

Parliamentary Panel Recommends Statutory Status to National Statistical Commission (NSC)

Lok Sabha's **Standing Committee on Finance** (2025-26) tabled its **27th Report on 'Performance review of NSC'** in the Parliament.

Key issues highlighted in the report

- **Inability to Enforce Standards:** The NSC lacks the power to enforce uniform standards and methodologies across all data producers, including government ministries and private data providers.
- **Data Discrepancies** in statistical estimates, like GDP, undermines stakeholder confidence and public trust.
- **Limited Autonomy:** Its operational effectiveness is constrained without the legal backing to mandate compliance.

Recommendations of the committee

- **Statutory Empowerment:** The NSC must be established as the **nodal and autonomous statutory body** for all core statistical activities, **empowered to prescribe standards** for both government and private data producers.
- **National Statistical Standards Framework:** Similar to accounting standards set by the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI), should be developed to harmonize data collection, sampling, and reporting protocols.
- **Formalized Statistical Audits** to conduct periodic, comprehensive reviews of data processes across agencies, with findings published transparently to ensure quality and accountability.
- **Refinement of GDP methodology** to more accurately capture the economic **contributions of the informal and unorganized sectors**, which constitute over 60% of the economy.
- **Other:**
 - ⊕ **AI Integration** into the national statistical system and **Capacity Building**.
 - ⊕ **International Collaboration** to translate global best practices into tangible domestic outcomes.

National Statistical Commission

- **Establishment:** In 2005 by the Government of India as an autonomous institution through a Resolution, on the recommendations of Rangarajan Commission (2000).
- **Ministry:** Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI).
- **Membership:**
 - ⊕ A part-time Chairperson (an eminent statistician or social scientist),
 - ⊕ Four part-time Members with specific specializations,
 - ⊕ The CEO of NITI Aayog (ex-officio), and
 - ⊕ The Chief Statistician of India (Secretary to the Commission).
- **Mandate:** The NSC is responsible for identifying core statistics, evolving national policies and priorities, laying down quality standards, and exercising statistical coordination between Ministries.

Indian Rupee (INR) breaches 90-mark against US Dollar

Despite strong domestic macroeconomic indicators (8.2% GDP growth, near 1% inflation, lower crude prices, etc.), **INR depreciated by more than 5% in 2025**.

- **Depreciation** of the rupee occurs when its value declines relative to foreign currencies in the open market.

Primary Factors Driving Depreciation

- **Uncertainty over US-India Trade Deal:** The imposition of steep US tariffs (up to 50%) on Indian goods **challenges export competitiveness** and **dents investor confidence**.
- **Capital Outflows:** Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) have pulled significant funds, often **treating India as a liquidity source** to pursue opportunities elsewhere.
- **Widening Trade Deficit:** Driven by **high demand for gold, electronics, and machinery**, while exports to major markets, including the US, have softened.
- **Speculative Investment:** Continuous dollar demand from importers who are **front-loading their dollar purchases** on expectations of further rupee weakening.

Key Impacts on Indian Economy

- **Negative Impact:**
 - ⊕ **Imported Inflation:** As India imports a large proportion of its crude oil (90%), edible oils, etc.
 - ⊕ **Increased Subsidy Burden:** Higher import prices for fertilizers will swell the government's subsidy bill.
 - ⊕ **Higher Cost of Overseas Liabilities:** Companies with dollar-denominated debt face higher repayment and interest servicing costs.
- **Positive Impact:**
 - ⊕ **Export Competitiveness:** Makes Indian exports cheaper and more competitive in the global market.
 - ⊕ **Remittances:** A weaker rupee could make remittances from overseas more attractive.

What measures can be taken to restore the value of INR?





- **Monetary Policy Measures:** Foreign exchange intervention by RBI, increasing interest rates, currency swap agreements, etc.
- **Fiscal Policy Measures:** Reducing import dependency by incentivizing domestic production, boosting exports through diversification and FTAs, attracting FDIs with support to infrastructure and ease of doing business, etc.

Parliamentary report on subject "review of mechanism to curb fake news" presented in Lok Sabha

Report warns that India's **current framework to tackle fake news** is inadequate for the scale and sophistication of today's misinformation ecosystem.

