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- *Uttarakhand Becomes India's Sixth Fully Literate State Under ULLAS Literacy Programme*
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## India and Australia Sign Landmark Agreements on Uranium Supply and Critical Minerals Corridor



- India and Australia signed a series of landmark agreements during the 3rd India–Australia Annual Leaders' Summit held in Melbourne, significantly strengthening their Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.
- The major outcomes included an agreement to operationalise the commercial supply of Australian uranium to India for peaceful civil nuclear purposes, the launch of a Dedicated India–Australia Critical Minerals Corridor, and the operationalisation of the Australia–India Partnership on Cyber, Critical Technologies and Supply Chains (AI-PACTS).
- The two countries also issued a Joint Declaration on Defence and Security Cooperation and adopted a Maritime Security Collaboration Roadmap to enhance cooperation in the Indo-Pacific.

### Major Outcomes:

- Australia to supply uranium to India for peaceful civilian nuclear use.
- Launch of the India–Australia Critical Minerals Corridor.
- Operationalisation of AI-PACTS (Australia–India Partnership on Cyber, Critical Technologies and Supply Chains).
- Joint Declaration on Defence and Security Cooperation.
- Maritime Security Collaboration Roadmap.
- Decision to strengthen cooperation in shipbuilding, defence innovation, and critical technologies.

### Uranium Supply Agreement:

- Australia agreed to commence commercial exports of uranium to India under the civil nuclear cooperation framework, providing a major boost to India's clean energy ambitions.

### Objectives:

- Support India's expanding nuclear power programme.
- Diversify India's clean energy sources.
- Strengthen long-term energy security.
- Deepen bilateral strategic cooperation.

### Key Facts:

- Uranium will be supplied only for peaceful civilian nuclear purposes under international safeguards.
- The agreement operationalises the Australia–India Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement, signed in 2014 (which entered into force in 2015).
- Australia possesses the world's largest known recoverable uranium reserves, making it a key global supplier.

### India–Australia Critical Minerals Corridor:

- The two countries launched a Dedicated Critical Minerals Corridor to build resilient supply chains for minerals essential to advanced manufacturing and clean energy technologies.

### Objectives:

- Secure supply chains for strategic minerals.
- Promote processing and value addition.
- Support electric vehicles, semiconductors, batteries, and renewable energy industries.
- Reduce dependence on concentrated global supply sources.

### Important Critical Minerals:

- Lithium.
- Cobalt.
- Nickel.
- Graphite.
- Rare Earth Elements (REEs).
- Copper.
- Australia–India Partnership on Cyber, Critical Technologies and Supply Chains (AI-PACTS)

**The AI-PACTS initiative aims to deepen collaboration in:**

- Cyber security.
- Critical and emerging technologies.
- Semiconductor and supply-chain resilience.
- Artificial Intelligence (AI).
- Quantum technologies.
- Trusted digital infrastructure.

**Defence and Maritime Cooperation:**

- The two countries signed a Joint Declaration on Defence and Security Cooperation to strengthen strategic coordination in the Indo-Pacific.

**Major Areas:**

- Regular Defence Ministers' Dialogue.
- Maritime domain awareness.
- Joint military exercises.
- Defence innovation and industry collaboration.
- Shipbuilding and ship repair.
- Freedom of navigation and rules-based maritime order.

**India–Australia Bilateral Relations:**

- India and Australia share a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership, upgraded in 2020.

**Key Facts**

- Diplomatic Relations Established: 1941.
- Strategic Partnership: 2009.
- Comprehensive Strategic Partnership: 2020.

**Both countries are members of:**

- Quad.
- G20.
- East Asia Summit (EAS).
- Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA).
- Commonwealth of Nations.
- Civil Nuclear Cooperation Between India and Australia
- Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement Signed: 2014.
- Entered into Force: 2015.
- Enables Australia's uranium exports for India's safeguarded civilian nuclear reactors.
- Supports India's target of achieving 100 GW of nuclear power capacity by 2047.

**About Critical Minerals:**

**Critical minerals are minerals that are:**

- Essential for economic development and national security.
- Difficult to substitute.
- Vulnerable to supply-chain disruptions.

