



The

ACHIEVERS IAS ACADEMY

A Serious & Genuine Institute For UPSC & BPSC

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NATIONAL

Centre rejects 6th schedule status to Ladakh

- The Centre has made it clear that Ladakh will not be granted Sixth Schedule status or statehood, two key demands of the Leh Apex Body (LAB) and Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA), the region's two major political organisations, said after talks in New Delhi last week.
- The Sixth Schedule of the Constitution allows special administrative arrangements for tribal areas to safeguard autonomy, culture and land.
- Speaking publicly for the first time after the Feb 4 talks with a Union home ministry (MHA) high-powered committee, Ladakh leaders said the Centre had instead offered a "territorial council" model.
- Under this proposal, the chief executive councillor of Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC) will be designated as CM and the deputy chief executive councillor as deputy CM.

JNUSU affairs

- JNU on 2 Feb, 2026, following a protocol inquiry, rusticated five students (including 4 JNUSU office bearers for two semesters for "vandalism" during a protest held against the installation of a biometric system for entry into the Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Central Library on the campus.
- The five students include current students' union President Aditi Mishra and former president Nitish Kumar.
- All have been asked to remain off campus and pay a penalty of Rs. 20,000 each.

- The order stated that any student who 'gives shelter' to them will face action.

Form 7

- Form 7 is an official document from the Election Commission of India used to request the deletion of a name from the voter list (electoral roll) or to object to the inclusion of a name. It is used for removing names due to death, shifting, or duplicate entries.
- Purpose: To delete one's own name, object to another's inclusion, or remove a name due to death, non-citizenship, or underage.
- Usage: It can be filed by any registered elector for their own name or to object to others.

Reasons for Filing:

1. Death of the voter.
 2. Shifting of residence.
 3. Duplication of voter identity.
 4. Name of a person not qualified (e.g., underage, not a citizen).
- How to File: It can be submitted online through the Voter Service Portal or offline to the Electoral Registration Officer.
 - Consequences: Intentionally submitting false information is punishable by law under the Representation of the People Act, 1950.
 - Form 7 ensures the voter list remains accurate and updated.
 - Form 7 has to be filled out when applying to object to the inclusion of the name of another person, or seeking deletion of one's own name or seeking deletion of any other person's name in the electoral rolls owing to death or shifting.





- The applicant has to sign a declaration at the end of the form stating that the facts and particulars mentioned in the form are true and that he or she is aware that making a statement or declaration that is false is punishable under Section 31 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950.
- Original status and amendments : The application can be made by an elector registered in the same constituency, and the onus of proof to substantiate the reason given for objection or removal of a name lies with the applicant. In 2022, the guidelines with regard to filling up and submission of Form 7 were amended to allow any voter from a constituency. *Earlier, the objector had to be in the same part of the electoral rolls as the person whose name was sought to be deleted.* This amendment resulted in the widening of the ambit of the source of pleas for deletion of names.
- Also, after the modifications brought about by the Commission in the criteria for the appointment of the BLAs on November 11, 2025, the BLAs, who was earlier required to be a registered voter in the same polling station which he or she was made in charge of, can now be from a different polling booth in the same Assembly constituency. As BLAs can file objections using Form 7, the change in the criteria for their appointment has also opened up the possibility of a more non-local use of the form.
- One BLA can object to only seven names under the election rules. But, in reality, around 9 to 10 thousand applications are received.
- The way in which Assam's CM has given a call to BJP workers to file Form 7 in bulk to remove the names of "Miyas", is highly objectionable.
- The EC amended Form-7 to allow any voter in a constituency to object, widening its ambit. Now, with allegations of thousands of fake forms targeting specific groups, the mechanism is itself under intense scrutiny.
- The Election Commission's campaigns for voter awareness, when highlighting the significance of Form-7, speak of the need to fill up and submit the form to the concerned election authorities when either getting the name of a deceased family member deleted from the electoral rolls or seeking to remove from the voters' list the name of a neighbour or a relative who has shifted residence to a new constituency.
- Form-7, however, is now not being viewed in such a benign way. Against the backdrop of the ongoing (SIR) of the electoral rolls in nine States and three Union Territories, as also the Special Revision in Assam, it is no longer seen as a facility whose purpose is limited to one's family or vicinity. Allegations are flying thick and fast that the form has been weaponised by the ruling BJP to undertake mass deletion of electors.
- This trend first emerged from Rajasthan.

68th Annual Grammy Awards 2026 and India

- The 68th Annual Grammy Awards honored the best recordings, compositions, and artists from August 31, 2024, to August 30, 2025, as chosen by the members of the Recording Academy, on February 1, 2026. In its 23rd year at Crypto.com Arena in Los Angeles.
- Comedian Trevor Noah hosted the ceremony for the sixth consecutive and final time
- With five wins, Kendrick Lamar became the winner of the largest number of categories in the 68th Annual Grammy Awards 2026. Last year, he was also the winner in the largest number of categories.
- There were a total of 95 categories including two newly added categories – Best Traditional country Album and Best Album Cover.



Award	Winner	Album/work
1. Record of the Year	Kendrick Lamar & SZA	Luther
2. Song of the Year	Billie Eilish	Wildflower
3. Album of the Year	Bad Bunny	Debi Tirar Mas Fotos (Spanish)
4. Best New Artist	Olivia Dean	-----
5. "Best Audio Book, Narration and Storytelling Recording"	Dalai Lama	"Meditation : The Reflections of His Holiness the Dalai Lama"

Dalai Lama won Grammy

- In November 2025, Dalai Lama was nominated for 68th Grammy Award "Meditation : The Reflections of His Holiness the Dalai Lama".
- It was his such nomination for the Grammy. His Holiness got nomination under the category of "Best Audio Book, Narration and storytelling Recording".
- It's music has been composed by Ustad Amjad Ali Khan (Sarod maestro) and his two sons Amaan Ali Bangash and Ayaan Ali Bangash.
- The album was produced by multi Grammy winner Kabir Sehgal. Among its' prominent casts, Andra Day, Maggie Rogers, Tony Succar, Ted Nash, Debi Nova and Rufus Wainwright are included.
- On 1 Feb, 2026 Dalai Lama declared winner. (Other nominees were: Kathy Garver, Trevor Noah, Ketanji Brown Jackson, Fab Morvan)

Other Indian nominees:

Indian nominees

Anoushka Shankar :

- Nominated two categories in 2026 (1. *Best Global Music Album* for "Chapter : We Return to Light" and 2. *Best Global Music Performance* for "Daybreak")
- She did not win in either categories
- Overall, she has been nominated for Grammy for 13 times.

Indo-jazz fusion band Shakti (featuring Shankar Mahadevan, John McLaughlin, and others) received two nominations for their album Mind Explosion. The album competed in the Best Global Music Album category, while the live track "Sherni's Dream (Live)" was nominated in the Best Global Music Performance category.

Siddhant Bhatia, nominated under the category of Best Global Music Album category for "Sounds of Kumbha"

Charu Suri, in the Category of Best Contemporary Instrumental Album for "Shayan", and But none of the above won any awards in their respective categories.

- First Indian to win a Grammy was Pt. Ravishankar who had won in 1968 for his work "West Meets East"
- It was Zubin Mehta who holds the record for the most Grammy nominations by an Indian artist. He was nominated for 18 times.

Underground rail in the 'Chicken neck'

- Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav announced on 2nd February that India is planning to construct underground rail tracks through the starategic 'chicken neck' corridor linking Bengal to the North East.
- Chickn neck is the 40 km stretch, flanked by Nepal, Bhutan and Bangladesh. It is barely 25 km wide at the narrowest point (at many places, it's dimension has been provided as 60 km long & 22 km wide.). It is also known as Siliguri Corridor.
- The proposed stretch of the rail track would run from Tin Mile Haat to Rangapani stations within West Bengal.



Recent threats regarding the Chicken Neck :

1. After fall the of Sheikh Hasina govt, several groups openly speak about choking the chicken neck to cut off the North east.
2. Issue of Greater Bangladesh
3. Dhaka's outreach towards China

Resolution against VB-G RAM G in Karnataka

- Karnataka CM tabled a resolution in the State Assembly that expresses "serious opposition" of the House to the VB-G RAM G Act, 2025 and urges the centre to fully restore the earlier MGNREGA, 2005, by rolling back the new job scheme.
- The resolution termed that the new Act is against the federal structure and the idea of decentralization. According to the resolution, the new Act also snatches the power and rights of village panchayats besides causing serious burden on the State. exchequer

8 LS MPs suspended

- On 3 Feb, 7 LS MPs from INC and one MP from CPI(M) were suspended.

Severe weather in Morocco

- Due to severe weather and heavy rainfall, around 50k Moroccans have been evacuated.

Death Penalty in India

- The sessions courts handed down 1310 death sentences nationwide between 2016-2025.

Coal mines blast in Meghalaya

- Due to illegal mining in a coal mine in east Jaintia hills in Meghalaya, a big blast occurred on 5 Feb, in which at least 18 people died.
- In Meghalaya, illegal coal mining is operational through 'Rat-hole mining Method' (declared illegal by the NGT in April.2014).
- Earlier instances: July 2021 :15 deaths; December, 2013 : 5; December, 2018 : 15 deaths in 2021 & 2022 also saw such incidents in which 5 & 3 people had died respectively.

President rule in Manipur ends, New CM sworn-in

- President Rule in Manipur, which was imposed since 13 February, 2025, has been withdrawn.
- Mr Y. Khemchand has taken oath of the post of the CM of the State. Ethnically he belongs to the Meitei group.

Tripartite Pact in Nagaland

- A tripartite agreement for the creation of 'Frontier of Nagaland Territory Authority' (FNTA) was signed between Eastern Nagaland People's Organisation (ENPO), Nagaland government and the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) on Thursday, in the presence of the Union Home Minister.
- ENPO is an apex body representing eight recognised Naga tribes of the six eastern districts of Nagaland.
- The agreement paves the way for creation of FNTA for six districts of Nagaland – Tuensang, Mon, Kiphire, Longleng, Noklak and Shamator – and devolution of powers in respect of 46 subjects to the FNTA.





- Since 2019, the Union government has signed 12 important agreements in the Northeast.
- The agreement provides, inter-alia, for a mini-Secretariat for FNTA, headed by Additional Chief Secretary/Principal Secretary, sharing of development outlay for the Eastern Nagaland region proportional to population and area. However, this agreement does not affect in any manner whatsoever the provisions of Article 371(A) of the Constitution, MHA said.

9 Feb is observed as

International Epilepsy Day is observed on 9 Feb

10 Feb is observed as

- National De-worming Day is observed on 10 Feb
- World's Pulses Day is observed on 10 Feb.

Santosh Trophy

- It is an inter-state national football competition contested by the State associations and government institutions under the All India Football Federation (AIFF) is the governing body of football, futsal and beach soccer in India. AIFF was founded on 23 June 1937.
- It was founded in 1941.
- In 2026, its 79 edition was held in Assam from 15 December, 2025 to 8 Feb 2026.
- "Service" team won the title (It's 8th title) by defeating the Kerala team.
- The top goal scorer was Himanshu Jangra.

SC on ad-hoc DGPs

- SC observed that States were avoiding appointment of regular DGPs with a fixed tenure of two years. The SC said that the States are opting instead for "Acting" police chiefs of their choice in violation of a 20-year-old top court judgement.
- In a 2006 judgment in the Prakash Singh case, the court had made it clear that the office of the DGP should be divorced from political or other external pressures. The court had also cautioned governments against mixing politics and law enforcement agencies.
- The 2006 judgment was delivered by the court by invoking Article 142 of the Indian Constitution.
- According to the judgment, DGPs must be selected by States from among the three senior-most and meritorious officers empanelled by the UPSC
- The court had thrown out the concept of Acting DGPs. It had held that State police chiefs should have a minimum fixed tenure of two years.
- It had also necessitated the sending of these names (proposals) by the state govts three months ahead of the retirement of the incumbent DGP.

UPSC adds more norms for Civil Services aspirants

- The Union Public Services Commission has expanded the restrictions on applying for the Civil Services Examination from 2026 for candidates who are allotted the Indian Police Service or any other Central Services Group "A", said the notification for the 2026 exam issued on Wednesday.





- The notification said the UPSC was looking to fill approximately 933 vacancies this year, of which 33 would be reserved for Persons with Benchmark Disability.
- The notification, while keeping the restrictions for those already allotted the Indian Administrative Service or the Indian Foreign Service in past CSEs unchanged, has introduced a set of conditions.
- A candidate allotted any of these services in the CSE 2026 would be eligible for the 2027 CSE if they are granted an exemption from training for that service by the “authority concerned”.
- The notification added that the candidate would be “eligible for grant of onetime exemption only from joining the training in order to enable him/her to appear in CSE2027.
- A notification says that the conditions will apply to those allotted IPS or any ‘Group A’ servicelt added that such a candidate should join the training for “foundation course only”.
- Further, the notification said that such candidates would not be allowed to appear in CSE 2028 or any subsequent CSEs “unless he/she resigns from the allocated service”.
- One-time opportunity The notification said that candidates who had been allotted any service based on CSE 2025 or earlier years, would have “a onetime opportunity” to appear either in this year’s examination or the one for 2027 without having to resign from their service.
- If their aim was to use their remaining attempts for CSE 2028 or subsequent exams, they would have to follow the resignation rule, the UPSC said.
- The notification said that this set of conditions would apply to those being allotted Indian Police Service or any Central Service categorised as Group A.

NIMHANS

- NIMHANS refers to the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences.
- It is an autonomous institute under the Union Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- Initially, it was founded in 1847 as Bangalore Lunatic Asylum, which was converted as Government Mental Hospital in 1925 and finally it was established in its present form on 27 December 1974. It has been registered under the Societies Registration Act.

It has been declared as an Institute of National Importance by an Act of Parliament in 2012.

- Institute of National Importance (INI): In the schedule VII of the Constitution, Institute of National Importance has been defined as the BHU, Aligarh Muslim Institute, declared as the INI at the commencement of the Constitution.
- Delhi University, substituted by the Constitution (thirty-Second Amendment) Act, 1973
- The University established in pursuance of article 371 E, and any other Institution declared by Parliament by law to be Institutions of National Importance. (there are 171 Institutes of National Importance under various Acts of Parliament. These INIs include: 23 IITs, 20 AIIMSSs, 21 IIMs, 31 NITs, 25 IIITs, 7 IISERs, 7 NIPERs, 5 NIDs, 3 SPAs, 2 NIFTEMs, 10 central universities, 4 medical research institutes, and 13 other specialized institutes.)

Agni-3 ballistic missile test-fired

- DRDO successfully test-fired a nuclear weapon-capable 3000 km rang Agni-3 ballistic missile from Chandipur off Odisha coast.
- It is a surface-to-surface missile Winter Olympics, 2026 will be held in (A) USA (B) Italy (C) Japan (D) China



Winter Olympics, 2026

- Winter Olympics, 2026, which will be held in Italy from 6-22 Feb, 2026, will be officially known as the Milano Cortina 2026.
- It will be followed by the Paralympics 2026, which will be held from 6 to 15 march.
- Macots: Two cheerful stoats named Tina and Milo for the two sports-events respectively.
- Italy is hosted the Winter Olympics, 2026 for third time (1956, & 2006).
- In the Winter Olympics, 2026, India is participating in two events: Alpine Skiing (represented by Arif Mohammad Khan) and Cross-country Skiing (represented by Stanzin Lundup)

World Wetlands Day

- World Wetlands Day is observed on 2 Feb. It was the day in 1971 on which the Ramsar Convention was adopted in Ramsar, Iran. However, it came into force on 21 December 1975. India had signed it on 1 February, 1982.
- Theme of the World Wetlands Day, 2026 : "Wetlands and traditional knowledge : celebrating cultural heritage"
- Two Indian wetlands have been added in the Ramsar List : 1. Patna Bird Sanctuary, Etah, UP
2. Chari-dhand , Kutch, Gujarat.
- With this, the total number of the Ramsar Sites in India became 98.

Ravidas Jayanti

- It was observed on 1 Feb, 2026. He was born in 1377 CE on the full moon day of Magh month.

Digital Food currency

- It is supported by RBI's CBDC (Central Bank Digital Currency) (Launched since 1 Feb 2022)
- It has been started in a few districts of Chandigarh, Puduchery and Gujarat as a pilot project.
- Digital Food currency can be used to buy only food articles (Ration commodities)

39th Surajkund Crafts Mela 2026

- The 39th Surajkund Crafts Mela 2026 was inaugurated by the Vice-President of India in Faridabad, Haryana.
- This year's theme was: 'Local to Global'
- UP and Meghalaya are participating States while Egypt is a participating Nation.

4 Feb is observed as

- 4 Feb is observed as the International Day of Human Fraternity as proclaimed by UNGA
- 4 Feb is observed as World Cancer day

Hydrogen powered Buses by the Airports

Kochi Airport became India's first airport to operate hydrogen powered buses at the airport.

Crafoord Prize

- Indian origin scientist Mr. Veerbhadran Ramanathan has been awarded the 2026 Crafoord Prize in Geosciences by the Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences.





- This award is also referred as the Nobel of Geosciences'
- It is an annual science prize.established in 1980 by Holger Crafoord.
- The prize is awarded in 4 fields : Mathematics & Astronomy, Geosciences, Biosciences, and Polyarthritis.
- It contains a reward of 8 million Swedish kronor.

India' Package to Seychelles

India, on the occasion of Seychelles President's India visit, announces a special economic **package worth \$175 million** to the Nation.

1. The package consists of a \$125 million line of credit and another \$50 million as grant.
 2. The package will support concrete projects in areas such as social housing, E-mobility, vocational training, health, defence and maritime security, creating new employment and skill opportunities for the people of Seychelles, especially the youth.
- The visiting President of Seychelles Mr. Patrick Herminie was on official visit to India in Feb, 2026.
 - On his visit, the two countries signed 7 agreements.
 - Seychelles has been included as a full member of the Colombo Security Conclave.
 - Seychelles is an Island country (consisting of 115 islands) and is the smallest country in the continent of Africa. It is **1500 km east of mainland Africa** situated in the Indian Ocean. So, it is also important for the security of the Indian Ocean Region. Its capital is Victoria.

First Foreign visit by PM

- PM of India's first foreign visit was to Malaysia (7-8 Feb).

Kimberley Process and India's Chairmanship

- The Kimberley Process (KP) Plenary has selected India to assume the chairmanship of the Kimberley Process from 1 January 2026.

1. The Kimberley Process (KP) is an international, tripartite certification scheme, known as the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS), launched in 2003 to prevent "conflict diamonds".

- The KP was initiated in March 2000 when the Flower Report recommendations came and further in May 2000 when the countries of southern Africa initiated dialogues to prevent the trade in conflict diamonds. Negotiations with 37 signatory parties, in 2003, led to the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS). Today, the KP has 60 participants, representing 86 countries, and accounts for approximately 99.8% of the global rough diamond production.

1. The objective to establish the Kimberley Process Certification Scheme (KPCS) is to prevent "Conflict Diamonds" from entering the mainstream rough diamond market.

- conflict diamonds are also known as Blood diamonds, brown diamonds, Hot diamonds and Red diamonds which refer to those diamonds which are mined in a war zone and sold to finance terrorism, insurgency and various factions engaged in many civil wars.



- The KPCS is the mechanism to prevent the trade of conflict diamonds, which is enforced individually by KP participant countries to ensure that rough diamonds in the legitimate supply chain are KP compliant. Each consignment is accompanied by a KP certificate corroborated by a participant country. The rough diamonds trade is permitted only between certified KP members who comply fully with these international standards. Additionally, participant countries are obliged to share timely and accurate statistical data for diamond production and trade.

Angola, Botswana, Canada, Congo, Namibia and Russia alone account for more than 85% of the production of rough diamonds, in quantity and value terms.

- Though India is not a producer, it is a major importer of rough diamonds, importing roughly 40% of the total global imports, both in quantity and value.
- As the world's leading cutting and polishing hub, centered in Surat and Mumbai, India re-exports polished diamonds to major markets which include China, Hong Kong, Israel, the United Arab Emirates and the United States.
- India's strategic position, at the heart of the global diamond value chain, gives it unique leverage within the KP to steer meaningful reforms in global diamond governance.

Core issues involved

The KP, a tripartite setup of governments, industry organisations and civil society, faces much criticism and challenges.

- First, a longstanding criticism is about the definition of 'conflict diamonds'. Its scope is very narrow, capturing only the financial mechanism between rebel groups and governments, while ignoring the illicit use of rough diamonds in state-linked abuses,

1. human rights violations and human trafficking,
2. environmental harm,
3. abuses in artisanal mining, and
4. illicit trade channels.

- There are also fundamental questions about the decision-making process. Civil society asks how the KP can ever identify 'conflict diamonds' if any such decision is subject to political veto. Under the current system, any determination can be blocked.

What happens when the KP identifies conflict diamonds?

- The case of the Central African Republic, which was banned from exporting rough diamonds in 2013 and rejoined in 2024, shows that embargoes without strong support measures tend to increase smuggling and worsen violence rather than stop it.
- Additionally, while many governments highlighted the need to protect the mining communities, there was less agreement on whether the KP should also address state related violence.

A more inclusive approach would better reflect the full range of challenges communities experience.

What India can do?

- India can leverage its technological strengths to promote digital, tamperproof KP certificates and harmonised customs data exchange. A blockchain based certification system, where each shipment carries a unique, immutable and timestamped digital record linked to key shipment details, would significantly reduce fraud, enhance transparency, and modernise KP operations.



- At the same time, India can support producer countries by establishing regional KP technical hubs in key producing areas, particularly in central and eastern Africa, offering training, IT support, certification assistance and forensic capacity. Such capacity building would make reforms more feasible and collaborative rather than punitive.
- Additionally, India can advance institutional reforms by adopting independent or third party audits in a subset of participants and push for full public release of granular KP statistics from participant countries. This is a step towards greater transparency. Since the KP's strength is its tripartite structure, India can ensure that civil society engagement remains robust by facilitating open communication channels.
- To address the community challenges, India can highlight how diamonds contribute to livelihoods in Africa.
 1. It can push the KP to explicitly acknowledge this reality by aligning its work with relevant Sustainable Development Goals, such as decent work, poverty reduction and responsible consumption. India can help ensure that the KP framework channels diamond revenues toward community development, supporting health, education, and local infrastructure, rather than allowing mining regions to be bypassed. This would help shift the KP's narrative from blocking bad diamonds to enabling a responsible and inclusive diamond trade.
- India, as the KP chair and the leader of the Global South, should start pursuing the reform agenda more aggressively to make it a more inclusive, progressive, sustainable, and rule-based multilateral body.

New amendments in the IT Act, 2021

- The Union Govt has amended the IT Act, 2021 and has notified the IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Amendments Rule, 2026.

- The changes will come into force from 20 Feb.

Main points :

- It requires photorealistic AI-generated content to be prominently labeled.
- Social media platforms will now have between 2-3 hours to remove certain categories of unlawful content (earlier it was 24-36 hours).
 1. Content deemed illegal by a court or an "appropriate government" will have to be taken down within 3 hours.
 2. The sensitive content, featuring non-consensual nudity and deepfakes, must be removed within 2 hours.
- The new rules also defines synthetically generated content as "audio, visual or audio-visual information which is artificially or algorithmically created, generated, modified or altered using a computer resource, in a manner that such information appears to be real, authentic or true and depicts or portrays any individual or event in a manner that is, or is likely to be perceived as indistinguishable from a natural person or a real world event."

SC agrees to hear on the hate-speeches in Assam

- On 11 Feb, on the petition filed by the CPI(M), the SC agreed to schedule a hearing on a sustained pattern of hate speeches by the Assam CM.

Opposition's notice for Speaker's removal

A notice, signed by 118 MPs has been submitted to the office of the Lok Sabha Secretary-General, Mr. Utpal Kumar Singh, on 10 Feb, 2026 under the provisions of the Article 94 (C) on the following grounds :



1. He did not allow LoP Mr. Rahul Gandhi, on 2 Feb, to speak on Thanksgiving motion on Preident's address.
2. On 3 Feb, suspended the House arbitrarily
3. Character assassination of former PMs of India (without taking names of Nishikant Dubey)
4. Misuse of the Constitutional post by giving a statement about the possibility of an unprecedented event near the PM's seat in Lok Sabha.

- A minimum of 14 days' notice has to be given before a resolution seeking the removal of the Speaker can be taken up by the House.
- Article 96 provides that the Speaker can respond to the notice for removal. The motion must be decided within 14 days from the date of submission of the motion.
- The process of discussion and voting must be completed within 10 days from the date of acceptance of the motion.
- Article 94-C states that the Speaker "may be removed from his office by a resolution of the House of the People by a majority of the then members of the House." Here it must be noted that the constitution does not use the words "effective majority" (i.e. the strength of the House minus the vacancies)
- Current strength of Lok Sabha : NDA ; 293; INDIA : 233
- In the past, two motions for the removal of the Speaker were accepted. 1. In 1954, against G.V. Mavalankar; 2. In 1987, against Balram Jakhar.
- One notice was given in 1966, against Hukum Singh, but it was not accepted.

World Seafood Congress, 2026

World Seafood Congress, 2026 was hosted by Chennai from 9 to 11 Feb 2026.

3rd CE Tamil Inscriptions found in Egypt

- About 30 inscriptions in Indian languages, 20 are in Tamil (Tamil-Brahmi) and the remaining 10 are in Sanskrit and Prakrit, primarily Tamil (Tamil-Brahmi) and Prakrit, have been discovered from the six rock-cut tombs in the Valley of Kings, a renowned UNESCO World Heritage site, in Egypt.
- These inscriptions have been discovered by the two researchers, Mr. (Prof.) Ingo Strauch, Department of Slavic and South Asian Studies (SLAS), Lausanne, Switzerland, and Mrs. (Prof.) Charlotte Schmid, EFEO, Paris, France.
- The research work's title is "From the valley of the Kings to India : Indian Inscriptions in Egypt" The discovery was announced on 11 Feb, 2026 at an 'International Conference on Tamil Epigraphy' organised by the Tamil Nadu State Department of Archaeology (TNSDA).
- These discoveries provide yet another clinching evidence of ancient trade links between India and the Middle Eastern country about 2,000 years ago.
- It implies that people from several regions of the Indian subcontinent were visiting Egypt, specifically the Valley of Kings within the ancient capital of Thebes, between the 1st and 3rd centuries AD to trade spices and other goods.
- In these inscriptions the name of Cikai Korran (Sigai Korran in modern Tamil), has been inscribed eight times in about five of the six tombs. Cikai Korran is believed to be a trader who spoke Tamil and sailed from the ancient Tamilagam.



- Korran is believed to have been derived from Korravai, a goddess of the Chera kingdom era who was mentioned in Silappathikaram (The Tale of an Anklet), an epic from the 2nd century CE. In one of the inscriptions, another individual was described in Sanskrit as a duta of a Ksaharata king.
- Ingo Strauch said, "I could not believe finding Tamili inscriptions in Egypt. The tombs have been visited regularly by hundreds of thousands of people, but nobody had found them. Cikai Korran was inscribed in tomb number 14, and the interesting part is that there was only one graffiti in the whole tomb, which is about 6 metres tall,"
- Ingo Strauch first found the Indian-language inscription in 2024, and he, along with Charlotte Schmid, has since uncovered 30 inscriptions. Prof. Charlotte Schmid termed the findings "really extraordinary," because the 20 Tamili inscriptions found in Egypt represent a significant addition to the roughly 100 Tamil inscriptions found in India.
- "This find raises questions about script usage, literacy, and why fewer inscriptions exist locally. It could well be due to the medium used, and trade practices of merchant communities like those of Korran, or limited readership and writing among certain groups," she told.
- Prof K Rajan, academic advisor, TNSDA, said that ancient India has had extensive maritime and transoceanic trade networks, spanning from the Indus Valley Civilization (IVC) to the early historic period, emphasizing a predominantly one-way flow of goods from India westward.
- After the IVC, the second phase intensified in the early historic era along India's west and east coasts with two trader groups emerging from Gujarat and from Tamilagam (Muziri in Kerala), using Tamil.
- It has been established that Romans craved Indian luxuries like pepper, Rajan told DH, adding that the new findings by the two professors further demonstrate the trade links with ancient India and the Roman empire, and reopen debates on Tamil Brahmi's role in early literacy, and cultural exchanges.
- The inscriptions from Thebes can be correlated with recent discoveries from Berenike, a Red Sea port that has been under excavation for more than three decades. At Berenike, longer inscriptions in Indian languages, including a recently discovered Tamil inscription-have been found, the professors said.

Mumbai's coastal Road : India's first 'musical path'

- After 4 countries, India has become fifth country to have the world's fifth musical road.
- A stretch on the Samruddhi Expressway, connecting Mumbai and Nagpur, from Nariman Point to Worli, has been inaugurated by the Maharashtra CM as "Sangeet Marg" on 11 Feb. On this stretch, tune of the Oscar-winning song "Jai Ho" will be displayed.
- So far, Hungary, Japan, South Korea and the UAE have implemented this concept.
- The concept of Mumbai's Sangeet Marg" is based on Hungarian technology.

Vande Mataran : Gol's new guidelines

- A set of instructions has been issued on 11 Feb to the States and government bodies that the National Song, Vande Mataram, should be sung or played before the National Anthem, Jana Gana Mana, when both the songs are played at an event.





- The fresh set of guidelines were uploaded on the Union Home Ministry website on February 6, but no formal announcement or a statement was issued.
- It states that whenever the official version of the National Song, around 3.1 minutes long, is sung or played, the audience shall stand to attention.
- All six stanzas, including the four removed by the Congress in 1937, will be played.
- However, when in the course of a newsreel or documentary, the National Song is played as a part of the film, it is not expected of the audience to stand as standing is bound to interrupt the exhibition of the film and would create disorder and confusion rather than add to the dignity of the National Song,” it said.
- “When the National Song is played by a band, the song will be preceded by a roll of drums to assist the audience to know that it is going to be played, unless there is some other specific indication that the National Song is about to be played,” the Ministry said.
- Till the 13th FC (20102015), the devolution involved specific transfers for Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) with extensive conditionalities. The share of States in Central taxes (vertical devolution) was fixed at 32%.
- However, since the 14th FC (20152020), the specific transfers for CSS were discontinued and the vertical devolution was increased to 42%. It was revised down to 41% in the 15th FC (20202026) due to the reorganisation of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories.

vertical devolution :

- Demands of the States : 18 States had demanded that the States’ share be increased from the current 41% to 50%. Few other States had demanded an increase of 45% to 48%. Many States had demanded the inclusion of cess and surcharge in the divisible pool as well as fixing a cap on cess and surcharge that could be levied by the Centre.
- Arguments, bases & recommendations of the FC : With respect to the demands regarding vertical devolution, the FC opined that under the present constitutional scheme, it is neither permissible nor desirable to fix a cap on cess and surcharge or for their inclusion in the divisible pool. These instruments may also be needed to raise resources for the Union to meet any exigencies. Similarly, the FC recommended retaining the States’ share in vertical devolution at its current level of 41% considering three main reasons —

Recommendations of the 16th FC

- The Constitution in Article 270 provides for the scheme of distribution of net tax proceeds collected by the Central government between the Centre and the States. The taxes that are shared between the Centre and the States include corporation tax, personal income tax, Central Goods and Services Tax (GST), Centre’s share of the Integrated Goods and Services Tax (IGST) etc. This division is based on the recommendation of the Finance Commission that is constituted every five years as per the terms of Article 280. This divisible pool, however, does not include cess and surcharge that are levied by the Centre. For the year, 2025-26, it is estimated that the divisible pool constitutes only around 81% of the gross tax revenue of the Centre after excluding cess and surcharge.

