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**Top Stories of The Day**

- *NPCI CEO Dilip Asbe Joins SWIFT Supervisory Board, Strengthening India's Role in Global Digital Payments*
- *South Korea, US and Japan Sign Trilateral Agreement for Global Deployment of Small Modular Reactors*
- *Centre Appoints New Chiefs for BPR&D, NCRB and SVPNPA to Strengthen Police Administration*
- *Padma Shri Awardee Girish Bharadwaj, Known as 'Bridge Man of India', Passes Away at 76*
- *India and Rwanda Expand Defence Cooperation During 2nd Joint Defence Cooperation Committee Meeting*
- *IOC Lifts Suspension of Russian Olympic Committee, Opening Path for LA 2028 Participation*
- *India Hosts 13th AITIGA Joint Committee Meeting to Modernise ASEAN-India Trade Agreement*
- *Nepal's Jestha Varna Mahavihar Receives UNESCO Heritage Conservation Award After India-Supported Restoration*
- *Sweden Tops Global Passport Index 2026 While India Ranks 125th in Global Mobility Ranking*
- *BRICS Adopts Guwahati Declaration to Strengthen Global Fight Against Illicit Drug Trafficking*
- *Delhi Government Launches Mission Kayakalp to Transform Government Schools with Modern Infrastructure*

## NPCI MD & CEO Dilip Asbe Joins SWIFT's Global Supervisory Board



### Why is it in News?

- Dilip Asbe, Managing Director and CEO of the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), has been appointed to the Supervisory Board of SWIFT (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication). The appointment reflects India's growing influence in the global digital payments ecosystem.

### Key Highlights

- Dilip Asbe, MD & CEO of NPCI, has joined the SWIFT Supervisory Board.
- His appointment strengthens India's representation in global financial governance and international payment systems.
- SWIFT plays a critical role in facilitating secure communication for international financial transactions.
- India's growing success in digital payments, especially through UPI, has contributed to its increasing role in shaping global payment infrastructure.
- The appointment is expected to enhance cooperation between India and global financial institutions in the areas of cross-border payments and financial technology.

### What is SWIFT?

- SWIFT (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication) is a global financial messaging network that enables banks and financial institutions to securely exchange payment instructions and other financial messages.

- It does not transfer money. Instead, it provides a secure, standardized messaging system that allows banks to communicate payment instructions accurately and efficiently.

### How Does SWIFT Work?

- When a customer sends money internationally, the sender's bank uses the SWIFT network to send a secure payment message to the recipient's bank.
- Based on this message, the receiving bank processes and credits the funds to the beneficiary's account.
- Thus, SWIFT acts as a communication network, while the actual movement of funds takes place through correspondent banking arrangements.

### Key Features of SWIFT

- Provides a secure and encrypted messaging platform for financial institutions.
- Connects over 11,000 financial institutions across 200+ countries and territories.
- Uses globally accepted SWIFT/BIC (Bank Identifier Code) to identify banks.
- Handles millions of financial messages every day.
- Supports international payments, foreign exchange transactions, securities trading, and trade finance.
- Considered the backbone of global cross-border banking communication.

### Functions of SWIFT

- |  |
|--|
| • Facilitates international fund transfer instructions.          |
| • Enables communication for trade finance and letters of credit. |
| • Supports securities settlement and treasury operations.        |
| • Standardises financial messaging across countries.             |

- Improves speed, security, and accuracy in global banking.

### SWIFT and India

- Indian banks use the SWIFT network for international remittances and cross-border trade transactions.
- India's digital payment innovations, such as UPI, are increasingly being integrated with global payment ecosystems.
- The appointment of the NPCI Chief to SWIFT's Supervisory Board highlights India's growing role in modernising international payment systems.

### Significance

- Enhances India's voice in global financial governance.
- Strengthens India's position in international payment infrastructure.
- Promotes cooperation in cross-border digital payments.
- Supports the global expansion of India's fintech ecosystem.
- Reflects international recognition of India's leadership in digital payment innovation.

### Exam Focus Points

- Person Appointed: Dilip Asbe
- Designation: MD & CEO, National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)
- Organisation: SWIFT (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication)
- Position: Member, SWIFT Supervisory Board
- SWIFT Established: 1973
- Headquarters: La Hulpe, Belgium
- Nature: Global Financial Messaging Network
- Primary Function: Secure exchange of financial messages between banks
- SWIFT Code: Bank Identifier Code (BIC)
- Money Transfer: SWIFT does not transfer money; it transmits payment instructions securely.
- Indian Digital Payment Operator: National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)
- Flagship Payment System of NPCI: Unified Payments Interface (UPI)

## South Korea, United States and Japan Agree to Cooperate on Small Modular Reactor (SMR) Deployment



- The Republic of Korea (South Korea), the United States, and Japan signed a Trilateral Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) to jointly promote the deployment of Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) in third countries.