**Applications:**

- Electric Vehicle (EV) batteries.
- Renewable energy technologies.
- Semiconductors.
- Aerospace and defence.
- Electronics and telecommunications.

**Exam Focus Points:**

- Countries: India and Australia.
- Summit: 3rd India–Australia Annual Leaders' Summit.
- Venue: Melbourne, Australia.
- Leaders: Narendra Modi and Anthony Albanese.
- Major Agreement: Commercial uranium supply for peaceful civilian nuclear use.

- New Initiative: India–Australia Critical Minerals Corridor.
- Technology Initiative: AI-PACTS (Australia–India Partnership on Cyber, Critical Technologies and Supply Chains).
- Defence Outcome: Joint Declaration on Defence and Security Cooperation.

- Civil Nuclear Agreement: Signed in 2014; operationalised through the latest arrangement.
- Strategic Partnership: Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (2020).

## QCI and NSIC Partner to Integrate ZED Certification, Digital Market Access and MSME Support Initiatives



- Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises.
- Implementing Agency: Quality Council of India (QCI).

### Vision:

- The Quality Council of India (QCI) and the National Small Industries Corporation (NSIC) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to strengthen the competitiveness of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) by integrating Zero Defect Zero Effect (ZED) Certification, digital market access, and capacity-building initiatives.
- The partnership aims to improve the quality, sustainability, and global competitiveness of Indian MSMEs by combining QCI's quality certification framework with NSIC's market facilitation and business support services.

- Zero Defect: Manufacture products with minimal defects and high quality.
- Zero Effect: Minimise environmental impact during production.

### Certification Levels:

- Bronze
- Silver
- Gold
- Diamond
- Platinum

### What is the MSME Sustainable (ZED) Certification Scheme?

- The MSME Sustainable (ZED) Certification Scheme is a flagship initiative of the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) aimed at encouraging manufacturing MSMEs to adopt world-class quality and environmentally sustainable manufacturing practices.

### Key Features:

- Full Form: Zero Defect Zero Effect (ZED).

### Benefits:

- Financial incentives and certification subsidies.
- Improved product quality.
- Better environmental performance.
- Enhanced export competitiveness.
- Easier integration into global value chains.

### Role of the National Small Industries Corporation (NSIC):

- The National Small Industries Corporation (NSIC) is a Mini Ratna Public Sector Enterprise

that promotes the growth of MSMEs by providing integrated business support.

**Key Facts**

• Established: 1955.
• Administrative Ministry: Ministry of MSME.
• Headquarters: New Delhi.
• Status: Mini Ratna Enterprise.

**Major Services:**

- Raw material assistance.
- Credit facilitation.
- Marketing support.
- Government procurement assistance.
- Technology and incubation support.
- Digital services through MSME Global Mart.

**About the Quality Council of India (QCI):**

- The Quality Council of India (QCI) is an autonomous body established to promote quality standards across various sectors of the economy.

**Key Facts**

• Established: 1997.
• Type: Autonomous body (Public-Private Partnership model).
• Headquarters: New Delhi.
• Parent Department: Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce and Industry.

**Functions:**

- Accreditation and certification.
- Quality promotion.
- Standardisation.
- Capacity building.
- Implementation of quality-related national initiatives.

**Digital Market Access Initiatives:**

**Under the partnership, MSMEs will receive support for:**

- Onboarding onto digital marketplaces.
- E-commerce participation.
- Digital business tools.
- Online branding and marketing.
- Digital compliance and business automation.
- Improved market linkages through NSIC platforms.

**Government Initiatives Supporting MSMEs:**

- MSME Sustainable (ZED) Certification Scheme.
- Udyam Registration Portal.
- Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance (RAMP) Scheme.
- PM Vishwakarma Scheme.
- Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE).
- Procurement and Marketing Support (PMS) Scheme.
- MSME Champions Portal.