1. the States’ share in total tax revenues of the country;
2. that much of the spending of the Union in CSS is anyway ultimately routed to the States; and
3. that the Union government needs increased funds for defence and infrastructure.



Horizontal devolution :

- Demands of the States : many States had pitched for the continued dominance of equity parameters in the criteria. Equally, many States had recommended reducing the weight assigned to 'income distance' as a criterion. Industrialised States such as Maharashtra, Gujarat, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka and Telangana had recommended the inclusion of States' contribution to GDP among the horizontal devolution criteria.
- Arguments, bases & recommendations of the FC : In its approach for horizontal devolution, the FC was guided by two principles.
 1. First, changes to each State's share in the portion of divisible pool should be gradual.
 2. Second, due recognition should be given to efficiency and especially the States' contributions to growth. Accordingly, a new criterion of State's contribution to GDP has been added. The weightage to this new criterion as well as other criteria has been assigned in such a way that it spells a directional change without causing a drastic shift in States' shares.
- Considering all the above factors, the share of southern and western States has marginally increased while the share of big north and central States has marginally decreased. Hence, one may conclude that it is status quo as far as vertical and horizontal devolution is concerned with a directional change towards providing due recognition for efficiency. Additionally, the following observations of the FC should be borne in mind. The Centre should progressively reduce raising revenues through cess and surcharge. The States should make their subsidies efficient and targeted, actively pursue reforms in the power sector, and rein in the levels of their fiscal deficit and debt. The Centre and States should undertake various public sector enterprise reforms.

Darjeeling toy train gets 1st female TTE

- Darjeeling Himalayan Railway (Darjeeling Toy train), after it's establishment in 1881, got it's first woman TTE on 12 Feb, 2026, after 145 years,
- Her name is Sarita Yolmo.
- Darjeeling Himalayan Railway comes under the Northeast Frontier Railway that is headquartered in Guwahati, is Asia oldest two-foot narrow gauge system. It is 88 km long, it climbs 6870 fet from New Jalapaiguri to Darjeeling in West Bengal. New Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling have average elevations of 330 feet and 7200 feet above mean sea level respectively.

Vande Mataram, its six stanzas and a settled question

The January 28, 2026 order of the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), directing that all six stanzas of Vande Mataram be played at official functions, with everyone present required to stand at attention, is not an act of patriotism. It is constitutional vandalism dressed up in national pride. To understand why, we need to go back to 1937, look at what the Constituent Assembly decided, and remember what the Supreme Court of India had said in the landmark case, *Bijoe Emmanuel and Ors. vs State of Kerala and Ors.* (1986).

1937 settlement is not weakness, but wisdom

In October 1937, the Congress Working Committee had met in Calcutta. What happened there was not appeasement, as some now claim. Dr. Rajendra Prasad moved the resolution while Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel seconded it. Mahatma Gandhi was there as a special invitee.





The resolution was unanimous. They recognised “the validity of objections raised by Muslim friends to certain parts of the song” and concluded that “the first two stanzas alone, accepted as the national song at national gatherings, are in no sense objectionable”.

This was not cowardice. It was common sense. The later stanzas of Bankim Chandra Chatterjee’s poem (Vande Mataram) call out, by name, the Hindu goddesses Durga, Lakshmi and Saraswati. One verse literally describes the motherland as “Tvam hi Durga dasa-praharana-dharini (You are Durga, wielder of the 10 weapons)”.

Think about what it means to force a Muslim civil servant, a Christian schoolteacher, a Sikh soldier, a Buddhist monk, or an atheist scientist to stand at attention while these verses are sung. That is not fostering unity. That is imposing a religious test in a secular republic.

Even Rabindranath Tagore supported keeping it to two stanzas. The whole freedom movement – from the moderate to the radical, from the secular to the devout – agreed that the first two stanzas captured the song’s spirit without hurting anyone’s faith. This was not a fringe decision. It was the collective wisdom of the people who fought for India’s freedom.

On January 24, 1950, President Rajendra Prasad announced that Jana Gana Mana would be the National Anthem, and that Vande Mataram would “be honoured equally” with it. But here is what matters: the Constituent Assembly adopted only the two stanza version as the National Song. Those four other stanzas were not accidentally forgotten.

They were deliberately left out because our founders understood something crucial: a secular republic cannot make verses devoted to specific gods and goddesses into official symbols. In the Constitution, Article 51A(a) tells every citizen “to abide by ...the National Flag, and the National Anthem”. If one notices carefully, the National Song is not mentioned.

When Parliament added fundamental duties through the 42nd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1976, it specifically listed the Flag and the Anthem.

The order of the Home Ministry mandating the full version of Vande Mataram is constitutionally indefensible did not include the Song. This was not an oversight. This was a choice. The Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971, protects the National Anthem, the Flag, the Constitution. It does not cover Vande Mataram.

There is no legal penalty for not singing it, not standing for it, or not showing it any particular respect. This is not accidental. The constitutional framework deliberately treats the anthem (which is secular and inclusive) differently from the song (which has religious elements that need to be carefully limited).

The case about the right not to sing

In July 1985, Bijoe, Binu Mol, and Bindu Emmanuel, three children in Kerala, were expelled from school. They were Jehovah’s Witnesses. Every morning during assembly, they stood respectfully while the National Anthem played. But they did not sing it, because their faith did not allow it. They did not cause trouble. They did not disrupt anyone. Then a State Minister got involved, and they were sent out. While the Kerala High Court said the expulsion was fine, the Supreme Court said absolutely not.

In his judgment, Justice O. Chinnappa Reddy said the expulsion violated their fundamental rights to free speech and freedom of religion. Then he wrote something that should be carved in stone: “Proper respect is shown to the National Anthem by standing up when it is sung. It will not be right to say that disrespect is shown by not joining in the singing.”

The Court went further. “It will not be right to say that disrespect is shown by not joining in the singing.” ‘Standing respectfully but staying silent does not break any law’. The children’s right to remain silent, which is itself part of free speech, was constitutionally protected. Justice Reddy quoted an American judge,





Justice Robert H. Jackson, from a case, West Virginia State Board of Education vs Barnette (1943): “If there is any fixed star in our constitutional constellation, it is that no official, high or petty, can prescribe what shall be orthodox in politics, nationalism, religion, or other matters of opinion or force citizens to confess by word or act their faith therein.” That star has not stopped shining.

Now, consider what the MHA order does. It mandates the playing of the complete sixstanza version at civil investitures, presidential events, and flag ceremonies. Everyone must stand at attention. Schools must start the day with community singing of the National Song. And, yes. It includes the four stanzas that the Constituent Assembly deliberately excluded. The stanzas invoke Durga with her weapons, Lakshmi with her blessings and Saraswati with her knowledge. The logic is simple.

If the Court said that you cannot force people to sing even the National Anthem (which has constitutional protection under Article 51A and legal protection under a specific Act), then you certainly cannot force them to sing the National Song (which has neither constitutional mention nor legal protection). What is forbidden for the greater must surely be forbidden for the lesser.

But this order does something worse. It is not just asking people to stand. It is making them participate, even passively, in singing explicitly religious verses. Consider the position of a Muslim bureaucrat compelled to stand at attention as “You are Durga, wielder of the ten weapons” echoes through the hall, or a Christian child in a school assembly where Hindu deities are invoked. That is not a formality.

That is a wound to conscience. That is exactly what Article 25 of the Constitution protects against. India’s founders were not naive. They were building something extraordinary: a constitutional order that could hold together a civilization of staggering diversity. They understood what we seem to have forgotten. Real patriotism does not require everyone to pray the same way.

The first two stanzas — “Sujalam, suphalam, malayaja sheetalam” — celebrate our motherland’s rivers, fruits, cool breezes, moonlit nights. They belong to every Indian, regardless of faith. The later stanzas are beautiful devotional poetry, but they are addressed to specific deities of one religious tradition. To mix them together and force everyone to participate in both is to break the republic’s founding promise.

What this is really about

Nobody is questioning whether Vande Mataram deserves respect. Of course it does. Its first two stanzas lit the fire of resistance against colonial rule. People sang them in streets and in jail cells, Hindus and Muslims together, as a battle cry for freedom.

The real question is simpler: Can the government force citizens to participate in religious observance by calling it patriotism? Any honest reading of the Constitution and the Supreme Court’s judgments gives you the answer. No. *Bijoe Emmanuel* is not some dusty old precedent. It is alive. It stands for something essential — in a constitutional democracy, the right to disagree, even silently and respectfully, is not treason. It is freedom itself. The MHA order overturns the 1937 settlement.

It ignores what the Constituent Assembly deliberately chose. It disregards Article 51A. It sidesteps the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act. It violates the principles in *Bijoe Emmanuel*. And it does all this through executive order, without any law being passed, without any constitutional amendment, without any court approval.

If there is any fixed star in our constitutional sky, it is this. The Republic belongs equally to all its citizens. To those who sing and to those who, for reasons of conscience, stand in respectful silence. To put out that star in patriotism’s name is to betray the very idea of India that its founders fought to build. The Constitution does not demand that we all worship the same way. It demands that we are all equal citizens.



Those are not the same thing, and no amount of forced standing can make them so.

(The Hindu; Sanjay Hegde is a Senior Advocate designated by the Supreme Court of India; 13 Feb 2026)



Seva Teerth and Kartavya Bhavan

- Seva Teerth and the Central Secretariat buildings, Kartavya Bhavan, 1 & 2 will be inaugurated by the PM on 13 February, 2026.
- 13 February, 2026 will also mark the date of the last meeting of the Union Cabinet in the historic South Block. With this an era will end when the iconic North and South Blocks are vacated. These buildings were designed by Herbert Baker. They were taken over by the Indian Government in 1947.
- South Block did include the PMO, Ministry of External Affairs and Defence. Whereas, the North Block included Ministry of Home Affairs and Finance.
- The newly built Seva Teerth will house the PMO, National Council Security Secretariat and the Cabinet Secretariat.
- The Seva Teerth and the Kartavya Bhavans are designed in accordance with 4-star GRIHA standards, the complexes incorporate renewable energy systems, water conservation measures, waste management solutions and high-performance building envelopes.

Substantive Motion

- A motion in parliamentary terms is an official suggestion made by a member of the House requesting that the House take a specific action, implement an order, or express an opinion on a particular issue. It is crafted to reflect a decision that the House can adopt.

1. A substantive motion is an independent proposal submitted to the House or approval, structured to communicate a decision effectively. Examples include resolutions and motions for the appointment of the Deputy Chairman in the Rajya Sabha, as well as the Motion of Thanks regarding the President's Address. Discussions about the conduct of individuals in high positions must also be initiated through appropriate substantive motions.

- Substantive Motion came in news when on February 12, 2026 said he has given a notice to initiate a 'substantive motion' against Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, and demanded that his Lok Sabha membership be cancelled and he be debarred from contesting elections for life. The BJP MP demanded that the "Lok Sabha membership of Mr. Gandhi be cancelled and he be debarred from contesting elections for life".
- In the notice for a substantive motion aimed at Mr. Gandhi, Mr. Dubey seeks not only the cancellation of the Congress leader's Lok Sabha membership but also a lifetime ban on him from contesting elections. This move, particularly in the context of the upcoming elections, is expected to intensify the political rivalry between the two parties.
- If the motion is accepted, the Lok Sabha will need to engage in a formal debate and make a decision regarding the issue. Currently, the next steps are entirely at the discretion of Speaker Om Birla, who can either accept or reject the motion or choose an alternative path according to the rules.



Joint Committee to examine the Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill, 2025

- The Bill was introduced in Lok Sabha on 15 December, 2025. It aims to establish a unified regulatory body, replacing multiple higher education regulators like the UGC, AICTE, NCTE and others.
- A joint parliamentary Committee has been constituted by the Speaker.
- The 31-member committee is chaired by Mrs D, Purandeswari (BJP). It consists of 20 members from the Lok Sabha and 10 from Rajya Sabha.

Pamela Conti, Coach of Indian Team

Mrs. Pamela Conti of Italy has been appointed as the Coach of the India's National Women U-17 Team.

Stalin's Bonanza

Tamil Nadu CM, under the Kalignar Magalir Urimai Thittam (KMUT), announced a bonanza for women crediting Rs.5,000 each to the bank accounts of 1.3 crore women family haed, who are beneficiar

Global AI Summits

Global AI Summits refers to a series of global summits hosted by different countries with different themes.

Till 2026, four such summits have been organized

1. AI Safety Summit in Bletchley Park in 2023,
2. AI Seoul Summit in 2024,
3. AI Action Summit, Paris (France) and
4. India AI Impact Summit

- India AI Impact Summit was held in New Delhi, India from 16 to 20 February at Bharat Madapam.
 - It is the first summit in the series in a Global South Nation.
 - The government aims for at least 15th outcomes from it.
1. One confirmed outcome is India's entry into the US led Pax Silica initiative, an alliance of like-minded countries aimed at building a resilient electronics supply chain.

UAE-INDIA

- India and UAE had signed the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) in 2022 with a target of pushing the value of bilateral trade between the two to 100 billiondollar in 2030 which has been achieved in 2025, 5 years ahead.
- In January, 2026, a new target has been set of 200 billion dollars by 2032.
- Non-oil trade value is \$65 billion.
- UAE entities have invested over \$22 billion in India, while the Indian companies have invested \$16 billion into the UAE.
- 5 million Indian nationals live and work in the Emirates, forming it's largest dispora.

World's first AI minister

The world's first AI minister was appointed by the UAE in 2017.



RTI & section 44(3) of DPDP Act

- A series of petitions in the SC, raise questions that section 44(3) of the DPDP Act, 2023 (Digital Personal Data Protection) imposes a ‘blanket ban’ on the RTI applicants, preventing them from seeking disclosure of ‘personal information’.
1. This section, according to these petitions, cynically uses the right to privacy to cripple the citizens’ right to information.
 2. India’s new digital personal data law delivers a “body blow” to citizens’ right to a transparent and accountable government under the Right to Information (RTI) Act.
- This situation has arisen as the Section 44(3) has amended Section 8(1)(j) of the RTI Act.
 - Originally, the RTI provision had exempted authorities from disclosing personal information to an applicant if the details sought had no relationship to any public activity or if disclosure would amount to unwarranted invasion of privacy. Even then, the government had to disclose if public interest outweighed privacy. The decision whether or not to reveal ‘personal information’ was taken by a Public Information Officer or the First Appellate Authority under the RTI Act after thoroughly weighing privacy and transparency concerns.
 - Section 8(1)(j) of the RTI Act had struck the right balance between the right to privacy and the right to information.
 - Advocate Vrinda Grover, appearing for petitioner Venkatesh Nayak, submitted that the government, instead of using a chisel, used a “hammer to deliver body blows to citizens’ right to information”.
 - She argued that Section 44(3) introduced by the DPDP Act has accorded the government “unguided discretion to deny personal information, which is unconstitutional”. In fact, the fundamental right to privacy has been extended to the State.

- According to the petitioners, the new digital personal data law delivers a “body blow” to citizens’ right to a transparent and accountable government under the Right to Information (RTI) Act.
- Chief Justice of India Surya Kant, heading a three-judge Bench, refused a plea to pass an interim order to stay the implementation of Section 44(3), though the top judge said that the petitions raised a “complex, slightly sensitive and really interesting” question of law.
- “We may have to lay down what is meant by personal information,” Chief Justice Kant remarked, issuing notice to the government.
- However, the Bench agreed to refer the series of petitions to a Constitution Bench.

Right to Information (RTI) and Section 44(3) of the DPDP Act

- The RTI Act, 2005 was enacted to create an informed citizenry and ensure state accountability, which is vital for a democracy.
 - Over two decades later, the DPDP Act has delivered a body blow by diluting one of its foundational sections.
 - Section 8(1)(j) originally allowed the withholding of personal information only if it had no relationship to any public activity or interest, or if its disclosure resulted in an unwarranted invasion of privacy.
1. Crucially, the section included a “public interest override” as an integral feature of the 2005 Act, permitting disclosure if a Public Information Officer was satisfied that the larger public interest justified it.
 2. The DPDP amendment removes this override and prohibits the disclosure of “any information which relates to personal information”, amounting to a blanket ban.
 3. This enables rejecting requests concerning officials, procurement records, audit reports or public spending.



- In its campaign for the RTI, the Internet Freedom Foundation has highlighted a “legitimate uses” paradox here: while Section 7 of the DPDP Act allows the state to process personal data without consent, the RTI amendment prevents citizens from using similar principles to seek transparency from the state.
 - Thus, while the government can monitor the citizen, the citizen is denied the ability to scrutinise the government.
 - This amendment also creates a severe “chilling effect” on the press. As argued in one of the writ petitions by The Reporters’ Collective, journalists could be classified as “data fiduciaries” under the DPDP Act and its Rules when collecting information for investigative reports.
 - Non-compliance with the Act can attract fines up to Rs.250 crore. Such a legal framework threatens reducing journalism to just publishing government releases.
1. It is ironic that the DPDP Act provides exemptions to startups but omits similar protections for journalism.
- This is in sharp contrast with the European Union’s General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which balances privacy and transparency to ensure accountability.
 - The Constitution Bench must refer to the judgment, Central Public Information Officer (2019), which held that personal information should remain private unless disclosure is necessary for the larger public interest. It is known that the RTI has significantly reduced state-citizen (this includes the poor) information asymmetry over two decades. Ensuring its survival is essential for a responsive government.

2018 SC’s Sabrimala judgment in 9-Judge SC Bench

- In September, 2018, the 5-Judge SC Bench presided by the CJI Deepak Mishra through its judgment had allowed women of menstruating age to enter the Sabrimala temple in Kerala.
- Various review and writ petitions were filed on that judgment.
- A 9-Judge Bench of the Supreme Court has scheduled hearing in that from 7 April, 2026. According to the Bench headed by the CJI, maintainability of the review petitions had already been decided by an earlier 9-Judge Bench constituted in 2019 by then CJI A. Bobde.

India’s first road-cum-rail tunnel

- The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) approved India’s first road-cum-rail tunnel in Assam (on corridor between Gohpur and Numaligarh) under the Brahmaputra River on 13th Feb.
- Its total length will be 34 km.
- Its estimated cost will be Rs.18,662 crore.

Urban Challenge Fund

On 13th Feb, the Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi, approved the launch of the Urban Challenge Fund (UCF) with a total Central Assistance (CA) of Rs. One lakh crore.

- CA will cover 25% of the project cost, subject to raising minimum 50% of the project cost from market.





- This will lead to a total investment of Rs. Four lakh crore in urban sector in next five years, marking a paradigm shift in India's urban development approach from grant-based financing to market-linked, reform-driven and outcome-oriented infrastructure creation.

The Fund will be operational from FY 2025–26 to FY 2030–31, with an extendable implementation period up to FY 2033–34. It gives effect to the Government's vision announced in Budget 2025–26 to implement proposals relating to Cities as Growth Hubs, Creative Redevelopment of Cities, and Water and Sanitation.

The Fund will cover:

- All cities with a population of 10 lakh or more (2025 estimates);
- All State and Union Territory capitals not covered above; and
- Major industrial cities with a population of 1 lakh or more.

Additionally, all ULBs in hilly States, North-Eastern States, and smaller ULBs with population below 1 lakh will be eligible for support under the Credit Repayment Guarantee Scheme. In principle all cities will be covered under UCF

BBC Indian Sportswoman of the year 2025

- Smriti Mandhana has been selected as the BBC Indian Sportswoman of the year 2025

SC forms a panel for Judges sensitivity

- A three-judge Bench of the SC headed by the CJI has formed a panel under the chairmanship of ex SC judge (Retd) Aniruddha Bose to draw guidelines to infuse the qualities of sensitivity and compassion in Judges.

- This came when, on 18 March, the Bench set aside an order passed by a single judge court of the Allahabad High Court on 17 March, 2025 in which it was concluded that the "pulling down of pyjama string" did not amount to an "attempt to rape" rather it was mere a "taiyari". Through this order, the single court had cancelled the summons issued by the special judge, under the POCSO, Act to the two accused men in June 2023.
- The guidelines should be in simple language, without any legal jargon.

Maharashtra cancelled Muslim reservations

- The Maharashtra Government cancelled the reservations provisions which granted 5% reservations to Muslims in jobs and in education.
- The Government Order to this effect was issued on 17 Feb, 2026.

Rajya abha Elections on 16 March

37 seats spread over 10 States

Chhatrapati Shivaji Jayanti

Chhatrapati Shivaji Jayanti is observed on 19 Feb.

Narvane's new book

- Gen Manoj M. Naravane (Retd)'s another book has been published.
- It's name is "The Cantonment Conspiracy : A Military Thriller".



SIR in more 17 States & 5 UTs

- According to the Election Commission of India, SIR will begin in 17 more States & 5 UTs from April 2026.
- The 17 States are Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Haryana, Himachal Pradesh, , Jharkhand, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Odisha, Punjab, Sikkim, Tripura, Telangana, and Uttarakhand, while the 5 UTs are the National Capital Territory of Delhi, Chandigarh, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, Ladakh, & Jammu and Kashmir

Sensex fall due to Iran Issue

- On February 19, due to increasing international tension on the Iran issue, India's stock market Sensex also recorded a decline of 1236 points and Nifty by 365 points.
- The tension between the USA & Iran more escalated after Trumps' latest statement that if Iran doesnot yield in signing an agreement with the USA, the world may face disasterous outcome soon.
- This decline was based on the sharp rise in oil prices due to the above tensions and the fear of blockage of the Strait of Hormuz.

Macron's India visit, 2026

- India and France signed on 21 agreements in the presence of the French President and the PM of India. On 17 Feb.
- The French President landed first in Mumbai and the he arrived in New Delhi to address the AI Summit.

Brazil's President to India

- Small countries negotiating individually with bigger ones always lose, he urged countries in the Global South to act as together in negotiating with global powers.
- He urged the formation of "negotiating Blocks".
- He called for "unionization" of those suffering from the tariffs.
- India and Brazil have been the top two sufferers of highest tariffs imposed by Trump.
- Both countries agreed to double their bilateral trade value to \$30 billion by 2030

Concerns of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs

- The Standing Committee, chaired by senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor, met to discuss the Ministry of External Affairs's (MEA) budgetary allocations.
- During the over threehour meeting, at least one member questioned the rationale behind the Prime Minister's visit at a time when India had issued an advisory urging citizens to leave Iran amid fears of a possible U.S. strike. The member noted that Israel, too, could be drawn into the unfolding conflict.
- Responding to the query, Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri said that all prime ministerial visits were planned keeping security considerations in mind. He did not clarify whether the trip would be cancelled if tensions escalate further.



- Several members also raised concerns over the absence of any allocation for the Chabahar Port in this year's Budget. Mr. Misri reiterated the Ministry's earlier response in the Lok Sabha that India had already fulfilled its commitment of contributing \$120 million towards procuring port equipment and that no additional funding was due.
- Some MPs, however, accused the government of compromising India's strategic autonomy and allowing the U.S. to influence its foreign relations.
- Mr. Tharoor described the meeting as "comprehensive", saying it covered a wide range of issues.
- The members also criticised what they termed the government's neglect of the External Affairs Ministry. A previous recommendation of the panel had called for at least a 20% increase in the Ministry's allocation, but this year's Budget shows a rise of only 7.8%.
- They noted that India had no diplomatic missions in 41 countries, and in many nations, a single Indian Foreign Service officer manages the entire mission with minimal staff. The Ministry's allocation remains roughly 0.4% of the total Union Budget.
- Concerns were also raised about inadequate support for the Indian diaspora, particularly after the merger of the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs with the External Affairs Ministry in 2016.

79th BAFTA Film Awards

- 79th British Academy Film Awards were held on 22 Feb 2026 at the Royal Festival Hall, London.
- It was hosted by Alan Cumming, a Scottish actor.

Some important awards:

Award	Winner	Film/work
Best Film	One Battle After Another	
Best Director	Paul Thomas Anderson	One Battle After Another
Best Actor	Robert Aramayo	For his role of Davidson in the Film – I Swear
Best Actress	Jessie Buckley	Hamnet
INDIA		
Best Children and Family Film	Boong (In Manipuri) Director: Lakshmi Priya Devi	

India's First-ever anti-terror policy: PRAHAAR

India's First-ever anti-terror policy titled PRAHAAR has been released by the Union Home Ministry

PRAHAAR is an acronym for India's first comprehensive National Counter-Terrorism Policy and Strategy which is Designed with a "zero-tolerance" approach, this policy focuses on tackling modern, technology-driven, and cross-border terrorism.

The seven pillars of the strategy are:

- Prevention of attacks.
- Responses that are swift and proportionate.
- Aggregating internal capacities.
- Human rights and 'rule of law' focus.
- Attenuating enabling conditions.
- Aligning international efforts.
- Recovery and resilience.
- This policy emphasizes confronting new methods of terrorism such as Cross-border jihadist networks and drone-based smuggling to cyber radicalization, cryptocurrency funding and the potential misuse of chemical, biological and nuclear material.
- PRAHAAR policy explicitly highlights the risks posed by CBRNED (chemical, biological, radiological, nuclear, explosive and digital) material. It warns of the dual threat from state and non-state actors misusing emerging technologies, robotics and cyber tool for mass-casualty attacks.



- Framed as both doctrine and roadmap, 'Prahara' signals the government's intent to institutionalise a permanent, technology-driven and globally aligned counter-terror posture, one that treats terrorism not merely as a law-and-order problem but as a multidimensional national security challenge demanding constant adaptation.

Friendship Groups of Lok Sabha

- 64 Friendship groups, related to various countries, for 18 Lok Sabha have been constituted.
- Sanjay Jha of JDU from Bihar has been nominated as the Chairman for the India-Germany group along with 11 MPs as its members.

New name of Kerala : Keralam

- The Union Cabinet, in its first meeting at the Seva Teerth, approved the Kerala Government's proposal resolution dated 24 June 2024 to change the Name of the State from Kerala to "Keralam".
- It was passed by the State Assembly in the form of the Kerala (Alteration of Name) Bill, 2026.
- Kerala was formed on the basis of language on 01 November, 1956.
- The name will be modified under the Article 3 of the Indian Constitution.

Kerala Story 2

- It is a film based on a narrative of religious conversion. It was released on 27 Feb, 2026. It is directed by Kamakhya Narayan Singh and is produced by Vipul Narayan Singh.
- It is a sequel of "The Kerala Story"

Trump Imposed 126% Solar duty on India

- Trump, on 24 Feb, 2026, under his "America First" policy, imposed 126% import duty on the Solar panels imported in the USA from India.
- In the view of the Trump administration, the Indian solar panels exported to the USA were dumped goods from China. Trump sees solar imports from India as a bypass for Chinese firms.
- Chinese manufacturers have shifted production across Southeast Asia to maintain market access.
- India has been a primarily beneficiary from this shift. In 2024, India exported solar panels to the USA worth \$792.6 million.
- Other two major beneficiaries of this shift were Indonesia and Laos. (Combined with Indian exports and these two countries accounted for 57% of US solar module imports in the first half of 2025.
- The USA also increased the solar import duties from Indonesia and Laos. It has become 143% for Indonesia and 81% for Laos.
- It was Imposed on 24 Feb, 2026
- Anti dumping and availing heavy government subsidy, exports of Solar panels to the USA by the Indian firms were hurting the competitiveness of U.S. solar firms and contravened World Trade Organization agreements on subsidies.
- It came into the light when on a probe by the U.S. Department of Commerce was conducted after complaints were received from the Alliance for American Solar Manufacturing and Trade, a coalition of leading U.S. solar firms.





- The complaints were made against Mundra Solar Energy Pvt. Ltd. and Mundra Solar PV Ltd. – both part of Adani Group – Premier Energies Photovoltaic Private Ltd., Waaree Energies Ltd. and Waaree Solar Americas.
- Currently duties of up to 40% are imposed on such export of solar cells.
 1. These duties are additional to existing tariffs. The final determination in the CVD investigations are now scheduled to be issued on July 6, 2026. The U.S. The Commerce Department is conducting a concurrent anti dumping duty probe of solar cells from India, Indonesia and Laos.
- Opposition members under the leadership of Mr. Yair Lapid boycotted Modi's parliamentary address unless the Supreme Court President Yitzhak Amit is invited for it, as per convention. But the relationship between The Netanyahu Government and the Supreme court president is bad as Mr. Netanyahu is facing serious corruption charges. Netanyahu wants to change the Chief Justice.
- Modi condemned the attack of 7 October, 2023 on Israel by Hamas and expressed condolences to those who died in that attack. Critics say that the Indian PM did not mention the plight of the people of Gaza. Modi mentioned the Mumbai attack on 26 November 2008. Modi also expressed India's support for the Gaza Peace Plan endorsed by the UNSA.

Modi's Visit to Israel

- Modi's first official foreign visit was made to Bhutan in June 2014.
- The Indian PM had visited Israel during 4-6 July 2017. Mr. Modi is the first Indian PM who travelled to Israel on an official visit. During the visit, 7 MoUs were signed.
- Due to an arrest warrant issued by the ICC. Netanyahu cannot go to 124 ICC countries.
- Modi visited Israel on 25-26 Feb. He landed at Ben Gurion International Airport in Israel on 26th Feb. He also addressed the Knesset (Israeli parliament), an innovation event on technology cooperation, and go with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to the Yad Vashem holocaust memorial museum.
- Mr. Netanyahu, on 23 Feb, informed his cabinet that India would join a "hexagonal alliance" of regional countries to cooperate on security issues.
- Modi was honoured with the "Speaker of the Knesset Medal".
- But questions are raised on the timing of the visit when tensions on the front of Iran in the whole West Asian region are very high.
- The members of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External Affairs on Monday raised concerns over the timing of the trip.
- Outcome: 27 agreements were signed between the two nations. Technology was the main sector. No big deal on defence has yet been announced.

