

NEWS TODAY

World Bank (WB) launches the first edition of its Business-Ready Index

It makes an assessment of 50 economies (excluding India) and aims to cover 180 economies by 2026.

- It is a successor to Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) rankings of WB.
 - ⊕ EoDB (flagship report of WB) ranked countries based on ease of opening and operating a company.
 - ⊖ It was discontinued in 2021 owing to ethical irregularities.

About Business-Ready (B-Ready) Index

- It provides a quantitative assessment of business environment (by focusing on three pillars) for private sector development, published annually and covering most economies worldwide.
- It contributes to meeting the World Bank Group's twin goals of eliminating poverty and boosting shared prosperity.

Features of B-Ready vis-a-vis EoDB

- **Comprehensive:** Evaluates business environment from perspective of an individual firm and from point of private sector development as a whole.
 - ⊕ EoDB evaluates same for individual small/medium firms.
- **Qualitative:** Examines regulatory burden on firms and quality of regulation.
 - ⊕ EoDB examined only burden of regulation on firms.
- **Balanced:** Collects both de jure (statutory laws) and de facto (practical) information on firms.
 - ⊕ In EoDB, certain indicators covered only de-facto regulations while certain covered only de jure.
- **Diverse:** Covers all major topics unlike EoDB that excluded some important topics like employing labor.

Pillars of B-Ready Index



Pillar I

Regulatory Framework

Rules and regulations that firms must follow as they open, operate, and close a business



Pillar II

Public Services

Facilities to support regulatory compliance and institutions and infrastructure to enable business activities



Pillar III

Operational Efficiency

Ease of regulatory compliance and effective use of public services directly relevant to firms

International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) published its Annual Review 2024 report titled "Renewable Energy and Jobs"

IRENA is an intergovernmental agency for energy transformation that facilitates international cooperation, supports countries in their energy transitions etc. India is member.

Key findings

- Global Renewable Energy (RE) workforce grew to 16.2 million, up from 13.7 million in 2022.
- In 2023, India had an estimated 1.02 million renewable energy jobs.
 - ⊕ Hydropower was largest employer in renewable sector in India followed by Solar Photovoltaic (PV).
 - ⊕ India added 9.7 GW of solar PV capacity in 2023 and ranked fifth globally for new installations and cumulative capacity (reached 72.7 GW by end of 2023).
 - ⊕ India had 2.38 lakh jobs in grid connected solar PV in 2023.
- India's wind power capacity reached 44.7 GW in 2023 (ranked fourth globally) and added 2.8 GW.

India's RE Status

- RE capacity grew by 165% in 10 years, rising from 76.38 GW to 203.1 GW (2014- 2024).
- Ranks 4th globally in RE Installed Capacity.

Key Skill Challenges for RE industry

- **Widening Skill Gaps:** Rapid growth of RE is outpacing development of suitably skilled workforce.
- **Lack of skills anticipation and monitoring systems** hinders countries' ability to adapt education and training programmes as per market demand.

Recommendations

- **Strong policy coherence, social dialogue, and PPP** are crucial for an effective energy transition strategy.
 - ⊕ Example: Sectoral Human Resource Development Plan on RE in Philippines.
- **Enhancing Technical and Vocational Education and Training programmes** by incorporating work-based learning will equip students with practical skills necessary for careers in RE.
 - ⊕ Example: Zimbabwe's Green enterPRIZE programme.

Major India's Initiatives driving RE Growth

- National Green Hydrogen Mission; PM Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana; Green Energy Corridors; Renewable Energy Certificate (REC) Mechanism etc.

Nepal, India, Bangladesh sign pact to facilitate cross-border electricity trade

Under this arrangement, Nepal will **export hydroelectricity to Bangladesh** via Indian transmission lines.

- It underscores a broader movement towards **cross-border energy cooperation in South Asia**.

Initiatives for Cross-Border South Asian Energy Co-operation

➤ Cross-Border Electricity Trade:

- ⊕ **India-Bangladesh:** Upcoming Electricity corridor from Katihar in Bihar to Bornagar in Assam.
- ⊕ **India-Nepal-Projects** like Arun III, Upper Karnali hydropower projects (UKHP).
- ⊕ **India-Bhutan:** E.g. Kurichu, Tala, Chukha and **Mangdechhu**.