**Exam Focus Points:**

• MoU Between: Quality Council of India (QCI) and National Small Industries Corporation (NSIC).
• Scheme Integrated: MSME Sustainable (ZED) Certification.
• ZED Full Form: Zero Defect Zero Effect.
• Nodal Ministry (ZED): Ministry of MSME.
• Implementing Agency (ZED): Quality Council of India (QCI).
• NSIC Established: 1955.
• QCI Established: 1997.
• NSIC Headquarters: New Delhi.
• Focus Areas: Quality certification, digital market access, MSME capacity building, sustainability.
• Related Government Initiatives: Make in India, Digital India, Atmanirbhar Bharat.

## Uttarakhand Becomes India's Sixth Fully Literate State



- Uttarakhand has been officially declared India's sixth fully literate state after meeting the literacy standards prescribed by the Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Education.
- The declaration was approved by the Governor under the ULLAS (Understanding of Lifelong Learning for All in Society) – New India Literacy Programme, aligned with the objectives of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.
- With this achievement, Uttarakhand joins Mizoram, Goa, Tripura, Himachal Pradesh, and Sikkim in the list of fully literate states.

- |                        |
|------------------------|
| • Basic Education      |
| • Vocational Skills    |
| • Continuing Education |

### What is a 'Fully Literate State'?

- A state is considered fully literate when it achieves the prescribed adult literacy benchmark (around 95% or above under ULLAS guidelines) among the target population through certification and assessment.

### National Education Policy (NEP) 2020

- Replaces the National Policy on Education, 1986.
- Emphasizes Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) as a national priority.
- Promotes lifelong learning, digital literacy, vocational education, and adult education.

### Exam Focus Points:

### ULLAS – Nav Bharat Saksharta Karyakram

- |   |
|---|
| • Launched by the Ministry of Education.                  |
| • Implemented for 2022–2027.                              |
| • Targets non-literate adults aged 15 years and above.    |
| • Based on the principle of volunteerism (Kartavya Bodh). |

- |   |
|---|
| • 6th Fully Literate State: Uttarakhand   |
| • Programme: ULLAS – Understanding of Lifelong Learning for All in Society (New India Literacy Programme) |
| • Duration of ULLAS: 2022–2027  |
| • Target Group: Non-literate adults (15 years and above)  |
| • States declared fully literate: Mizoram, Goa, Tripura, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Uttarakhand.           |

### Five Components of ULLAS

- |  |
|--|
| • Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) |
| • Critical Life Skills                     |

## India Gets World's First Once-Weekly Basal Insulin: Novo Nordisk Launches

### Awiqli

- Danish pharmaceutical company Novo Nordisk has launched Awiqli (Insulin Icodec) in India—

the world's first once-weekly basal insulin approved for clinical use.

- The new therapy is designed for adults with Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes requiring basal insulin and reduces the number of insulin injections from 365 per year to just 52, potentially improving treatment adherence and quality of life. India is among the first countries globally to introduce this breakthrough therapy.



### What is Basal Insulin?

- Basal insulin is a long-acting insulin that maintains blood glucose levels between meals and overnight.
- It mimics the body's natural background insulin secretion.
- It is commonly used in Type 1 diabetes and in advanced Type 2 diabetes when oral medicines alone are insufficient.

### About Awiqli (Insulin Icodec):

- Developed by Novo Nordisk (Denmark).
- Generic name: Insulin Icodec.
- It is the first once-weekly basal insulin approved for clinical use.
- It has an ultra-long duration of action, allowing one injection every seven days.
- Intended to improve patient adherence, reduce injection burden, and maintain effective glycaemic control.

### Difference Between Type 1 and Type 2 Diabetes

- | Type 1 Diabetes | Type 2 Diabetes |
|-----------------|-----------------|
|                 |                 |

- |   |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Autoimmune destruction of pancreatic <math>\beta</math>-cells</li> <li>Insulin resistance with progressive insulin deficiency</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Usually begins in childhood or adolescence</li> <li>Usually develops in adults, but increasingly seen in younger people</li> </ul>       |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lifelong insulin therapy is essential</li> <li>Managed with lifestyle changes, oral drugs, and insulin when required</li> </ul>          |

### Global Health Perspective:

- Diabetes is one of the major Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) identified by the World Health Organization (WHO).
- It is a key focus under Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3.4, which aims to reduce premature mortality from NCDs through prevention and treatment.