Modi's address to Knesset

32 Minutes.

It was mainly focused on :

- India's uncompromising policy of zero tolerance for terrorism with no double standards, in that light the PM extended a firm hand of friendship to Israel, now and beyond and condemned the "barbaric terrorist attack" on 7 October, 2023.
- Supported Gaza Peace Initiative, saying it as a necessity to "sustain" the process of peace building in the region. He highlighted that it was endorsed by the UNSC.





- He termed Israel's attempts to build friendly ties with the countries in West Asia, North Africa and with Arab countries as "courage and vision"

Bilateral cooperations:

- water management
- agriculture
- talent partnership
- Digital public infrastructure
- Working on an FTA

Bilateral trade :

- It was \$4.9 billion in 2016-17 which reached at its peak upto \$10.7 billion (Arab dollar) in 2022-23.
- Due to the war and the trade route troubles, it was at 6.5 billion dollar in 2023-24 and only 3.6 billion dollar in 2024-25.
- It was only \$200 million (20 crore dollar) in 1992, the year in which full diplomatic relations were established.

India's top 5 export-items to Israel	
Refined products made from crude oil	43.7%
Diamonds	21.9%
Rice	1.5%
Part of communication equipments	1.4%
Parts of arms and accessories	1.4%
India's top 5 import-items from Israel	
Diamonds	33.1%
Minerals and chemical fertilisers (Potassic)	8.1%
Integrated circuits and microassemblies	5.5%
Radio navigation and remote control	4.8%
Apparatus for transmission devices	3.7%

- Defence cooperation : India accounted for over 38%(according to some sources 42.1%) of Israel's arms export between 2014 and 2024.

Bilateral FDI :

- Between 2000 and September 2025, Israel's cumulative foreign direct investment was \$347 million (mainly in technology domain).
- Between 2000 and April 2025, India's cumulative overseas direct investment was \$443 million.

Public to public :

- In 2024, 32,715 Indians traveled to Israel
- Around 32,000 Indian workers are working
- 900 Indian students are studying in Israel

NCERT's chapter on corruption in Judiciary

- A three judge bench of the SC consisting of CJI, Joydip Bagchi & Vipul M Pancholi took *suo motu* case which has now been titled "In Re : Social Science Textbook for Grade-8 (part 2) published by NCERT and ancillary issues".
- The CJI called it a calculated move to denigrate the judiciary.
- The chapter 'The Role of the Judiciary in Our Society' in a class 8 Social Science book prescribed by NCERT mentions that corruption, a massive backlog of cases, and a lack of adequate number of judges were among the "challenges" faced by the judicial system.
- The Bench, on its first hearing on the case, said that the "reckless, irresponsible, motivated, contemptuous conduct and manner" of the textual depiction was meant to instill a bias against the judiciary in the "impressionable minds" of young schoolchildren, and through them, to society at large and even future generations.



- The Bench said that “heads must roll” and the court initiated contempt action. On the other hand, the Union Education Minister said that the government will probe the introduction of a section on “corruption” in the judiciary in NCERT book.

SIR impact of WB Judiciary

- In the light of the SC’s directions to the Calcutta high Court to verify about 50 lakh claims and objections in West Bengal, the Calcutta HC has deployed 294 judicial officers for verifications.
- Committees have been formed at the Calcutta HC and district levels to reassign urgent cases to alternative courts.
- This is severely affecting the judicial trials.

BMC budget

Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation, on 25 Feb, unveiled plans for Rs.80862 crore.

Sales of E-20 petrol mandatory

Sales of E-20 petrol of minimum RON (Research Octane Number) 95 has been made mandatory all over India from 1st April, 2026.

Chhattisgarh : deaths in judicial custody

In a reply in the Assembly, the State Home Minister informed that 66 jail inmates died during the period between January 1, 2025 and January 31, 2026.

Critical minerals: a strategic necessity

- Until August 2023, critical minerals in India were classified as atomic minerals.
- The new budget and other policies of the Government of India now clearly indicate that these minerals are now being given strategic importance in the context of the development of new age technologies.
- India now has a list of 30 critical minerals, and by excluding them from the list of atomic minerals, their exploration has been made easier even for small companies. India also now has the NCMM scheme with a budget of Rs 16,300 crore. The Mineral Resolve has been included in the new budget.
- India will now need to focus on three key areas to advance in these critical minerals:
 1. First: Ensuring the flow of capital and demand for processing these minerals.
 2. Second: Advancing the appropriate use of AI in mineral exploration techniques.
 3. Third: Expanding international strategic partnerships.

Assam Chief Minister's Hate Speech Case

- After being rejected by the Supreme Court, the case came to the Gauhati High Court. After a hearing on February 26th, the court issued a notice to the Chief Minister.
- The next hearing is scheduled for April 21st.



Chairman of the Manipur Inquiry Panel

- Former Gauhati High Court judge Ajay Lamba has resigned as chairman of the Manipur Inquiry Panel, which was constituted on June 4, 2023, citing personal reasons.
- This appointment has been made under the sub-section (3) of the Commissions of Inquiry Act, 1952 (60 of 1952).
- Former Supreme Court judge Balbir Singh Chauhan has been appointed its chairman in his place.
- Justice Singh also chaired the inquiry committee formed to investigate the violence in Leh.

Death : T.K. Oommen, eminent sociologist

- T.K. Oommen, eminent sociologist and Professor emeritus at the Centre for the Study of Social Systems of Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), who is regarded as a leading architect of modern Indian sociology, passed away on Thursday. He was 88, and his end came in Gurugram.
- A respected scholar, teacher and author, Professor Oommen is known for his writings and approaches to social justice, identity and pluralism. He had gained wide attention for his study of the Bhoodan Movement and as chairperson of the Advisory Committee of Gujarat Harmony Project, formed after the communal violence in the State.
- Professor Oommen was a former president of the International Sociological Association (ISA), the Indian Sociological Society, and a member of the Sachar Committee which studied the social, economic and educational status of India's Muslim community.

His scholarship spanned five major domains.

- First, he examined social movements and their transformative potential, beginning with his study of the Bhoodan Movement.
- Second, in the sociology of occupation, his study of the nursing profession (1978) was pioneering, bringing attention to socially undervalued yet indispensable occupations.
- Third, in his work on state and ethnicity, most notably in "Understanding security: a new perspective", he offered a novel framework for analysing social security in the context of communal violence and ethnic conflict in India.
- Fourth, he interrogated the complex relationship between State and civil society and explored how modern nationstates confront dissent and pluralism.
- Fifth, throughout, he argued that sociology is not an isolated discipline but one intrinsically connected to history, politics, and culture,"

Friendship Groups of Lok Sabha

- 64 Friendship groups, related to various countries, for 18 Lok Sabha have been constituted.
- Sanjay Jha of JDU from Bihar has been nominated as the Chairman for the India-Germany group along with 11 MPs as its members.

"Bail & stay" in Shirts off protest

- In the Shirts off protest at the India AI Impact Summit case, a Delhi Court of Duty Magistrate Vanshika Mehta granted bail to the IYC Chief Uday Bhanu Chib on 28 Feb.
- However, within hours, on the same day, the court of Additional Sessions Judge Amit Bansal stayed the bail order.





SIR outcome in WB

- At the end of the SIR conducted in WB, the total number of electors has become 7,04,59,528 crores. It shows a decline of 8.09% in the number which was at the start of the SIR (in October, 2025).
- It consists of 3,60,22,642 males and 3,44,35,260 females and third gender people 1382. It results in a sex-ratio of 956 females per 1000 males.
The USA and Israel attacks Iran
- The USA and Israel started attacks on Iran on 28 February, 2026.
- The USA has named this attack as the “Operation Epic Fury”, while Israel has named it as the “Operation Roaring Lion”. Iran has termed it’s attacks as “Operation Al-kahtm”



INTERNATIONAL

Blast in Islamabad

- A suicide blast at a shia mosque in Islamabad took place on 6 Feb. The name of the mosque is Imam Bargah Qasr-e-khadijatul Kubra mosque situated in the Tralal area.
- It killed 31 persons and wounded at least 130.
- The blast in Pakistan was deadliest since the 2008 Marriott bombing.
- A sunni terror outfit named Islamic State Pakistan ((an affiliate of the Islamic State Group) has claimed responsibility for the blast. The Islamic State group suggested it viewed the Pakistani Shias as legitimate targets, calling them a “human reservoir” that provided recruits to Shia militias fighting the Islamic State in Syria.

Project Vault

- It is a \$12 billion scheme to stockpile rare earth and critical minerals aiming to shield American companies from global supply disruptions.
- It is a private-public partnership that will buy and store rare earth elements and critical minerals.

Australian Open Tennis Tournament

- The **2026 Australian Open** was held at Melbourne Park, from 18 January to 1 February 2026,
- It was the 114th edition of the Australian Open , the 58th in the Open Era and the first major of the year.
- Carlos Alcaraz defeated Novak djokovic in Men’s Single title.

- Elena Rybakina defeated Aryna to win the women's singles tennis title.

Other Grand Slams :

- French Open :May-June
- Wimbledon : June-July
- The US Open : September

New President elected for Portugal

- The Centre-left socialist candidate Antonio Jose Seguro recorded a thumping victory over hard-right populist Andre Ventura in Portugal’s runoff presidential election on 8 Feb, 2026.
- Mr. Seguro registered 66.7%, while Mr. Ventura got 33.3% votes.
- The official residence of the President of Portugal is Pink Palace in Lisbon.
- In this election, a unique practice of voting by the children accompanying their parents to a polling station were given an opportunity to try their hand at casting a vote on a separate ballot featuring fictional popular characters. It is considered as a part of a training in the voting system and civic duties.

START of a Future START

- On February 5, 2026, the NEW START expired .
- It guided the USA and USSR (and further Russia) from unlimited accumulation towards negotiated reduction.
- By the 1980s, they each possessed over 10,000 strategic nuclear warheads – the U.S. with a lopsided advantage.
- START I negotiations began in 1982 and proved complex. The treaty was not signed until July 1991, just months before the Soviet Union’s collapse.



- The New START Treaty (2010) limited each side to 1,550 deployed strategic warheads. Each represented further progress down from Cold War peaks. The New START, with its 15-year lifespan, ought to have been replaced with more ambitious outcomes.
- U.S. President Donald Trump has stated that any future arms control must include China, given its growing nuclear stockpile, signalling that the U.S. will not be bound by limits if other major powers (such as China) are free to build up theirs. The end of START may have serious consequences for global agreements, such as the Non-Proliferation Treaty and the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty. They are both noble in theory but the first is discriminatory in the way it seeks to rid the world of nuclear weapons. The end of START is an opportunity to restart discussion on more equal terms.
- Her government proposed to make it tougher for foreigners to become citizens and also encourage prospective residents to learn Japanese.
- She withdrew an unpopular fuel tax and promised more tax cuts.
- Ms. Takaichi stated that Japan could militarily intervene in the event of a Chinese attack on Taiwan, provoking Beijing to impose restrictions on Japanese seafood imports and limits on critical minerals exports to Japan.

While her victory as the first woman Prime Minister is historic, it is shaped by a paradox:

Takaichi's Triumph

- In Japan's February 8 snap election, Mrs. Sanae Takaichi of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) registered a landslide victory and won 316 of 465 seats in Parliament's lower house, delivering its strongest postwar performance.
 - This victory is significant because the LDP, which has led Japan for all but four years since 1955, was doing very poorly in previous elections.
 - Mrs. Sanae Takaichi is a conservative nationalist and was closely aligned with the late former Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. After becoming PM, she has advanced a distinctly Trumpian agenda with Japanese characteristics.
 - the conservative ideology that defines her politics.
 - She has made repeated visits to the controversial Yasukuni shrine.
 - She opposes same-sex marriage, and many supporters have urged her to amend the Constitution to remove the pacifist clauses.
 - Although Ms. Takaichi enjoys warm ties with U.S. President Donald Trump, she also faces pressure from Washington to move towards a more militarised security posture.
 - But if Ms. Takaichi uses the huge mandate to remilitarise Japan and adopt a more muscular foreign policy, she risks placing herself on the wrong side of history. Post-war peace helped Japan rebuild an economy devastated by conflict and dramatically improve living standards.
 - Rather than issuing provocative statements that risk imperilling Japan's economic ties with its largest trading partner, she should return to the country's long-standing position of studied ambiguity over Taiwan and prioritise regional stability.
- As the PM of Japan she has taken various important steps/decisions :**
- She pledged to crack down on immigration and stand up to China's military and economic influence in the region.





- Her focus should be on revitalising the economy and addressing social challenges, including an ageing population, stagnant wages and persistent gender inequality. The supermajority that she now commands offers her an opportunity to move beyond rigid conservatism and pursue a more pragmatic and inclusive agenda rooted in pacifism.

White House cuts grants to Democrat States

The US Department of Health and Human Services is expected to cut about \$600 million in public health grants to Minnesota, California, Colorado and Illinois because they do not align with the priorities of the White House.

Braided protests

- Syrians of all ethnicities have suffered terribly from religious violence & current govt decisions will end up aiding the worst kind of extremists.
- 15 years ago, people across Syria took to the streets to demand democracy, freedom and equality.
- Kurds, Arabs, Druze, Armenians, Syriacs, Turkmen, Alwaites, Christians and Jews of Syria continue to strive for a better future for their country, one that does justice to its social diversity.

Elections Result in Bangladesh

- In the 13th National Parliamentary Election, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party (Tarique Rahman) has won 209 seats, while its allies have won 3 seats.
- Thus the BNP and its allies won 212 seats out of 300 directly elected seats using first-past-the-post in single-member constituencies.

- The Jamaat Party (leader Shafiqur Rahman) has won 68 seats.
- The Jatiya Sangsad consists of a total 350 seats out of which 50 are reserved for women.. The reserved seats are elected proportionally by the elected members.
- On the referendum to approve the 'July Charter', 68.59% voted in favour.
- To observe the elections, the Election Commission of Bangladesh had invited five International organisations including the UN and the EU. However, the EU had declined.
- The Nationalist Citizen Party (of the revolutionary students) has got only 6 seats.
- Mr. Tarique Rahman has become the PM, first male PM in the last 36 years.
- Lok Sabha Speaker represented India at the swearing-in on 17 Feb.

Tarique Rahman cabinet

- Mr. Tarique Rahman took the oath of the post of the PM of Bangladesh with 25 Cabinet Ministers and 24 Ministers of States.
- The oath ceremony was presided over by the President of Bangladesh Mr. Mohammed Shahabuddin.

Hindus in new govt of Bangladesh

The newly formed Tarique Rahman government in Bangladesh includes two members from the Hindu minority community (8%) :

1. **Niatai Roy Chowdhury** : Minister of Cultural Affairs
2. **Dipen Dewan (Buddhist)** : Minister of Chittagong Hill Tracts Affairs.





- Mr. Gayeshwar Chandra Roy is another Hindu MP from the BNP.
- Saching Prue (Buddhist) is fourth minority member in Jaitiya Sangasad.

Munich Security Dialogue/ Conference

- The 62nd Munich Security Conference was held from 13-15 February 2026.
- It is an annual conference on international Security policy. It has been organized in Munich (Germany), since 1963.
- US Secretary of State Marco Rubio called on Europe to help save the West as a common civilization, while chief European diplomat Kaja Kallas pushed back saying the EU does not need saving.
- Rubio further said that the USA has 'no interest in being polite and orderly caretakers'.
- German Chancellor Mr. Fredrich Merz said that today, the World order no longer exists.
- French President Macron said that France, on the other hand, is in dialogue with Germany on nuclear umbrella.
- Danish PM Mrs. Mette Frederiksen ruled out that the danger of Trump on Greenland has been de-escalated following NATO mediation. She said, It still persists.
- EU mutual defence clause: EU has launched an 800 billion euro programme to boost its defence readiness before 2030 in the face of a possible attack from Russia and doubts over the US commitment to NATO's Collective defence under Article 5.

Civilisational Erasure'

- The term 'Civilisational Erasure' is currently in the news, especially in the wake of the US National Security Strategy released in December 2025 and subsequent global discussions.
- The term is primarily used to describe a perceived threat to the future of Europe and its culture. The main reasons for its popularity are the following:
 - Trump administration claim: US President Donald Trump's administration has warned in a policy document that Europe is on the brink of "civilisational erasure".
 - European culture in crisis: This claim implies that Europe's core identity is changing due to uncontrolled migration, declining birth rates, and the loss of traditional values.
 - Policy changes: The report warns European countries to change their migration policies and "woke" culture to restore their "past greatness".
 - Tensions in trans-Atlantic relations: The issue is exacerbating differences between the US and its European allies, as European leaders consider the claim to be 'European-bashing' and false.
- In short: 'Civilisational erasure' is central to the discussion about whether Europe's traditional culture and identity will be lost forever due to immigrants from outside or internal changes.

FIDE Freestyle Chess title 2026

- Magnus Carlsen won the FIDE Freestyle Chess title 2026.



Khorramshahr-4 Missile

Khorramshahr-4 Missile is a newly developed liquid fuelled ballistic missile having an operational range of approx. 2000 km of Iran.

Piton de Fournaise Volcano

- It is located on the La Reunion Island that erupted recently.
- La Reunion Island is a French island in the western Indian Ocean.
- It is around 5,00,000 year-old and a UNESCO world heritage site.
- It is a shield volcano. This type of volcanoes do not form soaring mountains with conical peaks like composite volcanoes. Instead, they are broad volcanoes with gentle slopes.

David J. Farber

Known as the “Grandfather of the Internet”, died on 7 Feb in Tokyo at the age of 91.

Ex-Duke Andrew arrested @Epstein Files

- Britain's former Duke of York Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor (formerly Prince Andrew) and the younger brother of Britain's King Charles was arrested on 19 Feb, 2026.
- The arrest was made on suspicion of misconduct in public office – in connection with passing on confidential official documents to Epstein, when he served as an unpaid trade envoy for the UK between 2001 and 2011.
- The complaint was made against him by Virginia Louise Giuffre (Born on (August 1983, death 25 April, 2025). She had made her complaint during her interview with the BBC in 2019.

El Mecho Killed

- Mexican drug mafia El Mencho was killed by the Army of Mexico on 22 Feb, 2026. He had a \$15 million US bounty on his head. In the operation, 62 other persons also died.
- El Mencho was his nickname. His name was Nemesio Ruben Oseguera Cervantes. He was also known as “The Lord of the Roosters” (due to his love for cockfighting)
- He was a Policeman in Mexico who left his job to found ‘Jalisco New Generation Cartel (CJNG) with its HQ in Jalisco State of Mexico.
- He was notorious for trafficking fentanyl, methamphetamine and cocaine to the USA and other parts of the world.

World's newest sovereign country

1. The world's newest sovereign country is South Sudan.
2. This nascent nation has been beset by civil war, poverty and massive corruption.
3. Here, the lives of around 1.9 million people are at risk.

Pak-Afghan ‘open war’

- On 26th and 27th February, 2026 Pakistan and Afghanistan attacked various locations in each other's territories, claiming different casualties. Pakistan's Defence Minister declared the neighbours as “open war”.
- The Taliban Govt claimed that the Afghan forces killed 55 Pakistani soldiers and captured several, while putting the death toll among Afghan troops at 13. On the other hand, Pakistan claimed 274 killings on the Afghan side and claimed a loss of 12 Pakistani soldiers.
- Peace negotiations are going on with mediations by Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia & others.



Science & Tech

“Turtle trails” in Union Budget

- The Union Budget for FY '27 has proposed to develop ‘turtle trails’ along key nesting sites in the coastal areas of Odisha, Karnataka and Kerala.
- Various conservationists and researchers view that it sounds like a tourism idea, which badly affects the ‘mass nesting site’. So, they argue that being a Mass nesting site is a highly sensitive place, it should be kept free from anthropogenic pressure.
- Olive Ridley sea turtles is an endangered species, which is recorded only along India and Costa Rica and some handful of beaches in the world. Odisha is home to the world’s largest mass nesting ground for Olive Ridley turtles.

Next Industrial Shift : from molecules to electrons

- For over a century, the world’s factories, kilns and trucks have been powered by “molecules” – oil, coal and gas burnt for heat and motion. That age is now giving way to one where competitiveness is increasingly written in electrons: clean and reliable electricity. The nations that move the fastest from molecules to electrons will not only cut emissions but also win supply chains, capital and jobs.
- Molecules (oil, gas, LPG, coal, biofuels) are combusted directly in engines, boilers and furnaces. Electrons are delivered by the grid. Coal has already shifted from onsite combustion to centralised power generation. More electrons mean higher automation, better process control and easier decarbonisation.
- In this context, China has taken an edge. Nearly half its industrial energy comes from electrons and also has the highest share of green electrons. The United States and world average are around 12% while India lags at just 7%. China leads both in the quantity and the quality of electrons even as India remains molecule-dominated.
- China’s strategy (playbook) has been to build the grid, then build the electronics industry.
- China’s lesson is simple – electrify what can be electrified today, and reserve molecules only for processes that have no immediate alternative.

Why ‘electrons vs molecules’ is the right lens

Electrification also brings a major efficiency dividend. Electric motors convert over 90% of input energy into useful work, while internal combustion engines typically convert less than 35%. This means each percentage point increase in electrons displaces more fuel molecules than raw energy numbers suggest.

Industrial electrification snapshot
Green and grey electrons versus molecules

Global picture: industrial electrons and their quality

Region	Green electrons (%)	Grey electrons (%)	Total electrons (%)	Molecules (%)
China	18	29	47	53
The EU	16	18	34	66
U.S.	12	20	32	68
India	7	20	27	73
The world	12	18	30	70

Whole-economy context

Region	Green electrons (%)	Grey electrons (%)	Total electrons (%)	Molecules (%)
China	12	19	31	69
U.S.	13	19	32	68
The EU	17	17	34	66
India	8	19	27	73
The world	12	18	30	70





For Extra Reading :

- China's surge did not happen by accident. Since 2010, it has poured massive capital into generation, ultrahighvoltage transmission, flexible substations and gridscale storage. The result is a structural tilt toward electrons across industry.

1. In steel, electric-furnace (EAF) steel rose from about 44 million tonnes in 2010 to 106 million tonnes in 2024. Though only approximately 15% of output, this shift has been policy driven through scrap recycling and preferential tariffs.
2. In cement, China has electrified grinding mills, materials handling and deployed digital controls. Waste-heat-recovery systems typically contribute 3035 kWh per tonne of cement. Calcination emissions remain unavoidable, making CCUS pilots essential. India can follow a similar pathway.

What is India's starting line like?

India has doubled grid capacity in a decade and is a global leader in annual solar additions. Yet, industrial electrons remain around one quarter of energy use, and green electrons just 7%8% of final energy. Three factors explain this gap.

First, legacy reliance on onsite combustion locks in molecule use. Second, uneven power quality and reliability discourage firms from designing all electric processes. Third, policy focuses more on generation than on electrifying industrial processes.

- This is a road map to an electron-first industrial decade. In steel, India already produces approximately 30% of steel through EAFs, as compared to approximately 70% in the U.S. Improving scrap collection, standardisation and trading platforms can lift this share rapidly. Renewablelinked EAF incentives are essential, especially with the EU Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) targeting steel.

- In cement, support pilots of electrified kilns, large-scale waste heat recovery and carbon capture, utilisation, and storage (CCUS) hubs. Target a 20% reduction in molecule use per tonne this decade while preparing CCUS.
- On micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), most MSMEs run on coal boilers and diesel gensets. Transition requires concessional finance for electric boilers and induction furnaces, pooled procurement of renewable power purchase agreements, and technical assistance.
- When it comes to digitalisation, this must be embedded in new industrial clusters. Advanced controls reduce power waste, enable demand response, and generate auditable carbon data demanded by global buyers.

Why does this matter beyond climate?

- First, competitiveness as global buyers increasingly demand low-carbon manufacturing. Green electrons embedded in supply chains decide contract outcomes.
- Second, security. Shifting heat and motion to domestically produced electricity reduces exposure to imported oil and gas price shocks.
- Third, sovereignty. Industry can locate based on skills and logistics, not fuel availability.

The new industrial race

- The global race is not just electrons versus molecules, but also about green electrons versus grey electrons. China has acted strategically. Although its economywide electrification (31%) is similar to the U.S. (32%) and the EU (34%), it prioritised industry — nearly half of industrial energy is electrified, with a higher green share than peers. This design gives China a durable manufacturing edge.
- India must absorb this lesson. Without a rapid rise in green electrons, India risks CBAM penalties and lost export opportunities, but with bold action, it can seize the initiative.



- Policy must aim not just for megawatts of renewables, but for megawatt hours actually flowing into industry. India should launch a national mission on industrial electrification, significantly raise annual grid investment, mandate electrification in new industrial parks, and provide targeted MSME finance.
- The next industrial revolution will be written in electrons, not molecules. India must ensure that it is not left behind.

North india's first semiconductor Chip Plant

- North India's first plant (Outsourced Semiconductor Assembly and Test Facility) for manufacturing the Semiconductor Chips in sector-28 of NOIDA (under Yamuna Expressway Industrial Development Authority- YEIDA) at Jewar was inaugurated by the PM on 21 Feb 2026. Noida is known as Gautam Buddha Nagar.
- This unit will be owned by the M/S India Chip Private Limited joint venture of the HCL and Foxcon (of Taiwan) HCL have 60% partnership whereas, Foxconn have 40% ownership.
- Here, investment of 3.706 crore Rs. will be made.
- This plan will start its production from 2028.
- This plant will contribute around 45,000 crore Rs in India's GDP.
- Its capacity will be 20,000 wafers per month. It will also make display driver chips for Mobile, Laptops and Automobiles.
- More than half of phones in India are made in UP.

India's first own Foundational AI model LLM

A Bengaluru based Indian AI company named Sarvam AI at the ongoing AI Summit in New Delhi, unveiled three foundational AI Models. (language models) :

1. A 03-billion parameter model
2. A 35-billion parameter model and
3. A 105-billion parameter model is being seen as a milestone for AI development in India.

- Here it should be noted that GPT-3 contains 175 billion parameters, while newer models are estimated to reach into the trillions, approaching the roughly 100 trillion synapses in the human brain.
- Parameters act as the mind of the AI models.
- Apart from the Sarvam AI, BharatGen also presented a 17 billion parameter AI model.
 1. BharatGen is India's first government funded, sovereign, multilingual and multimodal AI initiative. IIT Bombay is associated with it.
- AI summits till now : England, France, South Korea, India, Switzerland (To be held).

Bacterial Communication

- Bacteria can talk to each other and are multilingual, they have so much to teach us about how collective behaviours evolved on earth.
- Mrs. Prof. Bonnie Bassler, renowned molecular biologist and professor of Princeton University, best known for her work in bacterial communication described Bacteria are "magical microbes" holding great promise in the fields of medicine, environment and agriculture.



- At a lecture titled “A chemical language that enables communication between diverse organisms” in Bengaluru, on 12 Feb, 2026, she said “Bacteria can talk to each other and are multilingual, and have so much to teach us about how collective behaviours evolved on earth.
- Bacteria can get into us, make us sick, and they can even kill us – but they give us our life too.
- It is the bacteria in our gut that digests food and gives us those (nutrients). This phenomenon of bacterial communication, or “quorum sensing” could indeed be a game changer for medicine, by opening new avenues to develop anti-quorum sensing therapies instead of antibiotics. Several are “notorious bacterial characters”. Prof, Bonnie said, specifically citing the deadly cholera-causing *Vibrio cholerae* bacterium, and perspectives on treating the disease. This bacterium is “the terrible cousin” to an obscure but brilliantly bioluminescent bacterium, the *Vibrio fischeri* that makes blue light and lives in a wonderful one-to-one symbiosis with a squid.
- The large squids live in knee-deep water along the coast of Hawaii. When scavenging under a bright moonlit sky, it needs a way to protect itself from predators that track the squid through their moving shadow. And this is where *Vibrio fischeri* glows under the squid, making it shadowless.

Next Step in AI

AI’s next step is the development of concrete AI applications and not just having more training or larger GPU clusters.

Trump revoked “endangerment finding”

- President Donald Trump on 12 Feb, 2026, revoked a foundational guideline (“endangerment finding”) of the American environment regulator (Environmental Protection Agency) that allowed it to control the transportation sector’s emission of greenhouse gases.
- The ‘endangerment finding’ emerged after the U.S. Supreme Court’s 2007 decision, in Massachusetts vs EPA, which held that greenhouse gases qualify as “air pollutants” and required the EPA to determine whether they endanger public health or welfare.
- In December 2009, the EPA concluded that six greenhouse gases – including 1. carbon dioxide, 2. nitrous oxide, 3. hydrofluorocarbons, 5. sulfur hexafluoride and 6. methane – “may reasonably be anticipated to endanger” health and welfare by fueling climate change.
- It was a landmark scientific finding which heavily affected assessments by the IPCC and U.S. scientific bodies.
- The EPA’s action had a seismic impact on the American automotive industry, setting in motion the first federal greenhouse gas standards, set in 2010, for cars and light trucks (2012-16), later extended through 2025. Manufacturers accelerated fuel-efficiency improvements, invested in hybrid systems, lightweight materials, and, eventually, battery-electric vehicles. Regulatory credit markets emerged, benefiting firms such as Tesla, Inc. and resulting in the popularity of electric vehicles globally, including in India.
- The repeal of the Environmental Protection Agency’s 2009 “endangerment finding” was paired with the immediate elimination of greenhouse gas standards on automobiles.



- The administration also framed the measure as a cost-saving move, claiming it would generate more than \$1 trillion in regulatory savings and bring down new car costs by thousands of dollars.
- Trump seems to believe that doing away with the EPA regulations will revive America's 'gas guzzler' era, boost American manufacturing jobs, and somehow tie in with his administration's rediscovery of Venezuelan oil.
- At best, the norms will be a speed bump to electric vehicle rollout and could win Mr. Trump some brownie points with his voter base. The real danger lies in automakers in India citing such regulation as a pretext to weaken fuel efficiency standards. Although India's standards do not yet connect climate goals with cars, the domestic automotive sector should view them as a lodestar.

What are bio-based chemicals and enzymes?

How is India positioned with respect to scaling bio-based chemicals and enzymes?

The story so far:

Biobased chemicals are industrial chemicals produced using biological feedstocks like sugarcane, corn, starch, or biomass residues, often through fermentation or enzymatic processes. Examples include organic acids (such as lactic acid), bioalcohols, solvents, surfactants, and intermediates used in plastics, cosmetics, and pharmaceuticals.