### Key Features of the Trilateral Agreement:

- Participating Countries: South Korea, United States and Japan.
- Agreement: Trilateral Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) on SMR deployment.

### Signed By:

- Cho Hyun – Foreign Minister of South Korea.
- Marco Rubio – US Secretary of State.
- Toshiimitsu Motegi – Foreign Minister of Japan.
- Focus: Joint deployment of SMRs in partner countries.
- Objective: Provide safe, affordable, and reliable clean energy solutions.
- Venue: Signed on the sidelines of the NATO Summit.

### What are Small Modular Reactors (SMRs)?

- Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) are advanced nuclear fission reactors with a power generation capacity of up to 300 MW(e) per unit—about one-third of the output of conventional nuclear reactors. They are factory-fabricated, modular in design, and can be transported to project sites for installation.

### What are the Advantages of SMRs?

- Smaller footprint compared to conventional nuclear plants.
- Lower initial capital investment.
- Modular construction reduces project completion time.
- Enhanced passive safety systems.
- Suitable for remote areas and smaller electricity grids.
- Can support hydrogen production, desalination, and industrial heat applications.
- Lower greenhouse gas emissions compared to fossil-fuel-based power generation.

### Challenges Associated with SMRs:

- High initial technology development costs.
- Licensing and regulatory approval challenges.
- Management and disposal of radioactive waste.
- Public concerns regarding nuclear safety.
- Need for robust nuclear security and safeguards.

### About Nuclear Energy:

- Energy Source: Produced through nuclear fission, mainly using Uranium-235 or Plutonium-239.
- Nature: Low-carbon source of electricity.
- Global Importance: Plays a key role in achieving climate change mitigation and energy security goals.

### Nuclear Energy in India:

- Department: Department of Atomic Energy (DAE).
- Regulatory Authority: Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB).
- Major Operator: Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL).
- India's Three-Stage Nuclear Power Programme: Proposed by Dr. Homi Jehangir Bhabha.
- Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs) using natural uranium.
- Fast Breeder Reactors (FBRs) using plutonium.
- Thorium-based reactors using Uranium-233 (India has one of the world's largest thorium reserves).

### About the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA):

- Established: 1957.
- Headquarters: Vienna, Austria.
- Type: Autonomous international organisation under the UN system.
- Objective: Promote the peaceful use of nuclear energy and prevent its military use.
- Director General: Rafael Mariano Grossi.

### Exam Focus Points:

- Agreement: Trilateral Memorandum of Cooperation on Small Modular Reactors (SMRs).
- Countries: South Korea, United States and Japan.
- Purpose: Joint deployment of SMRs in third countries.
- Technology: Small Modular Reactors (SMRs).
- Maximum Capacity of SMRs: Up to 300 MW(e) per unit.
- International Nuclear Agency: International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).
- IAEA Headquarters: Vienna, Austria.
- India's Nuclear Power Operator: Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL).

- India's Nuclear Programme Architect: Dr. Homi Jehangir Bhabha.
- Importance: Clean energy, energy security, and decarbonisation.

## Centre Appoints New Chiefs for BPR&D, NCRB and SVPNPA



- Administrative Ministry: Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).
- Headquarters: New Delhi.

### Functions:

- The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) has approved the appointment of new heads for three key police institutions under the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA)—the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D), the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), and the Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Police Academy (SVPNPA).

- Police research and policy formulation.
- Police modernisation.
- Development of policing technologies.
- Training and capacity building.
- Correctional administration and prison reforms.
- Development of Model Police Manuals and best practices.

### About National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)

- The NCRB is India's central agency for crime data collection, analysis, and criminal information management.

### Key Appointments:

- Alok Kumar Mittal (IPS, 1993 batch, Haryana cadre) appointed as Director General, Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D).
- Amit Garg (IPS, 1993 batch, Andhra Pradesh cadre) appointed as Director, National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB). The post has been temporarily upgraded to the Director General (DG) level until his superannuation.
- Sujeet Pandey (IPS, 1994 batch, Uttar Pradesh cadre) appointed as Director, Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Police Academy (SVPNPA).

### Key Facts

- Established: 1986.
- Administrative Ministry: Ministry of Home Affairs.
- Headquarters: New Delhi.

### About Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D)

- The BPR&D is the premier institution responsible for police reforms, research, and modernisation in India.
- Established: 28 August 1970.

### Major Publications:

- Crime in India Report (published annually).
- Accidental Deaths and Suicides in India (ADSI).
- Prison Statistics India.

