

# NEWS TODAY

## The Supreme Court (SC) rejected plea seeking 100% cross-verification of EVMs data with VVPAT records

- The SC issued two directions with respect to the plea
  - ⊕ The **Symbol Loading Units (SLUs)** used in the VVPATs should be sealed, secured, and **stored for 45 days** after the election results.
    - ◆ The SLUs are to be stored along with the EVMs and be examined similar to EVMs.
  - ⊕ Burnt memory semi-controller in 5% of the EVMs (I.e. Control Unit, Ballot Unit and VVPAT) **are to be examined by experts on written requests made by losing candidates.**
- **About Electronic Voting Machine (EVM)**
  - ⊕ **Microcontroller-based instrument** developed by the **Election Commission of India (ECI)** in alliance with Electronics Corporation of India and Bharat Electronics Limited.
  - ⊕ First time used in the general **election in Kerala in 1982.**
  - ⊕ Consists of a control unit that belongs to polling officers and a **balloting unit** used to cast votes.
- **About Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT)**
  - ⊕ **A system attached to EVM** to verify that the votes are cast as intended.
  - ⊕ It **allows voters to see a printed slip for 7 seconds** showing the serial number, name & symbol of the chosen candidate.
  - ⊕ SC order (2019) mandated **VVPAT cross verification to be done of 5 EVMs** in each assembly segment of a parliamentary constituency.

### Other reforms by ECI

- Cap on **election expenditure.**
- Restriction on **exit polls before the final phase of election.**
- Voting through **postal ballot.**
- Declaring of **criminal antecedents, assets, etc by the candidates.**

## RBI sets Eligibility Criteria for SFB to transit into Universal banking under on-tap licensing

- **'Universal banks (UBs)** are banks that offer a wide range of **financial services, beyond commercial banking and investment banking**, such as insurance.
  - ⊕ Until now, **SFBs were allowed to primarily undertake basic banking activities** of acceptance of deposits and lending to unserved and underserved sections
- **On-tap licensing:** It was introduced in 2016 for allowing banks to apply for banking licenses with the RBI throughout the year.
  - ⊕ Prior to this, banking licenses were granted **upon invitation of applications by RBI to prospective players.**
- **Eligibility for SFBs to transitioning into UBs**
  - ⊕ **Net Worth:** SFBs must have a **minimum net worth of Rs 1,000 crore.**
  - ⊕ **Status:** SFBs must be **scheduled banks** with a **satisfactory track record of performance** for a minimum of **5 years.**
  - ⊕ **Financial Health:**
    - ◆ **Profitability:** Should have **net profits in the last two Financial Years.**
    - ◆ **Asset Quality:** Gross non-performing assets (G-NPA) and net NPA (N-NPA) must be **less than or equal to 3% and 1%, respectively, over the last two FYs.**
  - ⊕ **Stock Listing:** Shares **must be listed on a recognized stock exchange.**
  - ⊕ **Promoter Requirements:** **No addition of new promoters** or changes to existing promoters are permitted during the transition.
    - ◆ No changes are allowed to the promoter **shareholding dilution plan** previously approved by the RBI.
  - ⊕ **Preference:** SFBs with a **diversified loan portfolio** will be preferred.

### About Small Finance Bank (SFB)

- **Genesis:** Announced in the **Union budget of 2014-15.**
- **Registrations:** Registered as a **public limited company** under the **Companies Act, 2013.**
- **Licensing:** Licensed and governed under the **Banking Regulation Act, 1949** and have **no restrictions on where to operate.**
- **Capital Requirement:** 200 crore (except for some SFBs)
- **Mandates for financial inclusion**
  - ⊕ They are required to extend **75% of their ANBC (Adjusted Net Bank Credit) to the priority sector.**