Enzymes are biological catalysts widely used in detergents, food processing, pharmaceuticals, textiles, pulp and paper, and increasingly in biomanufacturing. Enzymes often work at lower temperatures and pressures, reducing energy use and emissions.

Why does India need such chemicals?

India has strong fundamentals for scaling biobased chemicals and enzymes: a large CM YK agricultural base, deep expertise in fermentation from pharmaceuticals and vaccines, and a growing manufacturing sector.

Expanding this space could reduce import dependence on petrochemicals, create new markets for agricultural produce, and position India as a competitive supplier of sustainable industrial inputs. For example, India imported roughly \$479.8 million worth of acetic acid in 2023.

Where does India stand today?

India has prioritised biobased chemicals and enzymes as a priority area under the Department of Biotechnology's BioE3 policy. In the biobased chemicals segment, companies such as Praj Industries and Godrej Industries are leading. Other firms such as Godavari Biorefineries are pioneering ethanol-based, bioderived chemicals in India, while Jubilant Ingrevia produces "acetyls" intermediates (for example, acetic anhydride/ethyl acetate). Emerging companies such as StringBio are using novel microbial strategies to develop such chemicals.

The India enzymes market is consolidated in nature with top players accounting for more than 75% of the market share. Companies such as Novozymes India, DuPont, DSM, Advance Enzyme Technologies, BASF SE, and Ultreze Enzymes Private Limited are key players in the Indian market.

What are other countries doing?

The EU Bioeconomy Strategy and Action Plan provides coordinated support for biobased chemicals as part of circular bioeconomy goals. It links industrial transformation to climate goals, waste reduction, and sustainable growth. In the U.S., the USDA BioPreferred Program mandates federal procurement preference for certified biobased products, including chemicals and enzymes, creating early markets for producers.





China's bioeconomy development plans explicitly prioritise highvalue biobased chemicals and enzyme technologies as strategic sectors. In Japan, priority projects funded through METI/NARO integrate biobased chemical research with manufacturing readiness.

What are the risks?

A key risk in developing the biobased chemicals sector is the comparative cost of biobased products relative to petrochemical alternatives. While this cost disadvantage may be temporary and limited to early stages of scaleup, it nonetheless creates a significant entry barrier for private investment.

A second risk relates to the availability of reliable feedstocks and supporting infrastructure required to produce different categories of biobased chemicals at scale.

A third challenge lies in market adoption – specifically, whether biobased chemicals can seamlessly substitute existing inputs in manufacturing pipelines and whether downstream manufacturers are willing to switch, even when costs are comparable.

Scaling shared biomanufacturing infrastructure – such as biofoundries, pilot plants, and demonstration facilities under BioE3 – can reduce capital risk for firms. Clear standards, certification, and procurement policies can help build investor confidence.

How do graphics processing units work?

How are GPUs and CPUs different from each other? What are the four steps in rendering pipelines? What is a die? What are matrix and tensor operations? Why are European regulators investigating U.S. technology company Nvidia? How much energy do GPUs need?

The story so far:

In 1999, Californiabased Nvidia Corp. marketed a chip called GeForce 256 as “the world’s first GPU”. Its purpose was to make videogames run better and look better.

In the 2.5 decades since, GPUs have moved from the discretionary world of games and visual effects to becoming part of the core infrastructure of the digital economy.

What is a GPU?

Very simply speaking, a Graphics Processing Unit (GPU) is an extremely powerful numbercruncher. Less simply: a GPU is a kind of computer processor built to perform many simple calculations at the same time. The more familiar Central Processing Unit (CPU) is on the other hand built to perform a smaller number of complicated tasks quickly and to switch between tasks well.

To draw a scene on a computer screen, for instance, the computer must decide the colour of millions of pixels several times every second. A 1920x1080 screen has 2.07 million pixels per frame. At a frame rate of 60 per second, you will be updating more than 120 million pixels per second.

Each pixel's colour will also depend on lighting, textures, shadows, and the 'material' of the object. This is an example of a task where the same steps are repeated over and over for many pixels – and GPUs are designed to do this better than CPUs.

Imagine you're a teacher and you need to check the answer papers for an entire school. You can finish it over a few days. But if you have the help of 99 other teachers, each teacher can take a small stack and you can all wrap up in an hour.

A GPU is like having hundreds or even thousands of such workers, called cores. While each core won't be as powerful as a CPU core, the GPU has many of them and can thus complete large repetitive workloads faster.



How does a GPU do what it does?

When a videogame wants to show a scene, it sends the GPU a list of objects described using triangles (most 3D models are broken down into triangles). The GPU then runs a sequence called a rendering pipeline, consisting of four steps.

Vertex processing: The GPU first processes the vertices of each triangle to figure out where they should appear on the screen. This process involves using maths with matrices to rotate objects, move them, and apply the camera's perspective.

Rasterisation: After the GPU knows where each triangle lands on the screen, it fills in the triangle by deciding which pixels it covers. This step essentially converts the geometry of triangles into pixel candidates on the screen.

Fragment or pixel shading: For each pixel-like fragment, the GPU determines the final colour. It could look up a texture (for example, an image wrapped on the object), calculate the amount of lighting based on the direction of a lamp or the sun, apply shadows, and add effects like reflections.

Writing to frame buffer: The finished pixel colours are then written into an area of memory called the frame buffer. The display system reads the buffer and renders it on the screen.

Small computer programs called shaders perform the calculations required for these steps. The GPU runs the same shader code on many vertices or many pixels in parallel. Effectively the GPU reads and writes very large amounts of data – including 3D models, textures, and the final image – quickly, which is why many GPUs have their own dedicated memory called VRAM, short for video RAM.

VRAM is designed to have a high bandwidth, meaning it can move a lot of data in and out per second. Still, to avoid having to fetch the same data, the GPU also contains smaller, faster memory in the form of caches and arrangements for shared memory, with the goal of keeping memory access from becoming a bottleneck.

Many tasks outside graphics also involve performing the same type of calculation on large arrays of numbers, including machine learning, image processing, and in simulations.

Where is the GPU located?

A chip is a flat piece of silicon, called the die, with a fixed surface area measured in square mm. In a computer, the GPU is not a separate layer that sits below the CPU; instead it is just another chip, or a set of chips, mounted on the same motherboard or on a graphics card and wired to the CPU with a highspeed connection.

If your computer has a separate graphics card, the die holding the GPU will be under a flat metal heat sink in the middle of the card, surrounded by several VRAM chips. And the whole card will plug into the motherboard.

Alternatively, if your laptop or smartphone has 'integrated graphics', it likely means the GPU and the CPU are on the same die. This is common in modern system-on-a-chip, which are basically packages containing different chip types that historically used to come in separate packages.

Are GPUs smaller than CPUs?

GPUs are not smaller than CPUs in the sense of using some smaller kind of electronics. In fact, both use the same kind of silicon transistors made with similar fabrication nodes, for example, the 35 nm class. GPUs differ in how they use the transistors, that is, they have a different microarchitecture, including how many computing units there are, how they're connected, how they run instructions, etc.

CPU designers devote a lot of the die's area to complex control logics, the cache (auxiliary memory), and features that improve the chip's performance and ability to make decisions faster. A GPU on the other hand will 'spend' more area on many repeating compute blocks and very wide data paths, plus the hardware required to support those blocks, such as memory controllers, register files, display controllers, sensors, onchip networks, etc.





As a result, GPUs — especially the highend ones — often have more total transistors than many CPUs, and they aren't necessarily more densely packed per square mm. In fact, highend GPUs are often very large. Some GPU packages also place dynamic RAM very close to the GPU die, connected using short wires with high bandwidth. Essentially, the architecture of components needs to ensure the GPU can transfer large volumes of data quickly.

Why do neural networks use GPUs?

Neural networks — mathematical models with multiple layers that learn patterns from data and make predictions — can run on CPUs or GPUs, but engineers prefer GPUs because the networks run many tasks in parallel and move a lot of data. The math of neural networks is in the form of matrix and tensor operations. Matrix operations are calculations on two-dimensional grids of numbers, like rows and columns; the numbers in each grid can represent various properties of a single object. The essential problem is to multiply two grids to get a new grid. Tensor operations are the same idea but use higherdimensional grids, like 3D or 4D arrays.

This is useful when the neural network is processing images, for instance, which have more properties of interest than, say, a sentence. A neural network repeatedly adds and multiplies matrices and tensors. Since it's the same set of mathematical rules, just applied on different numbers, the thousands of cores of a GPU are perfect for the job. Second, contemporary neural networks can have millions to billions of parameters (a parameter is a learned weight or bias value inside the network). So in addition to doing the math, the network also has to be able to move data fast enough — and GPUs have very high memory bandwidth.

Many GPUs also include tensor cores, which are designed to multiply matrices extremely fast. For example, the **NVIDIA H100 Tensor Core** GPU can perform around 1.9 quadrillion operations per second of tensor operations called FP16/BF16. In fact, Google developed chips called Tensor Processing Units (TPUs) to efficiently run the math that neural networks require.

How much energy do GPUs consume?

Let's use a hypothetical example where four GPUs are used to train a neural network to predict the risk of some disease for a person (based on age, BMI, blood markers, and medical history). Then the same network is put in use.

Each GPU is an **Nvidia A100 PCIe**, whose board power is around 250 W during training. The GPUs are nearly fully used during training. The training duration is 12 hours.

The energy consumed during training will be 12 kWh and during use, around 2 kWh (assuming only one GPU provides the inferences). The server will also consume power for its CPUs, RAM, storage, fans, and networking, and some power will be lost. It's typical to add 3060% of the GPU power for these needs. Therefore, the total consumption will be around 6 kWh/day for the network to run continuously.

This is equivalent to running an AC for four to six hours at full compressor power, a water heater for around three hours or 60 small LED bulbs for 10 hours a day.

Does Nvidia have a monopoly?

Nvidia technically doesn't have a monopoly on GPUs; it enjoys a nearcomplete dominance in some markets and is a very strong market power in artificial intelligence (AI) computing platforms. In discrete GPUs sold for use in personal computers, industry trackers have reported that Nvidia has roughly 90% market share at least, with AMD and Intel making up most of the rest. As for GPUs used in data centres, Nvidia's position is strengthened by hardware performance and supply and the CUDA software ecosystem.

CUDA is Nvidia's software platform to run generalpurpose computation (like processing a signal or analysing data) on Nvidia GPUs. As a result, switching away from using Nvidia GPUs also means changing software, which companies don't like to do.





In fact, many buyers consider Nvidia GPUs running CUDA software to be the default platform for training and using neural networks at scale. The legal definition of monopoly depends on whether a firm can control prices or exclude the competition and whether it maintains that power through unlawful conduct.

This is why, for instance, European regulators have been investigating whether Nvidia uses its dominance to lock customers in, mainly by tying or discounting GPU prices when buyers also take Nvidia software or related components.

PAX SILICA

- The Pax Silica is an international alliance initiative of the USA, designed to build trusted, resilient supply chains of everything that powers the AI economy, ranging from rare earth minerals and energy to chip fabrication to setting of data centres, fibre-optic networks, and frontier AI models.
- The name “Pax Silica” consists of two terms/words i.e. Pax and Silica. Pax is a Latin word which means peace & prosperity, while Silica refers to silicon dioxide. It is widely known that silicon dioxide is the raw precursor to the semiconductor chips that make modern computing possible. Thus, “Pax Silica” refers a US-orchestrated coalition to form a stable, prosperous future depending on securing the silicon supply chain.
- The “Pax Silica” was launched at the “Pax Silica Summit” in Washington on 12 December, 2025.
- Seven Countries (Greece, Australia, Japan, South Korea, UK, Singapore, and Israel) plus the USA signed it as its founding members. Netherlands (on 117 December, Qatar (on 13 Jan), UAE (14 Jan) and India (20 Feb) joined later.
- India was not included in the list of founding countries but was later invited. India joined on February 20.

India’s potentials :

1. India has an estimated 8.52 million tonnes of rare earth reserve - one of the largest deposits in the world. However, India lacks extraction technology and proper investment in it.
 2. India has a rapidly growing semiconductor design ecosystem, with Qualcomm recently taping out a 2-nanometer chip design from its India centres.
 3. 10 semiconductor fabrication plants have been established from which commercial productions will start soon.
- India’s benefits :India can have faster access to process know-how, advanced manufacturing equipment and GPU infrastructure that has been in tight global supply. India can be benefited by close coordination with companies like ASML and Micron in having more technologies as India may be strong in designing semiconductors but in a preliminary stage in manufacturing. Joining the Pax Silica, is in accordance with India’s National Critical Minerals Mission (NCMM) and India Semiconductor Mission (NSM).

GPT/ChatGPT

- A generative pre-trained transformer (GPT) is a type of large language model (LLM) that is widely used in generative AI chatbots. GPTs are based on a deep learning architecture called the transformer. They are pre-trained on large datasets of unlabeled content, and able to generate novel content.
- OpenAI was the first to apply generative pre-training to the transformer architecture, introducing the GPT-1 model in 2018. The company has since released many bigger GPT models. The chatbot ChatGPT, released in late 2022 (using GPT-3.5), was followed by many competitor chatbots using their own generative pre-trained transformers to generate text, such as Gemini, DeepSeek and Claude.



- GPTs are primarily used to generate text, but can be trained to generate other kinds of data. For example, GPT-4o can process and generate text, images and audio. To improve performance on complex tasks, some GPTs, such as OpenAI o3, allocate more computation time analyzing the problem before generating an output, and are called reasoning models. In 2025, GPT-5 was released with a router that automatically selects whether to use a faster model or slower reasoning model based on the provided task
- During the 2010s, improved machine learning algorithms, more powerful computers, and an increase in the amount of digitized material allowed for an AI boom.
- Separately, the concept of generative pre-training (GP) was a long-established technique in machine learning. GP is a form of self-supervised learning wherein a model is first trained on a large, unlabeled dataset (the "pre-training" step) to learn to generate data points. This pre-trained model is then adapted to a specific task using a labeled dataset
- The transformer architecture for deep learning is the core technology of a GPT. Developed by researchers at Google, it was introduced in the paper "Attention Is All You Need", which was released on June 12, 2017. The transformer architecture solved many of the performance issues that were associated with older recurrent neural network (RNN) designs for natural language processing (NLP). The architecture's use of an attention mechanism allows models to process entire sequences of text at once, enabling the training of much larger and more sophisticated models. Since 2017, available transformer-based NLP systems have been capable of processing, mining, organizing, connecting, contrasting, and summarizing texts as well as answering questions from textual input.

On June 11, 2018, OpenAI researchers and engineers published a paper called "Improving Language Understanding by Generative Pre-Training", which introduced GPT-1, the first GPT mode

- On February 14, 2019, OpenAI introduced GPT-2, a larger model that could generate coherent text.
- GPT-2 has 1.5 billion parameters and was trained on WebText, a 40-gigabyte dataset of 8 million web pages.
- On May 28, 2020, OpenAI introduced GPT-3, a model with 175 billion parameters that was trained on a larger dataset compared to GPT-2.
 1. Following the release of GPT-3, OpenAI started using reinforcement learning from human feedback (RLHF) to align models' behavior more closely with human preferences.
 2. This led to the development of InstructGPT, a fine-tuned version of GPT-3.
 3. **ChatGPT**, the flagship chatbot product of OpenAI that was launched on November 30, 2022. ChatGPT was initially based on GPT-3.5.
- GPT-4 model, which was released on March 14, 2023.
- On August 7, 2025, OpenAI released GPT-5, which includes a router that automatically selects whether to use a faster model or slower reasoning model based on task.
- On December 11, 2025, GPT-5.2 is OpenAI's latest flagship LLM was released.

Foundation models

- A foundation model is an AI model trained on broad data at scale such that it can be adapted to a wide range of downstream tasks.
- The most recent OpenAI's *GPT-n* series model is GPT-5.





- GPT-5.2 is OpenAI's latest flagship large language model, released on December 11, 2025.

Green ammonia and India

India's energy shift through the green ammonia route

- Green hydrogen is increasingly being used to produce green ammonia by combining it with nitrogen. Its strategic use is growing in the European Union (EU), India, South Korea, and other regions.
- The creation of a global green ammonia market has begun through integrated procurement mechanisms by several countries and their groups.
- For example, the tender for green ammonia by H2Global under the European Union's hydrogen import strategy and South Korea's Clean Hydrogen Portfolio Standard (CHPS) are important.
- In June 2024, SECI issued a tender for a total demand of up to 724,000 tonnes per year of green ammonia at 13 fertilizer plants in India, under the SIGHT (Strategic Intervention for Green Hydrogen Transition) programme.
- Auctions were held in August 2025, and successful bidders were offered a 10-year fixed-price purchase agreement.
- The auction marked a significant breakthrough in cost-competitive green ammonia procurement, setting new global benchmarks that were approximately 40%-50% lower than H2Global auction prices.

- Seven bidders secured a total of 13 green ammonia distribution contracts in this auction. Specifically, one company won six contracts totaling 370,000 tons/year. These contracts include production subsidies of Rs. 8.82 per kg, Rs.7.06 per kg, and Rs.5.3 per kg for the first three years, and a 10-year fixed-price supply agreement with existing fertilizer manufacturers in India.

Free & Voluntary HPV vaccination

- The Union Health Ministry of India, in partnership with the GAVI (Global Alliance for Vaccination and Immunization, presently known as "Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance") has launched a free and voluntary nationwide HPV (Human Papillomavirus) vaccination programme targeting girls aged 14.
- In this vaccination programme, Gardasil will be used which is a quadrivalent HPV vaccine.
- It will protect recipients from HPV types 16 & 18, which cause cervical cancer and types 6 & 11.
- At the age of 14, the HPV vaccine offers maximum preventive benefit, well before a potential exposure to the virus.
- The South-East Asia Region (SEARO) accounts for the second-highest cervical cancer incident and death rate among WHO regions, with India contributing over 65% of the burden
- Cervical cancer is the second most common cancer among Indian women. India had 1,27,526 new cases and 79,906 deaths from cervical cancer in 2022.
- Anti-vaccination sentiments has been increasing world wide,. It is on the rise in countries like the USA, where a measles epidemic is on the increase in at least 26 States.



Carbon Capture and Utilisation Technologies (CCU technology)

- Carbon Capture and Utilisation (CCU) refers to a set of technologies that capture carbon dioxide emissions from industrial sources or directly from the air and convert them into useful products. This process removes carbon from the atmosphere and puts it into the economy as inputs for fuels, chemicals, building materials, or polymers. Unlike carbon capture and storage, where captured CO₂ is permanently stored underground rather than reused, CCU uses up the captured carbon.
- India has consistently been the world's third largest emitter of CO₂, with emissions driven largely by power generation, cement, steel, and chemicals.
- While renewable energy may reduce future emissions, many industrial processes are inherently carbon intensive and difficult to decarbonise. CCU offers a pathway to reduce emissions from these "hard to abate" sectors while simultaneously creating new industrial value chains. It also aligns with India's net zero target for 2070 and its push to build a circular, low carbon economy.
- India has begun supporting CCU through research funding from the Department of Science and Technology which has created a specific research and development roadmap for these technologies.

The draft 2030 roadmap for Carbon Utilisation and Storage (CCUS) presented by the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural gas has identified projects that can be used for CCUS purposes.

- In the private sector, Ambuja Cements (Adani Group) is working on an Indo-Swedish CCU pilot with IIT Bombay to convert captured CO₂ into fuels and materials.

- JK Cement is collaborating on a CCU testbed to capture CO₂ for applications such as lightweight concrete blocks and olefins.
- Beyond cement, Organic Recycling Systems Limited (ORSL) is leading India's first pilotscale BioCCU platform, valorising CO₂ from biogas streams into bioalcohols and specialty chemicals.

Other countries status : The EU Bioeconomy Strategy and Circular Economy Action Plan explicitly supports CCU as a way to turn CO₂ into feedstocks for chemicals, fuels, and materials, linking it to circularity and sustainability targets. ArcelorMittal and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Ltd. are working with a climate tech company, DCRBN, to trial a new technology to convert CO₂ captured at ArcelorMittal's plant in Gent, Belgium into carbon monoxide which can be used in steel and chemical production. The U.S. uses a combination of tax credits and funding to scale CCUs, particularly for CO₂ derived fuels and chemicals. The UAE's Al Reyadah project and planned CO₂ to chemicals hubs leverage CCU with green hydrogen.

Challenges :

- **Cost competitiveness :** The foremost risk in scaling CCU in India is cost competitiveness. Capturing, purifying, and converting CO₂ is energy-intensive and expensive. Without policy incentives, CCU-derived products will struggle to compete with cheaper, fossil-based alternatives.
- **Infrastructure readiness :** A second risk lies in infrastructure readiness. CCU requires co-located industrial clusters, reliable transport of CO₂, and integration with downstream manufacturing, all of which are unevenly developed across Indian industrial regions.
- Finally, the absence of clear standards, certification, and market signals creates uncertainty for investors and limits demand for CO₂-derived products.



- India has taken positive steps through the development of roadmaps to achieving CCU, and their appropriate implementation will be necessary for achieving India's goals.

Copernicus sentinel-2

It is an earth observation mission of the European Space Agency

Optimus

It is a humanoid robot model which will be produced at a large scale by Elon Musk's Tesla.

HbA1c based diabetic diagnosis may be misleading

- According to a new study published in The Lancet Regional Health-Southeast Asia on 9 Feb, 2026, India's over-reliance on glycated haemoglobin (HbA1c) test alone for diagnosing and monitoring type-2 diabetes (T2D) could result in underdiagnosis, delayed treatment and avoidable complications for millions.
- In Asia, particularly, India has a high prevalence of anaemia, haemoglobinopathies such as sickle cell disease and thalassaemia, and glucose-6-phosphate dehydrogenase (G6PD) deficiency.
- The article questioned reliance in HbA1c as sole diagnostic or monitoring tool for type 2 diabetes in South Asia

Dart frog Toxin

- This is a type of poison which is 200 times more potent than morphine.
- It is obtained from the skin of the Ecuadorian poison dart frog found in poison dart frogs in South America.

- The toxin is known as Epibatidine which is a natural neurotoxin.
- It is in news as according to the UK and some of its European allies, it was administered by the Russian opposition leader late Alexei Navalny.
- However, the Kremlin dismissed the finding as "an information campaign".
- The toxin overstimulates these nerve receptors, if dosed correctly, it can cause muscle twitching, paralysis, seizures, slow heart rate, respiratory failure and ultimately death, she explained.
- According to Alastair Hay, professor of environmental toxicology at the University of Leeds, its effects can result in breathing being blocked, and that "any person poisoned dies from suffocation"



ECONOMY

The 16th Finance Commission

- The 16th FC submitted its report to the President on November 17, 2025, which was tabled in Parliament on 1st Feb 2026.

It's constitution

- 16th Finance Commission was constituted on 31st December 2023, in the light of the provisions provided in thr Article 280 of the Constitution of India.
- Arvind Panagariya (former Vice-chairman of the NITI Aayog) was appointed as it's Chairman. It is constituted after every 5 years.
- On 31 January 2024, Ajay Narayan Jha (former member of the 15th FC and former Expenditure Secretary, Annie George Mathew, former Special Secretary, Expenditure, Dr. Niaranjan Rajyadhyaksha (Executive Director, Artha Global) were appointed as 3 Full members and Dr. Soumaya Kanti Ghosh (Group Chief Economic Advisor, SBI) was appointed as one part time member .
- This commission was mandated to submit its report to the President by October 31, 2025.

It's Recommendations

- The Commission has recommended for vertical devolution to the states a share of **41%** in central taxes at for the period of 2026-31.
- States were demanding for vertical devolution of 50%.
 - States are facing problems due to GST frameworks. States are compelled to take "recourse to market borrowings" as the principal adjustment mechanism.

- Total transfers to States are budgeted to rise by 12.2% between 2025-26 (RE) and 2026-27 (BE). But Rs.1.2 lakh crore – or about 42% of this increase – is from revenue transfers under Centrally Sponsored Schemes, reinforcing a governance model in which States act as implementers of priorities set in New Delhi.

- Horizontal Devolution: New Criteria for Distribution Among States

- The formula for distributing the states' share has been recalibrated with revised weights and a new parameter.

Criteria	15th FC Weight	16th FC Weight	Key Change
Income Distance	45%	42.5%	Slight reduction
Population (2011)	15%	17.5%	Increased weight
Demographic Performance	12.5%	10%	Redefined (uses pop. growth 1971-2011)
Area	15%	10%	Reduced weight
Forest & Ecology	10%	10%	Now includes open forests & growth in forest cover
Tax Effort	2.5%	0%	Dropped entirely
Contribution to GDP	0%	10%	New parameter rewarding economic size
Tota Total	100%	100%	

- The FC16's recommendations recognise the stresses in State finances but do not push for the structural change needed to restore the balance in fiscal federalism.

Urban Development :

- The 16th FC has allocated Rs.7,91,492 lakh crore (from 2026-31) to the local governments. (In 10th FC-1995-2000, it was 5381 crore Rs. after that in 11th it was 10,000 crore Rs., in 12th FC, it became 25,000 crore Rs. in 13th,14th,& 15th it were 87518, 2,87,436, 4,36,361 crore Rs., respectively).
- Out of this, 45% (Rs.3.5 lakh crore) has been recommended to the urban local governments (ULGs).



- And yet, beneath the veneer of macroeconomic stability, the fiscal math, as projected by the Finance Minister, masks a more precarious reality. As manufacturing scales in strategic frontiers like MSMEs, semiconductors, and biopharma, the mechanism connecting this massive capital expansion to actual employment outcomes has become increasingly tenuous. While capital formation successfully drives headline GDP, absorption of labour is stalled. This suggests that India is perfecting a growth model designed to function with clinical efficiency, while quietly leaving its vast labour force behind.
- **Towards a growth doctrine** : For much of India's fiscal history, capex played a secondary role. It expanded when revenues permitted and was restrained when deficits widened. That changed after the pandemic. From 2020-21 onwards, capex expenditure ceased to function as a countercyclical instrument and instead became the organising principle of fiscal policy. The data capture this shift. Capex expenditure as a share of total expenditure rose from roughly 12% in 2020-21 to over 22% in recent estimates.
- The youth NEET rate (share of people who are not in education, employment, or training) for ages 15-29 remains in the 23%-25% range, materially higher than several peer economies. Nearly one in four young Indians is structurally outside employment, education, or training even as public investment accelerates.

To achieve the goals of the budget, Ms. Sitharaman said the Budget was structured along three kartavyas or duties.

- “Our first kartavya is to accelerate and sustain economic growth, by enhancing productivity and competitiveness, and building resilience to volatile global dynamics,” she said.

1. The Finance Minister said that her first kartavya would be met through targeted measures in six areas: scaling up manufacturing in seven strategic and frontier sectors; rejuvenating legacy industrial sectors; creating “champion MSMEs”; a powerful push for infrastructure creation; ensuring long-term energy security and stability; and developing city economic regions.

The second kartavya, she added, was to fulfil the aspirations of the Indian people and build their capacity.

1. The second kartavya focused on measures targeted at the services sector through the education, training and skilling of the workforce in areas such as healthcare, medical tourism, animal husbandry, animation, visual effects, gaming and comics (AVGC), and design.

“Our third kartavya, is to ensure that every family, community, region and sector has access to resources, amenities and opportunities for meaningful participation,” she said.

1. Announcements under the third kartavya included measures to increase farmer incomes through productivity enhancement and entrepreneurship, empowering India's Divyang and vulnerable population through livelihood opportunities, training, high-quality assistive devices, and access to mental health and trauma care.

To push manufacturing sector further, establishments of

- Bio-pharma Shakti,
- Rare Earth Corridor,
- Three Dedicated Chemical Parks and
- India Semiconductor 2.0 has been announced.





The budget focused on 12 growth engines :

- Railways: at the cost of 16 lakh crore rupees, 7 High-speed corridors will be developed. The Budget also included the announcement of an integrated East Coast Industrial Corridor connecting Durgapur in West Bengal, as well as a new dedicated freight corridor connecting Dankuni in West Bengal to Surat in Gujarat.
- Road Transport : 3.09 lakh crore rupees has been allocated to this sector which is 8.0% more than the last-year's budget of 2.87 lakh crore rupees.
- Women : Girls' hostels shall be built in each district. She-mart for Lakhpati deedees.
- Tourism : 10 thousand Guides will be trained at 20 specific tourist places.
- Education : Education sees a hike of 14.21% to about 1.39 lakh crore rupees. Content Creation Labs will be established in 15,000 schools. The budget also plans to establish 5 University townships.
- Energy : Free custom charges on Nuclear energy for next 9 years.

Defense : The defense budget for FY'27 will be of 7,84,678 crore rupees, which will be

- 14.68% of the total budget and
- around 2% of India's GDP and
- it will be more than 15% from the defense budget of FY'26 (In FY'26, it was 6,81,210 crore rupees).
- It is the first time that such a large increase of 1.03 lakh crore rupees has been made.
- Major part of the defence budget is spend on modernization of the forces.

A look on previous five years budget :

- FY 2022-23 : 5.25 lakh crore rupees
- FY 2023-24 : 5.94 lakh crore rupees
- FY 2024-25 : 6.22 lakh crore rupees
- FY 2025-26 : 6.81 lakh crore rupees
- FY 2006-27 : 7.85 lakh crore rupees

Health : Establishment of Bio-pharma Shakti with an investment of 10 thousand crore rupees by the Government. Establishment of Five regional medical have also been proposed.

AI : 20-year Tax-free for Data Centres and Cloud services.

Industry :

- The textile sector will see almost a 25% jump in budgetary allocation for 2026-27 from current FY while the MSME sector will see doubling of allocation.l
- It injects 10,000 crore rupees in the form of equity help to MSME sector and a top-up amount of 2,000 crore rupees in the Atmanirbhar Bharat Fund. 200 Old industrial groups shall be revived. It also announced establishment of Mega Textile Park. In the budget, an 'Integrated National Fibre Scheme' for labour intensive textile/garment sector with five sub-components has been proposed. It also proposed 'Textile Extension and Employment Scheme' and 'Tex-Eco Initiative'

Agriculture : 20,000 Veterinary doctors, 500 resevoirs and 'Amrit Sarovars'

Banking : A new committee will be constituted to recommend steps for further reforms.

- A 20,000 crore rupee plan has been announced for Carbon capture, consumption and storage.
- The Budget emphasizes on development of tier-I cities having more than 5 lakh population.
- There will be a Capacity Building of 1.5 "bahukul caretakers for service of elderly people.
- To States, 1.4 lakh crore rupees shall be devolved as grants according to 16th Finance Commission recommendations. Debt-GDP ratio shall be reduced to 55.6% in the FY'27 from present 56.1%.