### Major Projects:

- Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems (CCTNS).
- National Automated Fingerprint Identification System (NAFIS).
- Inter-operable Criminal Justice System (ICJS).

- National Database on Sexual Offenders (NDSO).

### About Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Police Academy (SVPNPA):

- The SVPNPA is India's premier training institution for Indian Police Service (IPS) officers.

#### Key Facts

- Location: Hyderabad, Telangana.
- Administrative Ministry: Ministry of Home Affairs.

#### Role:

- Basic training of IPS probationers.
- Mid-career training programmes.
- Leadership development.
- Counter-terrorism and cybercrime training.
- Internal security and investigation courses.

### About the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC):

- Chairperson: Prime Minister of India.

- Member: Union Home Minister.
- Function: Appoints senior officers to top positions in the Government of India, including Secretaries, Directors General, and heads of autonomous bodies.

#### Exam Focus Points:

- Appointments Approved By: Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC).
- Administrative Ministry: Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).
- Director General, BPR&D: Alok Kumar Mittal.
- Director, NCRB: Amit Garg.
- Director, SVPNPA: Sujeet Pandey.
- BPR&D Established: 1970.
- NCRB Established: 1986.
- SVPNPA Location: Hyderabad, Telangana.
- Major NCRB Projects: CCTNS, ICJS, NAFIS, NDSO.
- Premier IPS Training Academy: Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel National Police Academy.

## 'Bridge Man of India' Girish Bharadwaj Passes Away at 76



- Padma Shri awardee Girish Bharadwaj, popularly known as the "Bridge Man of India", passed away at the age of 76 in Sullia, Karnataka, following a brief illness.

#### Major Contribution:

- Designed and built over 140 low-cost suspension footbridges across India.
- First Suspension Bridge: Constructed in 1989.

- Dedicated over 35 years to improving connectivity in remote and tribal regions.
- His bridge designs were affordable, durable, and required minimal maintenance.

#### Major Recognition

- Padma Shri: 2017.
- Recognised nationally for innovation in rural infrastructure development and social engineering.
- Widely acknowledged as one of India's leading grassroots innovators.

#### About the Padma Awards

- The Padma Awards are among India's highest civilian honours and are conferred by the President of India.

**Categories (in order of precedence)**

• Bharat Ratna
• Padma Vibhushan
• Padma Bhushan
• Padma Shri

**Key Facts**

• Announced: Every year on the eve of Republic Day.
• Conferred By: President of India.
• Administrative Ministry: Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).

**Recognise exceptional achievements in fields such as:**

• Art
• Literature and Education
• Science and Engineering
• Public Affairs
• Medicine
• Social Work
• Civil Service
• Sports
• Trade and Industry

**Importance of Suspension Footbridges**

**Suspension footbridges are particularly useful in:**

• Mountainous and hilly regions.
• Flood-prone river basins.
• Tribal and remote villages.
• Areas where conventional bridge construction is expensive or technically difficult.

**Advantages**

- Cost-effective.
- Faster construction.
- Minimal environmental impact.
- Suitable for difficult terrain.
- Enhances rural connectivity and disaster resilience.

**Government Initiatives for Rural Connectivity:**

- Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY): Launched in 2000 to provide all-weather road connectivity to eligible rural habitations.
- PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan: Integrated infrastructure planning for multimodal connectivity.
- National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP): Long-term infrastructure investment programme to improve connectivity and logistics.

**Exam Focus Points:**

• Personality(Obituary): Girish Bharadwaj.
• Popular Title: Bridge Man of India.
• State: Karnataka.
• Contribution: Built over 140 low-cost suspension footbridges.
• First Bridge Constructed: 1989.
• Padma Shri Award: 2017.
• Field: Rural infrastructure and social engineering.
• Known For: Affordable suspension bridge technology for remote villages.
• Related Scheme: Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY).

**India and Rwanda Agree to Expand Bilateral Defence Partnership at 2nd JDCC Meeting**

- India and Rwanda agreed to deepen their bilateral defence cooperation during the 2nd

Joint Defence Cooperation Committee (JDCC) Meeting held in New Delhi.

- Both countries decided to expand collaboration in military training, joint military exercises, defence industries, and military medical cooperation.
- They also approved an implementation plan with timelines for the agreed action points, reflecting their commitment to strengthening long-term defence ties.
- The meeting was co-chaired by Amitabh Prasad, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Defence, India, and Brigadier General Louis Kanobayire, Chief for Joint Force Development, Training and Doctrine (Chief J7), Rwanda Defence Force Headquarters.



### Additional Developments:

- The Rwandan delegation called on Defence Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh.
- The delegation interacted with representatives of the Indian defence industry and explored opportunities in indigenous defence manufacturing.
- The delegation visited Army Hospital (Referral & Research), New Delhi, to study India's military healthcare infrastructure and medical support systems.
- Both countries agreed to accelerate cooperation in defence production and technology.