## Defence Secretary participated in Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Defence Ministers' meeting

- A Joint Communiqué was issued in which the SCO Defence Ministers agreed to develop the idea of 'One Earth, One Family, One Future'.
  - ⊕ It is rooted in the ancient Indian philosophy of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' (The World Is One Family; finds its mention in Maha Upanishad).
- **Significance of SCO for India**
  - ⊕ **Geopolitical:** Strengthen India's position as a promoter of a multilateral global order as well as helps to practice strategic autonomy.
  - ⊕ **Economic:** give access to the central asian region rich in iron-ore, coal, gas, uranium, etc.
  - ⊕ **Counter-terrorism:** SCO's Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) provides access to key information and intelligence on the movements of terrorists and drug-trafficking.
  - ⊕ **Connectivity:** give boost to projects like Chabahar Port, International North-South Transport Corridor, TAPI pipeline, etc.
- **Challenges for India in SCO**
  - ⊕ **Dominance of china:** Barring India, the belt and road initiative has been endorsed by all members.
  - ⊕ **Rivalry** between India with Pakistan and China casts a shadow on the grouping.
  - ⊕ SCO is seen as an **anti-West forum by western countries.**
  - ⊕ **Limited institutional capacity** and decision-making processes.



### About Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)

HQ  
Beijing, China

- **Genesis:** In 2001 at the Shanghai Summit by Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyz Republic, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan.
- **About:** It is a permanent intergovernmental international organisation.
- **Members:** 9 member countries, 3 observer states and 6 dialogue partners.
- **Official language:** Russian and Chinese.
- **Goal:** strengthening mutual confidence and good-neighbourly relations among the member countries.

## INCOIS Scientists Study showed that realistic representation of bathymetry led to improved surface current simulations

- **Bathymetry** is a technique dedicated to **mapping the depths of water bodies** (rivers, seas and oceans).
  - ⊕ Additionally, it also includes **identifying underwater relief (seamounts, mountain ranges, valleys, etc)** and **creating three-dimensional maps of sea floor.**
- **Bathymetry impacts ocean circulation in several ways**
  - ⊕ **Currents are modified near the coast**, and even relatively **small ridges** on the sea floor can influence the **direction of major ocean currents.**
  - ⊕ In deep ocean, **ridges serve as solid barriers** separating bottom waters in adjacent ocean basins.
- **Key findings**
  - ⊕ **East India Coastal Current (EICC):** At 1,000 metres and 2,000 metres depth, EICC flows **opposite to that of the surface.**
    - ◆ **EICC is a seasonal ocean current** in the Bay of Bengal. During the summer monsoon, EICC flows poleward, and during winter it flows equatorward.
  - ⊕ **Equatorial Under Current (EUC):** Presence of the **Maldives Islands** is responsible for the **westward extent of EUC.**
    - ◆ EUC is a **subsurface ocean current** that flows eastward along the equatorial region.
  - ⊕ **Current along Along Andaman and Nicobar Islands (ANIs):** **Boundary current** along the coast of ANIs was found at a depth of 2,000 metres.
  - ⊕ **Salinity and temperature:** Salinity and temperature of the **upper ocean** are very close to the observed value **near the coast.**



### Indian National Center for Ocean Information Service (INCOIS)

- **Genesis:** It was established as an **autonomous body** in 1999 under the **Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES).**
- **About**
  - ⊕ It is a unit of the **Earth System Science Organisation (ESSO)**
  - ⊕ It is the **permanent member of the international Oceanographic Commission (IOC)** of UNESCO
  - ⊕ It is also a founding member of the **Indian Ocean Global Ocean Observing System (IOGOOS)** and the **Partnership for Observing the Oceans (POGO).**
- **Key functions:**
  - ⊕ Mandated to provide the **best possible ocean information and advisory** services to society, industry, government agencies.
  - ⊕ Provides **warnings on tsunamis, storm surges, high waves, etc.** through the **Indian Tsunami Early Warning Centre (ITEWC).**

## Supreme Court (SC) Registry Refuses to Receive Petition To Abolish Collegium System & Revive NJAC

### ➤ About collegiums system

- ⊕ Collegium is a system through which **judges of SC and High Court (HC) are appointed by the President under Article 124 and 217** of the Constitution respectively (refer to the box).
  - ◆ It has evolved through judgments of the SC, referred to as **3 Judges Cases** and pronounced in **1981, 1993, and 1998**.
- ⊕ Currently, the **collegium system** is governed by the **Memorandum of Procedure (MoP)**.
- ⊕ **Advantage: Keeps Judiciary independent from politics** by protecting the judiciary from the influence of executive and legislative.
- ⊕ **Criticism: Neither a Constitutional nor a statutory body, no prescribed norms for eligibility criteria, lack of transparency** and accountability, allegations of nepotism and quid pro quo, etc.