### Exam Focus Points:

- |  |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Company: Novo Nordisk (Denmark).</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Drug Name: Awiqli.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Generic Name: Insulin Icodec.</li> </ul>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Significance: World's first once-weekly basal insulin.</li> </ul>                             |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Launch Country: India.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Disease Targeted: Diabetes Mellitus.</li> </ul>   |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eligible Patients: Adults with Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes requiring basal insulin.</li> </ul> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Type of Insulin: Basal (long-acting/background) insulin.</li> </ul>                           |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dosage Frequency: Once every 7 days (52 injections per year).</li> </ul>                      |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Previous Standard: Once-daily basal insulin (365 injections per year).</li> </ul>             |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Key Benefit: Improves patient adherence and reduces injection burden.</li> </ul>              |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Company Headquarters: Bagsværd, Denmark.</li> </ul>   |



- Switzerland has announced that the Geneva AI Summit 2027 will be held on 21–22 June 2027 at Palexpo, Geneva.
- The summit will be organized back-to-back with the International Telecommunication Union (ITU)'s AI for Good Global Summit, bringing together heads of state, policymakers, technology companies, researchers, international organizations, and civil society to discuss the future of Artificial Intelligence (AI) governance, innovation, safety, and international cooperation.
- The announcement was made by Swiss Federal Councillor Albert Rösti during the AI for Good Global Summit 2026 in Geneva.

### AI for Good Global Summit:

- Organized by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU).
- Co-convened with the Government of Switzerland in partnership with UN agencies.
- Launched in 2017.
- Focuses on leveraging AI to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Held annually in Geneva.

### International Telecommunication Union (ITU):

- Established: 1865.
- Headquarters: Geneva, Switzerland.

- Specialized Agency of the United Nations for information and communication technologies (ICTs).
- Responsible for global standards in telecommunications, radio spectrum allocation, satellite orbits, and digital connectivity.

### Geneva's Global Importance:

- Known as the "Peace Capital" due to its concentration of international organizations.
- Hosts the European Headquarters of the United Nations and several other international institutions, making it a leading venue for global diplomacy.

### Evolution of Global AI Summits

• 2023: AI Safety Summit – Bletchley Park, United Kingdom.
• 2024: AI Seoul Summit – South Korea.
• 2025: AI Action Summit – Paris, France.
• 2026: AI Impact Summit – New Delhi, India.
• 2027: AI Summit – Geneva, Switzerland.

### Exam Focus Points:

• Global AI Summit Host Country (2027): Switzerland.
• Venue: Palexpo, Geneva.
• Dates: 21–22 June 2027.
• Announcement by: Swiss Federal Councillor Albert Rösti.
• Associated Event: ITU AI for Good Global Summit.
• Organizing International Body: International Telecommunication Union (ITU).
• ITU Headquarters: Geneva, Switzerland.
• ITU Established: 1865.

## Jaipur Ranked Among the World's Happiest Cities in 2026

- Jaipur has secured the 6th position globally in the list of the World's Happiest Cities 2026,

making it the highest-ranked Indian city in the survey. The rankings were based on residents' responses regarding overall life satisfaction,

community belonging, safety, affordability, access to public spaces, work-life balance, and quality of urban life. The United Kingdom's Bath topped the list, followed by Panama City and Guadalajara (Mexico).



**World's Happiest Cities 2026 (Top 10):**

- |                            |
|----------------------------|
| • Bath (United Kingdom)    |
| • Panama City (Panama)     |
| • Guadalajara (Mexico)     |
| • Medellín (Colombia)      |
| • Kraków (Poland)          |
| • Jaipur (India)           |
| • Chicago (United States)  |
| • Cape Town (South Africa) |
| • Shanghai (China)         |
| • Gothenburg (Sweden)      |

**Parameters Used in the Survey**

**The rankings are based on citizens' perceptions of:**

- |  |
|--|
| • Overall happiness and life satisfaction  |
| • Safety and security                      |
| • Community belonging                      |
| • Cost of living and affordability         |
| • Access to green and public spaces        |
| • Work-life balance                        |
| • Public services and urban infrastructure |

**About Jaipur:**

- |   |
|---|
| • State: Rajasthan                              |
| • Nickname: Pink City                           |
| • UNESCO World Heritage City: Declared in 2019. |
| • Founded by: Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II.      |
| • Year of Foundation: 1727.                     |

- One of India's earliest planned cities, designed according to principles of Vastu Shastra and grid-based urban planning.