### About the Joint Defence Cooperation Committee (JDCC):

- The Joint Defence Cooperation Committee (JDCC) is a bilateral institutional mechanism established to review and strengthen defence cooperation between partner countries.

### Functions

- Review progress in defence collaboration.
- Identify new areas of military cooperation.
- Promote defence industrial partnerships.
- Enhance military training and capacity building.
- Facilitate implementation of bilateral defence agreements.

### India–Rwanda Defence Relations:

- Defence Cooperation MoU Signed: July 2018, during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Rwanda.

### Areas of cooperation include:

- |   |
|---|
| • Military training.                        |
| • Defence capacity building.                |
| • Defence manufacturing.                    |
| • Peacekeeping cooperation.                 |
| • Medical support.                          |
| • Exchange of expertise and best practices. |

### India–Rwanda Bilateral Relations:

- Diplomatic Relations Established: 1999.
- Indian Mission in Kigali: Opened in 2018.

### Key Areas of Cooperation:

- |                                    |
|------------------------------------|
| • Defence and Security.            |
| • Agriculture.                     |
| • Healthcare.                      |
| • Education and Capacity Building. |
| • Digital Public Infrastructure.   |
| • Trade and Investment.            |

- Development Partnership under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme.

### About Rwanda

- |                                      |
|--------------------------------------|
| • Official Name: Republic of Rwanda. |
| • Capital: Kigali.                   |
| • Currency: Rwandan Franc (RWF).     |

- President: Paul Kagame.
- Region: East Africa.

- Technology transfer.
- Institutional development.

**Member of:**

- African Union (AU).
- East African Community (EAC).
- Commonwealth of Nations.
- United Nations (UN).

**Exam Focus Points:**

- Meeting: 2nd Joint Defence Cooperation Committee (JDCC).
- Countries: India and Rwanda.
- Venue: New Delhi.
- Dates: 6–7 July 2026.
- Co-Chair (India): Amitabh Prasad.
- Co-Chair (Rwanda): Brig. Gen. Louis Kanobayire.
- Defence Cooperation MoU: Signed in July 2018.
- Defence Secretary of India: Rajesh Kumar Singh.
- Key Areas: Military training, defence industry, military exercises, medical cooperation.
- Indian Capacity-Building Programme: ITEC.

**About ITEC (Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation):**

- Launched: 1964.
- Nodal Ministry: Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).

**Objective: Capacity building and technical assistance for partner countries through:**

- Training programmes.
- Scholarships.
- Expert deputation.

**IOC Lifts Suspension of Russian Olympic Committee, Opens Path for LA 2028**

**Olympics**



**Why is it in News?**

- The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has provisionally lifted the suspension of the Russian Olympic Committee (ROC), allowing Russian athletes to return to international competitions and potentially compete at the Los Angeles 2028 Olympic Games (LA28), subject to eligibility rules. However, the IOC has not yet decided whether Russia will be allowed to

compete under its national flag, anthem, or colours.

**Key Highlights**

- The IOC has provisionally lifted the suspension imposed on the Russian Olympic Committee (ROC).
- The decision clears the way for Russian athletes to participate in qualification events for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics.
- Russia's flag, anthem, and national colours have not yet been restored for Olympic participation.
- Several international sports federations may continue to impose their own restrictions despite the IOC's decision.

**Background**

- Russia has faced Olympic restrictions since 2016 following revelations of a state-sponsored doping programme.
- After Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, the IOC recommended restricting Russian and Belarusian athletes from international competitions.
- In October 2023, the IOC suspended the Russian Olympic Committee (ROC) after it recognised Olympic councils in the Russian-occupied Ukrainian regions of Luhansk, Donetsk, Kherson, and Zaporizhzhia, which the IOC said violated the Olympic Charter and the territorial integrity of Ukraine's National Olympic Committee.
- Marks an important development in the gradual reintegration of Russian athletes into international sports.
- The decision remains controversial due to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict and Russia's past doping violations.
- Highlights the balance the IOC seeks between sporting participation, anti-doping standards, and geopolitical considerations.

### Exam Focus Points

• Organisation: International Olympic Committee (IOC)
• Decision: Provisional lifting of the suspension of the Russian Olympic Committee (ROC)
• Beneficiary: Russian Olympic Committee (ROC)
• Purpose: Allow Russian athletes to participate in international competitions and qualify for LA28
• Host of 2028 Olympics: Los Angeles, United States
• Suspension Imposed: October 2023
• Reason for Suspension: Recognition of Olympic councils in Russian-occupied Ukrainian territories
• IOC Headquarters: Lausanne, Switzerland
• Current IOC President: Kirsty Coventry

### Why Did the IOC Lift the Suspension?

- The IOC stated that the ROC no longer includes sports organisations from the occupied Ukrainian territories and has assured that it will not conduct activities there. The IOC also emphasised that athletes should not be punished for the actions of their governments, while continuing to monitor Russia's compliance.