### ➤ National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC)

- ⊕ The NJAC was established by the **99<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Act, 2014** to replace the collegium system.
- ⊕ However, SC in **Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association and Anr. vs. UoI (2015)** declared NJAC unconstitutional.
  - ◆ NJAC, in addition to judicial members also had **non-judge members** (Union law minister and 2 eminent persons).
  - ◆ This was considered to be violating the **separation of powers between the executive and judiciary**.

### Appointment by Collegium

- Appointment in SC: The collegium consists of **CJI and four other senior-most judges** of the SC.
- Appointment in HC
  - ⊕ The **collegium in HC** consists of **Chief Justice of HC and two seniormost judges** of the concerned HC.
  - ⊕ The **collegium in SC** consists of **CJI and two seniormost Judges of the SC**.

## Decreasing trend in solar radiation for electricity: India Meteorological Department (IMD) study

- **Global solar radiation (GR)** is the total amount of solar radiation that is being received per unit area on the earth surface.
- **Key findings**
  - ⊕ Solar photovoltaic Potential (SPV) showed a **general decline in stations of IMD**.
    - ◆ SPV is the amount of radiation that may be **practically available to be converted to electricity** by panels measured as **kilowatt hours per installed kilowatt of capacity (KWh/kWp)**.
  - ⊕ **Gujarat and Rajasthan**, where India's largest solar parks are located are also showing a decrease in SPV potential.
  - ⊕ **Cause: increase in aerosol load** due to fine particles from carbon emissions, fossil fuel burning and dust.
    - ◆ **Aerosols absorb sunlight** and deflect it away from the earth, and they can also form dense clouds that block sunlight.
- **Status of solar energy in India**
  - ⊕ Installed solar energy capacity stands at **81.81 GW as of Mar 2024**.
  - ⊕ India's **solar energy potential is estimated to be 748 Giga Watt peak** as estimated by National Institute of Solar Energy.
  - ⊕ India ranks **5<sup>th</sup> in Solar Power Capacity globally**.
  - ⊕ **50 solar parks with an aggregate capacity of 37.49 GW have been approved**.

### Initiatives to promote solar power

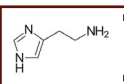
- **The Production Linked Incentive Scheme (PLI)** for the National Programme on High-Efficiency Solar Photovoltaic Modules.
- **Solar Park Scheme** to establish 50 Solar Parks of 500 MW and above.
- **PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana** to provide subsidies to install solar panels on roofs.

## Also in News



### Bru community

- For the first time, **Bru voters exercised their franchise** in Tripura Lok Sabha election.
- **Bru community**
  - ⊕ Also referred to as **Reangs**, **Bru community** have historically resided in **Mizoram, Tripura, and parts of southern Assam**.
    - ◆ **Reangs in Tripura** are categorised as **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG)**.
  - ⊕ They are ethnically **distinct from the Mizos of Mizoram**.
    - ◆ Over 30000 Brus **fled Mizoram following ethnic clashes with Mizo tribes in 1997** and were forced to **live in the refugee camps in Tripura**.
    - ◆ In 2020, a **quadripartite agreement** (among Centre, Governments of Tripura and Mizoram, and Bru-Reang representatives) was signed to facilitate **permanent settlement of Bru refugees in Tripura**.



### Histamine

- Various researches are being conducted on the **H3 and H4 receptors (proteins)** of histamine.
- **Histamine**
  - ◆ It is one of the earliest identified **mediators of allergy**.
  - ◆ It plays a **key role in the inflammatory response of the body** and is also responsible for autoimmune conditions, gastric acid secretion, and hematopoiesis.
  - ◆ They can be **released in our body due to different factors**, including:
    - ◆ **Factors related to the immune system** (example contact with allergens, snake venom, etc.),
    - ◆ **Other factors** that are not related to the immune system (example physical injury).
  - ◆ Most of the histamine is stored in the **secretory granules of mast cells and basophils** (types of white blood cells).
- **Antihistamines:** These are **drugs that act to treat histamine-mediated conditions** by binding to histamine receptors and blocking the effect of histamines.



