

NEWS TODAY

Twenty-Five Years of Kargil War

Recently, Indian Army commenced a **Pan-India Motorcycle Expedition** to pay tribute to heroes of Kargil War.

About Kargil War (1999)

- It was fought **between India and Pakistan** in Kargil district of Kashmir and along the Line of Control (LOC).
- Pakistan's motive was to **cut link between Kashmir and Ladakh**
- It commenced shortly after the signing of the **Lahore declaration in 1999**.
 - ⊕ It provided the **framework for peaceful relations** whereby all issues including the **issue of Jammu and Kashmir** would be resolved by peaceful means.
- During the war, Indian Army evicted Pakistani intruders and succeeded in **recapturing Tiger Hill** and other posts as part of **Operation Vijay**.

Aftermath of the war

- After the war, several **military and intelligence reforms** were carried out on the basis of the **Kargil Review committee**. It recommended
 - ⊕ To reorganize the mechanisms between the Defence Ministry and the Service Headquarters and the interface between them.
 - ◆ Later post of the **Chief of Defence Staff** was created
 - ⊕ **Strengthen surveillance capability** and develop required technology indigenously.
 - ⊕ Full time **National Security Adviser** to advise the Prime minister about threats to security.



IIT-KGP publishes study on drought due to depleting groundwater (GW) levels

Key findings

- **Trend:** The **severity of GW drought increased 22 times** during the pre-monsoon season from **1996 to 2016**.
 - ⊕ GW drought is a condition when **water tables drop below their normal levels**.
- **Affected Regions:** Large parts of North India, including major cities such as Delhi-NCR, Jaipur, and Lucknow.

About Groundwater

- **Global abundance:** 30% of the world's freshwater is groundwater.
- **India's Usage:** India is the **largest groundwater user in world** (more than 25% of global total).
 - ⊕ Contribution of GW is nearly **62% in irrigation, 85% in rural water supply and 50% in urban water supply**.
- **Major Basins:** Indo-Ganga-Brahmaputra plains **possess 60% of the country's groundwater resources**.
- **High Utilization States:** Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Tamil Nadu
- **Extraction level:** As per Dynamic Groundwater Resource Assessment 2023 by the CGWB, of the assted GW units:
 - ⊕ **11% are overexploited** (i.e., extraction exceeding annually replenishable groundwater recharge)
 - ⊕ **3% are critical** (i.e., extraction is between 90-100 % of annual extractable resources available).

Causes of Groundwater Depletion

- **Excessive use** of groundwater for **agricultural and industrial purposes** due to **rising population**.
- **Shifting climate patterns** affecting water availability.
- **Unsustainable urbanisation** (like encroachment of water bodies, concretisation).
- **Subsidies** facilitating low-cost pumping technologies, free electricity, etc.

Steps Taken:

- **Atal Bhujal Yojana (ATAL JAL):** To improve the management of groundwater resources in 7 states (Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh).
- **"Catch The Rain" Jal Shakti Abhiyan:** To promote Rainwater harvesting & water conservation
- **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS):** The natural resource management component includes water conservation and water harvesting structures.
- **Financial assistance to States:** Financial assistance under the 15th Finance Commission tied grants can be utilized for **rainwater harvesting**.
- **Master Plan for Artificial Recharge to Groundwater (2020):** Prepared by the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB).

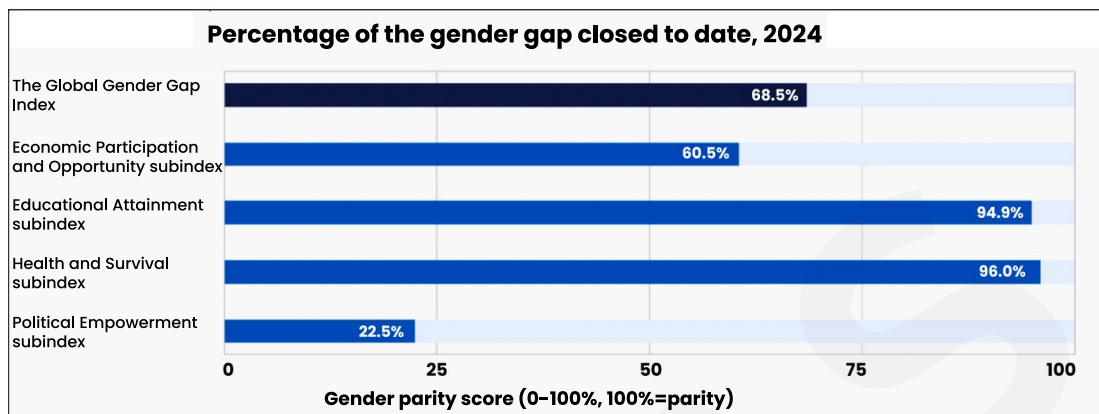
World Economic Forum (WEF) released 'Global Gender Gap Report 2024'