### Significance

- Opens the possibility for a larger Russian contingent at the LA28 Olympics.
- Reinforces the IOC's principle that athletes should not automatically face sanctions because of government actions.

## India Hosts AITIGA Joint Committee Meeting to Review ASEAN-India Trade Agreement



- India is hosting the 13th Joint Committee Meeting of the ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA) in New Delhi to accelerate the review and modernization of the trade pact. The meeting aims to make the agreement more business-friendly and boost trade between India and ASEAN countries.

### Key Highlights

### Why is it in News?

- India is hosting the 13th AITIGA Joint Committee Meeting and related meetings from 6–10 July 2026 in New Delhi in a hybrid format.
- The meeting is reviewing the ASEAN–India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA) to simplify trade rules and improve market access.
- Three Sub-Committees are meeting alongside the Joint Committee:
  - Customs Procedures and Trade Facilitation (SC-CPTF)
  - National Treatment and Market Access (SC-NTMA)
  - Rules of Origin (SC-ROO)
- The Joint Committee has directed the Sub-Committees to complete pending negotiations within agreed timelines.
- The meeting was co-chaired by Nitin Kumar Yadav (India) and Mastura Ahmad Mustafa (Malaysia), with participation from all 10 ASEAN member countries.

- To remove trade barriers and simplify customs procedures.
- To improve market access for Indian exporters.
- To update trade rules in line with current global business practices.
- To strengthen supply chains and economic integration between India and ASEAN.
- To increase bilateral trade and investment.

**Significance**

- Strengthens India's economic engagement with Southeast Asia.
- Supports India's Act East Policy.
- Promotes easier and faster trade with ASEAN countries.
- Enhances regional supply chain resilience and economic cooperation.
- Helps create new opportunities for exporters, manufacturers, and investors.

**What is AITIGA?**

- The ASEAN–India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA) is a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between India and the 10 ASEAN member countries. It aims to reduce or eliminate tariffs on goods, facilitate trade, and strengthen economic cooperation.

**About AITIGA**

• Signed: 13 August 2009
• Came into Force: 1 January 2010
• Part of: ASEAN–India Free Trade Area (AIFTA)
• Covers trade in goods between India and ASEAN member countries.
• The ongoing review seeks to make the agreement more modern, transparent, and business-friendly.

**Exam Focus Points**

• Agreement: ASEAN–India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA)
• Type: Free Trade Agreement (FTA)
• Current Meeting: 13th AITIGA Joint Committee Meeting
• Purpose: Review and modernise AITIGA
• Signed: 13 August 2009
• Effective From: 1 January 2010
• Related Framework: ASEAN–India Free Trade Area (AIFTA)
• Co-Chair (India): Nitin Kumar Yadav, Additional Secretary, Department of Commerce
• Co-Chair (Malaysia): Mastura Ahmad Mustafa, Deputy Secretary General (Trade)
• ASEAN Members: 10 countries
• Related Policy: Act East Policy

**Why is the Review Important?**

**Nepal's Restored Jestha Varna Mahavihar Wins UNESCO Heritage Conservation Award**



**Why is it in News?**

- The Jestha Varna Mahavihar, a 17th-century Buddhist monastery in Lalitpur, Nepal, has received the 2025 UNESCO Asia-Pacific Award of Merit for Cultural Heritage Conservation. The monastery was restored with financial assistance from the Government of India after it was severely damaged in the 2015 Nepal earthquake.

**Key Highlights**

- Jestha Varna Mahavihar in Lalitpur, Nepal, has been honoured with the 2025 UNESCO Asia-Pacific Award of Merit for Cultural Heritage Conservation.
- The monastery suffered extensive damage during the 2015 Gorkha (Nepal) earthquake and was restored with Indian grant assistance of about NPR 13.78 crore.
- The restoration project was carried out under India's post-earthquake reconstruction programme in Nepal.
- The project received international recognition for successfully combining modern earthquake-resistant technology with the preservation of traditional Newari architecture and wood carvings.
- The restoration was completed with technical support from the Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) in collaboration with the Government of Nepal and the local community.
- The award highlights the strong cultural and development partnership between India and Nepal.

**About Jestha Varna Mahavihar**

- It is a 17th-century Buddhist monastery located in Lalitpur (Patan), Nepal.
- It is one of Nepal's important examples of Newari Buddhist architecture.
- The monastery serves as both a place of worship and a living cultural heritage site for the local community.

