

# NEWS TODAY

## India re-elected to the International Maritime Organization (IMO) Council for 2026–27 with highest votes

India has been re-elected in **Category B**, comprising countries with the largest interest in international seaborne trade.

- ▶ **IMO Council consists of 40 elected members across three categories (A, B and C)** and functions as the executive body of the IMO.

### About IMO (HQ: London, UK)

- ▶ **Genesis:** 1948 as Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization (IMCO), but the name was changed in 1982 to IMO.
- ▶ **Role:** **United Nations specialized agency** with responsibility for the safety and security of shipping.
  - ⊕ Create a **regulatory framework** for the shipping industry that is **fair and effective, universally adopted and universally implemented**.

### Role of IMO in Maritime Safety

- ▶ **Key IMO Conventions and Strategies:**
  - ⊕ **International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL)** prevents and minimizes pollution (oil, garbage, air) from ships.
  - ⊕ **Ballast Water Management Convention** aims to prevent the spread of invasive aquatic species.
  - ⊕ **International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS)** establishes minimum safety standards for ships, including requirements for fire protection and navigation.
  - ⊕ **International Convention on Standards for Training Certification and Watchkeeping for Seafarers Convention** sets qualifications for seafarer training and certification.
  - ⊕ **2023 IMO Strategy on Reduction of GHG Emissions from Ships** seeks to achieve **net-zero GHG emissions by 2050**.

## Fiscal Fault Lines in India's Disaster Response

Disaster relief funding in India is becoming increasingly uneven, with a widening gap between assessed needs and actual funds released. E.g. In Kerala after Wayanad landslides.

- ▶ This raises the question of whether **India's fiscal federalism** is shifting from **cooperation to a more centralised and conditional system** of disaster finance.

**India's Disaster Response Financing Framework:** Established under Disaster Management (DM) Act, 2005, operates on a two-tier structure.

- ▶ **State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF):** Jointly financed by Centre and States, typically in a 75:25 ratio, though it is 90:10 for Himalayan and north-eastern States.
- ▶ **National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF):** Fully financed by Union government, intended to supplement SDRF when a calamity is officially classified as "severe".

### Key institutional issues in Framework:

- ▶ **Outdated Relief Norms:** Compensation ceilings e.g. ₹4 lakh for each life lost have remained largely unchanged for a decade.
- ▶ **Ambiguity in Classification:** DM Act, 2005, does not define what constitutes a 'severe' disaster, allowing discretion in deciding eligibility for NDRF aid.
- ▶ **Procedural and Slow Aid Release:** Process relies on sequential clearances, including a State memorandum, central assessment, and high-level approval.
- ▶ **Weak Finance Commission Allocation Criteria:** Criteria for allocation use population and total geographical area to measure exposure, neglecting actual hazard patterns.
  - ⊕ Furthermore, disaster vulnerability is approximated by poverty instead of a robust disaster-risk index.

### Way Forward for better disaster response financing:

- ▶ **Adopting global best practices:**
  - ⊕ Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in the United States uses per capita damage thresholds.
  - ⊕ Mexico's former FONDEN released funds automatically when predetermined rainfall or wind limits were exceeded.
  - ⊕ Philippines uses rainfall and fatality indices to trigger quick-response funds.
  - ⊕ African and Caribbean insurance facilities utilize satellite data for rapid payouts.
- ▶ **Other Recommendations:** Revising allocation criteria using a comprehensive vulnerability index, updating relief norms etc.