The report is based on the **Global Gender Gap Index (GGGI)** which annually benchmarks the current state and evolution of gender parity based on **14 indicators across four key dimensions**.

Key findings

Global

- ⊕ Among 146 countries, **Iceland, Finland, Norway, New Zealand, and Sweden** are the **top five** countries.
- ⊕ The share of **women in parliamentary positions** has shown an **almost uninterrupted positive trajectory since 2006**.
- ⊕ At the current rate of progress, it will take **134 years to reach full parity**.
- ⊕ Women constitute **28.2% of the STEM workforce and 47.3% of the non-STEM workforce**.



India

- ⊕ Overall, India was ranked **129th** (ranked 127 in 2023), and **5th** in South Asia **after Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and Bhutan**.
- ⊕ Saw **small declines in Educational Attainment and Political Empowerment** while Economic Participation and Opportunity slightly improved.
- ⊕ Shares of women are high in **primary, secondary and tertiary education enrolments**.

Recommendation

- Achieving **gender parity by 2030** would require a collective investment of **\$360 billion per year**.
- **Targeted interventions** and ensuring equitable access to emerging technological competencies are needed.
- **Businesses** need to have effective **diversity, equity and inclusion policies and upskilling**.

NOTE: Gender Inequality Index (GII), released by UNDP, is also a composite metric of gender inequality based on three dimensions: reproductive health, empowerment and the labour market.

World Bank Releases 'Global Economic Prospects Report'

Report called for a **significant acceleration in public investments** by Emerging Markets and Developing Economies (EMDEs) to meet their development goals.

Key highlights

Investment Level:

- ⊕ Public investment averages about **25% of total investment in the median EMDE**.
- ⊕ Public investment in these economies has **experienced a historic slowdown in the past decade**

Benefits

- ⊕ **Economic growth:** Increasing public investment by **1% of GDP can boost GDP by over 1.5%** and raise private investment by **2.2%** in the medium term.
 - ◆ However, **public investment may also crowd out private investment**, especially when fiscal space is limited and additional fiscal stimulus raises sovereign risk and borrowing costs for the private sector
- ⊕ **Sustainability of growth:** Public investment can be critical in delivering public goods or services that may not be privately profitable, such as public health care and education.

Recommendations ("three Es" package of policy priorities) to harness the benefits of public investment

- **Expansion of fiscal space:** Improve tax collection efficiency, enhance fiscal frameworks, and curtail unproductive spending.
- **Efficiency of public investment:** Tackling corruption, and poor governance, facilitating public-private partnerships, etc.
- **Enhanced global support:** Coordinated financial support and effective technical assistance are imperative for structural reforms.

About public investment

- ⊕ Public investment **usually** refers to **gross fixed capital formation** (total value of acquisitions, less disposals, of fixed assets) **by the State**, whether through central or local governments or publicly owned industries or corporations.
- ⊕ It encompasses **physical or tangible investment** in infrastructure (such as transport, telecommunications, and buildings), but in a broader sense, it can include **human or intangible investment** in education, skills, and knowledge.

Twenty fifth anniversary of International Labour Organisation (ILO) convention No. 182

It deals with “**worst forms of child labour**” and is the **first ILO Convention** to be universally ratified.

- India ratified it in 2017 along with **convention No. 138** which deals with **minimum age of employment**.

Prevalence of Child Labour in India

- As per census 2011, **10.1 million children** (3.9% of total child population) are working, either as ‘main worker’ or as ‘marginal worker’.
- **Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, and Madhya Pradesh** constitute nearly 55% of total working children in India.
- **Child labour mostly persists in** agriculture, household industries, roadside dabas, etc.