**About the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation**

- The UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation recognise outstanding efforts to conserve and restore heritage buildings and cultural sites across the Asia-Pacific region. The awards encourage projects that preserve historical authenticity while ensuring that heritage sites remain useful for local communities.

**Significance**

- Recognises India's contribution to Nepal's post-earthquake reconstruction.
- Strengthens India–Nepal cultural and historical ties.
- Promotes conservation of South Asia's shared cultural heritage.
- Demonstrates how modern engineering can be combined with traditional architecture for sustainable heritage conservation.
- Encourages community participation in preserving cultural monuments.

**Exam Focus Points**

• Award: UNESCO Asia-Pacific Award of Merit for Cultural Heritage Conservation (2025)
• Awarded Site: Jestha Varna Mahavihar
• Location: Lalitpur (Patan), Nepal
• Type of Site: 17th-century Buddhist Monastery
• Restored With: Government of India Grant Assistance
• Restoration Cost: NPR 13.78 crore
• Technical Partner: Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH)

- Recognising Organisation: UNESCO
- Significance: Strengthened India–Nepal cultural and development partnership.

## Sweden Tops Global Passport Index 2026; India Ranks 125th



### Why is it in News?

- The Global Passport Index 2026 has been released, with Sweden securing the 1st position as the world's most powerful passport. India has slipped to the 125th rank, highlighting the relatively limited global travel access available to Indian passport holders.

### Key Highlights

- Sweden has topped the Global Passport Index 2026, becoming the world's most powerful passport.
- The index ranks passports based on the visa-free and visa-on-arrival access they provide to travellers.
- India is ranked 125th, reflecting relatively lower international travel mobility compared to many other countries.
- Countries with higher rankings enjoy easier international travel due to broader visa-free agreements and stronger diplomatic relations.
- The rankings are influenced by factors such as visa-free access, visa-on-arrival facilities, electronic travel authorisations (eTA), and global mobility.
- The index serves as an indicator of a country's diplomatic relations, international cooperation, and travel freedom.

### What is the Global Passport Index?

- The Global Passport Index is an annual ranking that compares the strength of passports issued by different countries based on the number of destinations their citizens can access without obtaining a visa in advance.
- The stronger the passport, the greater the travel freedom enjoyed by its citizens.

### Parameters Used:

- Visa-free travel
- Visa-on-arrival access
- Electronic Travel Authorisation (eTA)
- Ease of international mobility
- Global diplomatic engagement

### Significance

- Measures the global mobility enjoyed by citizens of different countries.
- Reflects the strength of a country's diplomatic relations and international agreements.
- Helps travellers, businesses, and policymakers assess international travel accessibility.
- Indicates the ease of cross-border movement for tourism, education, employment, and business.

### Top 5 Countries – Global Passport Index 2026

Rank	Country	Overall Score
• 1	Sweden	96.05
• 2	Switzerland	95.57
• 3	Finland	95.53
• 4	Germany	95.20
• 5 (Joint)	Netherlands	95.11
• 5 (Joint)	Denmark	95.11

### Bottom 5 Countries – Global Passport Index 2026

Rank	Country	Overall Score
• 193	Syria	25.22
• 194	Yemen	24.94
• 195	South Sudan	24.33
• 196	Somalia	23.57
• 197	Afghanistan	23.10

- Exam Tip: Do not confuse this Global Passport Index (Global Citizen Solutions) with the Henley Passport Index or Arton Capital Passport Index. Each uses a different methodology, so rankings and scores differ.

• Top-Ranked Country: Sweden
• India's Rank: 125th
• Ranking Basis: Visa-free, Visa-on-arrival, and Electronic Travel Authorisation (eTA) access
• Purpose: Measure the global strength and travel freedom of passports
• Indicator: International mobility and diplomatic relations
• Best Passport Holder: Sweden
• Key Concept: Passport Strength / Global Mobility Index
• Factors Considered: Visa-free access, Visa-on-arrival, eTA, travel freedom, international agreements

**Exam Focus Points**

- Report: Global Passport Index 2026

**BRICS Adopts Guwahati Declaration to Strengthen Fight Against Illicit Drug Trafficking**



**Why is it in News?**

- The BRICS countries have adopted the Guwahati Declaration during the BRICS Heads of Anti-Drug Agencies Meeting held in Guwahati, Assam. The declaration aims to strengthen cooperation among BRICS nations to combat illicit drug trafficking, synthetic drugs, and transnational organised crime.

**Key Highlights**

- The Guwahati Declaration was adopted at the conclusion of the BRICS Heads of Anti-Drug Agencies Meeting held on 6–7 July 2026 in Guwahati, Assam.