- **Energy Pipelines:** TAPI Pipeline to transport natural gas, India-Bangladesh Friendship Pipeline, Motihari-Amlekhganj pipeline etc.

- **Renewable Energy Cooperation:** Exemplified by International Solar Alliance initiative's Green Grids Initiative, OSOWOG etc.

Significance of Energy Co-operation

- **Countering Chinese influence:** China is developing energy infrastructure for importing energy from its South Asian partners.
- **Economic integration:** Energy trade is key enabler of regional integration.
- **Other Significances:** Energy Security, environmental sustainability etc.

Challenges in Energy Co-operation

- **Environmental damage:** Opposition of UKHP in Nepal for impacts on Himalayan environment.
- **Hurdle Rates:** Represents costs due to structural grid barriers between countries which needs to be factored for electricity trade.
- **Other Issues: Regional Frictions** (E.g. conflicts between India and Pakistan), **Limited Utility of Hydropower Projects**.

Institutional Mechanisms For Energy Cooperation

- SAARC Energy Centre
- South Asia Sub Regional Economic Cooperation (SASEC)
- BIMSTEC Energy Centre
- South Asia Regional Initiative for Energy Integration (SARI/EI)

United Kingdom hands sovereignty of Chagos Islands to Mauritius

Both countries have reached a **historic political agreement** to hand over **Chagos Islands to Mauritius** (Still subject to finalization of a treaty).

- While **US-UK base** will remain on **Diego Garcia atoll**.

About Chagos Archipelago

- It is an **island group**, located **500 km south of Maldives** in Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

- Uninhabited until **18th century**, later **French colonized** it. French ceded island to **British** in 1814.

- **British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT):** Formed by UK in 1965, with Chagos as a central part.

- ⊕ Some BIOT islands were ceded to **Seychelles** in 1976.

- Archipelago was **detached from Mauritius** by UK in 1965, three years before Mauritius gained independence.

Significance of Treaty

- **Addressing colonial legacy:** Ends a long-standing dispute over last British colony in Africa.

- **Regional Security Dynamics:** As Mauritius may seek to balance its relations with major powers.

- **Security Importance:** **Diego Garcia** base allows US to **monitor Malacca Strait**, crucial for global trade, and **maintain its presence in IOR**.

- **Compliance with International Law:** Handing over island is aligned with judgment of **International Court of Justice** In 2019 & **UNGA resolution in 2019**.

- ⊕ India supported **Mauritius' claim** by voting in its favor at UNGA in 2019

- ◆ It was in line with India's "**principled stand on decolonization and support for sovereignty and territorial integrity of nations**".



Global Framework on Chemicals (GFC) Fund to support chemicals and waste management in developing economies

GFC Fund has launched its first project call for **targeting safe and sustainable management of chemicals and waste**.

About GFC Fund

- Setup during **fifth International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM5)** in 2023 in Bonn, Germany.
- **Executive Board** takes operational decisions and oversees its functioning. It is composed of
 - ⊕ **2 National representatives of each United Nations region;** and **Representatives of all donors and contributors.**
- It **complements existing financial mechanisms**, like Global Environment Facility etc. and funds that support biodiversity and climate action.
- **Objectives:**
 - ⊕ **Support low-and middle-income countries**, including small island developing states, in addressing chemicals, including products and waste in line with international standards.
 - ⊕ **Target medium-scale projects that strengthen national and regional abilities** managing chemicals and waste.
- **Financial Support:** Selected projects will **receive 300,000 to 800,000 USD for up to three years** to minimize harm from chemicals and waste and **protect environment and human health.**
 - ⊕ Funding is provided through **voluntary contributions.**

About GFC (Bonn Declaration adopted at ICCM5)

- **Multi-sectoral agreement** that outlines **set of 28 targets** to address chemicals and waste management including **prevention of illegal trade, elimination of highly hazardous pesticides in agriculture by 2035** etc.