Current mechanism to curb fake news

- **Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021:** For regulation of content by online publishers of news and current affairs content, and curated audio-visual content.
- **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita:** Section 353 criminalizes spreading false information or rumors with intent to cause public harm.
- **Other Mechanisms:** Information Technology Act, 2000, Fact Check Unit under PIB, Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995 for private satellite TV channels etc.

Subject	Issues in current mechanism	Recommendations of the committee
 Absence of a Statutory Definition	♦ The term ' Fake News ' is not explicitly defined under any current statute.	♦ Need to define " Fake News " legally , set up a committee to suggest amendments to existing laws like IT Act, 2000, and Cable Television Network (Regulation) Act, 1995, to address misinformation effectively
 Regulatory gaps	♦ " Safe Harbour " provisions of the IT Act , which exempts intermediaries from liability for third-party content, provided they follow due diligence.	♦ Relevant Sections of the IT Act should be revisited to ensure accountability, particularly given that algorithms often amplify sensational narratives for revenue.
 Cross-Border Jurisdictional Issues	♦ Difficult to hold foreign content creators accountable, different countries have varying laws	♦ A dedicated Inter-Ministerial Task Force involving the Ministry of External Affairs and legal experts should be formed
 Technological Sophistication	♦ Proliferation of AI videos and Deep fakes due to Increased Internet penetration and low digital literacy.	♦ Exploring the feasibility of mandatory labeling for AI-generated videos ♦ Additionally, licensing requirements for AI content creators should be explored

New Study published in journal Nature Sustainability warns about Invasive Alien Species

Invasive alien species (IAS) are those plants, animals, or microorganisms that do not naturally belong to a region but, once introduced, spread quickly and disturb the local balance.

Key highlights of the study

- **Expansion of IAS:** Annually, ~15,500 km² natural areas in India are invaded by at least one new **IAS**.
 - ⊕ Invasive alien plants have already doubled their range in ecologically sensitive regions eg. Western Ghats (WGs), Himalayas and north-east.
- **Impacting Natural Ecosystem:** Almost 2/3rd of India's natural ecosystems now contain at least 11 major IASs, eg. **Lantana camara**, **Chromolaena odorata**, **Prosopis juliflora** etc.
- **Climate Change-Driven Spread:** Wet-biome invaders eg. **Ageratina adenophora**, **Mikania micrantha** expanded with rising temperatures and declining soil moisture
 - ⊕ Conversely, dry biomes invasions e.g., **Xanthium strumarium** increased with increasing rainfall.

Impacts of IAS

- **Threatening Livelihood:** Eg. **Prosopis juliflora** often block access to pasture, firewood and water and can cause respiratory illness.
- **Threat to Wildlife-** Eg. By 2022, invasions had impacted more than 1 lakh sq km of tiger habitat.
- **Threat to Biodiversity-** eg. **Lantana camara** suppressed native vegetation in India's Western Ghats.
- **Economic-** India's economic losses from IASs (1960 -2020) is \$127.3 billion.

Way Ahead

- **Need for a National mission** - For better co-ordination and integration and to counter the lack of dedicated national institutional mechanism or database
- **Prevention:** Stop new invasive species from entering through stricter checks on trade, travel, and shipping (like ballast water management).
- **Empowerment:** Communities suffering the impacts must be involved in the process of recovery and monitoring.
- **Following best practices** - Eg. **Mandatory Pest Risk Analysis of New Zealand** for all new or imported products to predict the possibility of Invasions.

Antarctic ozone hole closes early, indicating steady progress in global ozone recovery

Antarctic Ozone Hole is a seasonal and **severe thinning of stratospheric ozone** over Antarctica, mostly from **August to November** during the Southern Hemisphere spring.

- In 2025, it peaked at just over 21 million sq km, well below the 2006 record (29 million sq km).
- **Stratospheric ozone (good Ozone)** is found at 10-40 KM above Earth's surface, and protects Earth from UV radiation from the Sun.