## India's New Earthquake Zonation Map by Bureau of Indian Standards

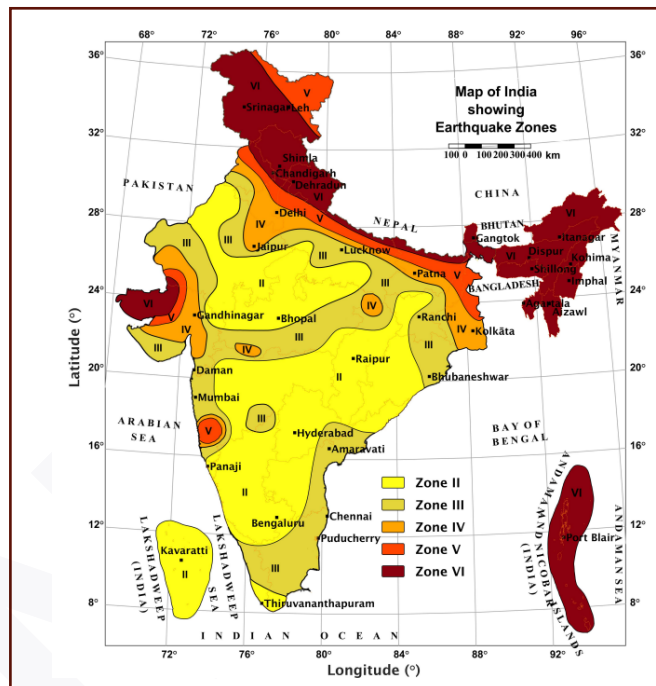
India has released a revised **Seismic Zonation Map** under the updated **Earthquake Design Code (BIS, 2025)** based on faults, maximum likely events, attenuation, tectonics, lithology, etc.

### Details of New Zonation

- **Number of Zones:** Earlier, the Indian landmass was demarcated into **4 earthquake zones**, namely **Zones II, III, IV, V**.
  - ⊕ Introduces **new highest-risk Zone VI**, placing the **entire Himalayan arc** under it for the first time (previously split between Zones IV and V).
- **Boundary towns between zones:** Now automatically fall in the **higher-risk category**.
- **Hazard mapping:** Prioritises **geological conditions over administrative boundaries**.

### India's Earthquake Vulnerability:

- **61% of India's land** now lies in **moderate to high hazard zones** (earlier: 59%).
- **75% of India's population** is now in seismically active regions.
- **Implications of New Map:** Nudges to **retrofitting** in high-risk regions, halting expansion on **soft sediments** or near **active faults**, enforcing uniform building standards in Himalayan states, etc.
- **Government strategies:**
  - ⊕ **National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) & State Disaster Management Authority (SDMA):** NDMA is responsible for setting disaster management policies and SDMAs are in charge of creating and implementing disaster plans.
  - ⊕ **National Seismological Network:** Monitors earthquake activities and conducts research on developing earthquake early warning systems.



## Researchers claim to crack the reason behind collapse of the Indus Valley Civilization (IVC)

A study published in the journal *Communications Earth & Environment* highlighted that the downfall of Harappan civilization was not due to a singular catastrophic event.

### Key findings of study

- **Impact of Droughts:** Beliefs suggest that the downfall was due to a single catastrophic reason, but it was actually due to a series of prolonged droughts that lasted for centuries.
  - ⊕ Four major drought events, each spanning over 85 years, occurring between 2425 and 1400 BCE impacted nearly the entirety of the region.
- **Dwindling resources:** Hydrological changes leading to desiccation of rivers, lakes and soils likely prompted the Harappans to frequently relocate in search of more viable living conditions.
- **Declining trade:** Low water level hindered trade activities reliant on river navigation and made agriculture more challenging and forced populations to migrate.
- **Other factors:** Decline was compounded by factors such as diminished food supply and a fragile governance structure.

Other Major theories of IVC decline	
Theory	Evidence
<b>Catastrophic Flooding (Raikes's Hypothesis)</b>	Houses of Mohenjodaro were covered with silty clay and rebuilding activity was found.
<b>Earthquakes</b>	Earthquake raised the level of flood plains blocking passage of river water to sea, forcing water in to cities.
<b>Changes in the course of the rivers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊕ Apparently, the river Indus shifted about thirty miles away from Mohenjodaro.</li> <li>⊕ Drying up of the river Ghaggar-Hakra in Rajasthan (D.P. Agarwal)</li> </ul>
<b>Barbarian Invasions</b>	Rig Veda mentions a place called Hariyupiya (probably Harappa) and Aryans fought a battle here.
<b>Ecological imbalance (Gradual Decline)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>⊕ Historian Fairservice emphasised the delicate ecological balance of these semi-arid areas was being disturbed by population and fast depleting resources.</li> <li>⊕ <b>D.P. Agarwal:</b> Climate change.</li> </ul>