Reasons for Child Labour in India

- **Poverty forces families** to rely on their children's labour to make their ends meet.
- **Lack of quality education** increases the likelihood of children entering the workforce prematurely.
- **Disasters, conflicts and mass migration** leads to economic instability and disrupts families exposing children to labour.
- **Demand for Cheap Labour** in various industries such as agriculture, domestic work.
- **Lack of stringent legislation** and enforcement of laws.

Government measures to prevent child labour

- **Constitutional Provisions**
 - ⊖ **Article 24** prohibits the employment of children below the age of 14 years in any factory, mine, or hazardous occupation.
 - ⊖ **Article 39(e)** requires the States to direct its policy towards ensuring that the health and strength of workers, men and women, and the tender age of children is not abused.
- **Legal Framework**
 - ⊖ **Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016** prohibits “the engagement of children (below 14 years) in all occupations and of adolescents (below 18 years) in hazardous occupations.”

30th anniversary of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)

UNCCD is one of the three global agreements known as the **Rio Conventions (1992)**, alongside the **UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)** and the **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**.

About UNCCD

- Established in 1994, UNCCD is the **sole legally binding international agreement** linking environment and development to sustainable land management.
- **Members:** 196 countries and the European Union.
- **Objectives**
 - ⊖ **To protect and restore land** and ensure a safer, just, and more sustainable future.
 - ⊖ It's committed to a **bottom-up approach**, encouraging the **participation of local people** in combating desertification.
- **Report:** Global Land Outlook.
- **Flagship initiatives:**
 - ⊖ In 2015, **Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) target setting programme (LDN TSP)** : Parties were invited to formulate voluntary targets to achieve LDN.
 - ◆ **LDN:** It refers to the **sustainable management of land resources** to support ecosystem services and food security.
 - ◆ India committed to **restore 26 million hectares by 2030**.
 - ⊖ In 2017, **the Strategic Framework 2018–2030:** It urged nations to incorporate desertification/land degradation and drought concerns into national policies.
 - ⊖ **Other initiatives:** the Great Green Wall (2007), The Changwon Initiative (2011), International Drought Resilience Alliance (2022), G20 Global Land Initiative (2020), etc.

Issue of Land Degradation and Desertification

- Land degradation is the **deterioration or loss of the productive capacity** of the soils for present and future.
- Land degradation affects up to **40% of the world's land area**, resulting in the loss of 100 million hectares of healthy land each year.
- In India, **32% of its land is under degradation** and **25% undergoing desertification**.

Also in News

Financial Intelligence Unit - India (FIU-IND)

Recently FIU **fined Axis Bank** for **failing to detect suspicious transactions** carried out in the name of counter-terrorist commando force National Security Guard.

About FIU-IND

- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Finance
 - ⊖ FIU-IND reports directly to the **Economic Intelligence Council** headed by the Finance Minister.
- **Genesis:** Set up by the Government of India in 2004
- **Mandate:**
 - ⊖ **Central national agency** responsible for receiving, processing, analyzing, and disseminating **information about suspected financial transactions**.
 - ⊖ Coordinates with national and international intelligence agencies in pursuing global efforts **against money laundering and financing of terrorism**.



Prime Minister's National Relief Fund (PMNRF)

Prime Minister announced **ex-gratia relief** to the families of the deceased in a fire tragedy in Kuwait from PMNRF

About PMNRF

- **Genesis:** Established in 1948 to assist **displaced persons from Pakistan**.
- **Usage:** Now, it is utilized to **render immediate relief to families of those killed in natural calamities** like floods, cyclones, earthquakes, etc.
 - ⊖ Assistance is also rendered for **medical treatment**.
- **Source of funding:** Funded **entirely with public contributions** and **does not get any budgetary support**.
 - ⊖ It **accepts voluntary contributions** from Individuals, Organizations, Trusts, Companies and Institutions etc.
- **Tax benefit to contribution:** All contributions towards PMNRF are **exempt from Income Tax**.



Mercy Petition

President has **rejected the mercy petition** of a Lashkar-e-Taiba terrorist sentenced to death for the **December 2000 Red Fort attack**.