Other Global Initiatives for sustainable management of chemicals and waste

- **Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM):** Global policy framework to minimize health and environmental impacts of chemicals throughout their lifecycle.
- **Basel Convention:** An international treaty to **regulate transboundary movement and disposal of hazardous wastes.**
- **Stockholm Convention:** Global treaty to protect human health and environment from effects of persistent organic pollutants.

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) released study on Monetary Policy Transmission (MPT) and Labour Markets in India

Study analyzes **impact of informality in labor markets** on inflation stabilization and monetary policy offering new insights on MPT.

About Monetary Policy (MP)

- MP is a **set of actions** available to a **nation's central bank (RBI in India)** to achieve **sustainable economic growth & Maintaining price stability** by adjusting money supply.
- **Statutory Basis:** RBI, Act,1934 (amended in 2016).
- **MP Framework: Central Government**, in consultation with RBI, **determines inflation target** in terms of Consumer Price Index (CPI) every 5 years.
 - ⊕ **Flexible Inflation Targeting:** Currently, it is **4% (with a tolerance of +/- 2%)** till March, 2026.
- **Tools: Direct and indirect instruments** like Repo Rate, Reverse Repo Rate etc.
- **Types: Expansionary** (Lowering interest rate to stimulate economic activity); and **Contractionary** (Increasing interest rate to slow down activity and prevent inflation)

Key findings of Study:

- **MP Transmission:** Improves with more formality in the labor market.
- **Impact on Unemployment:** Contractionary Monetary Policy (CMP) leads to **Rise** in unemployment in both formal and informal markets.
- **Impact on Macroeconomic variables:** Contractionary Monetary Policy (CMP) leads to a **decline** in aggregate consumption, inflation, investment, output, capital stock, etc.

Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)

- **About:** Constituted by Central Government to determine **policy rates (E.g. Repo)** for achieving inflation targeting.
- **Members: 6 Members-** Governor, RBI (ex-officio chairperson); five other members (2 from RBI and 3 appointed by the Government).
- **Voting:** Each member has one vote (Governor exercises the casting vote).
- **Meeting:** At least 4 times in a year
- **Quorum:** 4 members.

Also in News



National Agriculture Code (NAC)

Bureau of Indian Standards is creating a NAC similar to National Building Code and National Electrical Code.

About NAC

- Code will have two parts. **First will contain general principles for all crops**, and **second will deal with crop-specific standards** for paddy, wheat, oilseeds, and pulses.
- NAC will **cover all agriculture processes and post-harvest operations**, like crop selection, land preparation, sowing/transplanting etc.
- **Objectives**
 - ⊕ Create national agricultural code that considers agro-climatic zones, crop types, etc.
 - ⊕ Create **comprehensive guide for farming community** to ensure effective decision making in agricultural practices.
 - ⊕ **Address horizontal aspects of agriculture** like SMART farming, sustainability, etc.



Bihar Floods

Bihar is facing severe flooding, affecting 1.184 million people who have been forced from their homes.

Reasons for Flooding in Bihar

- North Bihar, downstream of Nepal's rivers, is **vulnerable to floods from upstream rainfall.**
- Rivers like Kosi and Gandak carry **heavy sediment from young Himalayas**, causing them to quickly **overflow during heavy rainfall.**
- **Embankment** has worsened flooding by disrupting sediment distribution and **raising the riverbed.**

Effects of Bihar Flood

- Damage to crops, infrastructure, loss of livestock, and distress migration etc.

Solutions

- Construction of dams or an additional barrage on Kosi.
- Adequate laws, policies, and risk reduction strategies.



Co-District Initiative

Assam has launched a **first of its kind unique concept** of **co-district** within a district administration in place of the existing system of civil sub-divisions.

About Co-Districts

- **Smaller administrative units** below districts headed by an officer of rank of **Assistant District Commissioner**, having powers and responsibilities similar to those of district commissioners.
- **Significance:** Decentralizing administration; enhancing governance; providing citizen-centric services, providing services closer to people, etc.



Pygmy Hog (*Porcula salvania*)

Nine captive-bred pygmy hogs released in Assam's Manas national park.