## Annual Groundwater Quality Report 2025 released by Central Ground Water Board (CGWB)

### Key Findings

- 71.7% of India's groundwater meets BIS standards but 28.3% of samples exceed limits for one or more parameters,
- **Nitrate Contamination:** Nitrate is most widespread pollutant nationally, with approximately 20% samples exceeding WHO and BIS limits(45 mg/L) , followed by fluoride and salinity.
  - ⊖ It is largely attributed to anthropogenic sources, e.g. fertilizer use and sewage and animal waste seeping in groundwater.
- **Uranium contamination:** Samples with uranium levels above the safe limit of 30 ppb were found at 6.71% during the Pre-Monsoon and 7.91% during post-monsoon.
  - ⊖ Punjab recorded highest contamination, followed by Haryana and Delhi
- **Salinity:** Salinity (Electrical Conductivity,) is a critical issue in arid and semi-arid regions like Rajasthan and Delhi, exceeding limits in 7.23% of samples.,
- **Fluoride** - 8.05% of nationwide samples exceeded limit however it was predominantly geogenic (naturally occurring). Rajasthan showed highest contamination.
- **Lead** - Delhi recorded highest contamination.It can impair cognitive development , increases blood pressure, affect kidney and is classified as probable carcinogen.
- **Irrigation Suitability:** The groundwater quality is largely suitable for irrigation purposes. The majority of samples, 94.30%, fall into the "excellent category".
- **Other Trace Metal and Geogenic Contaminations:** Arsenic (especially in Ganga and Brahmaputra basin), Manganese (e.g., Assam, Karnataka, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal) etc.

#### CGWB (Faridabad, Haryana )

- **Origin:** Established in 1970 by renaming the Exploratory Tube wells Organization
- **Ministry:** Under Ministry of Jal Shakti
- **Role:** Management, exploration, monitoring, regulation etc of ground water resources of the country
- It is also discharging the functions as **Central Ground Water Authority(CGWA)** established under **Environment Protection Act, 1986.**

### Also In News



#### Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in Nigeria

Nigeria is set to host the first Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) campus in West Africa.

- The **first batch** is expected to begin in 2026, focusing on engineering, technology, and research.
- This initiative marks a major step in **India's global education outreach** and is part of the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**, which encourages Indian universities to expand internationally.
- The new campus will follow the IIT Madras–Zanzibar model.
  - ⊖ The **IIT Madras-Zanzibar campus** started in 2023 with students from across Africa.
  - ⊖ The **IIT Delhi- Abu Dhabi campus**, which opened in 2024, offers courses that match local industry needs.



#### Femicide

The Italian Parliament approved a law that recognises femicide.

#### About Femicide

- **Femicide** (or feminicide, as it is referred to in some contexts) is defined as an **intentional killing with a gender-related motivation.**
- It is considered **among the most severe manifestations of crimes targeting women.**
- A **2022 framework developed by several United Nations bodies divided femicides into three categories**, based on the women's relation to their attacker(s). These were intentional homicides or killings of women and girls perpetrated by,
  - ⊖ **Intimate partners**
  - ⊖ **By other family members** (blood relatives and relatives by marriage or adoption)
  - ⊖ **By other perpetrators**



#### ELVEs

A bright halo of **red light has been spotted floating above a small Italian town due to a rare atmospheric phenomenon called ELVEs** (Emission of Light and Very Low Frequency perturbations due to Electromagnetic pulse Sources).

#### About ELVEs

- **ELVEs are defined** as rapidly expanding rings of light emission, up to about 300 km across, in the lower ionosphere, generated by the electromagnetic pulse (EMP) from lightning return strokes.
- **Discovered by:** Boeck.
- **They are more common over oceans** and result from the heating of free electrons due to the electric field from the EMP.