- It targets to bring the Fiscal deficit to 4.3%.

Municipality Bond : The budget has introduced a plan to provide an incentive of 100 crore rupees if they issue a Municipality Bond of the value of 1000 crore rupees.

- Recently the Patna Municipal Corporation (PMC) had proposed to issue a bond of 200 crore rupees.

Income Tax slabs :

- Upto 4,00,000/- : Zero
- 4,00,001/- to 8,00,000/- : 5%
- 8,00,001/- to 12,00,000/- : 10%
- 12,00,001/- to 16,00,000/- : 15%
- 16,00,001/- to 20,00,000/- : 20%
- 20,00,001/- to 24,00,000/- : 25%
- More than 24,00,000/- : 30%

Percentage of Income from :

1. Loans & Liabilities : 24%
2. Income Tax : 21%
3. Corporate Tax : 18%
4. GST & Others : 15%
5. Central Excise : ^%
6. Custom Duties : 4%
7. Non-Tax Revenue : 10%

Items of Expenditure :

1. States' share in Tax : 22%
 2. Interest Payments : 20%
 3. Central Schemes : 17%
 4. Defence : 11%
 5. Centrally sponsored schemes : 8%
 6. Finance Commission and other transfers : 7%
 7. Main Subsidy : 6% Civil Pension : 2%
- The Budget proposed to establish dedicated rare earth corridors to support the mineral-rich States of Odisha, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu to promote mining, processing, research and manufacturing.

- The first of the new national waterways to be constructed would be in Odisha, connecting places such as Talcher and Angul and Kalinga Nagar to the Paradip and Dhamra ports.
- Allocations for the Rural Jobs : allocation of 95,692.31 crore Rs. for VB-G RAM and 30,000 crore Rs for MGNREGA. It is 43% higher if compared with the revised Estimate of 88,000 crore Rs.
- However, experts say the allocation is insufficient to provide 125 workdays to all workers and the government will need an outlay of Rs. 2.3 crore.
- Census allocation : 6,000 crore Rs.

Union Gender budgeting

- The Union Govt has allocated funds for women and girls' under various schemes in the Union Budget 2026-27, which saw an increase of 11.55% from the previous fiscal year

US-India Trade Deal, 2026

- As per a Social Media post by the USA President Mr. Donald Trump, the USA has become ready to reduce the reciprocal Tariff from 25% to 18%. He also announced that the Indian PM has also become ready to not to buy Oil from Russia, which refers that the USA will also abolish the Penalty of 25%
- The imposition of 25% tariff on India was signed by Mr. Trump on July 30 came into effect from August 7 and the order for imposition of 25% penalty signed on August 6 which had come into effect from August 27.
- Mr. Trump's post also informed that India will import from the USA worth 500 billion USD (Per year).





- After Mr. Trump's post, a post on X, confirmed the deal regarding reduction of the reciprocal tariff to 18% but, it did not refer anything about the promise of not buying oil from Russia.
- As a whole, no official content, subject matter has been published.
- From another post of the Agriculture Minister of the USA, it was informed that there was a deal on agricultural products.
- The two countries also agreed to strengthen “economic security alignment” to enhance supply chain resilience and innovation through complementary actions “to address nonmarket policies of third parties”, as well as cooperating on inbound and outbound investment reviews and export controls.
- “India and the U.S. will significantly increase trade in technology products, including Graphics Processing Units (GPUs) and other goods used in data centers, and expand joint technology cooperation.”

Developments on & after 7 Feb :

- Joint statement on the deal : Further, on 7 Feb, 2026, India & the USA issued a joint statement on the deal.
 1. It confirmed the information provided through above posts but it did not include any mention of India's imports of Russian oil.
 2. The joint statement said that India will eliminate or reduce tariffs on all US industrial goods and a wide range of US food and agricultural products, including dried distillers' grains, red sorghum for animal feed, tree nuts, fresh and processed fruits, soyabean oil, wine and spirits and additional products.
- The US President separately signed an amendment to an executive order, effective from 7 February, 2026, that removed the additional 25% tariff on imports from India, which had been imposed in August 2025 as a 'penalty' for India's import of Russian oil.
- India's commerce minister said that an executive order that would reduce the remaining 25% reciprocal tariff to 18% is expected next week.
- He also informed that a formal Interim Agreement to be signed expectedly in mid-March 2026.
- “The US and India will establish rules of origin that ensure that the benefits of the Agreement accrue predominantly to the US and India.”

Digital trade

The two countries also committed to addressing “discriminatory or burdensome” practices and other barriers to digital trade, and to set a “clear pathway” to achieve mutually beneficial digital trade rules as part of the BTA.

India's payment to UN

India has paid \$35.18 million to the UN Regular Budget for 2026, joining the 'honour roll' of 47 Member states who pay full budget on time.

India's first fully Insured district

India's first fully Insured district is Alwar in Rajasthan under : “Insurance for All by 2047”

Moody's projection for growth in India's GDP

Moody's Ratings has projected growth in India's GDP at the rate of 6.4% in the FY'27.





Miniratna status

Yantra India Limited has been awarded the status of Miniratna category-1

USA Owes to UN

The USA owes to the UN nearly \$4 billion. It includes :

- \$2.196 billion for it's regular operating budget and
- \$1.8 billion for far-flung peacekeeping operations

New deal between Bangladesh and the USA

A new deal between Bangladesh and the USA has been signed. According to it,

- Bangladesh has got a tariff rate of 19% in the new trade deal with the U.S., which is good compared to our rivals like Cambodia and Indonesia
- The deal has given us greater advantage as the U.S. has agreed to reduce tariff to zero if our textile producers switch to U.S. cotton or manmade fibre,”
- Bangladesh will replace Indian cotton with U.S. produced cotton
- It will provide Bangladesh greater access to the U.S. market.
- the deal had made Bangladesh's cotton market “attractive” for the U.S.

Bangladesh restricted import of yarn from India through its land ports through an order dated April 13, 2025.

1. India exported to Bangladesh cotton yarn worth \$1.6 billion in 2024-25 and manmade fibre (MMF) yarn worth nearly \$85 million.
2. India exported \$1.47 billion worth cotton yarn (570 million kg) to Bangladesh, which is the biggest destination for Indian yarn, in 20242025. It also shipped 1214 lakh bales of cotton to Bangladesh last year. Almost 20% of Bangladesh's garment and 26% of India's cotton apparel exports are to the U.S.

- On May 16, 2025, India had imposed curbs on import through land ports of several items which included readymade garments, the largest export item from Bangladesh to India.
- Bangladeshi authorities have said that they will now shift focus to the market in the U.S., which is the largest textile market for Bangladeshi manufacturers.
- But critics say that the trade agreement had “undoubtedly” created a market in Bangladesh for raw cotton from the U.S. and cautioned that the agreement has “restricted Bangladesh as it will prevent Bangladesh from exploring rival cotton producing countries”.

India's Forex Reserve

- In the last week, ended on 20 February, India's forex reserves was 723.60 Arab dollar. It was 2.11 Arab dollars down from its previous week.
- its previous week ended on 13 February, India's forex reserve was 725.727 billion dollars. This was the all-time high level of India's forex reserves.
- In the week ended on 6 Feb, India's forex reserve was 717.06 arab dollars. It was 6.71 arab dollars down from the previous week. In the week ended on 30 January, India's Forex Reserve reached at the new all time high level of 723.77 billion USD.





- The value of the Gold Reserve was 123.47 arab dollars.
- Before this, in the last week, which ended on 23 January, India's Forex Reserve had reached an all time high level of 709.41 billion USD, with an increase of 08.05 billion USD.
- Its previous all time high was 704.89 billion USD in September 2024.
- Diversification: In December 2025, India diversified its oil imports from 10 countries, up from 16 countries in December 2024.
- Indian companies paid an average of \$506.7 per tonne for oil import from the USA, while they paid \$469.4 per tonne from Russia.
- There is also a significant difference in the cost of shipping oil from the US/Venezuela and the Middle East. It could be on average \$4.5 a barrel, compared to a maximum of \$1 a barrel from the Middle East. (Estimating the cost of transporting oil from Russia is difficult as different companies work out separate deals with non-sanctioned entities in Russia).

India's Oil Imports

India imported 5.8 million tonnes oil in December, 2025 from Russia (7.7 million tonnes in November 2025). It accounts for 24.9% of its total oil import in December 2025. (it was 34% in November 2025). However, during Apr-Dec 2025, India imported 31% oil from Russia of its total oil imports. (during the same period in 2024, India had imported 37.5% of its oil from Russia).

1. It was the lowest since February, 2025.
 2. This quantity stands at 24.9% of India's overall oil imports in December, 2025.
- The value of this import from Russia was \$2.7 billion, down 15% from Dec 2024.
 - India's oil imports from the U.S. was 1.1 million tonnes, with a total value of \$569.3 million, 31% increase compared to Dec 2024. (In November, India's oil imports from the U.S. had jumped to a seven-month high of nearly 2.8 million tonnes, with a total value of \$1.4 billion). During Apr-Dec 2025, India imported 7.8% of its total oil imports from the USA, which was 4.5% during Apr-Dec 2024.
 - India imported a total 21.59 million tonnes of crude oil in December, 2025. It was 7% higher than in December 2024.
 - India's oil import value from Saudi Arabia was \$1.8 billion, which saw a 60% rise.
 - India has begun sourcing oil from 41 countries, compared with 27 countries a few years ago.

New CPI Series

- Base revised from 2012 to 2024, using Household Consumption Expenditure survey (HCES) 2023-24.
- 12 Divisions in place of 6 Groups in accordance with Classification of Individual Consumption According to Purpose (COICOP) 2018.
- 1. COICOP, 2018 is the updated International standard for classifying individual consumption expenditures by purpose, adopted by the UN Statistical Commission in March 2018 to replace the 1999 version.

Export of Gems & Jewellery

- In January 2026, the export value of the Gems & Jewellery was \$223.85 crore (2,376 million or 2.376 billion), 5.79% down from \$237.60 crore.
- During the period of Apr-Jan, 2026-27, the export value of the Gems & Jewellery was \$2318.58 crore, while it was \$2333.47 crore in the previous year's same period.



UAE-INDIA

- India and UAE had signed the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) in 2022 with a target of pushing the value of bilateral trade between the two to 100 billion dollars in 2030 which has been achieved in 2025, 5 years ahead.
- In January, 2026, a new target has been set of 200 billion dollars by 2032.
- Non-oil trade value is \$65 billion.
- UAE entities have invested over \$22 billion in India, while the Indian companies have invested \$16 billion into the UAE.
- 5 million Indian nationals live and work in the Emirates, forming its largest diaspora.

Unemployment rate

- In January, 2026 the unemployment rate among the age group of 15 years and above was 5%. In December, 2025, it was 4.8%.

New Economic Base-year & Data of India

- After the IMF had assigned Grade 'C' to India's economic data on 27 November, 2026, the government of India had decided to change its various base years.

Accordingly, the Government of India had decided to change the various base years as follows :

Changes in the calculation of the Indian economy

- According to the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, retail inflation based on the Consumer Price Index and national accounts data will be released on a new basis from February 12 onwards.

- While the new series of the Index of Industrial Production will be released from May 28, 2026.
- Base year for retail inflation: 2024 (to be released from February 12)
- For national accounts: 2022-23 (from February 27, 2026)
- Index of Industrial Production: 2022-23 (from May 28, 2026)

Meanwhile, the Union Government released the First Advance Estimates on 7th January.

- According to it, the Growth Rate in the Real GDP during the FY 2025-26 will stand at 7.4%, while the Growth Rate in the Nominal GDP during the FY 2025-26 will stand at 8.0%.
- The Government issues data regarding a particular Financial Year in the form of **first Advance Estimates** (January) & **Second Advance Estimates** on 27 February. After 30 May, **Provisional Estimates** are released.
- Till now, about the Fiscal Year 2025-26, GoI had revealed that the growth rate during Q1 = 7.8%, Q2 = 8.2% and during H1, it was 6.8%

On 12th Feb, 2026, the GoI issued the new CPI series.

New CPI Series:

- Base revised from 2012 to 2024, using Household Consumption Expenditure survey (HCES) 2023-24.
- 12 Divisions in place of 6 Groups in accordance with Classification of Individual Consumption According to Purpose (COICOP) 2018.
- COICOP, 2018 is the updated International standard for classifying individual consumption expenditures by purpose, adopted by the UN Statistical Commission in March 2018 to replace the 1999 version.



On 27 Feb, it issued the base year for the National Accounting data.

- The New series of data has been released by the Statistics Secretary Saurabh garg and Chief Economic Advisor V. Anantha Nageswaran which updates base year for the National Accounting Data System from 2011-12 to 2022-23.

Changes due to New Base Year		
Financial Year/Titles	Old Base Year	New base Year
2023-24	9.2%	8.2%
2024-25	6.5%	7.1%
2025-26	7.4% (in real GDP) (as predicted in the First Advance Estimates on the basis of the old series)	7.6% (in real GDP) (in the second Advance Estimates)
FY'26: Q1, Q2 & Q3	Q1 : 7.8% Q2 : 8.4% Q3 : Issued only on the new base year series, shown in next column	Q1 : 6.7% Q2 : 8.4% Q3 : 7.8%

According to the second advance estimates

Sectors	Sub-Sectors	2024-25	2025-26
Primary Sector	Agriculture	4.3%	2.5%
	Mining & Quarrying	11.3%	5.0%
	Aggregate	5.0%	2.8%
Secondary Sector	Manufacturing	8.3%	12.5%
	Construction	7.1%	6.9%
	Aggregate	7.3%	9.5%

FDI during April-December

- FDI during April-December, FY'26 in India was 47.87 billion dollar. It was 18% higher than the same period of the FY'25



BIHAR

Bihar in the Union Budget

It will benefit from the Siliguri-Varansai High-speed Rail Corridor. High speed trains will run at the speed of 320 km per hour. There will be five stations in Bihar : Buxar, Patna, Begusarai, Katihar & Kishanganj.

- Bihar has been allocated 10,379 crore Rs for rail infrastructure development in 2026-27.
- The Rail Minister said that the railways is implementing several infrastructure development projects across the state, valued at a total of 1,09,158 crore Rs.
- Under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme 98 stations are being revamped at an investment of Rs. 3287 crore Rs.

Six-new Water-ways :

- A Bihar Maritime Board shall be constituted by reorganizing the Inland Water Transportation Department.
- In Bihar, Ganga river has already been marked as National Waterways (NW) 1.
- New proposed waterways in this budget for Bihar,
 1. NW-37 (Gandak),
 2. NW-40 (Ghaghra),
 3. NW-54 (Karmnasa),
 4. NW-58 (Kosi),
 5. NW-81 (Punpun) and
 6. NW-94 (Sone)
- According to this budget, Bihar will get 1,51,831 crore rupees, from the divisible pool of the Union Taxes, which will be 13,316 crore rupees more than that in the previous financial year (in FY'26, it was a total of 1,38,515 crore rupees).

This amount has been increasing year by year:

- FY 2021-22 : 86,942 crore rupees
- FY 2022-23 : 97,767 crore rupees
- FY 2023-24 : 1,14,289 crore rupees
- FY 2024-25 : 1.28.151.10 crore rupees
- FY 2025-26 : 1,38,515 crore rupees

Ship Repair Centre in Patna (Digha)

- The State government has allotted 5 acre land to establish a Ship Repair centre in Digha of Patna with a cost of 300 crore rupees.
- It has been announced in the Budget 2026-27.

Bihar Economic Survey, 2025-26

- Bihar Economic Survey, 2025-26 was tabled in the Assembly on 2 February, 2026.
- According to it, Economic growth of Bihar, at the current prices, in 2024-25 was 13.1%, higher than the national average of 9.8%.
- The State government's expenditure increased from 1.66 lakh crore in 2020-21 to 2.82 lakh crore in 2024-25.
- Bihar's per capita GSDP at current prices rose from Rs.46,412 in 2020-21 to 76,490 in 2024-25.

A state-of-art ship repair centre in Patna

A state-of-art ship repair centre shall be established with an estimated cost of approx. Rs. 243 crore. It was announced by the Sate Transport Minister Sharawan Kumar on 2 February.



1. For this, 20,000 square meters of land has been identified on the Southern bank of Ganga in Patna.
 2. The Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) has expedited the tender process.
 3. The Centre will be completed within 24 months of the commencement of work.
- The ship repair centre will include vessel handling and lifting infrastructure like slipway structure (sloping concrete platform, ship lift and transfer system, 800-tonne capacity maritime boat hoist and hydraulic trailer.
 - There will also be a primary repair bay, small vessel bay, additional raft foundation slab.
 - Under the central govt's Vision 2047, the goal is to increase the use of waterways for passenger transport across the country from 6% to 12%.
 - At present, the only ship repair facility on the NW-1 is in Kolkata.. Therefore, all ships are sent to Kolkata for repair.
 - There is a proposal to acquire 22 hybrid vessels for regular ferry services from Patna and surrounding ghats. These vessels can operate even in water as shallow as one metre.
- Bihar has 7 National Waterways (total 111 in India) which covers the length of 1187 km.
 - Inland water transport provides a cheaper alternative (average cost of 1.3 per tonne-km, compared with Rs. 2.41 by rail and 3.62 by road)
 - It will decrease road traffic by 30-40%. National Inland Navigation Institute (NINI) is situated in Patna. The State Government is planning to establish Inland waterways Navigation Training Institutes at Buxar, Bhagalpur and Darbhanga under the guidance of the NINI. A multimodal terminal at Kalughat can handle 77,000 container loads annually, with seamless water, rail and road connectivity reducing time and cost of freight movement.
 - The State Government will also focus on dredging in rivers like Kosi & Sone for smooth navigation and to create smooth freight corridors.
 - According to the Roadmap, the National Waterways passing through Bihar will be developed. Apart from this, Inland Waterways in Bihar will also be developed.
 - The State Government will also put emphasis on developing Urban Water Transport. A Patna Water Metro with an estimated budget of 1200 crore Rs. will be developed (on the pattern of the Kochi Water Metro).

Waterways in Bihar

- The State government has made a roadmap to develop waterways in Bihar which was revealed at the third meeting of the 'Inland Waterways Development Council'.
 - The Inland Waterways Development Council was established in 2013 under the guidance of the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI)
 - It is Chaired by the Union Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways. The concerned ministers of the State/UTs governments are its members.
 - Its first meeting was held on 8th January, 2024 on board the MV Ganga Queen in Kolkata
1. Currently, trails are underway for one electric hybrid water metro and another water metro will arrive in Patna soon.
 2. These two water metros will operate between Kangan Ghat, Digha ghat, Gai ghat, Gandhi ghat, Digha ghat, Narial ghat, panapur, Konhara ghat, kali ghat (Sonapur), and Chhechhar ghat.





- Three new Quick Points Of Mobilisation (QPOM) at Digha, Danapur and Fatuha. At present one QPOM is functional at Ara. Two hybrid electric catamaran vessels are arriving to operate in both battery and hybrid modes. These will be zero-emission and quiet, boosting commercial and tourism activities. Cruise terminals are being developed at Digha Ghat and Kangan Ghat in Patna, along with a ship repair facility. Bihar also demanded for revision of the water carrier scheme, seeking a reduction in the minimum distance from 300 km to 100 km to suit Bihar's City network. In Bihar, there are a total of 1550 ghats where transportation of around 7000 are conducted.
- In keeping with the resolve of Nyay ke Saath Vikas (development with justice), a sum of ₹7,724 crore has been allocated for social welfare schemes.
- Eligible women will receive Rs.2 lakh under the scheme.
- Total expenditure for 2026-27 is estimated at Rs.3,47,589.76 crore. Establishment and committed expenditure is pegged at Rs.2,25,434.34 crore.
- The annual scheme outlay is estimated at Rs.1,22,155.42 crore and revenue expenditure is projected at Rs.2,84,133.92 crore.

BIHAR BUDGET, FY'27

Main Points:

- The budget reflects policy stability instead of any major change.
- It is a Rs.3.47 lakh-crore budget for the financial year 202627 in the Bihar Assembly, placing major emphasis on education, technology, innovation and social justice.

1. the budget marks an increase of about Rs.30,000 crore over last year's outlay of Rs.3.17 lakh crore.

Estimated growth rate : 14.9%

The State government's plans are being prepared on five basic elements –

- knowledge,
 - science,
 - integrity,
 - aspirations and
 - respect.
- Tax revenue of around ₹65,800 crore during the year

- The fiscal deficit is estimated at Rs.39,111.80 crore, or 2.99% of the GSDP of Rs.13,09,155 crore for 2026-27.
- The State projects a revenue surplus of Rs.1,143.19 crore, or 0.09% of GSDP, asserting that its finances are “in good shape”.

Five big things:

- Rs.3000 annual payment to farmers under 'Karpuri Samman Nidhi'
- Target of private investment of Rs.50 lakh crore to increase employment opportunities.
- One Model School and A degree college in each Block and establishment of one New Educational City.
- Construction of five new expressways and converting all one-lane urban roads into two-lanes.
- All diesel buses shall be converted into CNG and electric buses

“Three sankalps” :

1. To make per capita income double
2. To create 11 crore employment opportunities
3. To Empower women



Big allocations : (in Rs. crore)

Education	68,216.95
Rural Development	23,701.41
Health	21,270.41
Energy	18,737.06
Urban Development	15,237
Rural works department	11,312.18
Panchayati raj	10,995.51
Social welfare	8470.06
Road Construction	7404.79

GSDP: (In Rs. Crore)

FY	At current price)	At Constant price
2022-23	7,63,165	60,573
2023-24	8,77,197	68,624
2024-25	9,91,997	76,490

55 Centre of Excellence in Bihar

- 55 Educational institutions of Bihar shall be developed as the Centre of Excellence.
- Apart from this, teaching/classes of graduation course in degree colleges 213 Blocks will be started from July, 2026. This step has been taken in the light of 4th point of the “Saat Nischay” i.e. “Unnat Shiksha, Ujjwal Bhavishya”.

1. These 213 blocks are such blocks where there are no degree colleges.

185 MW electricity from Kajra Solar Plant

An MoU has been signed on 4th February, 2026 between the Kajra Solar Plant, Lakhisarai (185 MW solar power and 282 MWh battery based energy storage project) and the Bihar Govt.

Cultivation of pulses in Bihar

- The State govt. has set a target to increase the cultivation of pulses in Bihar from the area of 4.48 lakh hectare to 9,19 lakh hectare and to increase its production from 3.93 lakh metric tonnes to 11.27 lakh metric tonnes.
- For this the government has taken steps to strengthen the Pulses seed system. Under this step, production of 45,992 quintal certified seed and production of 2043 quintal ‘Aadhar beej’ will be ensured.
- The farmers of Bihar will also be provided 1,15,742 quintal high quality seeds at subsidized rates.
- According to the National Institute of Nutrition, intake of 25 gm per capita per day has been recommended.

Gender Budget in Bihar

- Out of 3.46 lakh crore budget of Bihar, 48,000 crore will be spent on multilateral development and empowerment of women. This expenditure will span over 27 departments.
- In the Gender budget, an integrated expenditure amount on the welfare of women is represented.
- Out of the expenditure of 14,000 crore rupees under the saat nischay, 9,000 crore will be spent on women welfare.
- In the budget of FY '26, out of 3,16.895 crore rupees, 48,657 crore i.e 15.35% amount was allocated for development of women.

However, it was 30.03% of the total budget amount of FY'24.

1. In FY'20 : 15.77%,
2. FY'21 : 13.53%,
3. FY'22 : 17.45%,
4. FY'23 : 18.05%,
5. FY'25 : 14%



Gangajal to Bihar reservoirs

- The Central Water Commission has approved the project to provide Ganga river water to 6 of total 23 water reservoirs in Bihar.
- For this, a 132 kilometre pipeline will be built. It will be completed in two stages.
- 15 crore rupees have been allocated for this purpose.

Faruwahi Folk Dance

- A vibrant cultural marker of West Champaran and Bhojpuri speaking region in Bihar.
- It is a physically demanding dance in which the performer's entire body moves rhythmically to the beats of traditional instruments such as the dholak, nagada, and cymbals.
- It is an energy and intensity intensive dance.

Prabodhan in Bihar Vidhan Parisar

Prabodhan is a seminar which was held in the central hall of the Bihar Legislative Building on the 106th foundation day of the Bihar Legislative body.

- The creation of a separate province by combining Bihar and Orissa was announced on 12th December, 1911 by the British Emperor George V in his Delhi Durbar. Patna was made its headquarter. On 22 March 1912, this creation was notified and Sir Charles Stuart Bailey was appointed as first Lieutenant-Governor.
- For its legislative functions, a 43-member Provincial Legislative Council was created. Its first meeting was held on 20 January, 1913.

- However, a new administrative system of Dyarchy was introduced by the Govt of India Act, 1919. The province of Bihar was elevated to the status of Governor's province. Due to this change, a new Governor was appointed in the place of the Lieutenant Governor. Lord S. P. Sinha was appointed as the first Governor of Bihar & Orissa.

- After becoming a Governor's State, the first meeting of the Bihar and Orissa Provincial Legislative Council was held under the Presidency of Sir Wlter Maude on 7 February 1921, addressed by the Governor Lord S. P. Sinha.

- In 1937, when Bihar was separated from Orissa due to the Govt of India Act, 1935. Mr. Ram Dayalu Singh was appointed as the Speaker, on 23 July, 1937. (Mr. Bindeshwari Prasad Verma became the first Speaker after Independence, from 25 April, 1946 to 14 March 1962)

- The theme of 2026 Prabodhan was "Empowered legislators, stronger democracy" (Sashakt Vidhayak, Sashakt Loktantra).

- On this day, National e-Vidhan Sabha Application _NeVA) was also inaugurated.

- On this occasion, Lok Sabha Speaker Mr. Om Birla was the chief guest.

- On this occasion, Mr. Vijay Kumar Choudhary, the Parliamentary Minister of Bihar demanded repeal of Article 104 and 193, saying their content was incongruous with the spirit of the Constitution in the present context. These two Articles deal with the provisions related to the Penalty for sitting and voting in Parliament and a State Legislative house, in case of not taking Oath and in case of any disqualification.

1. Mr. Choudhary viewed that the punishment in the form of rupee is not according to the spirit of the constitution, rather it was a part of the then IPC, CrPC, and now the new BNS. The Constitution empowers a Speaker to punish under contempt of the House or to send jail in case of illegal entry.



Vulture Conservation in Bihar

- Vultures are known to be extremely important to the ecosystem. It is estimated that a single vulture can consume approximately 1 to 1.5 kilograms of carrion per day, significantly reducing the spread of diseases. This is why vultures are often called 'sanitation sentinels' and 'heroes of the ecosystem'."
- Vulture numbers have been declining significantly over the past several years. Recognizing their importance, the Forest Department of the Government of Bihar has initiated a dedicated program during 2023-24, giving special priority to vulture conservation in the VTR. Five acres of land in compartment number T-22 of Gonauli forest range under Valmiki Tiger Reserve (VTR) in West Champaran has been identified for setting up a vulture conservation centre.
- Main reasons for the decline in the number of vultures: Experts believe that the main reason for the sharp decline in the number of vultures over the decades is the widespread use of diclofenac, a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug given to animals. When vultures ate the carcasses of animals treated with diclofenac, the drug proved fatal to the birds.
- Recent surveys and ground level observations have confirmed the presence of vultures in various parts of the sanctuary. Recent efforts have shown encouraging signs of recovery in the endangered vulture population, raising new hopes for biodiversity conservation in the region.
- Recently groups of about 25 to 30 vultures have been sighted in the VTR area at Madanpur, Gobardhana, Harnatand and along the banks of river Gandak. Vultures seen mainly include the Long-billed Vulture (*Gyps indicus*) and the White-rumped Vulture (*Gyps bengalensis*), Both are listed as critically endangered species on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List.
- He further said that the Forest Department has set a target of increasing the number of vultures in the Valmiki Tiger Reserve by 30 to 40% in the next five years. "Although the use of non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs) such as diclofenac in livestock is considered a major cause of the decline in vulture numbers, at the same time, non-target poisoning through pesticide-laden carcasses has also emerged as an important cause of vulture mortality in many parts of the country."

Therefore, the following are the key points of the strategy being undertaken by the Forest Department of Bihar to ensure the availability of safe food sources:

1. Promote diclofenac-free veterinary practices in villages surrounding the sanctuary.
2. Encourage veterinarians and livestock keepers to use safer alternatives.
3. To also make local communities aware about disposing of animal carcasses at designated safe places.

Hugh Gantzer

- Hugh Gantzer was a renowned travel writer and a Padma Shree awardee (in 2025, in Literature and Education.)
- He died on 4 Feb 2026.
- He was born in Patna.

Plastic roads in rural Bihar

- Under an initiative under the rural development department's Lohia Swachh Bihar Abhiyan (LSBA), Single-use plastic collected from rural households in Bihar is being re-purposed for village road construction, converting a persistent waste problem into a resource for stronger rural infrastructure.



- The plastic waste gathered from households, under the door-to-door garbage collection in rural areas, is being channelled to 171 plastic waste management units established across the state.
- After segregation and processing, the material is supplied to the rural works department for use in road construction. The department is blending shredded plastic with hot bitumen to lay plastic-mixed roads, a method that has been promoted in several parts of the country as a way to improve road durability while reducing plastic litter.
- So far, Bihar has constructed 10.5 km of roads using about 8 metric tonnes of plastic waste in three districts—Khagaria, Purnia and Aurangabad—according to district-wise data shared by the departments involved.

1. In Khagaria, a 1-km stretch has been built using around 1 metric tonne of plastic.
2. In Purnia, a little over 4 km of road has been laid using more than 3 metric tonnes of plastic.
3. Aurangabad accounts for 5 km of plastic-mixed roads, consuming about 3.5 metric tonnes of plastic waste.

- Ratnish Verma, state advisor for Solid and Liquid Waste Management under LSBA, said the process uses shredded low-density and high-density plastic along with PET material, mixed with hot tar at a ratio of around 7%.

1. He said the resulting surface performs better in waterlogged conditions and is less prone to damage caused by still water, a common factor behind premature deterioration of rural roads during and after the monsoon.

- Rural development and transport minister Shraavan Kumar said the programme is intended to support environmental protection and sustainable infrastructure development. He said the focus is on strengthening roads in waterlogged areas while also reducing pollution by ensuring better collection and disposal of single-use plastic.