- BRICS countries agreed to strengthen intelligence sharing, exchange of best practices, and operational cooperation to tackle cross-border drug trafficking.
- The declaration emphasizes the use of digital technologies, data-driven policing, and innovative enforcement tools to combat synthetic drugs and organised crime.
- Member countries pledged to improve coordination in accordance with national laws and international obligations.
- India proposed the creation of a BRICS Virtual Task Force on Narcotics to enable faster intelligence sharing and coordinated action against international drug cartels.
- India also presented its 2026–2029 Anti-Drug Roadmap, which focuses on dismantling drug networks, preventing drug abuse through awareness campaigns, and strengthening treatment and rehabilitation facilities.

**What is the Guwahati Declaration?**

- The Guwahati Declaration is a joint commitment adopted by BRICS nations to enhance cooperation against illicit drug

trafficking and transnational organised crime through intelligence sharing, technology-driven enforcement, capacity building, and coordinated policy action.

### Significance

- Strengthens international cooperation against drug trafficking.
- Improves intelligence sharing among BRICS countries.
- Promotes the use of technology and digital tools in narcotics control.
- Supports coordinated action against synthetic drugs and organised criminal networks.
- Reinforces India's leadership under the BRICS Chairship 2026.

### About BRICS

- BRICS is a grouping of major emerging economies that promotes cooperation in trade, investment, finance, sustainable development, technology, and global governance.

### History

- 2001: The term BRIC was coined by Jim O'Neill of Goldman Sachs.
- 2006: First meeting of BRIC Foreign Ministers.
- 2009: First BRIC Summit held in Yekaterinburg, Russia.
- 2010: South Africa joined, and BRIC became BRICS.
- 2024: Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and UAE joined.
- 2026: Indonesia became the 11th member.

### Current Members (11)

- Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates (UAE), and Indonesia.

### Major Institutions

- New Development Bank (NDB): Established in 2014; Headquarters – Shanghai, China.
- Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA): US\$100 billion financial safety mechanism for member countries.

### Exam Focus Points

• Declaration: Guwahati Declaration
• Adopted By: BRICS Nations
• Meeting: BRICS Heads of Anti-Drug Agencies Meeting
• Venue: Guwahati, Assam, India
• Host Country: India
• Organised By: Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB), Ministry of Home Affairs
• Objective: Strengthen cooperation against illicit drug trafficking and transnational organised crime
• Key Focus Areas: Intelligence sharing, synthetic drugs, digital enforcement, capacity building, operational cooperation
• Indian Initiative: Proposal for a BRICS Virtual Task Force on Narcotics
• Related Group: BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, UAE)

## Delhi Government Launches Mission Kayakalp to Modernise Government

### Schools

#### Why is it in News?

- The Delhi Government has launched Mission Kayakalp, a major initiative to transform

government schools into safe, clean, modern, and student-friendly learning spaces through infrastructure upgrades and community participation.



### Key Highlights

- Mission Kayakalp aims to improve the overall infrastructure of government schools across Delhi.
- The initiative focuses on renovating classrooms, repairing school buildings, upgrading laboratories, improving toilets, ensuring clean drinking water, and beautifying campuses.
- The programme is being implemented with the support of district administrations, the Education Department, CSR organisations, NGOs, market associations, and local communities.
- Special attention is being given to creating inclusive facilities, including renovated sensory parks for children with special needs.
- The initiative seeks to make government schools not only centres of education but also safe, inspiring, and modern learning environments.

### What is Mission Kayakalp?

- Mission Kayakalp is a flagship initiative of the Delhi Government aimed at modernising government schools by improving physical infrastructure, cleanliness, safety, accessibility, and learning facilities. It also encourages community participation to improve the quality of public education.

### Objectives

- Modernise government school infrastructure.

- Provide a clean, safe, and inclusive learning environment.
- Improve the quality of education through better facilities.
- Increase student participation and public confidence in government schools.
- Encourage community and CSR participation in school development.

### Significance

- Improves the quality of public education.
- Creates a better learning environment for students.
- Strengthens infrastructure in government schools.
- Promotes inclusive education for children with special needs.
- Encourages collaboration between the government and local communities.

### Exam Focus Points

• Scheme: Mission Kayakalp
• Launched By: Delhi Government
• Objective: Modernise government schools and improve infrastructure
• Coverage: Government schools across Delhi
• Key Components: Smart classrooms, repaired buildings, laboratories, toilets, drinking water, clean and green campuses
• Implementation: Education Department with support from district administration, CSR organisations, NGOs, market associations, and local communities
• Focus: Safe, clean, modern, and inclusive learning spaces
• Special Initiative: Sensory parks and improved facilities for children with special needs.