### Government Securities (G-Sec Bonds)

- RBI kept the **Foreign Portfolio Investment** limit in **G-sec** unchanged at 6% of outstanding stocks of securities for 2024-25.
- **About G-Secs:**
  - ⊖ They are **tradable instruments** issued by **Governments** through **auctions** conducted by RBI.
  - ⊖ **Types**
    - ◆ **Short-term:** Usually called **treasury bills**, have **maturities of less than one year**.
    - ◆ **Long term:** Usually called **Government bonds or dated securities**, have **maturities of one year or more**.
  - ⊖ **Central Government can issue both** (treasury bills and government bonds) while **State Governments issue only government bonds** (they are called the State Development Loans or SDLs).



### Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) Status

- The Centre has extended AEO status to the gem and jewellery sector.
- **About AEO program**
  - ⊖ It is under the aegis of the **World Customs Organization (WCO) SAFE Framework**.
  - ⊖ Aims to enhance **international supply chain security and facilitate movement** of legitimate goods.
  - ⊖ It is in sync with the commitments made under the **World Trade Organisation trade facilitation agreement**.
  - ⊖ It enables **Indian Customs to enhance and streamline cargo security** through close cooperation with the principle stakeholders of the international supply chain.



### Avars

- DNA analysis of ancient graves has revealed insights on the social life of Avars
- **About Avars**
  - ⊖ They are **nomadic people** who survived in eastern **central Asia** between 6<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> century.
  - ⊖ **Considered as successors of the Huns** by their way of life and warfare.
  - ⊖ They followed strict **patrilineal descent** (father's line)
  - ⊖ They were **hired by the Byzantine Empire** to subdue other tribes
  - ⊖ They **avoided inbreeding** and **practised limited intermarriage** with non-Avar neighbours.
  - ⊖ They are renowned among archaeologists for their **distinctive belt garnitures**.



### World Energy Council

- The **26<sup>th</sup> World Energy Congress**, co-hosted by the **World Energy Council (WEC)**, concluded in Rotterdam (Netherlands).
- **About WEC**
  - ⊖ **Genesis:** Formed in 1923, the WEC is an UN-accredited not-for-profit global energy body.
  - ⊖ **Mission:** Enabling access to clean, affordable and reliable energy for better lives and a healthier planet.
  - ⊖ **Role:** Develop practical **solutions and convene network** of global energy transition leaders and practitioners.
  - ⊖ **Members:** More than 3000 member organizations (public, private and academic sectors) located in around 90 countries.



### World Coral Conservatory Project

- Self-bred corals from the **World Coral Conservatory project** nested among Europe's largest coral reefs at the Burgers' Zoo in the Netherlands.
- **About World Coral Conservatory Project:**
  - ⊖ Launched in **Monaco in 2019**.
  - ⊖ **Aim:** to protect, in a **network of partner public and private aquariums**, a global collection of the majority of coral species and strains in the form of living colonies.
  - ⊖ Under this, samples of coral taken from the **natural environment will be cultivated and shared with aquariums**.
- **Coral reefs** are large underwater structures composed of the **skeletons of colonial marine invertebrates called coral**.



### Alagar Temple, Tamil Nadu

- The procession of the Lord Kallazhagar back from the Vaigai river marked the end of the Chithirai festival
- **About Alagar Temple**
  - ⊖ Located on the foothills of **Alagar hills in Madurai, Tamil nadu**
  - ⊖ The temple is **one of the 108 abodes of Lord Vishnu**, worshipped here in the name of **Kallazhagar**.
  - ⊖ It has **six corridors** surrounded by fort walls.
  - ⊖ The temple also finds mention in **Tamil epic Silappadikaram** and in the **hymns of the Alvars**.
  - ⊖ The pillars of mandapam are depicted in the **Nayaka art style**.

## Places in News



### Burkina Faso (Capital: Ouagadougou)

- Burkina Faso suspended BBC and Voice of America after they covered a report on mass killings.
- **Political features**
  - ⊖ **Location:** A **landlocked country in western Africa**.
  - ⊖ **Bordering nations:** Bounded by Mali, Niger, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and Togo.
- **Geographics features**
  - ⊖ **Highest mountain:** Mount Tenakourou
  - ⊖ **Rivers:** Black Volta, Red Volta, and White Volta (all 3 converge in Ghana to the south to form the Volta River).
  - ⊖ **Lakes:** Bam and Oursi
  - ⊖ **Vegetation:** Consisting mainly of flat **savanna** which lies within the Sahelian zone.