- The state plans to expand the model to additional districts in the coming period, scaling up both plastic processing capacity and its use in rural road works.

Defence corridor in Bihar

- At present, there are only two defence corridors in India—one in UP and second in TamilNadu.
- The Govt of Bihar, in its FY'27 budget, has announced the establishment of a defence corridor in Bihar.

1. Currently, an ordinance factory is operating in Nalanda. This is the only factory in the country that produces the bio-modular charge system, which is used to fire shells from the Bofors and other cannons.
2. There is a gun factory in Munger.

Child Budget in Bihar

- Child budget in Bihar was started since FY 2013-14
- Its objective is to focus on education, health and development for children aged 0-18.

The budget amount on the child welfare is utilized in accordance to the four key pillars of the UNCRC (UN Child Rights Conference) Framework :

1. Survival (health & nutrition);
2. Development (Education, care);
3. Protection (safety from abuse); and
4. Participation (Voice in matters affecting them)

- In FY '26, the child budget in Bihar was 64,554 crore Rs.



VTR emerges as major snake biodiversity hub

- VTR, which is Bihar's only Tiger Reserve, has emerged as a major centre of snake biodiversity.
- A total of 43 snake species have been recorded.
- However, worldwide 35,00 snake species exist and around 363 species are recorded in India.

In VTR, the Wildlife Institute of India, in collaboration with the state forest department has identified 5 new snakes :

1. Copper Head Trinket (locally known as Vansundari);
 2. Twin spotted wolf snake;
 3. Dromelis Black-headed snake;
 4. Mock Viper; and
 5. Salazar Pit Viper (mildly Venomous).
- None of these are found in any other districts of Bihar.
 - Long-Snaout Vine Snake is a new species discovery from this area is also new for India and the World.
 - According to global estimates, around 600 snake species worldwide are venomous.
 - Of India's "Big Four" snakes (1. Spectacled Cobra; 2. Common krait; 3. Russel's Viper; 4. Saw scaled Viper), the first three species are found in Bihar
 - Snakes play a crucial role in maintaining ecological balance
 1. by controlling rodent population and supporting the natural food chain
 2. Their presence also indicates a healthy forest ecosystem.

Rare Earth Survey in Nawada

- A survey for exploration of rare earth materials in Nawada districts is going on.
- Union Minister of State (Independent charge) for Science, technology and Earth Sciences Jitendra Singh informed Lok Sabha on 11 Feb.
- In Nawada, the G-4 state geological and radiometric survey is underway.

Irrigation scenario in Bihar

- At present there is a potential for irrigation in 53.53 lakh hectares of area in Bihar (in other words, total irrigation potential of the state is 53.53 lakh hectares). The State Govt. targets to increase it to 1.15 lakh hectare by 2026-27. Irrigation capacity is being developed in the remaining area by making an action plan. Of this, irrigation capacity has been developed in 4.2 million hectares. In the remaining area, irrigation capacity is being developed through action plans.
- Kosi-Mechi River Link will increase the irrigation capacity of Bihar by 2 lakh hectares.
- Over the next five years, 23.38 lakh hectares of command area will be developed in the state, providing irrigation water to every farm. This work will be carried out under the VB-GRAM-G.
- Command Area: The command area is the total cultivable land area within an irrigation project that is directly supplied with water by the project. This is the area that can actually be cultivated. This includes net sown area, current fallow land and other cultivable land. This includes net sown area, current fallow land and other cultivable land.
- Flood-Prone Areas: Of the state's 6.88 million hectares of flood-prone area, 4.2 million hectares have been protected from floods. A 3,800-kilometer-long embankment has been constructed to achieve this.



Water management in Bihar

- A survey by the Central Ground Water Commission found excess groundwater in an area of 930 square meters.
- Kosi-Mechi river link Project : Kosi-Mechi River Link will increase the irrigation capacity of Bihar by 2 lakh hectares.

Sone-Kohira river link

- Kohira is a river in Kaimur district of Bihar which is currently facing the threat of its existence.
- After flowing 64 km from Kaimur Hills, it used to join the Suara River.
- Its solution is to revive the Kohira River by constructing a Kohira Link and connecting it to the Sone Link Canal and sending the surplus water of Sone into it. Under this scheme, surplus water of Sone will be transferred upstream to Rajpur Weir constructed in Kaimur on Kohira River. The government is working on this plan.
- Rs. 155 crore has been approved for this project. This project will rehabilitate 12.62 kilometers of the canal, and expand it by 500 meters. The Rajpur Weir will also be rehabilitated.

Arsenic affected 14 districts in Bihar

According to the answer given by the Bihar PHED minister in the Bihar Vidhan Sabha, underground water in 14 districts of Bihar are affected by Arsenic, while in 12 districts are affected by Iron. He also informed that 11 districts are affected by Filariasis disease.

Union Gender budgeting

The Union Govt has allocated funds for women and girls' under various schemes in the Union Budget 2026-27, which saw an increase of 11.55% from the previous fiscal year

Pulses in Bihar

Year	Cultivation Area	Production
2023-24	4.68 lakh hectare	3.80 lakh tonnes
2024-25	4.44 lakh hectare	3.92 lakh hectare

- Around 4 lakh tonnes pulses has to be purchased from out of the State.

Sanjay Dutt's granny Jaddan Bai's house in news

- In the area of Daulat Bagh, there was a sprawling bungalow of Jaddan Bai, mother of Nargis Dutt and granny of Sanjay Dutt.
- In that complex, the Government of Bihar is constructing government buildings including DIET and auditorium. The complex was acquired by the State govt. in the 1950s.

Centre rejects 6th schedule status to Ladakh

- The Centre has made it clear that Ladakh will not be granted Sixth Schedule status or statehood, two key demands of the Leh Apex Body (LAB) and Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA), the region's two major political organisations, said after talks in New Delhi last week.
- The Sixth Schedule of the Constitution allows special administrative arrangements for tribal areas to safeguard autonomy, culture and land.





- Speaking publicly for the first time after the Feb 4 talks with a Union home ministry (MHA) high-powered committee, Ladakh leaders said the Centre had instead offered a “territorial council” model.
- Under this proposal, the chief executive councillor of Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Council (LAHDC) will be designated as CM and the deputy chief executive councillor as deputy CM.
- The guidelines for developing Global Capability Centers (GCCs) in Tier-2 cities were provided at the National Conference of Chief Secretaries held in New Delhi on 13th December, 2024. At this conference, the need to bring Tier-2 cities into the focus of economic development was emphasized.
- Global Capability Center is a strategic unit that helps increase efficiency and reduce costs of an organization's global operations through technology, talent and innovation. There are about 1700 Global Capability Centres in the country, out of which 400 Global Capability Centres have been established in the last five years.

Eastern Zonal Council & Bihar

- Samrat Chaudhary and Water Resources Minister Vijay Kumar Chaudhary have been nominated as members from Bihar for the Eastern Zonal Council under the States Reorganisation Act, 1956.
- Pratyay Amrit and Arvind Kumar Chaudhary have been nominated as its advisors.
- It is in accordance with the cabinet’s decision to develop Bihar as an important New age technology hub of eastern India. It aims to develop the global knowledge economy in Bihar.
- The whole thing is designed to integrate advanced technologies such as IoT, AI, robotics, cloud computing and data analytics, into the industrial value chain.

Opening of Sugar Mills in Bihar

- The sugar mills in East Champaran (Barachakiya), West Champaran (Chanpatia), Gopalganj (Sasamusa), Saran (Marhaura), Mujaffarpur (Motipur), Samastipur, Madhubani (Sakari, Reyam) shall be opened shortly.
- It will be done under ‘Samridh Udyog, Sashakt Bihar’ of the ‘Saat Nischay- 03’
- The policy aims to develop the technological ecosystem, to attract global investments, to promote innovation and to generate high-quality employment opportunities.
- Under the policy, eligible GCC units include private/public limited companies or LLPs (Indian or multinational) listed in Forbes Global 2000 or Fortune 1000 or the Companies having turnover of 1000 crore Rs. in the last three financial years. The Companies with turnover between Rs. 500 crore and Rs. 1000 crore may be considered by a high level committee headed by the Chief Secretary. The benefits are limited to the first 25 eligible GCC units.

Bihar GCC Policy, 2026

- On 5th February, 2026, the Information Technology Department of Bihar approved the Bihar Global Capability Centre (GCC) Policy, 2026. The policy will remain effective for five years from 5 February, 2026.



- The policy provides substantial financial incentives. Eligible units can avail Capital Expenditure (Capex) assistance of upto 30% of fixed capital investment, subject to a ceiling of Rs. 50 crore. Reimbursement of lease rental (50% subject to prescribed limits), 25% reimbursement of power bills for five years and 50% reimbursement of cloud infrastructure expenses for five years are also provided. Additionally, renewable energy installation costs are eligible for support.
- Employment-linked incentives are a key feature. Salary reimbursement as percentage of CTC) is provided for three years, with higher reimbursement rates for employees who are permanent residents of Bihar. The benefit applies upto 200 direct employees per unit per year. Further incentives include 1005 reimbursement of patent filing fees (upto Rs. 50 lakh over 5 years), 50% reimbursement for quality certification costs (upto Rs. 1 crore overall, subject to per-employee limits)
- GCC units established outside Patna and Danapur municipal areas are eligible for an additional 10% incentive. Units generating 500 or more direct jobs may be offered tailor-made incentive packages over and above standard benefits. All incentives (except salary reimbursement) are available for five years from the date of commercial operations.

Bihar Mukhyamantri Mahila Rojgaar Yojana

- Bihar Government transferred a total amount of 25,000/- at the rate of Rs. 10000/- each to additional 25 lakh women of the State on 16 Feb.
- 1.56 lakh women have already been provided the amount of 10,000/-.
- Thus till 16 Feb, 2026, a total of 1.81 crore women have received the amount of 10,000/- each.

ADB's help to Bihar

The Asian Development Bank will provide monetary help of more than 1 billion dollar to Bihar for the projects of Bihar in six fields :

- Development of the Buddha Circuit
- Water resources and Agricultural Transformation Project (Krishi Roopantaran Pariyojana)
- Skill Development Project
- Urban Infrastructural Development and Resilient (Lachilapan) Project.
- **Energy sector**
 1. Extension of renewable energy and strengthening of Grid Integration
 2. Distribution Grid (Vitaran Grid)
- Bihar Health and Medical Education Transformation Project (Bihar swasthya aur chikitsa Shiksha Roopantaran Pariyojana).

Mushroom Production in Bihar

- Bihar produces 12% of the national production of Mushrooms.
- Total production of Mushroom in Bihar (metric tonne)

Production of Mushroom in Bihar	
Year	Production (metric tonne)
2022-23	35,000
2023-24	42,000
2024-25	44,930

- **Prominent districts** : Patna, Nalanda, Gaya, Vaishali and West Champaran



CUSB study on Falgu revival

- Two scholars Mr. Praful Singh and Mr. Bibhukalyan Mohapatra at the Geology Department of CUSB (Central University of South Bihar) conducted a study on revival of the Falgu river.
- The study was published in the latest edition of the International journal “Spatial Information Research”
- The study offers scientific insights that blend modern analytical tools with traditional ecological practices to revive the culturally significant river in Gaya.
- The study notes that sustainable river rejuvenation cannot rely solely on engineering measures or policy mandates. Instead it calls for a balanced integration of traditional ecological knowledge, community participation and contemporary scientific and technological tools. According to the researchers, such a multidimensional approach offers strong potential for restoring the ecological health of the Falgu and strengthening the social systems linked to it.
- Praful Singh explained that the Falgu originates from the confluence of the Lilajan and Mohana Rivers near Bodh Gaya, with their headwaters in the Simaria highlands of Chatra district of the Hazaribagh Plateau. The basin drains a substantial portion of the Chotanagpur Plateau and spans Jharkhand and Bihar.

- The research team adopted an integrated, application-oriented methodology combining field observations, river morphology, geospatial analysis, and machine-learning techniques to identify critical sub-watersheds requiring urgent intervention, particularly in degraded upper catchments. The study delineates priority watersheds with high potential to support river-flow restoration and basin-wide rejuvenation, Singh said. He added that these findings should be further strengthened through detailed hydrogeological, geomorphological, sedimentological and geophysical investigations to develop a comprehensive and implementable strategy for restoring the Falgu River basin and sustaining its flow. Singh also noted that the research outcomes align closely with national initiatives such as the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) and the Atal Bhujal Yojana (ABY) under the Union Ministry of Jal Shakti, and can directly support evidence-based river-basin management and policy implementation.

ISRO's RADAR in Bhagalpur & W. Champaran

ISRO will install Doppler weather RADAR in Bhagalpur and West Champaran. There is also a plan to establish a geo-centre in Bihar.

Death anniversary of Karpuri Thakur

17 Feb is observed as the Death anniversary of Karpuri Thakur

Rajya Sabha elections in Bihar on 16 March

As the terms of Upendra Kushwaha, A.D. Singh, Harivansh Narayan Singh, Premchand Gupta and Ramnath Thakur in Rajya Sabha elections for these five seats are scheduled to be held on 16 March.



Notice to 28/42 MLA's

- The Patna High Court issued notices on 19 Feb to the MLAs whose elections had been challenged through election petitions (EPs).
- Two separate (single) benches of Justices S. B. Pd. Singh and Ashok Kumar Pandey are hearing 45 election petitions filed between 5 Dec, 2025 to Jan 8, 2026.

Main grounds of the EPs :

1. Concealing criminal records in the affidavits in nomination papers.
2. Providing incorrect Asset declaration
3. Irregularities during voting
4. Irregularities during the countings

Bihar Education budget

The Bihar Vidhan Sabha, on 19 Feb, approved a total of 68,216 crore rupees for the education sector of Bihar, which amounts 19.63% of its Budget. The allocation includes 60,204 crore rupees for school education and 8,012 crore rupees for higher education.

GI tag in Bihar

1. Shahi litchi (Mujaffarpur)
2. Silao ka khaza (Nalanda)
3. Magahi Paan (Nalanda, nawada and Shaekhpura)
4. Sujanai kalaa (Begusarai, Darbhanga)
5. Bhagalpur Katarni (Bhagalpur, Banka)
6. Madhubani Painting (Madhubani)
7. Jardaalu Aam (Bhagalpur)
8. Makhana (Darbhanga, Supaul, Saharsa)
9. Bhagalpuri Silk (Bhagalpur),
10. Sikki kala (Bhagalpur & surrounding area),
11. Kahtwa Applique
12. Marcha Chawal,
13. Manjusha Kala

Balwant Rai Mehta Birth Anniversary

On 19 Feb, 127th birth anniversary was observed in Patna

Construction of footpath under Saat Nischay-03

- Under the "Saat Nischay-03" initiative, "Sabka Samman-Jeevan Aasan," footpaths and zebra crossings will be constructed at identified crowded locations in urban areas of Bihar. Foot overbridges, escalators, and underpasses will be built wherever necessary.
- According to the Ministry of Transport and Highways (MoTH), 4,143 pedestrians were involved in road accidents in Bihar in 2025, resulting in 3,462 deaths. Pedestrians constitute one-third of the annual road accident deaths.
- On 15 May 2025, the Supreme Court held that access to footpaths for pedestrians is a constitutional right under Article 21 of the Indian Constitution.

Subsidy under Agricultural Input Subsidy Scheme

- Under the Agricultural Input Subsidy Scheme, a grant of Rs 113 crore was provided through DBT from Sankalp Auditorium located at the Chief Minister's residence on 21 February 2026 to more than 2 lakh farmers affected by crop damage due to floods caused by excessive rainfall and the Montha storm in the year 2025.
- Farmers of 53 blocks and 493 panchayats of 13 districts of Bihar (Begusarai, Bhojpur, Kaimur, Gayaji, Darbhanga, Kishanganj, Madhpura, Madhubani, Muzaffarpur, Purbi Champaran, Sheohar, Sitamarhi and Supaul) were affected by the above disaster.



Bihar bans meat, fish sales near schools and religious places

- The sale of Bihar meat, fish near religious places, educational institutions or crowded locations has been banned.
- A letter in this regard has been sent to the municipal commissioners by Mr. Vinay Kumar, Principal Secretary.
- The letter mentions that illegal meat and fish shops were operating under various municipal bodies in violation of the provisions of section 345 of the Bihar Municipal Act, 2007.

Use of fertilisers in Bihar

The ratio of the use of NPK in Bihar is 10:4.3:8.1. It should be 4:2:1.

	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25	2025-26 (till Jan)
Use of fertilizer per hectare in Bihar (in Kg)	167.68	207.01	195.68	192.26	164.82
Total use of fertilise in Bihar(metric tonnes)	30.86	37.45	38.73	40.93	35.09
Consumption of Urea (lakh tonne)		23.39	24.69	25.59	
Consumption of di-ammonium phosphate (in lakh tonnes)		6.59	6.47	5.83	
Use of single super phosphate (Lakh tonne)		1.44	1.18	1.63	

- Maximum use of fertilisers are done in Rabi crops.
- Imbalance use of fertilisers are harmful for soil.

Excessive use of fertilizers has adverse effects on human health.

- Nitrates leach into groundwater and drinking water due to excessive use of fertilizers, which causes methemoglobinemia, also known as Blue Baby Syndrome, in infants.

- Apart from this, the risk of infertility, diabetes, anemia, colon, gall bladder and ovarian cancer increases.
- Immunity decreases.
- Due to this, stomach related diseases, blood pressure and heart diseases also increase.

Friendship Groups of Lok Sabha

- 64 Friendship groups, related to various countries, for 18 Lok Sabha have been constituted.
- Sanjay Jha of JDU from Bihar has been nominated as the Chairman for the India-Germany group along with 11 MPs as its members.

4 new bill passed by Assembly

4 following new bill have been passed by the Bihar Legislative Assembly on 24 Feb :

- Bihar Nagarpalika (amendment) Bill 2026
- Bihar Takniki seva Aayog (amendment) Bill 2026
- Bihar Staff Selection Commission (amendment) Bill 2026 and
- Bihar Civil Court Bill 2026 (It will take place of Bengal, Agra, and Assam Civil Court Act, 1887)

Survey of Beggars in Bihar

A survey of persons engaged in begging in the state of Bihar was conducted in all 38 districts from 27 Feb to 31 March, 2026.





Destination Bihar Expo 2026

- Eighth Industrial expo of the Bihar Industrial Association was inaugurated on 25th Feb. It was concluded in 2 March.
- It's theme was : "Now or Never"
4190 Questions asked in 18th Assembly's first

Budget session

4190 Questions were asked out of which 3783 were accepted during the first budget Session of the 18 Legislative Assembly of Bihar.



ARTICLES

India-EU FTA : An analysis

- Negotiations on the IndiaEuropean Union Free Trade Agreement (FTA) – dubbed the ‘mother of all deals’ by leaders on both sides – officially concluded on January 27, closing about two decades worth of intermittent talks. The deal, which has benefits for both, simultaneously avoids intractable sensitive issues while securing advantageous concessions on most others.
- The FTA has been called thus because of the size of the economies, markets, and bilateral trade involved. The deal brings together the second and fourth largest single customs blocs, with the Indian government estimating the combined market size to be Rs. 2,091.6 lakh crore or about \$24 trillion.
- India has signed about eight FTAs in the last four years. While the other eight FTAs together accounted for about 16% of India’s total trade in 202425, in the latest full year of data available, the EU itself accounted for nearly 12%. Bilateral merchandise trade between India and the EU stood at Rs.11.5 lakh crore (\$136.54 billion) in 2024-25, with Indian exports accounting for about Rs.6.4 lakh crore (\$75.85 billion) of this. The India-EU trade in services touched Rs.7.2 lakh crore (\$83.10 billion) in 2024.
- Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal claims the deal will be implemented in calendar year 2026 covering 2.9% of India’s exports will see tariffs eliminated over 35 years from implementation for certain marine products, processed food items, arms and ammunition, among others. In addition, 6.1% tariff lines covering 6% of India’s exports will see tariffs reduced, but not eliminated, for certain poultry products, preserved vegetables, bakery products among others or be reduced through quotabased tariffs for cars, steel, certain shrimp and prawns products, among others. So, taken together, the EU’s tariff concessions cover more than 99% of the trade value of what India exports to the region.
- The concessions offered are not limited to merchandise either. While the services sector has not seen as wide an opening up as merchandise, the EU has offered “broader and deeper commitments” across 144 service subsectors, including IT/ITeS, professional services, education, and other business services, the government has said.

Beneficial sectors

“The potential [of the EU FTA] on labour intensive sectors, where we’ve got huge wins, is about \$35 billion. Out of the \$35 billion, \$33.5 billion will become 0% duty on day 1,” Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal explained to The Hindu in an interview following the closure of negotiations. These sectors, which include textiles, apparel, marine, leather, footwear, chemicals, plastics/rubber, sports goods, toys, and gems and jewellery, currently attract tariffs ranging from 426%. This is particularly noteworthy because these are primarily the sectors that have been hit by the 50% tariffs imposed by the U.S. on imports from India. “Preferential market access for agricultural products like tea, coffee, spices, grapes, gherkins and cucumbers, dried onion, fresh vegetables and fruits as well as for processed food products will make them more competitive in the EU,” the government said in a release.

India’s Gain

- The detailed FTA document has not been made public yet, with information only available through government releases from both sides. Under the deal, the EU will eliminate duties on about 70.4% of tariff lines immediately once the deal comes into effect, covering nearly 90.7% of India’s export value. Another 20.3% of products





The FTA is expected to benefit Indian traditional medicine services and practitioners as well, it added. As per the deal, in EU countries where regulations do not exist, AYUSH practitioners will be able to provide their services using the qualifications they have obtained in India.

India's offer to the EU

- Under the deal, about 49.6% of tariff lines covering 30.6% of trade value will see their duties immediately eliminated once the deal comes into effect. Another 39.5% of tariff lines with a trade value of 63.1% will see their tariffs eliminated over five, seven, or 10 years from when the deal is implemented. Taken together, India's total offer covers about 92.1% of tariff lines and 97.5% of trade value.
- While a lot of European items are set to get cheaper for Indians, the main consumer-facing items of interest are wine and automobiles. European wine will see current duties of about 150% falling in a phased manner over seven years to 30% for wine priced between 2.5 to 10 euros and to 20% for wine over 10 euros. No concessions have been offered on cheap wine to protect domestic producers. These tariffs all apply under a quota, however, with amounts exceeding the quota limit attracting non-FTA tariffs. On motor vehicles, the tariffs will be gradually reduced to 10% from the current 110%, but also under a quota system. Cars below ₹25 lakh, which account for the majority of the Indian market, are not part of the deal. Cars above that limit are divided into three quota brackets. The lowest of these brackets has the smallest quota for European cars, since Indian manufacturers do have a presence there. The highest segment has the biggest quota for European cars since the ultraluxury segment is where European carmakers don't have Indian competition.

Sectors...out of deal

In his interview, Mr. Goyal explained that in all his FTA negotiations the two countries begin by laying out their 'red lines' or sectors that they will not offer any concessions on. So, in the EU deal, India managed to keep out sensitive agricultural sectors such as beef, poultry, dairy products, fish and seafood, cereals, especially rice and wheat, fruits and vegetables, nuts, edible oils, tea, coffee, spices, and tobacco. The EU has kept beef, sugar, rice, chicken meat, milk powder, honey, bananas, soft wheat, garlic, and ethanol out of the deal, and has offered quotas on sheep and goat meat, sweetcorn, grapes, cucumbers, dried onions, and rum made of molasses and starches. Mr. Goyal has expressed his confidence that the deal will be implemented in calendar year 2026, despite the fact that the text still needs to go through legal vetting, translation into 24 European languages, approval in 27 European countries, and finally passage in the European Parliament.

Concerns

- The FTA could not make much headway in addressing the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), a tariff structure the EU devised to address the carbon footprint of countries and companies. The EU side argued that CBAM tariffs apply to all countries equally and so it cannot give any concessions to specific countries. However, India has secured a commitment that, if the EU gives CBAM concessions to any other country, those would automatically apply to India as well.
- Another concern is that, if India is to attract investments from countries looking to take advantage of the new tariff-free route to Europe, it will have to quickly implement more reforms to make India investment-friendly.



SC stayed UGC regulations

On January 29, the Supreme Court stayed a new set of regulations notified by the University Grants Commission (UGC) earlier this month on the promotion of equity within higher educational institutes, saying they were “vague and could be misused”. These regulations were brought to replace a previous version in effect since 2012, to specifically address issues of caste discrimination in campuses.

What are the 2026 UGC equity regulations?

The University Grants Commission (Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions) Regulations Bill, 2026, was notified by the higher education regulator on January 13, 2026.

In these regulations, the UGC defined “castebased discrimination” as “discrimination only on the basis of caste or tribe against the members of the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and other backward classes”.

It also defined “discrimination” as “any unfair, differential, or biased treatment or any such act against any stakeholder, whether explicit or implicit, on the grounds only of religion, race, caste, gender, place of birth, disability, or any of A significant section argued that the new regulations were not strengthening the 2012 rules on antidiscrimination them...” The regulations provided for establishing a layered grievance redressal system for addressing discrimination.

This included provisions to set up Equal Opportunity Centres, Equity Committees, and Equity Squads in each institute, and Equity.

Ambassadors in each unit (departments, schools) of the institutes. It also provided for an institutional accountability mechanism, where institutes found violating the regulations could be penalised.

Why were the regulations said to be biased?

Protesters argued that the regulations discriminated against “general or upper castes”, hinging on the (lack of) definition of “castebased discrimination”, the dropping of the provision on “false complaints”, and the ambiguity in the functioning of bodies like the ‘Equity Squads’.

By leaving them out of this definition, the upper caste section argued that the regulations had “presupposed” that general or upper caste students would be the perpetrators of caste discrimination at all times. Further, the protesters argued that the provision of punishment for “false complaints” had also been absent, which they said could have been useful to counter false complaints.

How did these regulations come about?

These regulations were devised under the supervision of a Supreme Court Bench that was hearing a batch of petitions filed in 2019 by the mothers of Rohith Vemula and Payal Tadv, both of whom had died by suicide, alleging castediscrimination in 2016 and 2019, respectively.

Their petition had argued that the 2012 UGC regulations were not being implemented to address “rampant caste discrimination” in higher education institutes. During the hearings, the UGC had told the Supreme Court that it had formed an Expert Committee to revisit the 2012 regulations under the Chairmanship of Professor Shailesh N. Zala. The committee drafted a revised version of the equity regulations, and the final regulations were notified in 2026.

What were the 2012 regulations?

In the 2012 regulations, the regulatory authority had not defined “castebased discrimination” separately.





It had defined “discrimination” with subsections on depriving access to education, imposing undignified conditions, and maintaining separate educational and social spaces within the campuses on the basis of caste, creed, religion, language, ethnicity, gender, and disability.

The 2012 regulations had provided for the setting up of grievance redressal mechanisms, which included the establishment of Equal Opportunity Cells, SC/ST Cells, and the appointment of an antidiscrimination officer.

Further, in prohibiting discrimination against SC and ST students in higher educational institutes, the 2012 regulations had identified a total of 25 specific instances and types of discrimination in various aspects of campus life. None of these specific acts has been included in the 2026 regulations.

However, the 2012 regulations did not provide the language to protect “Other Backward Classes” and did not have institutional consequences for not following through on the implementation of the regulations.

Were only upper castes upset?

No. A significant section argued that the new regulations were not strengthening the 2012 rules on antidiscrimination, principally because of the lack of specificity on what counted as discrimination.

Professor Sukhadeo Thorat, former Chairperson of the UGC argued that the new regulations do not clarify if they will be applicable to institutes like IITs, IIMs, polytechnics, nursing institutions, etc., further noting that the composition of Equity Committees should mention the quantum of representation for SC, ST, and OBC members.

Jadavpur University Assistant Professor Subhajit Naskar said in dropping the specific acts of discrimination, the new regulations had, in fact, diluted the 2012 regulations.

Now what?

The SC has said that the batch of petitions challenging the 2026 regulations will be heard with the petitions filed by the mothers of Rohith Vemula and Payal Tadvi, also calling for the UGC to go back to its 2012 regulations while it hears the challenges to the new version. In doing so, the SC has also framed certain legal questions that are to be addressed in the course of the hearings in these matters from now onwards. These petitions are to come up for the next hearing in March.

Assam’s tea gardens make room for bamboo to fuel bioethanol plant

The world’s tallest grass may help some of Assam’s 803 major tea estates and 1.22 lakh registered small tea growers overcome a tough phase.

In August 2022, the government tweaked the Assam Fixation of Ceiling on Land Holding Act of 1956 to allow tea gardens to use up to 5% of their land for nontea purposes.

A few tea gardens within a 300km radius of the world’s first commercial-scale 2G bioethanol plant using bamboo as feedstock, are using the permitted portion of their area for bamboo cultivation.

This ₹4,930crore plant spread across 43 acres at Numaligarh, about 260 km east of Guwahati, has been established by Assam Bio Ethanol Private Limited (ABEPL), a joint venture of Numaligarh Refinery Limited (NRL), which is a Navaratna public sector undertaking, with the Finland-based Chempolis Oy and Fortum.

ABEPL experts said ethanol production is costlier in a 2G or second-generation plant than a first-generation plant, but ensures food security, is more sustainable, and leaves a lower carbon footprint. While 1G ethanol is produced from food crops using simple fermentation, 2G ethanol is derived from nonfood farm waste or residue.





“We pursued the bioethanol project after research in Finland showed that freshly harvested bamboo, chipped to a specific size, can be a sustainable substitute for food crops. And we are located at the centre of a region that is the largest producer of several bamboo species,” an NRL spokesperson said.

The ABEPL streamlined the bamboo supply chain much before Prime Minis Narendra Modi dedicated the bioethanol plant to the nation in September 2025.

“We need five lakh metric tonnes of green bamboo to produce 49,000 metric tonnes of ethanol annually, apart from furfural, acetic acid, liquid CO₂, and biocoal for our 25MW captive power plant,” a specialist said.

The ABEPL has registered some 4,200 of a targeted 30,000 bamboo farmers across 26 districts of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, and Nagaland. They are, however, not enough to meet the plant’s annual intake.

This is where the tea gardens, especially those with land to spare for nontea activities such as tourism and horticulture, have come in.

“Some tea gardens have started planting bamboo. Our members are also thinking of doing it,” Bidyananda Barkakoty, the adviser of the North Eastern Tea Association, told The Hindu.

Some planters believe fuelling the bioethanol plant could help the industry get over a nearslump due to multiple factors, including climate change impacting production, ageing tea bushes, high production costs, poor infrastructure, and labour shortage.