Causes of Ozone Hole/ozone layer depletion in Antarctica

- **Ozone depleting Substance (ODS) Release:** Emissions of Chloro Fluoro carbons (CFCs), halons, hydro chlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs), and methyl bromide reach the stratosphere.
 - ⊕ UV radiation breaks these substances, releasing **chlorine** and **bromine** atoms that rapidly destroy ozone.
- **Meteorological Drivers:** Polar vortex traps air and **concentrates** chemicals, while extreme cold forms **Polar Stratospheric Clouds** that **accelerate** ozone-destroying reactions.
- **Return of sunlight:** In spring (September and October) sunlight returns to the region, providing the energy for the catalytic ozone-destroying reactions to occur.

Impacts of ozone layer depletion

- **Health Risks:** Higher incidence of skin cancer, cataracts, and weakened immunity due to increase in harmful **UV-B radiation** reaching the surface.
- **Ecosystem Damage:** Reduced **plant productivity** and **disruption of marine food chains**.

Major Treaties and Mechanisms for protection of ozone layer

- **Vienna Convention 1985:** Established the **initial framework** for international cooperation, research, and monitoring for ozone protection.
- **Montreal Protocol 1987:** It is a **universally ratified** treaty that set binding phase-out targets for ODS and **achieved over 98% reduction** compared to 1990 levels.
- **Kigali Amendment to Montreal Protocol (2016):** Added hydro fluorocarbons (HFC) controls, linking ozone protection with climate mitigation.



Also In News



Leprosy (Hansen's disease)

NHRC recently submitted that 97 central and State laws continue to contain provisions that discriminate against persons with leprosy.

About Leprosy (Hansen's disease)

- **Definition:** It is a chronic **bacterial** infection caused by **Mycobacterium leprae** that affects the skin, peripheral nerves, and eyes.
 - ⊕ Left untreated, this neglected tropical disease may cause progressive and permanent disabilities.
- **Transmission:** The bacteria are transmitted via droplets from the nose and mouth during close and frequent contact with untreated cases.
- **Situation in India:** Prevalence Rate (PR) from 57.2 per 10,000 in 1981 to 0.57 per 10,000 in 2025 (**99% reduction**).
 - ⊕ In 2005, India achieved **Elimination status for leprosy at National level**. i.e. **PR less than 1 per 10,000** population.
- **Elimination Efforts:** National Leprosy Eradication Programme (NLEP), the National Strategic Plan and Roadmap for Leprosy (2023-2027).



Central Excise (Amendment) Bill, 2025

The bill was recently passed in Lok Sabha to amend the **Central Excise Act, 1944**.

About the Bill

➤ Background:

- ⊕ Central excise duties on many items were repealed with the introduction of GST(2017), except for some items such as tobacco and tobacco products, liquor, petroleum.
- ⊕ Along with GST, GST compensation cess was also introduced on products such as tobacco to compensate states for revenue loss due to GST.
- ⊕ Thus, tobacco and tobacco products are currently subject to GST, compensation cess, and central excise duty.
- ⊕ The compensation cess on tobacco and tobacco products is planned to be discontinued.

- **Objective of Bill:** To levy a higher excise duty on tobacco and related products once GST compensation cess ends to keep taxes on them at existing level.

- ⊕ **Excise duty** is a form of indirect tax imposed by the central government. on domestic production of goods.



Denotified Tribes (DNTs)

Centre 'not classifying' denotified tribes despite survey report.

- The AnSI (Anthropological Survey of India) in its 2023 report had recommended fresh classification of 85 of these DNTs.

About DNTs

- **DNTs:** also known as Vimukta Jati, are the tribes that were listed originally under the **Criminal Tribes act of 1871**, as criminal tribes.
 - ⊕ The Criminal Tribes Act was repealed in 1949 and thus 'de-notified' the tribal communities.
 - ⊕ **Idate Commission (2017)** recommended setting up a permanent commission for DNTs and doing a caste census column to count DNT populations.



Inhalable microplastics (iMPs)

As per a new study, **high concentration of inhalable microplastics (iMPs)** has been found across Indian cities.

About Inhalable Microplastics (iMPs)

- **Meaning:** They are plastic particles **less than 10 micrometres (microns)** in size, as compared to microplastics (less than 5 millimetres).
 - ⊕ These plastic particles, once inhaled, **can penetrate deep into the lungs**, enter the bloodstream, and potentially reach crucial organs, acting as "Trojan Horses".
- **Potential Health Impacts:** iMPs can carry pathogens and toxic chemicals, causing inflammation, cellular stress, and increased risk of long-term diseases like cancer.