**Urban Development Initiatives in India:**

- Smart Cities Mission – Launched in 2015 to improve urban infrastructure, governance, mobility, and quality of life.
- AMRUT (Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation) – Focuses on water supply, sewerage, urban transport, and green spaces.
- PM eBus Sewa Scheme – Promotes sustainable urban public transport through electric buses.
- Swachh Bharat Mission (Urban) – Improves sanitation and solid waste management in cities.

**Exam Focus Points:**

- |  |
|--|
| • World's Happiest Highest-ranked Indian city: Jaipur. |
| • Global Rank: 6th.                                    |
| • Top-ranked city: Bath, United Kingdom.               |
| • Indian State: Rajasthan.                             |
| • UNESCO World Heritage City status: 2019.             |
| • Founder of Jaipur: Maharaja Sawai Jai Singh II.      |
| • Founded: 1727.                                       |

**RBI Approves Mahesh Muralidhar Pai as MD & CEO of South Indian Bank**

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved the appointment of Mahesh Muralidhar Pai as

the Managing Director (MD) and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of South Indian Bank for a three-year term, effective 1 October 2026.

- Pai is currently serving as the Chief General Manager (Digital Banking & Innovation) at Canara Bank.
- The appointment is subject to approval by the bank's Board and shareholders, in accordance with the Banking Regulation Act and SEBI regulations.



- RBI's Role in Appointment of Bank CEOs:
- Under the Banking Regulation Act, 1949, appointments or reappointments of MDs and CEOs of private sector banks require prior approval of the Reserve Bank of India.
- RBI assesses candidates based on the 'Fit and Proper' criteria, including integrity, professional competence, banking experience, and governance standards.
- Such appointments are also subject to the approval of the bank's Board of Directors and shareholders, wherever applicable.

### About Mahesh Muralidhar Pai

- Presently serves as Chief General Manager at Canara Bank.
- Has nearly three decades of banking experience.

### Expertise includes:

- Digital Banking & Innovation
- Treasury
- Foreign Exchange
- Retail Banking
- MSME Credit
- Agriculture Credit

- Strategy and Corporate Governance.

### About South Indian Bank:

- Established: 1929.
- Headquarters: Thrissur, Kerala.
- Type: Private Sector Bank.

- It is one of the oldest private sector banks in India, offering retail, corporate, MSME, and digital banking services.

### About Canara Bank:

- Established: 1906.
- Founder: Ammembal Subba Rao Pai.
- Headquarters: Bengaluru, Karnataka.
- Nationalised: 1969.
- MD & CEO: Brajesh Kumar Singh

### Banking Regulation Act, 1949:

- Governs the regulation and supervision of banking companies in India.

### Empowers the RBI to:

- License banks.
- Regulate management and governance.
- Conduct inspections.
- Issue prudential norms.

- Approve appointments of key managerial personnel in private sector banks.

### Exam Focus Points:

- South Indian Bank New MD & CEO: Mahesh Muralidhar Pai.
- Current Position: Chief General Manager, Canara Bank.
- Effective Date: 1 October 2026.
- Tenure: Three years.
- South Indian Bank Headquarters: Thrissur, Kerala.

- Relevant Law: Banking Regulation Act, 1949.

## India and Tajikistan Agree to Deepen Economic Cooperation



- India and Tajikistan have reaffirmed their commitment to strengthening bilateral economic ties during the 12th Meeting of the India–Tajikistan Joint Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation (JCTEC), held through video conferencing.
- Both countries reviewed progress in bilateral cooperation and identified new opportunities in energy, hydropower, renewable energy, mining, critical minerals, textiles, digital economy, transport, logistics, finance, healthcare, and agriculture to boost trade and investment.