**Lets Revise**

- ❖ Which global financial organisation has appointed Dilip Asbe to its Supervisory Board? **SWIFT (Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication).**
- ❖ What is the full form of SWIFT? **Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication.**
- ❖ SWIFT was established in which year? **1973.**
- ❖ Which code is used by SWIFT to uniquely identify banks worldwide? **SWIFT Code or Bank Identifier Code (BIC).**
- ❖ Which three countries signed a trilateral Memorandum of Cooperation to jointly promote the deployment of Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) in third countries? **South Korea, the United States, and Japan.**
- ❖ Who has been appointed as the new Director General of the Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D) in July 2026? **Alok Kumar Mittal (IPS, 1993 batch, Haryana cadre).**
- ❖ Who was popularly known as the "Bridge Man of India" for constructing more than 140 low-cost suspension footbridges in remote rural areas? **Girish Bharadwaj.**
- ❖ Which African country held the 2nd Joint Defence Cooperation Committee (JDCC) meeting with India in New Delhi in July 2026 to expand bilateral defence cooperation? **Rwanda.**
- ❖ Which country's Olympic committee has recently had its suspension provisionally lifted by the IOC? **The Russian Olympic Committee (ROC).**
- ❖ Which edition of the Olympic Games could see the return of Russian athletes following the IOC's latest decision? **The 2028 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles, USA.**
- ❖ Where was the 13th AITIGA Joint Committee Meeting held? **The meeting was held in New Delhi, India.**
- ❖ What does AITIGA stand for? **ASEAN–India Trade in Goods Agreement.**
- ❖ When was the ASEAN–India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA) signed? **The agreement was signed on 13 August 2009.**
- ❖ Which monastery received the 2025 UNESCO Asia-Pacific Award of Merit for Cultural Heritage Conservation? **Jestha Varna Mahavihar in Nepal.**
- ❖ Where is the Jestha Varna Mahavihar located? It is located in Lalitpur (Patan), Nepal.

- ❖ Which international organisation confers the Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation? **UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization).**
- ❖ Which country provided financial assistance for the restoration of Jestha Varna Mahavihar? **India provided financial assistance.**
- ❖ Approximately how much grant assistance did India provide for the restoration of Jestha Varna Mahavihar? **Around NPR 13.78 crore.**
- ❖ Which Indian organisation provided technical support for the restoration of Jestha Varna Mahavihar? **The Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH).**
- ❖ Which country topped the Global Passport Index 2026? **Sweden**
- ❖ What is India's rank in the Global Passport Index 2026? **125th**
- ❖ Which organisation publishes the Global Passport Index? **Global Citizen Solutions.**
- ❖ How many destinations can Indian passport holders access visa-free or with visa-on-arrival according to the Global Passport Index 2026? **26 destinations.**
- ❖ Where was the BRICS Heads of Anti-Drug Agencies Meeting 2026 held? **Guwahati, Assam, India.**
- ❖ Which declaration was adopted during the BRICS Heads of Anti-Drug Agencies Meeting 2026? **The Guwahati Declaration.**
- ❖ What is the primary objective of the Guwahati Declaration? **To strengthen cooperation against illicit drug trafficking, synthetic drugs, and transnational organised crime.**
- ❖ Which new initiative did India propose during the BRICS Anti-Drug Meeting? **The BRICS Virtual Task Force on Narcotics.**
- ❖ Which government has launched Mission Kayakalp? **The Delhi Government.**
- ❖ What is the primary objective of Mission Kayakalp? **To modernise government schools by improving infrastructure, safety, cleanliness, and learning facilities.**
- ❖ Mission Kayakalp is associated with which sector? **Education.**
- ❖ Which institutions will benefit under Mission Kayakalp? **Government schools across Delhi.**



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## IMPORTANCE OF CURRENT AFFAIRS IN UPSC EXAMINATIONS

Current Affairs hold a crucial place in the preparation for the UPSC Civil Services Examination. A comprehensive understanding of recent national and international developments helps aspirants strengthen their General Studies foundation and develop a well-rounded perspective on important issues. Topics such as government policies, schemes, economy, international relations, science and technology, environment, defence, social justice, governance, reports, indices, appointments, awards, and major global events are highly relevant for both the Prelims and Mains examinations. Regular study of current affairs not only enhances factual knowledge but also improves analytical ability, critical thinking, answer-writing skills, and decision-making aptitude. Since UPSC questions often connect contemporary developments with static subjects, consistent preparation of current affairs enables aspirants to understand issues in depth and present balanced, informed, and relevant answers. It also plays an important role in Essay writing, Ethics, and the Personality Test, giving candidates a strong edge throughout the examination process.

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