About Pygmy Hog

- **Habitat:** Lives in tall, dense grasslands with shrubs and trees, constructing dome-shaped nests from vegetation.
 - ⊕ **Found in Manas and Barnadi Wildlife Sanctuaries** (Assam).
- **Characteristics:** Smallest and rarest wild suid in world.
 - ⊕ **An indicator species.** Its presence reflects health of its primary habitat, tall, wet grasslands of region.
- **Behavior:** Non-territorial, living in small family groups of 4-5 members.
 - ⊕ **Adult Males are solitary** but stay loosely connected to family groups.
- **Conservation Status:** Endangered (IUCN Red List); Schedule I (Wildlife Protection) Act, 1972).



Emergency Use Listing (EUL)

The **World Health Organization (WHO)** announced the inclusion of the first Monkey pox (mpox) In Vitro Diagnostic (IVD) kit under its EUL procedure.

About EUL

- **About: Risk-based procedure** for assessing and listing unlicensed medical products.
- **Includes three product streams:** Vaccines, Therapeutics, and In Vitro Diagnostics.
- **Significance: Global access** to products in case of public health emergency, aids countries lacking an elaborate regulatory mechanism.
- **Criteria for Product listing:** Covers serious, life threatening diseases; inability of existing products in treatment; product manufactured with set standards, etc.



Lipulekh Pass

First batch of pilgrims viewed Mount Kailash (abode of Lord Shiva) from **Old Lipulekh pass**.

- Previously, pilgrims had to travel to Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) to view the peak.

About Lipulekh Pass

- **Location:** **International Mountain pass, above Kalapani valley, forming tri-junction between India, Nepal, and TAR (China).**
 - ⊕ Situated in **Vyas valley, Pithoragarh district, Uttarakhand** inhabited by **Bhutiya people**.
- **Significance:** Ancient trade and pilgrimage route.
 - ⊕ Closed in 1962 by India fearing Chinese incursions and was reopened in 2020.



Greening of Antarctica

Plant cover across Antarctic peninsula is increasing due to climate crisis.

About Greening of Antarctica:

- **It is growth of vegetation e.g. moss** on a continent dominated by ice and bare rock due to extreme heat waves.
 - ⊕ Warming in the region is happening much **faster than global average**, accelerating between 2016 and 2021.
- Vegetation has **expanded over tenfold between 1986 and 2021**.
- **Impact**
 - ⊕ **Invasive species:** Greening may introduce **invasive species, and harm local wildlife**.
 - ⊕ **Worsen Climate effect:** It will **reduce the continent's ability to reflect sunlight (albedo)**, worsening climate effects.



Charon

Scientists have detected carbon dioxide and hydrogen peroxide on **Charon (Pluto's moon)** using **NASA's James Webb Telescope**.

Significance of Findings:

- Understanding the origin of **Charon and other moons of Pluto**.
- Could help in understanding origins and **evolution of icy bodies** in the outer Solar System.

About Charon

- It is **largest among five moons of Pluto**.
- It is so big that Pluto and Charon **orbit each other like a double planet**.
- Pluto is a **dwarf planet** located in a distant region of our solar system beyond **Neptune known as the Kuiper Belt**.

Personality in news



Shyamji Krishna Varma (4th October, 1857 - 30th March, 1930)

PM paid tribute to freedom fighter Shyamji Krishna Varma on his birth anniversary.

About Shyamji Krishna Varma (4th October, 1857 - 30th March 1930)

- Born in 1857 in modern-day Gujarat.

Contributions:

- **Founded Indian Home Rule Society, India House in London** to carry out anti-British activities.
 - ⊕ Inspired **Veer Savarkar** (Member of India House in London.)
- **Publication journal (English Monthly):** called "**Indian Sociologist**".
- Became first President of **Bombay Arya Samaj**, was an admirer of **Dayanand Saraswati**.
- **In 1905, barred from practicing law by Inner Temple** (a professional association for barristers in London) following **charges of sedition**.
- In face of criticism, shifted his base from England to Paris and continued his movement.

Values: Patriotism, Courage, Selfless Service etc.