Constitutional provisions related to President's power on mercy petition

- **Article 72 empowers the President of India to grant pardons, reprieves, respites, suspend, remit, or commute the sentence of a person convicted of any offense where the sentence is**
 - ⊖ By a **court Martial**;
 - ⊖ For an offence **against any law relating to a matter to which executive power of Union extends**;
 - ⊖ A **sentence of death**.



Nitrous oxide

Nitrous oxide emissions grew 40% in last four decades, **China, India largest emitters: Study**

Nitrous oxide

- **Odorless, colorless, non-flammable gas that supports combustion and occurs naturally** in the environment
- Causes euphoria, hence nicknamed **'laughing gas'**.
- Used for **anesthesia** and other **therapeutic benefits**.
- It has a **Global-warming potential** 273 times that of CO₂ for a 100-year timescale.
- **Emission source:** Agricultural emissions (fertilizers), **vehicular gas emissions, etc.**



Sea cucumbers

As per a new research, repopulating Sea Cucumbers **can help in recovery of coral reefs**.

About Sea cucumbers

- Belong to the animal group called **echinoderms**, which also contains starfish and sea urchins.
- Are known as **janitors of tropical seas** as they consume decomposing organic matter and convert it into recyclable nutrients and buffers the ocean's acidification.
- It exhibits **sexual and asexual reproduction**.
- Protected under **Schedule I of Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**.
- **Threats:** illegal harvest, trade and trafficking.



Greater Adjutant Stork

Rapid urbanisation in Assam is affecting **Greater Adjutant stork survival**.

About Greater Adjutant Stork

- **Habitat:** Mostly breed in Brahmaputra Valley of Assam.
- **Characteristics**
 - ⊖ They are omnivorous and **primarily scavengers of large carrion**.
 - ⊖ The name adjutant comes from their distinctive, **military style walking**.
 - ⊖ They are known to be **monogamous**.
 - ⊖ Both male and female **participate in nest building**.
 - ⊖ **They lack vocal muscles** and rely on unique behaviour and tactile form of communication.
- **IUCN status:** Near Threatened.
- **Threats:** Habitat loss, disturbance of its breeding and feeding sites, Hunting of adults, etc.



Atomic clock

New portable Atomic clock offers very accurate timekeeping at sea.

Working of atomic clock

- It measures time using the **vibrations of atoms**.
- It contains an element like **cesium or calcium** and a **source of microwave radiation**.
- When excited by a microwave, the electron of the element can get **excited to a higher, excited state**.
- By observing the characteristic of **frequency at which the transition takes place**, time can be measured accurately.
 - ⊖ **Frequency refers** to the number of waves that cross a particular point in time in one unit of time.



New Craters on Mars

Three craters have been discovered on Mars by **Physical Research Laboratory (PRL), Ahmedabad**.

- They have been discovered in the **Tharsis volcanic region on Mars**.
 - On PRL recommendation, **the International Astronomical Union (IAU) Working Group for Planetary System Nomenclature** has approved naming of these craters.
 - They are named as **Lal crater, Mursan crater and hilsa crater**.
- About IAU**
- Founded in 1919, it serves as the **international authority for assigning designations to celestial bodies** and surface features on them.

Personality in news



Bhagwan Birsa Munda

Freedom fighter and tribal leader Birsa Munda was remembered on his death anniversary.

About Bhagwan Birsa Munda (1875 - 1900)

- He was born in the Munda tribe at Ulihatu, **Khunti district of the Chotanagpur Plateau region (Jharkhand)**.
- Also known as **'Dharti Aaba'**.

Contributions

- **Started faith of Birsait** and stressed the importance of **prayer, staying away from alcohol, and having faith in God**.
- Started a movement called **'Ulgulan (The Great Tumult)'** against the exploitation of **tribals by local authorities**.
 - ⊖ This led to the enactment of the **Chotanagpur Tenancy Act (1908)** which restricted the transfer of land from tribal people to non-tribals.

Legacy

- His **birth anniversary (on 15th November)** is celebrated as **Janjatiya Gaurav Divas**.

Values

- **Courage, Justice, Leadership, etc.**



AHMEDABAD



BENGALURU



BHOPAL



CHANDIGARH



DELHI



GUWAHATI



HYDERABAD



JAIPUR



JODHPUR



LUCKNOW



PRAYAGRAJ



PUNE



RANCHI