### India–Tajikistan Joint Commission (JCTEC):

- Full Name: India–Tajikistan Joint Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation.
- It serves as the institutional mechanism for reviewing and expanding bilateral cooperation.
- The 12th meeting focused on trade facilitation, investment promotion, and sector-specific collaboration.

### Key Areas of Cooperation:

- Trade and Investment
- Renewable Energy and Hydropower
- Critical Minerals and Mining
- Pharmaceuticals and Healthcare
- Agriculture and Food Processing

- Digital Economy and Information Technology
- Transport and Logistics
- Banking and Financial Services
- Textiles and MSMEs

### About Tajikistan:

- Capital: Dushanbe
- Currency: Somoni (TJS)
- President: Emomali Rahmon
- Region: Central Asia
- Borders: Afghanistan, China, Kyrgyzstan, and Uzbekistan.

- The Pamir Mountains cover much of the country, earning it the nickname "Roof of the World."

### India–Tajikistan Relations:

- Diplomatic relations were established in 1992, following Tajikistan's independence from the Soviet Union.
- Tajikistan is an important partner under India's Connect Central Asia Policy.
- India and Tajikistan cooperate in counter-terrorism, defence, capacity building, healthcare, education, and connectivity.
- India has supported development projects in Tajikistan through grants, Lines of Credit, and the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme.

### Connect Central Asia Policy:

- Launched by India in 2012.

### Aims to strengthen cooperation with the five Central Asian Republics:

- Kazakhstan
- Kyrgyzstan

- Tajikistan
- Turkmenistan
- Uzbekistan

**Focus areas include:**

- Energy security
- Trade and investment
- Connectivity
- Defence and security
- Capacity building
- Cultural exchanges

**Strategic Importance of Tajikistan:**

- Shares a long border with Afghanistan, making it strategically important for regional security.
- Acts as a gateway for India's engagement with Central Asia.

- Cooperation in critical minerals is becoming increasingly important for clean energy technologies and advanced manufacturing.

**Exam Focus Points:**

- Country: Tajikistan
- Capital: Dushanbe
- Currency: Somoni (TJS)
- Regional Group: Central Asia
- Meeting: 12th India–Tajikistan Joint Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation
- Key Focus: Trade, investment, energy, hydropower, critical minerals, digital economy, transport, logistics, and healthcare.
- Indian Foreign Policy Initiative: Connect Central Asia Policy (2012).

**India and Vietnam Agree to Deepen Parliamentary Friendship**



- India and Vietnam have agreed to strengthen parliamentary cooperation following a meeting between India's Ambassador to Vietnam, Tshering W. Sherpa, and Phan Chi Hieu, Chairman of the Vietnam–India Parliamentary Friendship Group (VIPFG).
- Both sides agreed to deepen parliamentary friendship, exchange legislative best practices, and enhance cooperation between the legislatures of the two countries.
- They emphasized that the Parliamentary Friendship Groups will play an important role in further strengthening the India–Vietnam Enhanced Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (ECSP).

**India–Vietnam Parliamentary Cooperation:**

**Parliamentary Friendship Groups promote:**

- Exchange of parliamentary delegations.
- Sharing of legislative and committee best practices.
- Cooperation between Members of Parliament.
- Greater people-to-people and institutional ties.
- India constituted the India–Vietnam Parliamentary Friendship Group in March 2026, headed by Shri Vishnu Dayal Ram, MP (Lok Sabha).

**India–Vietnam Enhanced Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (ECSP):**

- Relations were upgraded to an Enhanced Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (ECSP) during the Vietnamese leadership's State Visit to India in May 2026.

**The partnership expands cooperation in:**

• Defence and maritime security.
• Trade and investment.
• Digital technology and innovation.
• Semiconductor and critical technologies.
• Renewable energy.
• Space cooperation.
• Education and cultural exchanges.

**India–Vietnam Bilateral Relations:**

- Diplomatic Relations Established: 1972.
- Vietnam is a key pillar of India's Act East Policy and Indo-Pacific Vision.

**Both countries cooperate closely through:**

• ASEAN.
• East Asia Summit (EAS).
• Mekong–Ganga Cooperation (MGC).
• United Nations.