### SoLAR Phase II

SoLAR Phase II has been launched to **expand climate-resilient solar irrigation systems** across South Asia and East Africa.

**About The Solar Irrigation for Agricultural Resilience in South Asia (SoLAR) Phase II**

- **Phase II Launch: November 2025.** Phase 1 was during 2019-2024.
- Implemented by the **International Water Management Institute (IWMI)** and the **Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).**
- A **multi-country programme** covering **India, Bangladesh, Kenya, and Ethiopia.**
- **Objective:** Ensures **equitable, sustainable access** to solar-powered agriculture for small and marginal farmers.

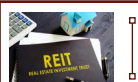


### BARC

BARC India has appointed an independent agency to investigate allegations that one of its employees manipulated TRP ratings in exchange for bribes.

**About Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC) India**

- It is a **Joint Industry Body** founded by **stakeholder bodies** that represent Broadcasters, Advertisers, and Advertising and Media Agencies.
- BARC India **owns and manages a transparent, accurate, and inclusive TV audience** measurement system.
- BARC's mandate is only to measure viewership after it occurs and not how or why viewers land on a channel.



### Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs)

SEBI reclassified REITs as **equity instruments** to boost participation by mutual funds and SIFs, while retaining Infrastructure investment trusts (InvITs) under hybrid category.

- Equity instruments, also known as shares, and capital shares in particular, give holders property rights to the company.
- A hybrid security blends the features of two financial instruments into one asset, usually combining aspects of debt and equity.

**About Real Estate Investment Trusts (REITs)**

- **Definition:** It is a company that owns, operates, or finances income-generating real estate and sells shares to raise capital to do so.
- REITs are an **alternative investment option** for people who cannot afford to invest directly in real estate.



### Cyclone Ditwah

Recently India launched **Operation Sagar Bandhu** to assist **Sri Lanka**, struck by cyclone Ditwah

**About cyclone Ditwah**

- It is a tropical cyclone that **brought heavy rains to Sri Lanka and Southern India.**
  - ⊖ The name "Ditwah" was contributed by Yemen.
- World Meteorological Organisation uses the term 'Tropical Cyclone' to when winds exceed 'Gale Force' (minimum 63 kph).
- Cyclones are **atmospheric disturbances** around a **low-pressure area** distinguished by swift and often destructive air circulation.
- The air circulates inward in an **anticlockwise direction** in the Northern hemisphere and **clockwise in the Southern hemisphere.**



### NASA ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR) Satellite

Recently **NISAR Satellite** entered its final science operations phase after earlier phase of launch, deployment, commissioning

**About NISAR**

- **Orbit:** It is an Earth **observation satellite (EOS)** being placed in **Low Earth Orbit (LEO).**
  - ⊖ It is placed in **Sun-synchronous Polar Orbit** (orbit in which satellites are in sync with sun i.e. they will pass over the same spot on Earth at the same local time).
- **Collaboration:** It's the 1st satellite jointly developed by **ISRO and NASA.**
- **Launch vehicle:** Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle F16 (GSLV-F16).
- Contains a **dual frequency band** (L band by NASA and S band by ISRO) Synthetic Aperture Radar(SAR).
  - ⊖ SAR-uses **motion of a radar antenna** to create high-resolution images.



### Asia Power Index 2025

Recently the annual Asia Power Index, was released by Australia-based think tank Lowy Institute.

**About Asia Power Index 2025**

- The annual Asia Power Index measures resources and influence to assess the relative power of states in Asia.
  - ⊖ It evaluates the power of **27 countries and territories** across Asia across 8 measures, including Military Capability, Economic Capability, Diplomatic and Cultural Influence
- **India secured 3d ranking (improved) gaining the status of 'major power',** though still far behind U.S.(1st) and China.
  - ⊖ This rise is attributed to its **growing economic and military strengths** boosted by recent Operation Sindoor.