Long-term plan

The ABEPL has put in place a structured tieup model, ensuring sustainable bamboo supply and transparent sourcing. The model requires farmers to offload their product at a decentralised chipping unit within 3040 km of their farms.

The chipped bamboo is then transported to the plant for instant payment to everyone down the line.

A major part of the plan is the long-term goal of distributing 60 lakh saplings free of cost to the farmers.

IITDelhi, Germany team makes ‘chiral valve’ to sort current

In a new study in Nature, scientists from IITDelhi and Germany have demonstrated a device to separate electrons based on their ‘handedness’ without powerful magnetic fields, taking a step towards chiral electronics, which could in future enable lowpower devices.

The human left hand is a mirror image of the right; the two can’t be perfectly superimposed. In certain complex materials called topological semimetals, electrons possess a similar left or right chirality. (The chirality is a specific quantum state of an electron moving inside the crystal.)

However, these special electrons are usually mixed with ‘standard’ electrons that lack chirality and detecting them has historically required the use of powerful magnetic fields or precise chemical doping, rendering the technology impractical for daily use. The researchers addressed this challenge by exploiting the quantum geometry of a palladium gallium (PdGa) crystal.

“The single homochiral crystal made by Claudia’s group was crucial for the study,” Max Planck Institute of Microstructure Physics managing director and study coauthor Stuart Parkin told The Hindu, referring to the work of fellow author Claudia Felser.

In this crystal, electrons behave like waves as they move through the lattice, which in turn restricts how much energy and momentum the wave can have.





The set of constraints is called the band structure. In the copper wiring in your house, the road is flat and straight. If you apply a voltage, it will push the electron in a straight line. In the crystal, the road is twisted, so even if the electron is moving straight, its path will drift to the side. Which side depends on the electron's handedness.

The team fabricated a small device with three arms and passed an electric current through it. Beyond a threshold, PdGa's quantum geometry pushed lefthanded electrons into one arm and righthanded electrons into the other.

"Utilising quantum geometry as a new element, rather than an external magnetic field, was pivotal to achieving the valve functionality," Dr. Parkin said. "It led us to fabricate our unique device geometry to demonstrate that we can control the separation of currents with opposite electronic chirality."

Some roadblocks remain, including the need for ion beams to fabricate the device and ultralow temperature to operate it, which make practical use infeasible. If these challenges can be overcome, the technology could lead to lowpower computing and new forms of magnetic memory.

What's in store for garment exporters to the U.S.?

In the U.S.-Bangladesh Agreement on Reciprocal Trade, signed on February 9, the U.S. has committed to "establish a mechanism that will allow for certain textile and apparel goods from Bangladesh to receive a zero reciprocal tariff rate".

A statement from the White House said this mechanism will provide for a tobespecified volume of apparel and textile imports from Bangladesh to enter the U.S. at this reduced tariff rate, but that the volume shall be determined based on the use of U.S. produced cotton and MMF (manmade fibre) textile inputs.

Following concerns in the Indian textile and garment industry, which is the largest employment generator after agriculture, Indian Minister for Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal said that India is to have the same facility as Bangladesh, and that Indian garment and textile exporters will also benefit.

What does data of the countries indicate?

Of the total imports of \$16.1 billion of textile inputs by Bangladesh in 2024, \$3.1 billion went from India. Bangladesh imports approximately 85 lakh bales of cotton annually, mainly from Brazil, India, and African countries for its nearly 500 spinning mills. India exported 1214 lakh

Bangladesh's garment industry depends heavily on imported textile inputs, especially yarn and fabric, for making garments bales of cotton to Bangladesh in 2024, of its total production of about 300 lakh bales.

It also shipped \$1.47 billion worth of cotton yarn (570 million kg) to Bangladesh, which was the biggest destination for Indian yarn, in 2024. Bangladesh buys more yarn and fabric from other countries than the basic raw material – fibre, according to a report by the Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI). Bangladesh exported \$50.9 billion in garments globally in 2024, and of it, \$7.4 billion went to the U.S.

Of the annual garment exports of \$16 billion from India, almost onethird goes to the U.S. At present, international cotton prices (landed cost) have a 2% to 8% price difference, depending on the country of origin and the buying country.

Will trade dynamics tilt towards Bangladesh?

Indian textile and garment exporters feel things will not change immediately or much because of the U.S.-Bangladesh deal. A GTRI report notes that over 63%, or \$32.3 billion, of Bangladesh's garment exports went to the European Union, dutyfree.





Since the EU is Bangladesh's main market, its garment supply chains are built to serve European buyers.

Bangladesh's garment industry depends heavily on imported textile inputs, especially yarn and fabric, for making garments. To qualify for zero tariffs of the U.S., Bangladesh should replace long-established suppliers and invest heavily in new spinning and fabric processing capacity, which it currently lacks.

According to the Cotton Textiles Export Promotion Council, the Bangladesh textile industry should change its product mix and realign its raw material supply chains to benefit from the use of American cotton. Its textile mills are already in a crisis, say Indian yarn exporters.

What is the extent of India U.S. cotton trade?

India imports close to five lakh bales of U.S. cotton annually, of which 2.5 lakh bales are of extra long staple (ELS) cotton and the other 2.5 lakh bales are nonELS cotton. India is one of the leading users of American PIMA cotton, which is a premium ELS variety. Several Indian textile mills are already nominated by American brands to supply yarn made of American cotton for garments. India currently levies 11% import duty on cotton, except for ELS cotton. Indian garment exporters will get similar access to the U.S. market as Bangladesh exporters, Mr. Goyal has said.

What are the concerns?

While Indian goods will attract 18% reciprocal tariff in the U.S., goods from Bangladesh will attract 19% from the earlier 20%. Thus, the U.S. tariff difference between India and Bangladesh has halved with the U.S. Bangladesh agreement.

Bangladesh is already among the leading exporters of textiles and apparel to the U.S., alongside China, Vietnam, and India. Both India and Bangladesh make predominantly cotton-based apparel.

Shafiqul Alam, information adviser to Chief Adviser Mohammed Yunus, told The Hindu that Bangladesh has traditionally imported cotton from India and Central Asia as it does not produce the cotton or yarns necessary for its textile sector. It will replace Indian cotton with U.S. produced cotton as a result of the U.S. Bangladesh trade deal, he said. The immediate impact is likely to be on Indian cotton and yarn exporters.

However, Indian exporters still have a lot of unanswered questions, such as if the U.S. India agreement does give Indian garment exporters a similar facility to the U.S. market, will the Indian government waive the import duty on U.S. cotton? Will it allow specific quantities to be imported by India duty-free?

Will there be benefits for garment exporters buying American cotton?

There is every possibility of U.S. cotton prices firming up when demand increases. If cotton is available from any other country at a lower cost, will U.S. customers find it cost competitive to buy garments made from U.S. cotton? There is also no clarity on how the U.S. will determine the quantity of U.S. cotton in a garment or textile product.

Both India and Bangladesh garment exporters will get relief only from the reciprocal tariff if they use U.S. cotton and not the basic duty. While waiving of tariff by the U.S. for products made from U.S. cotton or MMF will certainly benefit Indian garment exporters, they are hoping the Indian government will evolve a system that will take into consideration all the practical implications and necessities for the effective operation of such a facility.

Nicobar Project controversy

Great Nicobar Island, the southernmost tip of the Andaman and Nicobar archipelago, is one of the most pristine and isolated ecosystems on the planet, and the home of the Shompen and the Nicobarese tribes and unique wildlife.





This tranquillity is poised for a radical transformation. The Indian government has sanctioned a Rs. 72,000 crore mega-infrastructure initiative called the 'Holistic Development of Great Nicobar Island'.

Spearheaded by NITI Aayog and implemented by the Andaman and Nicobar Islands Integrated Development Corporation, the project envisions transforming the remote outpost into a major transshipment and defence hub.

The project covers around 166 sq. km, or nearly 18% of the island's total land area, and entails an integrated city-state designed to serve both commercial and military purposes. The crown jewel is the international Container Transshipment Terminal in Galathea Bay. The bay's natural depth is ideal to handle large container ships that currently dock in Colombo, Singapore or Klang.

The government has said the terminal will eventually handle 14.2 million TEUs of cargo, capturing a significant slice of the transshipment revenue.

A new airport serving both civilian and military needs is planned for 24/7 operations, including handling 4,000 passengers per hour at its peak. The government has said this airport will offer a forward base for surveillance and logistics in the Indian Ocean region.

Perhaps the project's most transformative aspect is the new township. The government has estimated that over the next 30 years, the local population will swell from the current 8,000 to more than 3.5 lakh people. The township will include industrial zones and residential areas and will effectively urbanise a significant chunk of the rainforest. All this infrastructure will be powered by a new 450MVA gas and solar-based power plant.

India's push is driven by geopolitics and economics. The island overlooks the western entrance of the Strait of Malacca, a narrow shipping lane through which around 40% of the world's trade and most of China's energy imports pass.

In the event of a conflict, a robust military presence here would allow India to theoretically monitor or interdict Chinese naval assets entering the Indian Ocean. Second, nearly 75% of India's transshipment cargo is currently handled by ports outside the country, increasing the logistic costs for Indian trade. A transshipment hub at Great Nicobar could on the other hand allow India to service its own cargo as well as attract international vessels.

Source of controversy

The project's primary source of controversy has been speed, which critics have argued is part of government efforts to sidestep due diligence. In 2021, NITI Aayog engaged AECOM, a global infrastructure firm, to prepare a prefeasibility report. In March 2022, the terms of reference for the environmental impact assessment (EIA) were finalised. And in November, the Union Environment Ministry granted stage 1 forest clearance to divert 130.75 sq. km of forest land.

Days later, the final clearance was granted as well. The rapidity raised eyebrows because the project required denotifying parts of a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve and tribal reserve.

Galathea Bay is itself a crucial nesting site for the giant leatherback turtle, ancient mariners that travel thousands of kilometres to nest on these beaches. Building breakwaters and dredging for the port will effectively destroy the beach and permanently drive the turtles away. Conservationists and policymakers have also criticised the EIA for being based on a single season of data rather than the comprehensive multiseason data usually required for projects of this magnitude.

To build the township and airport, an estimated 9.64 lakh trees will be cut, per government figures; independent ecologists fear the number could be higher. These forests are the only home of the Nicobar megapode and the Nicobar tree shrew.

The rules require the state to plant trees elsewhere to 'compensate' for the deforestation.



Since there is no land left in the archipelago, the government has proposed planting trees in Haryana, thousands of kilometres away – an idea ecologists have scoffed at because planting saplings in a dry, dusty scrubland in North India couldn't possibly replace the complex ecological functions of a tropical evergreen rainforest in the Bay of Bengal.

The project will also affect more than 20,000 coral colonies. The government has proposed translocating these corals to other sites but that's a complex process with a notoriously low survival rate worldwide. Overall, critics have said the state's ideas amount to ticking boxes rather than a genuine conservation strategy.

The project's social effects are likely to be equally volatile. The island is home to two distinct indigenous groups, the Nicobarese and the Shompen. The Shompen are a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) – largely seminomadic hunter-gatherers who have lived in the island's interior for millennia, with limited contact with the outside world.

While the government claims the Shompen settlements won't be disturbed, anthropologists are clear that an influx of 3 lakh outsiders and construction activity will push them into smaller pockets of land. The Shompen also lacks immunity to common diseases. Greater contact with construction workers and tourists thus poses a severe risk of an epidemic that could wipe out the tribe, a fear international scholars have articulated as a risk of "genocide".

Tragic history

While the Nicobarese are more assimilated, they have a tragic history with the project site. Before the 2004 tsunami, many of its members lived on the west coast; after the tsunami, they were relocated to the east coast with the promise that they could eventually return to their ancestral lands. But by designating the west coast for the project, the government is effectively barring the Nicobarese from ever returning home.

Under the Forest Rights Act 2006, diverting forest land requires the gram sabhas' consent. Reports, however, indicate that the Tribal Council issued a 'no objection certificate' in 2022, only to withdraw it later alleging the Council had been rushed into signing without understanding the implications. The government has proceeded with the project anyway.

In 2023, the National Green Tribunal temporarily stayed the project and constituted a high-powered committee to revisit its clearances. However, the committee submitted its report in a sealed cover and the NGT allowed the project to proceed saying the committee had found the project to be compliant.

Critics, including a group of former civil servants, condemned this lack of transparency saying an environmental clearance process for a public project couldn't be treated as a state secret. Tribal leaders continue to protest, with captains from Great Nicobar alleging publicly that they were forced by district administrations to sign "surrender certificates" for their land, further fuelling suspicions that the government is bulldozing the project.

Wetlands as a national public good

On February 2, 2026, the world marked World Wetlands Day 2026 under the theme, 'Wetlands and traditional knowledge: Celebrating cultural heritage'. In India, this theme feels especially apt. There is a rich history of communities sustaining themselves through wetlands following practices that inherently safeguarded ecosystems.

Traditional practices in Tamil Nadu's wetlands revolve around ancient water management and community livelihoods, humanmade tanks or kulams, forming cascading irrigation networks for paddy and other crops. In Wayanad, Kerala, shallow wells called kenis, crafted over 200 years ago, support drinking water, rituals, and festivals, while wetlands in Srikakulam, Andhra Pradesh, sustain traditional fishing practices.





Such stories can be told from any part of India, where communities have thrived for generations around wetlands that are both ecology and economy, habitat and heritage, essential to social wellbeing.

But we must be honest. Although the benefits and services of wetlands abound, wetlands remain among the most threatened ecosystems because they sit at the intersection of land, water, and development.

Policy background, challenges at home

Policy and regulatory frameworks are often blamed, but India does not lack laws. It lacks consistent, high-quality implementation. The Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017 provide a framework for identifying, notifying, and managing wetlands through authorities to restrict damaging activities.

However, nearly 40% of India's wetlands have vanished over the last three decades, and around 50% of what remains show signs of ecological degradation.

Updated guidelines under the National Plan for Conservation of Aquatic Ecosystems (NPCA) push for structured planning, monitoring and outcome-oriented management.

The Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ) framework aims to maintain the ecological integrity of coastal wetlands, while Ramsar site designation offers global recognition and responsibility. The 98 Ramsar sites in India are not just badges but commitments that encourage action.

These instruments span freshwater, coastal, urban, natural, riparian and high-altitude wetland but must be coordinated into a single operational rhythm that starts with mapping, leads to notification and enhanced protection, enables restoration where needed, and continues monitoring through adaptive management.

Through site-based wetland conservation and restoration initiatives, organisations such as the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation have worked with State governments, local communities and stakeholders to support wetland mapping, participatory management is Chairperson, M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF) is Director – Wetlands, M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation (MSSRF).

There is a need to shift the focus from 'projects' to programmes and 'beautification' to ecological functionality, and ensure watershed-scale governance planning, and livelihood-linked conservation.

Wetlands are "multiple-use" systems, which make them valuable and vulnerable. In a highly populated country, encroachment and land conversion have already erased around 40% of natural wetlands, replacing them with infrastructure, real estate and road networks. Even where wetlands persist, their catchments are often irreversibly altered, and old cadastral maps rarely match current ground realities.

Wetlands rely on timing and flow of water. Dams, embankments, channelisation, sand mining and groundwater overextraction disrupt these flows, eroding their natural characteristics. Riparian wetlands and floodplains are especially vulnerable because they are treated as spare land rather than active river space. Urban wetlands are expected to store floodwater, receive storm runoff, absorb sewage, and remain clean and biodiverse, often without legal buffers.

Growing pollution results in the eutrophication of water bodies when untreated sewage, industrial effluents, agricultural runoff, and solid waste are pushed into wetlands. When a wetland becomes a dumping ground, its biodiversity collapses, along with its ability to buffer floods and purify water. In coastal areas, sea level rise, cyclones and shoreline change collide with ports, tourism, aquaculture and settlement growth. Mangroves and lagoons face a double bind: development pressure on landward sides and rising seas on seaward sides, leaving them little room to migrate.





Lastly, a major challenge is capacity constraints. State wetland authorities are often understaffed, underfunded, and stretched across competing mandates. Training gaps in hydrology, ecology, GIS, legal enforcement, and community engagement often translate into weak management plans, weaker implementation and continued degradation of valuable wetlands.

Pragmatic and contextual approaches

There is an urgent need to shift from “projects” to programmes, from “beautification” to ecological functionality, and from “departmental silos” to watershed-scale governance. Through coordinated, efficiently monitored approaches, we can begin to address this complex problem. Here are some ideas to start with.

First, notification and safety of wetland boundaries. The 2017 Rules are only as strong as notification and demarcation, which should be paired with publicly accessible maps, grievance redress and participatory groundtruthing with communities where disputes are likely.

Second, treat wastewater before it meets wetlands. For urban and periurban wetlands, a key action is ensuring treated inflows. Wetlands cannot substitute for sewage treatment plants. Where feasible, constructed wetlands can complement but not replace primary treatment.

Third, protect the wetland’s catchment and hydrological connectivity. Wetlands must be managed as part of a basin or catchment system — restore feeder channels, prevent blockages by roads and embankments, stop solid waste dumping, and regulate extraction that alters water regimes.

Fourth, make coastal and riparian wetlands central to disaster risk reduction. Mangroves, mudflats, floodplains, and urban wetlands are nature-based infrastructure. Planning authorities should treat them as risk buffers, worthy of investment comparable to “grey” infrastructure.

CRZ enforcement should be paired with livelihoods-sensitive approaches that support coastal communities while defending ecological no-go areas.

Fifth, build skills and institutions. A national capacity mission for wetland managers with accredited training in hydrology, restoration ecology, GIS/remote sensing, environmental law and community-led governance. NPCA investments can be more transformative if paired with systematic capacity building and measurable performance indicators, including direct livelihood benefits to local communities.

There are already strides in this direction, with enhanced attention being given to wetlands by various state and nonstate actors, and it deserves amplification.

Better mapping and monitoring are now possible through satellite remote sensing, drones, and time series analytics to track encroachment, inundation, and vegetation change.

Updated NPCA guidelines enable science-based, monitorable management plans for outcome-oriented design, while Ramsar’s focus on clear boundaries and wise use aligns with India’s needs — especially through community stewardship. The 2026 World Wetlands Day theme highlights traditional knowledge that can strengthen restoration and compliance when treated as evidence.

Align science and policy

World Wetlands Day 2026 may have passed but let us make a societal pact. Governments must notify, enforce, fund, and coordinate; cities must stop treating wetlands as wastelands; industry must prevent pollution at source; research and education institutions must train the next cadre of wetland managers; and citizens must defend local lakes, ponds, floodplains, mangroves, and springs as shared heritage.





If we align science with policy, and policy with people drawing strength from both modern tools and traditional wisdom, we can restore wetlands not as museum pieces, but as thriving, working ecosystems. The future of India's water — and a significant part of India's resilience — depends on it. (By : Dr. Soumya Swaminathan & Rupesh K. Bhomia , on 3 Feb)

What is happening in Balochistan

In January 2021, the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) carried out coordinated attacks across at least nine districts of Balochistan, targeting police stations, military outposts and a highsecurity prison in Quetta, the provincial capital. In a video released online, BLA leader Bashir Zeb Baloch claimed responsibility for the attacks, describing them as the second phase of the 'Herof' (Black Storm) operation. He called on Baloch men and women to leave their homes and join the "national liberation war" against the Pakistani military. The BLA claimed it killed 84 security personnel and kidnapped 18 others.

According to Pakistani authorities, the military launched operations against the militants across the province, killing at least 145 fighters. Soon after the attacks, Pakistan's Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi accused India of supporting "terrorists". "India is behind these attacks. I can tell you for sure that India planned these attacks along with these terrorists," Mr. Naqvi said, without offering any evidence. On February 1, India "categorically rejected" Pakistan's "baseless allegations", calling them "usual tactics to deflect attention from its own internal failings," according to a statement issued by the Ministry of External Affairs.

Rich in minerals

Balochistan, a longstanding flashpoint of Pakistan, has witnessed a surge in violence in recent years, particularly after the Taliban, which was backed by the Pakistani military establishment, captured power in Kabul in August 2021.

According to the Pakistan Institute for Peace Studies, Balochistan recorded at least 254 attacks in 2021, resulting in more than 400 deaths, a 26% rise from the previous year.

Balochistan, Pakistan's largest province, covers nearly 40% of the country's land area. Rich in mineral resources, it shares borders with Iran and Afghanistan, has an Arabian Sea coastline, and is home to nearly 15 million of Pakistan's 240 million people. Most of the country's mineral wealth — copper, scandium, lead, zinc, chromite, marble, granite and molybdenum — is concentrated in Balochistan, which also holds significant reserves of oil, gas, coal and gold.

The \$60billion ChinaPakistan Economic Corridor, linking China's Xinjiang region to Pakistan's Gwadar port through roads, railways and pipelines, passes through Balochistan. In September 2021, US Strategic Metals, a Missouri-based mining firm, signed a \$500m memorandum of understanding with Pakistan's Frontier Works Organisation, a military-aligned company, to extract minerals in Pakistan. But recurring violence in Balochistan continues to threaten the viability of large, longterm investments in the province.

Waves of rebellion

Balochistan has witnessed several waves of rebellion since its annexation by the Pakistani state in 1948. The latest phase began in the early 2000s after the emergence of the BLA. Human rights organisations have accused Pakistan of using excessive force against Baloch nationalists and militants. Amnesty International reports that over 10,000 Balochis have disappeared in Pakistan since 2011.

Enforced disappearances, extrajudicial killings, and military operations have deepened resentment among the Baloch population. Local leaders argue that the Pakistani government is exploiting the province's resources without addressing the development needs of the local population. Longstanding historical, political and economic grievances have fuelled the separatist movement.





Following the Taliban takeover of Kabul, as security conditions deteriorated in Pakistan's border regions with the Pakistani Taliban stepping up attacks in the tribal areas, Baloch separatist groups also intensified their operations.

In March 2025, the BLA carried out one of their most daunting attacks when they hijacked the Jaffar Khan Express with more than 400 passengers onboard.

Pakistani security forces launched Operation Green Bolan, rescuing more than 300 passengers and killing at least 33 fighters, according to an official account. March also witnessed largescale protests, called by the Baloch Yakjethi Committee, a Baloch rights movement, which was violently put down by state forces.

Cycle of violence

But despite Pakistan's resort to heavy force, Baloch militants have expanded their attacks in recent years. Since 2018, major factions, including the BLA and the Balochistan Liberation Front (BLF), have coordinated under the banner of the Baloch Raaji Aajoi Sangar, a united front that calls for a sovereign Balochistan.

Militants have increasingly deployed suicide bombers (including women), carried out coordinated attacks and temporarily seized territory and key highways, directly challenging state authority.

The Pakistani state often responds with retaliatory force, but without breaking the cycle of violence. Islamabad has frequently blamed India for the Baloch insurgency. Following the Jaffar Khan express attack, Pakistan formally designated Baloch militant groups as 'Fitna alHindustan'. India has consistently rejected any involvement.

"Instead of parroting frivolous claims each time there is a violent incident, [Pakistan] would do better to focus on addressing longstanding demands of its people in the region," India said on February 1. "Its record of suppression, brutality and violation of human rights is well known."

Under the Forest Rights Act 2006, diverting forest land requires the gram sabhas' consent. Reports, however, in 2022, only to withdraw it later alleging the Council had been rushed into signing without understanding the . The government has proceeded with the project anyway.

Rethinking battery strategy in India: the case for sodiumion technology

India's dependence on lithiumion batteries exposes structural constraints linked to critical minerals, import dependence, and supply security; sodiumion batteries emerge as a safer alternative with lower material risk, compatible with existing infrastructure, and the potential to strengthen energy security

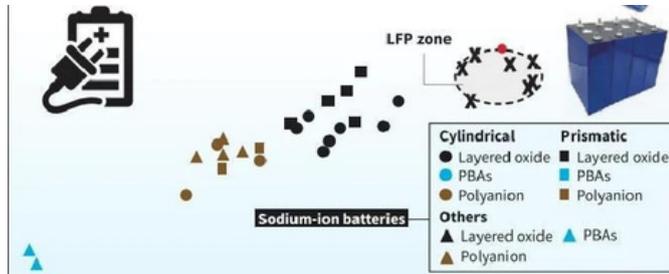
Batteries have become deeply embedded in modern life. From laptops, mobile phones, wearable devices such as smartwatches and wireless earphones, to power tools, electric vehicles (EVs), and largescale battery energy storage systems, batteries now underpin both personal convenience and critical infrastructure. A newer trend is also emerging, with batteries being integrated directly into household appliances. These developments collectively point to a future saturated with batteries, making energy storage a foundational pillar of economic growth, energy security, and the clean energy transition.

Dominant, not a perfect solution

Among the various battery chemistries that have existed or are still in use, lithiumion batteries have emerged as the dominant global technology. This dominance is largely driven by their high energy density, low selfdischarge rates, and long cycle life. Sustained global focus on lithiumion technology over the past two decades has resulted in steady improvements in performance, manufacturing efficiency, and largescale capacity buildout. By 2024, global lithiumion manufacturing capacity had reached nearly 2.5 times annual demand, further accelerating cost reductions through economies of scale.



As a result, costs have fallen dramatically, from nearly \$1,100 per kWh in the early 2010s to about \$108 per kWh in 2025.



However, the success of lithiumion batteries masks several structural challenges. These batteries are highly resourceintensive and depend on critical minerals such as lithium, cobalt, nickel, and graphite. The availability of these materials is unevenly distributed across a handful of countries, while refining and processing capacities are even more geographically concentrated.

This creates vulnerabilities related to supply security, price volatility, and geopolitical risk. As global demand for batteries accelerates, these constraints are likely to intensify, reinforcing the need for alternative technologies that can support a more resilient and equitable energy transition.

Ambitions and structural constraints

The Government of India has made sustained efforts to build domestic battery manufacturing capacity, most notably through the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for Advanced Chemistry Cells launched in 2021. Under this scheme, around 40 GWh of manufacturing capacity has been allocated so far. While this represents meaningful progress, deployment remains at an early stage, with just over 1 GWh commissioned to date and additional capacities expected to come online gradually.

More critically, India's upstream ecosystem, from raw material availability and mineral processing to cathode and anode active material production and separator manufacturing, remains underdeveloped.

Domestic reserves of lithium are limited and yet to be proven commercially viable, while processing infrastructure is still nascent. Consequently, import dependence for lithiumion batteries is likely to persist for a considerable period. This reality underscores the importance of parallel investments in alternative battery technologies that can reduce material risk and strengthen longterm energy security. Sodiumion batteries (SiBs) represent one such technology, offering significant promise for India in the medium to long term.

Energy density: sodium vs lithium

From a fundamental perspective, sodium ion batteries exhibit lower specific energy (Wh/kg) than lithiumion batteries, largely because sodium has a higher atomic mass than lithium, which intuitively leads to more mass per unit of stored energy.

However, this performance gap is often overstated. In practice, it can be significantly narrowed if the mass of other cell components in sodium ion batteries is reduced, thereby compensating for the higher mass of sodium itself.

Moreover, among commercially available sodium ion chemistries, layered transition metal oxide cathodes already deliver higher specific energy than polyanionic compounds and Prussian blue analogues, underscoring the growing competitiveness of sodium ion technology.

Importantly, layered oxide sodium ion batteries are now approaching the specific energy of lithium iron phosphate (LFP) batteries, as illustrated in Figure 1. Although their volumetric energy density (Wh/L) still trails that of LFP, ongoing materials and celllevel optimisations are expected to substantially narrow this gap and potentially lead to meaningful overlap. It is also important to emphasise that this comparison is based on commercially available products, whereas laboratory scale and pilot-level research results suggest even greater performance potential.



By contrast, comparisons with high energy lithium nickel manganese cobalt (NMC) chemistries are less. EV manufacturers should be encouraged through procurement policies, pilot programmes, and regulatory nudges to type test and approve vehicle platforms using sodiumion batteries alongside lithiumion options. This approval strategy would allow rapid substitution in response to supply disruptions or cost fluctuations instructive, as NMC batteries occupy a distinct performance space and entail separate tradeoffs related to safety and reliance on critical minerals.

Safety first

Safety is one of the most compelling advantages of sodium ion batteries. Studies, including those conducted by the U.S. Naval Research Laboratory, have shown that sodium ion cells exhibit significantly lower peak temperature rise during thermal runaway events compared to lithium ion cells. This intrinsic safety advantage extends well beyond cell performance into storage, handling, and transportation.

Lithium-ion batteries are classified as “Dangerous Goods” by national and international transport authorities, necessitating strict packaging, handling, and transportation requirements. They are typically shipped at a state of charge not exceeding 30%, which increases logistical complexity and cost. These restrictions stem from the use of copper current collectors on the anode side, which can dissolve at low voltages and redeposit on the cathode, increasing the risk of internal short circuits.

Sodiumion batteries do not suffer from these limitations. They use aluminium current collectors on both the anode and cathode sides, as sodium does not form unstable alloys with aluminium. As a result, sodium ion cells can be safely stored and transported at zero volts without degradation or safety risks. Prolonged storage at zero volts has been shown not to compromise cycling stability. This feature offers significant benefits across the value chain, including safer handling, lower transportation costs, and greater flexibility in manufacturing and installation.

Manufacturing ready

Another critical advantage of sodiumion batteries is their compatibility with existing lithiumion manufacturing infrastructure.

With relatively minor modifications, lithiumion production lines can be adapted to manufacture sodiumion cells. This dramatically lowers the capital barrier to adoption and allows manufacturers to hedge against raw material supply risks.

The primary process difference lies in moisture sensitivity during cell stack preparation. Sodiumion batteries require more stringent vacuum drying conditions, as residual moisture can have a greater negative impact on performance. While lithiumion cells can tolerate drying at relatively mild vacuum levels, sodiumion cells require deeper vacuum conditions, which may marginally increase energy consumption and manufacturing costs. However, as the industry progresses toward dry electrode coating and advanced manufacturing techniques, these challenges are expected to diminish.

Sodiumion batteries offer a structurally different material pathway compared to lithiumion systems. Sodium is derived from abundantly available resources such as soda ash, which are far more plentiful and geographically diversified than lithium. Several sodiumion chemistries eliminate the need for critical minerals.

In addition, sodiumion batteries use aluminium as the current collector for both electrodes. Aluminium is cheaper, lighter, and more widely available than copper, resulting in cost savings and weight advantages. These material choices significantly reduce exposure to global commodity price volatility and enhance supply chain resilience, a critical consideration for a country like India.

Why sodiumion matters

Taken together, these attributes suggest that sodiumion batteries are not merely an experimental technology but a commercially viable and strategically important solution. Cost projections indicate that sodiumion batteries could undercut lithiumion batteries by 2035.