**Defence cooperation includes:**

• Joint military training.
• Naval ship visits.
• Maritime security cooperation.
• Capacity building and defence industry collaboration.

**About Vietnam:**

• Capital: Hanoi.
• Currency: Vietnamese Dong (VND).

• Official Name: Socialist Republic of Vietnam.
• Region: Southeast Asia.
• Member of: ASEAN, APEC, WTO, United Nations.

**Act East Policy:**

- Launched in 2014, replacing the earlier Look East Policy.
- Aims to strengthen India's strategic, economic, cultural, and connectivity ties with ASEAN and the wider Indo-Pacific region.
- Vietnam is one of India's most important strategic partners under this policy.

**Exam Focus Points:**

• Countries: India and Vietnam.
• Key Development: Agreement to deepen parliamentary friendship.
• Indian Representative: Ambassador Tshering W. Sherpa.
• Vietnamese Representative: Phan Chi Hieu.
• Institution: Vietnam–India Parliamentary Friendship Group (VIPFG).
• Strategic Framework: India–Vietnam Enhanced Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (ECSP).
• India's Regional Policy: Act East Policy.
• Vietnam's Capital: Hanoi.
• Currency: Vietnamese Dong (VND).

**Centre and Delhi Government Launch Major Delhi Ridge Rejuvenation Initiative**

- The Government of India and the Government of the National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi have announced a major initiative to restore and legally protect the Delhi Ridge, the northern extension of the Aravalli Range. Under the Delhi Ridge Rejuvenation Campaign, around 6,300 hectares of the Green Ridge area will be developed as protected forest land over the next

four years to conserve biodiversity, improve groundwater recharge, reduce air pollution, and strengthen Delhi's ecological resilience.

**Delhi Ridge:**

- It is the northern extension of the Aravalli Range.

- Commonly known as the "Green Lungs of Delhi."
- Extends for about 35 km across Delhi.
- Acts as a natural barrier against dust storms from the Thar Desert and helps moderate Delhi's climate.
- Serves as an important groundwater recharge zone and biodiversity hotspot.



**Four Zones of the Delhi Ridge:**

- Northern Ridge – Near Delhi University (about 87 hectares).
- Central Ridge – Around Dhaula Kuan (about 864 hectares).
- South-Central Ridge – Includes Sanjay Van (about 626 hectares).
- Southern Ridge – Largest section, includes Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary (around 6,200 hectares).

**About the Aravalli Range:**

- One of the oldest fold mountain ranges in the world (Precambrian age).
- Extends for approximately 670 km across Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana, and Delhi.
- Highest Peak: Guru Shikhar (Mount Abu), Rajasthan.
- Acts as a natural barrier against the eastward expansion of the Thar Desert.

- Source region for rivers such as Banas, Sabarmati, and Luni.
- Ecological Importance of Delhi Ridge
- Reduces dust and air pollution.
- Conserves native flora and fauna.
- Supports hundreds of bird species and wildlife.
- Prevents soil erosion.
- Improves groundwater recharge.
- Acts as a carbon sink and helps mitigate the urban heat island effect.

**Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary:**

- Located in the Southern Ridge on the Delhi–Haryana border.
- Forms part of the Northern Aravalli Leopard Wildlife Corridor.
- Home to leopards, nilgai, jackals, hyenas, porcupines, reptiles, and numerous bird species.
- An important protected area for Delhi's biodiversity.

**Exam Focus Points:**

- Campaign: Delhi Ridge Rejuvenation Campaign.
- Area to be protected: Around 6,300 hectares.
- Geographical Feature: Delhi Ridge (Northern extension of the Aravalli Range).
- Nickname: Green Lungs of Delhi.
- Highest Peak of Aravallis: Guru Shikhar (Mount Abu).
- States traversed by Aravallis: Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana, and Delhi.
- Largest Ridge Segment: Southern Ridge.
- Major Protected Area: Asola Bhatti Wildlife Sanctuary.