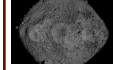


Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO)

Recently, **CDSCO mandated designated QR code and toll-free number** to be displayed at all retail and wholesale pharmacies to report adverse drug reactions.

About CDSCO (HQ: New Delhi)

- **Established:** It is a statutory authority under **Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940**.
- **Ministry:** Ministry of Health and family welfare.
- **Functions:** Regulatory control over the import of drugs, approval of new drugs and clinical trials, etc.



Asteroid Benu

Scientists have found **glucose in samples collected from asteroid Benu by Nasa's Osiris-Rex spacecraft** in 2023.

- This discovery indicates the presence of **essential chemical ingredients for life** in the early solar system.

About Asteroid Benu

- It is a relatively small asteroid that **passes close to Earth about every six years**.
- **Constituents:** It is an amalgamation of such rocks (not found on Earth) that are loosely packed and barely held together by gravity or other forces.



NAKSHA

Center is planning a major overhaul of urban property registration system by replacing hand-drawn sketches with precise **spatial Databases** such as **NAKSHA (National Geospatial Knowledge-based Land Survey of Urban Habitations)**.

About NAKSHA

- **Ministry:** It is a pilot programme of the **Department of Land Resource, Ministry of Rural Development** under **Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme (DILRMP)**.
- **Aim:** To build a **comprehensive, GIS-integrated database of urban land parcels** using cutting-edge **aerial and field survey techniques**.
- **Significance:** Transparent property ownership, streamlining urban planning, better infrastructure development, etc



Reciprocal Exchange of Logistic Support (RELOS) pact

Russia's lower house ratified the **Reciprocal Exchange of Logistic Support (RELOS) pact** marking a major step in deepening bilateral military cooperation between Russia and India.

About RELOS pact

- **Purpose:** Allows both countries' **military platforms to access each other's bases, ports, airfields and maintenance facilities**.
- **Significance:** Will facilitates joint exercises, training, disaster relief, refuelling, repairs and port visits.
- **Strategic Impact:** It enhances India's operational reach, including potential access to Russian naval routes, and strengthens overall military coordination.

Personality in News



Khudiram Bose (December 3, 1889 - August 11, 1908)

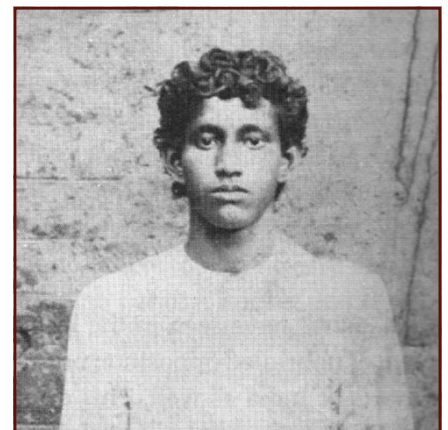
Leaders paid tribute to freedom fighter **Khudiram Bose** on his birth anniversary.

About Khudiram Bose

- **Birth:** Village of Mohobani in Medinipur district, West Bengal.
- Influenced by **Swadeshi Movement** and nationalist ideals at a young age.

Key Contributions:

- **Revolutionary Role:** Joined **Anushilan Samiti**, a revolutionary group in Bengal.
- **Participated in the Muzaffarpur conspiracy (1908):** which aimed at targeting British Magistrate **Douglas Kingsford**.
 - ⊕ **On April 30, 1908**, in Muzaffarpur, Bose and **Prafulla Chaki** bombed the wrong carriage; two British women died. Chaki later committed suicide.
- **Martyrdom:** At **age 18**, he was arrested, convicted, and hanged on **August 11, 1908**.
- **Values:** Courage, Sacrifice, Revolutionary zeal etc.



AHMEDABAD



BENGALURU



BHOPAL



CHANDIGARH



DELHI



GUWAHATI



HYDERABAD



JAIPUR



JODHPUR



LUCKNOW



PRAYAGRAJ



PUNE



RANCHI