As of 2025, around 70 GWh of sodiumion manufacturing capacity is already operational globally, with expectations of scaling to nearly 400 GWh by 2030. This rapid expansion highlights the urgency for India to engage early and decisively with this technology.

Policy, regulatory, and ecosystem recommendations for India

To ensure sodiumion batteries become a meaningful part of India's energy storage landscape, a coordinated policy and regulatory approach is essential. Public support for upstream battery infrastructure, such as cathode, anode, electrolyte, and separator manufacturing, should explicitly include sodiumion chemistries rather than remaining narrowly focused on lithiumion systems.

Future incentive programs, including revisions to the PLI framework, should encourage flexibility, ensuring that new battery plants are designed to accommodate both lithiumion and sodiumion production with minimal retrofitting from the very beginning.

From a regulatory standpoint, standards, safety codes, and certification pathways must be updated to explicitly include sodiumion batteries, enabling faster commercialisation and deployment. EV manufacturers should be encouraged through procurement policies, pilot programmes, and regulatory nudges to typetest and approve vehicle platforms using sodiumion batteries alongside lithiumion options.

This dualapproval strategy would allow rapid substitution in response to supply disruptions or cost fluctuations.

Finally, targeted public funding for R&D, demonstration projects, and early deployments, particularly in grid storage, two and threewheeler EVs, and stationary applications, can help build market confidence.

By aligning industrial policy, regulation, and market incentives, India can foster a fair, resilient, and futureready battery ecosystem in which sodiumion batteries play a central role.

Jaideep Saraswat leads the Electric Mobility vertical at Vasudha Foundation where he focuses on addressing key barriers to EV adoption and advancing sustainable mobility solutions; Nikhil Mall is also part of the Electric Mobility vertical contributing to research, stakeholder engagement, and initiatives that promote the transition to clean transportation

Nuclear diplomacy set to resume in Muscat as U.S., Iran stay far apart

- Tehran says the format of the talks will mirror previous rounds held before the Israeli attacks in June 2025; U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio says the dialogue should include the range of Iran's ballistic missiles and its support for militant groups
- After weeks of uncertainty and military tensions in the Persian Gulf, Iran confirmed on Thursday that it would hold nuclear talks with the U.S. in the Omani capital, Muscat, on Friday. However, statements from both sides indicated that wide gaps remain, starting with disagreements over the very format of the talks.
- "Nuclear talks with the United States are scheduled to be held in Muscat at about 10 am Friday. I'm grateful to our Omani brothers for making all necessary arrangements," Iran's Foreign Minister Ab
- Bas Araghchi wrote in a social media post. The White House had said on Tuesday that Steve Witkoff, a special envoy of President Donald Trump, would meet Iranian officials later this week. According to Iranian state media, Mr. Araghchi would lead the delegation, which would also include Majid TakhtRavanchi,
- Iran's former Permanent Representative to the UN, and Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi.





- “The format of the talks will mirror previous rounds held before the unlawful U.S-Israeli war on Iran last June, which derailed the diplomatic process,” said a report in the stateowned Press TV.
- Mr. Araghchi and Mr. Witkoff had held five rounds of talks last year. Israel attacked Iran on June 13, just two days ahead of the scheduled sixth round of talks.
- While Iran insists that talks should focus solely on its “peaceful nuclear programme”, the U.S. wants the framework to also include Iran’s ballistic missile production and its support for various militia groups in the region.
- “If the Iranians want to meet, we’re ready,” U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said on Wednesday at the State Department. “[T]hey will have to include certain things, and that includes the range of their ballistic missiles... their sponsorship of terrorist organisations across the region... the nuclear programme... the treatment of their own people,” said Mr. Rubio, contradicting the Iranian claim that the talks would be only on the nuclear programme.
- After entering into force on February 5, 2011, New START set up verifiable limits on the strategic offensive arms of both nations, including capping the number of deployed warheads to 1,550, and required both parties to reach these limits within seven years and maintain them thereafter. It also allowed 18 onsite inspections a year, mandated data exchange, and set up a bilateral commission to resolve issues.
- New START was constantly beleaguered. Russia often argued that U.S. missile defense systems undermined the strategic balance, suggesting that if one side could neutralise the other’s retaliatory strike, the ‘mutually assured destruction’ dynamic would be broken. The U.S. expressed concerns over conventional prompt global strike capabilities, where precise conventional warheads are placed on ballistic missiles, systems that New START counted under its nuclear limits.
- Later Russia also unveiled several novel strategic systems, including the Sarmat heavy ICBM and the Avangard hypersonic glide vehicle. While
- The U.S. successfully argued that these should be counted under New START, other systems like the nuclear-powered underwater drone Poseidon and nuclear-powered cruise missile Burevestnik remained outside the treaty’s technical definitions.

The end of New START and a new era of nuclear rivalry

- The New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (New START) officially expired on February 5, marking the end of the last remaining bilateral agreement constraining the nuclear arsenals of the U.S. and Russia. The New START treaty emerged from a period of diplomatic reset between Washington and Moscow in the late 2000s.

No binding limits

- The treaty was originally set to expire in 2021. Just days before the deadline, the Biden administration and the Kremlin agreed to a one, five-year extension, moving the expiration date to February 5, 2026. But in February 2023, after the conflict in Ukraine escalated and undermined bilateral relations, President Vladimir Putin said he was suspending Russia’s participation in New START because, Moscow said, the U.S. was seeking a “strategic defeat” of Russia and that western aid to Ukraine made onsite inspections in Russia impossible. The U.S. soon followed.



- Today, for the first time since 1972, there are no legally binding limits on the number of strategic nuclear weapons the U.S. and Russia can deploy. The formal channels to verify the locations and status of nuclear forces have ceased to exist, forcing intelligence agencies to rely entirely on satellite imagery and other unilateral methods, which are more error prone and easier to politicise. Nuclear and nonnuclear strategic systems are also entangled today and that, together with the premium both sides place on noncontact options like cyberattacks, can threaten nuclear command and control without crossing a nuclear threshold. This is why analysts have stressed the loss of predictability rather than the appearance of new warheads alone.
 - New START's expiry also makes the prospect of including China and other nuclear states in a larger nonproliferation regime harder in practice. Washington can now argue that it shouldn't be the only state constrained while Beijing grows. Moscow can argue that it shouldn't accept constraints while NATO's aggregate capabilities shape its security environment. And Beijing has already argued that its arsenal is smaller than those of the U.S. and Russia and that therefore it's "not fair or reasonable" to demand it enter their disarmament framework now.
 - In 2025, Arms Control Association board chairman Thomas Countryman argued that the most realistic nearterm path is a regime with three prongs: the U.S. and Russia establishing measures to restore basic level of transparency, the P5 group standardising definitions and modest transparency practices; and setting up of nonproliferation tools such as hotlines, launch notifications, incident prevention, and fissile material security, to involve more states without immediately forcing them to count each other's warheads.
- ### Trump cancels 25% tariffs, says India committed to buy oil from U.S. and stop supply from Russia
- India has "committed" to stopping buying Russian oil, and has already taken "significant steps" towards it, U.S. President Donald Trump said while rescinding the 25% punitive tariffs imposed on India in August 2025.
 - The startling claim, which was not denied by the government on Saturday, was made in an executive order issued simultaneously with the India-U. S. joint statement on an interim trade agreement framework, and appeared to be a condition for removal of the punitive tariffs.
 - Mr. Trump said the tariffs would return if India "resumes" oil imports from Russia, and that India would buy U.S. energy, which former Indian diplomats criticised, calling it "plain bullying" by a "hegemonic America".
 - In a separate order, Mr. Trump said that any country engaging in trade with Iran would draw penalty tariffs, formalising a threat he had made in January on social media.
 - "India has committed to stop directly or indirectly importing Russian Federation oil, has represented that it will purchase United States energy products from the United States, and has recently committed to a framework with the United States to expand [defence] cooperation over the next 10 years," said Mr. Trump explaining his decision to cancel the 25% tariffs levied on August 6 last year.
 - "I have determined that India has taken significant steps to address the [Russian issue] and to align sufficiently with the United States on national security, foreign policy, and economic matters," he added, deputing Secretary of Commerce Howard Lutnick to "monitor" India's compliance on Russian oil, and threatening to "reimpose" 25% duties if it did.



- Mr. Trump's orders and claims that India has already accepted his terms, put a dampener on the otherwise celebratory mood in government over hammering out a joint statement to work towards a trade agreement, and the Ministries of Commerce and External Affairs refrained from commenting directly.
- Slamming the U.S. for the conditional order, former Foreign Secretary Kanwal Sibal said Washington was introducing "extraneous geopolitical issues" into the bilateral trade deal. "India's oil trade with Russia or trade with Iran have nothing to do with a bilateral trade deal with the U.S.," Mr. Sibal told The Hindu.
- "The U.S. is a hegemonic power, and has the power to enforce such conditions," said former Ambassador to the EU and Nepal, Manjeev Puri.
- At a press conference Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal refused to comment on the issue of oil imports, deferring to the MEA. When asked, the MEA spokesperson referred to his statement earlier in the week, that "diversifying energy sourcing in keeping with objective market conditions and evolving international dynamics" is at the core of the government's strategy.

FORM-7

The story so far:

In the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR), bulk applications are being filed for the deletion of names from the draft electoral rolls. On January 29, the Congress, in a letter to the Election Commission of India (EC), alleged that the form was being misused through "systemic and coordinated efforts" to delete names of eligible voters and embolden BJP's efforts to wrongfully gain electoral advantage. The Hindu's reporting from Rajasthan and Gujarat also found individuals who said they had not submitted the Form 7 applications purportedly signed by them.

What is Form 7?

Form 7 is used for objecting to the inclusion of another person's or one's own name on the electoral roll on specific grounds such as death, duplication or shifting of residence. It can also be used to object to voters who are ineligible due to age, citizenship or misrepresentation.

As per Section 13(2) of the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960, framed under the Representation of the People Act, 1950, "every objection to the inclusion of a name in the roll shall be (a) in Form 7 and (b) preferred only by a person whose name is already included in that roll".

Booth Level Agents (BLAs) can also file objections. Earlier, only persons from the same booth/station were allowed to file an objection but in 2022, the EC amended Form 7 to allow any voter in a constituency to object, widening its ambit.

However, to prevent misuse, the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) is required to mandatorily verify all claims if an individual files more than five objections.

Once a Form 7 application is received, Booth Level Officers (BLO) are required to conduct physical verification of the voter's address and eligibility. In cases of death, verification involves confirmation signatures by three neighbours and a death certificate. If the voter is found absent, the BLO must make three physical visits to confirm whether the person has shifted. The concerned voter is then issued a notice for a hearing. Appeals against the ERO's decision can be made to the district magistrate within 15 days of publication of the updated list.

How extensive is the ongoing SIR?

According to the EC, more than 50.94 crore enumeration forms have been distributed since the launch of Phase II of the SIR, covering 99.94% of the nearly 51 crore voters included in this phase.





The SIR is currently underway in Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Puducherry, the Andaman and Nicobar Islands, and Lakshadweep. The revision follows a tight schedule, and against this compressed timeline, the scale of objections and deletions sought through Form 7 has raised concerns about procedural fairness and administrative capacity. According to the draft electoral rolls published by the EC, the names of 6.5 crore electors were removed from the draft rolls of nine

States and three Union Territories (UTs) as part of the ongoing SIR. Before the revision, these States and UTs had 51 crore voters; after publication of the draft rolls, the number fell to 44.4 crore. EC officials said those removed were placed in the 'ASD' category – Absent, Shifted and Dead/Duplicate. The highest deletions were reported from Uttar Pradesh (2.89 crore), followed by Tamil Nadu (97 lakh), and Gujarat (74 lakh).

What is the way ahead?

At the heart of the controversy is the bulk submission of Form 7 applications by anonymous or fraudulent actors seeking mass deletion of voters from electoral rolls in the ongoing SIR. Filing a false declaration is a punishable offence under Section 32 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950, attracting imprisonment of up to one year or a fine or both. Critics argue that 'if remained unchecked this will lead to the disenfranchisement of lakhs of voters, especially those belonging to the backward, marginalised communities'.

The next big commodity is the mineable self

(Writer Arjun Appadurai is Emeritus Professor of Media Studies at New York University)
A global market in a new commodity is growing exponentially in front of our eyes. It is not artificial intelligence (AI).

It is not rare earths. It is not some new source of energy. It is not even in pharmaceuticals, media, or finance. It is integral to each of them and might determine the future of all of them. It is an infinitely renewable resource, which will last at least for as long as human beings and our planet continue to exist.

This commodity is the self, in which a global market has gradually emerged. It cuts across all domains of human life, from entertainment to journalism, from streaming to gender transitions, from banking to branding, from identity politics to soft power, and from crowdfunding to tariff wars.

Mining the self

Industrial capitalism has a marked predilection for the creation and exploitation of what Marx called surplus value, value beyond the value of the labour required to produce commodities, and floats into the mysterious form of profit for the owners and managers of capital.

Today, human beings are the new object and horizon of capitalist extraction. The new object is sociality itself. It is our friendships, our love lives, our family connections, our classmates, our children, our fellow workers, our neighbours, as well as our digital lives, our political allies, our food and drug suppliers, and more. This is profiling on steroids. It mines our deepest affinities and our most ephemeral social ties.

It is a new feat of creative destruction, which renders ideas such as privacy, intimacy and trust obsolete. It makes all our sociality a resource that can be mined without permission or limit. And in this unbounded mining of sociality, our stories are the access code. There are three recent changes in the market for selves, which together drive the mineable self.

This first change is that the seduction of the global has captured the market in characters. This is evident in the global hunt for stories from Mexico to Nepal and Spain to Indonesia.





Every form of local mythology, folklore and backwater is trolled by publishers, film festivals, art biennales, and literary prize committees in the ceaseless hunt for portability, local flavour, vaguely universal themes and new character types (aliens, cybermonsters, souped up heroes, zombies, postblobs).

The most sought-after stories of our times are about obviously mobile phenomena such as drugs, migrants or mercenaries. More precisely, they are about the local addresses of transborder volatility. And this is as true of the stories that Stories, technology platforms and digital markets are transforming humans into commodities make up the news, as it is of more obviously literary fiction. It has been a few decades since any person with a camera or a videorecorder who happens to be in a scheme of war, crime or terror becomes a photojournalist, a kind of narrative First Responder, who puts the global narrative system on alert.

Syndicated news services, stringers, overseas correspondents and their metropolitan handlers become parts of a vast system of triage for these “local” incidents and images, stoking the furnace of global media. Of course, there is a vast pyramid of news organisations, media, audiences and platforms, which form an uneven hierarchy of priorities and tastes. These include media that are resolutely local in their reach.

But even they imagine the larger world through their own lenses. So, “local” news is often a prismatic refraction of global issues, in a manner that changes the texture of locality, which is no longer bound by the parochial, the proximate and the familiar. Thus, locality regarding the news is no longer what it used to be.

Nor is the global its simple antonym. The market for stories, whether of the real or of the less real, occupies a new geography which cannot be captured by opposing the global and the local. This development drives the transformation of the self into the newest form of raw material, a new horizon for extraction, exploitation and commodification.

In this new market, everyone has a story, including ordinary humans (who still are the reference point of what used to be called human interest), but also banks, nations, sports teams, genders (old and new), corporations, and franchises and cities among other social forms.

This multiplication of the “I” and the “Me” is discernible even in the twilight zone of AI, where Siri, ChatGPT and numerous bots are in the race to display the same emotions, intuitions and vulnerabilities as any garden variety human can do.

The strange symbiosis between the mineable self, the rebooted idea of locality and the story market can be better understood by looking at the single biggest force in the story market today, which is OTT (Over the Top) streaming, the entertainment technology of choice for such giants as Netflix, Amazon Prime, Disney and other companies in this market.

The character of streaming

It is widely known that streaming, driven by OTT technologies, which rely only on the Internet, and not on prior media infrastructures, is colonising much of the market previously dominated by big studios, their business models, their modes of distribution and their approaches to branding, promotion and audience building.

Perhaps the biggest element of this booming story economy is the rise of “unknowns”, midmarket actors and characters who appear to be woven into modest parts of professional life and seem extraordinarily ordinary.

In India, a streaming market that Netflix CEO Reed Hastings claimed in 2018 would bring his company a 100 million subscribers. This trend highlights a more general global trend toward the democratisation of the self, a not entirely positive phenomenon.



The rise of the self is sometimes seen as an expression of the best of enlightenment values, another face of the rise of the individual, of personal liberty, of freedom from assigned collective identities, and of freedom to craft one's own path from the raw materials of birth, context and social stereotypes. But that potential has now become a big part of the mineable self of our digital era.

The intelligence of the artificial competes with previously human monopolies over affect, judgement and intuition. The classical individual is now an unstable composite of credit scores, actuarial charts, algorithmic storehouses, and consumer profiles, with virtually no need for a unified or continuous anchor in a singular person. Thus, what the philosopher Charles Taylor studied as "The Sources of the Self" might today be retold as the story of the "sources of the selfie". The selfie taken with a celebrity, even by photobombing, is a quintessential expression of the democratisation of the self, equal to anyone else before the lens.

The chain of storytelling

This trend is now at the cutting edge of mining itself. Everyone has the right to have a self-centered story, whether of heroism, victimhood, martyrdom, or redemption, and anyone can get help to tell their story better with the paid help of influencers, coaches, writing apps, publishing platforms or, sometimes, through selling the right to mine their stories to entertainers, journalists, publicists or scriptwriters. The great chain of storytelling always strives for more ears and eyeballs. The careers of many YouTube stars have been powered by nothing more than the lucky virality of often trivial selfnarrations. Thus, two slogans meet one another in the global market for selves. One is that every self has a story, and the other one is that every such story deserves an audience. These two pieces of recent common sense fuel the rush to drill into every living mineshaft, looking for a chunk of ourselves with the tools that we have so recently invented. What we have now is a new supercommodity, bound only by our appetite for mining ourselves.

NGT clears Great Nicobar Island mega-infrastructure project, cites 'strategic importance'

A six-member National Green Tribunal (NGT) special bench ruled on Monday that it did not find "any good ground" to interfere in the environmental clearance accorded to the Rs 81,000-crore Great Nicobar mega infrastructure project as there were "adequate safeguards" in the project's environmental clearance. The bench, headed by NGT chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava, also noted the "strategic importance of the project" and the issues that were dealt with by a high-powered committee (HPC) tasked with revisiting the project's environmental clearance, as per a 2023 order of the NGT.

The mega project, spread over 166 sq km, entails diversion of 130 sq km of forest land and felling of almost a million trees to facilitate the construction of a transshipment port, an integrated township, a civil and military airport and a 450-MVA gas and solar power-based plant. The Centre has pushed ahead with the project amid concerns expressed by the Nicobarese community over dispossession of their ancestral land (which was devastated in the 2004 tsunami), as well as concerns over ecological damage.

The special bench headed by Shrivastava is composed of judicial members Justice Dinesh Kumar Singh, Justice Arun Kumar Tyagi, and expert members A Senthil Vel, Afroz Ahmand and Ishwar Singh. The tribunal acknowledged that neither the project's strategic importance could be denied, nor conditions of the Island Coastal Regulation Zone (ICRZ) notification be ignored. It framed the issue as one that needed a "balanced approach."

With this order, the NGT disposed off a batch of petitions which had alleged violations of the ICRZ notification, 2019, for clearing projects in ecologically sensitive coastal areas, and also allegations of non-compliance of the NGT's 2023 order on revisiting the EC.





Environmental activist Ashish Kothari had filed the petitions before the NGT and argued that parts of the proposed project (700 hectares) fell in ICRZ areas, where development was prohibited. In its order, the NGT sought to address three key concerns – protection of corals; whether limited baseline data was relied upon to clear the project; whether parts of the project fell in prohibited and protected coastal areas. It also assessed whether or not conditions imposed in the project’s 2022 environmental clearance – to mitigate its impacts – were met.

On the issue of whether the project fell within ICRZ areas, the NGT relied upon the report of the high-powered committee headed by former environment secretary Leena Nandan, and concluded that no part of it fell in the prohibited area.

The committee was formed in compliance with the NGT’s April 2023 order, to revisit some unanswered issues in the project’s environmental clearance. During the course of the pleadings, the Environment Ministry did not make the HPC report public, citing confidentiality and strategic interests. The Tribunal eventually relied only on the HPC’s findings produced in an affidavit by Centre. It also recorded the Centre’s submissions that parts of ports which fall in the CRZ (1A and 1B areas) as per the proposed master plan, shall be excluded from the revised master plan.

The NGT said in its order that it found “adequate safeguards” within the environmental clearance and did not find any good ground to interfere in the project’s clearance.

The green court recorded that there were specific conditions laid down for protection of the leatherback sea turtle, the Nicobar megapode, saltwater crocodiles, robber crab, Nicobar macaque and other endemic bird species of the Great Nicobar island.

The tribunal stipulated that the government is bound by the conditions in the environmental clearance and must ensure these are not violated.

The NGT directed the Union Environment Ministry to ensure that the project’s proposed constructions – including foreshore development – should not cause erosion, shoreline changes near the project area and all along the islands. “The shoreline of the island will be protected ensuring no loss of sandy beaches as these beaches provide nesting sites for turtles, birds, apart from protecting the islands,” it said.

The tribunal took into account past submissions made by the Zoological Survey of India, and concluded that no coral reef exists within the project area and existing scattered coral reef will be translocated as per suggestions of the Zoological Survey of India. It directed the ministry to take all measures to protect coral reefs along the coastal stretch and ensure coral regeneration through proven scientific methods.

India’s federalism is in need of a structural reset

The Constitution of India, while federal in structure, was designed with a pronounced centralising bias. Drawing heavily from the Government of India Act, 1935, it concentrated significant authority in New Delhi while assigning a comparatively modest sphere to the States. This architecture was shaped by the circumstances of its birth – the trauma of Partition, the integration of 14 provinces and over 500 princely States, and the pervasive fear that centrifugal forces might threaten national unity. In that climate, centralisation appeared not merely prudent but also indispensable.

Yet, even in those anxious deliberations, there were voices of rare clarity. K. Santhanam cautioned the Constituent Assembly that the Union’s strength lies not in the indiscriminate accumulation of functions, but in the disciplined refusal of responsibilities that do not properly belong at the national level. “It is in this positive as well as negative delimitation of powers that a real federal system rests...,” he observed.





In that single formulation lay two enduring principles: first, authority is most effective when exercised closest to knowledge and accountability; and second, excessive centralisation breeds fragility by overburdening a single authority with tasks that it cannot efficiently discharge. A government that attempts to supervise everything – from space exploration to rural sanitation – may expand in reach but this inevitably diminishes its effectiveness.

Reinforcement of dominance

History demonstrates that power assumed in the name of necessity rarely retreats when necessity fades. In the decades that followed, centralising tendencies were reinforced by the dominance of a single national party at the Union and State levels, fostering a “high command” culture that attenuated the autonomy of State leadership. Later, the emergence of coalition governments at the Union and the rise of regional parties in States led to a more balanced federal order without endangering unity. One may reasonably surmise that had today’s politically mature and linguistically consolidated States existed in 1950, the constitutional design might have evolved along a more decentralised path.

Just as an individual cannot remain perpetually captive to the neuroses of childhood, so too a nation cannot forever labour under the anxieties of its formative years. India’s unity is no longer fragile, and the idea of India now rests on firm and enduring foundations. Yet, 76 years later, constitutional practice continues to reflect the reflexes of the late 1940s. Centralisation, once defended as a necessity, has hardened into habit. Through successive constitutional amendments, expansive Union legislation in Concurrent List subjects, conditional Finance Commission transfers, and centrally sponsored schemes with rigid templates, the balance of power has tilted even further toward the Union. Large ministries exist in New Delhi that duplicate. There is a need for balanced federalism in the form of autonomous States, an efficient Union, and accountable governance.

State functions and often attempt to steer State priorities through micromanagement and procedural oversight. In an inversion of democratic hierarchy, the Union Executive is attempting to override plenary State laws in Concurrent List subjects through subordinate legislation. It is a principle.

Such a drift sits uneasily with constitutional doctrine. In *S.R. Bommai vs Union of India* (1994), the Supreme Court of India declared federalism part of the Constitution’s Basic Structure and affirmed that States are not mere appendages of the Centre but are supreme within their allotted spheres. Federalism, the Court held, is a principle rooted in India’s history and diversity; not a matter of administrative convenience. Despite this judicial affirmation, State autonomy has continued to erode – through legislative expansion, executive overreach, and certain other judicial interpretations that privilege uniform national solutions over contextual diversity.

Underlying this trajectory is a persistent illusion – that the Union becomes stronger by diminishing the States. In truth, the Union and the States are not competitors in a zerosum contest; they are partners in a shared constitutional enterprise. India’s size and heterogeneity render centralised policy design inherently limited. No authority in New Delhi, however enlightened, can tailor policy with equal sensitivity to every linguistic region, agricultural ecology, industrial cluster, or labour market.

Decentralisation addresses this limitation by enabling parallel experimentation. States can design and test policies at manageable scale, contain failures without national disruption, and allow successful innovations to diffuse horizontally or be adopted nationally. Many of India’s most effective programmes followed precisely this path. Tamil Nadu’s noon meal scheme, Kerala’s achievements in public health and literacy, and Maharashtra’s employment guarantee initiative all began as State experiments before informing national policy. Overcentralisation suppresses the very diversity of strategies from which innovation and discovery arise.





Centralists often argue that States lack administrative or technical capacity and, therefore, require Union intervention. Yet, such intervention stunts the very capacity it claims to remedy, creating a self-perpetuating cycle of dependence. Parents who do not entrust their children with responsibility, and leaders who refuse to delegate authority, inevitably breed dependence. Governments are no exception.

Capacity arises from responsibility, accountability, and the freedom to make, and correct, mistakes. To suggest that India's States – many comparable in scale to sovereign nations – are inherently incapable and must, therefore, be subjected to intrusive central control is incompatible with national self-respect.

Centralisation might still be defended if it had delivered superior outcomes. But by comparison with decentralised federations, global benchmarks, or India's own aspirations, the record is unpersuasive. The centralised model has struggled to deliver universal access, sustained quality, genuine equity, or global competitiveness. Instead, it has produced regulatory complexity, chronic underfunding as resources are stretched across expanding mandates, blurred accountability, and gradual erosion of State capacity.

Tamil Nadu recognised these dangers at an early stage. In 1967, C.N. Annadurai observed that the Union must indeed be strong enough to maintain the sovereignty and integrity of India. But that did not mean that it should assume control over every subject, such as health or education, which bore no direct nexus to national defence.

His successor, K. Karunanidhi, advanced this philosophy through the maxim, "Autonomy to the States, Federalism at the Centre", and in 1969 established the first independent Committee on Union-State Relations under Justice P.V. Rajamannar. The Committee's 1971 Report became a landmark in India's federal debate. Later national commissions – the Sarkaria (1983) and Punchhi (2007) – acknowledged the need for rebalancing, though they stopped short of recommending fundamental structural reform.

Time to right-size

India now stands at a constitutional juncture that calls for recalibration rather than complacency. The objective is not to weaken the Union but to rightsize it, allowing it to concentrate on genuinely national responsibilities while restoring to States the autonomy essential for effective governance. Such recalibration would not diminish national unity; it would deepen it by aligning authority with responsibility.

In this spirit, the Government of Tamil Nadu constituted a High Level Committee on Union-State Relations in April 2025 under the chairmanship of Justice Kurian Joseph (a retired Supreme Court judge), with K. Ashok Vardhan Shetty (a retired IAS officer) and Dr. M. Naganathan (former State Planning Commission vice-chairman) as members. Thought of as a nonpartisan exercise, the Committee undertook a comprehensive review of contemporary federal challenges. Part I of its Report, which was submitted on February 16, 2026, addresses issues that range from the role of Governors and language policy to delimitation, elections, education, health, and Goods and Services Tax.

The Government of Tamil Nadu presents this report to the public in the hope that it will stimulate informed debate, restore balance to the Union-State relationship, and contribute to a constitutional settlement in which the Union is strong because it is focused, and the States are strong because they are trusted.

M.K. Stalin is the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu

- Indian Federalism is based on the Government of India Act, 1935 and the circumstances at time of the Independence i.e. the trauma of Partition, the integration of 14 provinces and over 500 princely States, and the pervasive fear that centrifugal forces might threaten national unity.
- In that climate, centralisation appeared not merely prudent but also indispensable.



Loose connection sent NVS02 satellite off its orbit, says panel

The apex committee says the signal meant to activate a key valve in the engine's oxidiser line never reached it; this valve is crucial for firing the engine to raise the orbit of the spacecraft

- The Hindu (Erode)
- 26 Feb 2026
- Jacob Koshy



Off track: The NVS-02 navigation satellite aboard the launch vehicle GSLV-F15 in Sriharikota on January 29, 2025.

After nearly a year's delay, the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) made public the report of a committee constituted to analyse why the NVS02 satellite, which was launched aboard a GSLV rocket on January 29 last year, could not be placed in its intended orbit.

The apex committee, as it is called, concluded that the main reason for what happened was that the signal meant to activate a key valve in the engine's oxidiser line never reached it. This valve is crucial for firing the engine to raise the spacecraft's orbit. Faulty connection

The committee said the most likely explanation was that at least one connection in the electrical connector — in both the primary and backup lines — came loose or failed, preventing the signal from getting through.

NVS02, the second spacecraft in the NVS series, was placed successfully into an 'elliptical transfer' orbit on January 29, 2025 at 00:53 UT but its subsequent transfer to a circular orbit was unsuccessful. This was also a special occasion being the 100th launch from the Sriharikota launchpad. The spacecraft was separated from the launch vehicle (GSLVF15) following which a series of autonomous activities on the satellite were carried out, including deploying the solar panel and stabilising the orientation for power generation. The NVS02 was to be the second satellite in the NVS series, and part of India's Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC).

Tips for enhancement The committee, an ISRO statement said, gave a set of recommendations to "enhance" the redundancy and reliability of pyro system operations for future missions. These were "successfully implemented in CMS03 spacecraft launched on November 2, 2025 by LVM3 M5, and the pyro systems performed satisfactorily placing the satellite in the intended orbit."

The CMS03, or GSAT7R, is an indigenously designed and developed satellite, weighing approximately 4,400 kg — India's heaviest communication satellite — and is critical to the Navy's spacebased communications and maritime domain awareness. The Hindu reported this week that a committee that includes K. Vijayraghavan, former Principal Scientific Adviser, and S. Somanath, former Chairman, ISRO, will probe "systemic issues" underlying the successive failures of ISRO's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV).