**Allahabad High Court: Shariat Cannot Override Child Marriage Law**

- The Allahabad High Court has ruled that the Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) cannot override statutory child protection laws in India.
- The Court held that attainment of puberty cannot be treated as legal eligibility for marriage if it violates the provisions of the Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), 2006 and the

Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012.

- The judgment reaffirmed that the legal minimum age of marriage prescribed under central laws applies uniformly and that child protection laws take precedence over personal law in matters concerning minors.



### Prohibition of Child Marriage Act (PCMA), 2006:

- Enacted to prohibit child marriages and protect children's rights.
- Defines a child as:
  - Male: Below 21 years
  - Female: Below 18 years

#### Provides for:

- Punishment for promoting or conducting child marriages.
- Appointment of Child Marriage Prohibition Officers (CMPOs).
- Maintenance and residence for the female party.
- Custody and protection of children born from such marriages.

### Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act, 2012:

- A gender-neutral law enacted to protect children from sexual offences.
- Defines a child as any person below 18 years.
- Criminalizes all forms of sexual activity involving a child, irrespective of consent.
- Provides for Special Courts for speedy trial of offences.

### Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) Application Act, 1937:

- Governs matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, maintenance, guardianship, and waqf among Muslims.
- The High Court clarified that personal law cannot override parliamentary legislation enacted for child protection.

#### Constitutional Provisions:

- Article 14: Equality before law.
- Article 15(3): Special provisions for women and children.
- Article 21: Right to life and personal liberty.
- Article 39(f): Protection of children against exploitation (Directive Principles).
- Article 44: Uniform Civil Code (Directive Principle).

#### Child Marriage in India:

#### Child marriage remains a significant social issue linked to:

- School dropout.
- Maternal and infant mortality.
- Malnutrition.
- Gender inequality.

- India is committed to eliminating child marriage under Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 5.3, which seeks to end child, early, and forced marriage.

#### Exam Focus Points:

- Court: Allahabad High Court.
- Key Ruling: Shariat cannot override child protection laws.
- Relevant Acts: Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006; POCSO Act, 2012.
- Legal Marriage Age: 21 years for males and 18 years for females.

- POCSO Definition of Child: Any person below 18 years.
- Directive Principle Related to Uniform Civil Code: Article 44.

- SDG Target: SDG 5.3 – Eliminate child, early, and forced marriage.

**Lets Revise**

- ❖ Name any four important critical minerals under the India–Australia Critical Minerals Corridor : **Lithium, Cobalt, Nickel and Graphite.**
- ❖ What does AI-PACTS stand for? **Australia–India Partnership on Cyber, Critical Technologies and Supply Chains.**
- ❖ Which two organisations signed an MoU to integrate ZED Certification with digital market access and MSME support initiatives? **Quality Council of India (QCI) and National Small Industries Corporation (NSIC).**
- ❖ Uttarakhand was recently declared India's sixth fully literate state under which of the following programmes? **ULLAS – Understanding of Lifelong Learning for All in Society (New India Literacy Programme)**
- ❖ Which company launched the world's first once-weekly basal insulin in India? **Novo Nordisk.**
- ❖ Which country will host the Global AI Summit in 2027? **Switzerland.**
- ❖ Which Indian city was ranked among the World's Happiest Cities 2026? **Jaipur**
- ❖ Which city topped the World's Happiest Cities 2026 rankings? **Bath, United Kingdom..**

- ❖ Who has been approved by the RBI as the new MD & CEO of South Indian Bank?  
**Mahesh Muralidhar Pai.**
- ❖ Which meeting of India–Tajikistan JCTEC was held recently? **The 12th Meeting of India–Tajikistan JCTEC.**
- ❖ Who is the Chairman of the Vietnam–India Parliamentary Friendship Group (VIPFG)? **Phan Chi Hieu.**
- ❖ Which mountain range does the Delhi Ridge belong to? **Aravalli Range.**
- ❖ The Aravalli Range extends across which four states/UT? **Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana, and Delhi.**
- ❖ Name two major rivers that originate in the Aravalli Range: **Banas and Sabarmati.**  
(Luni also originates from the Aravalli region.)
- ❖ Which High Court recently ruled that Shariat cannot override the child marriage law?  
**Allahabad High Court.**



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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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