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ISRO Successfully Completes Three Major Qualification Tests of Gaganyaan Crew Module Systems

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has successfully completed three major qualification tests of the Crew Module (CM) systems for the Gaganyaan Mission, marking another significant milestone towards India's first human spaceflight programme.
- The tests validated critical systems responsible for astronaut safety during splashdown, module separation, and structural integrity during re-entry.
- These successful trials enhance the reliability of the Crew Module before the upcoming uncrewed Gaganyaan missions.

Major Tests Conducted:

Crew Module Uprighting System (CMUS) Float Inflation Test:

• Validated the Crew Module Uprighting System (CMUS).
• Ensures the crew module automatically returns to an upright position after splashdown in the sea.
• Uses stored cold-gas inflation technology to deploy flotation bags.
• Critical for safe astronaut evacuation and recovery after landing.

Crew Module–Service Module Connect & Disconnect System (CSCDS) Test:

• Successfully tested the umbilical separation mechanism between the Crew Module and Service Module.
• Confirms proper separation of electrical, communication, and fluid interfaces before re-entry.
• Essential for the safe functioning of the Crew Module during descent.

Crew Module Structure Qualification Test:

• Validated the structural strength of the Crew Module against Apex Cover separation loads.
• Confirms the module can withstand mechanical stresses during parachute deployment and re-entry.
• Ensures structural safety of astronauts during mission-critical phases.

Purpose:

- Validate critical safety systems of the Crew Module.
- Ensure safe splashdown and astronaut recovery.
- Verify separation mechanisms before atmospheric re-entry.
- Qualify the Crew Module for future uncrewed and crewed Gaganyaan missions.
- Enhance mission reliability and astronaut safety.

About Gaganyaan Mission:

- India's first indigenous human spaceflight mission.
- Developed by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) under the Indian Human Spaceflight Programme.
- Aims to demonstrate India's capability to send three astronauts (Vyomanauts) into Low Earth Orbit (LEO) for a short-duration mission and safely bring them back to Earth.
- The mission will be launched using the Human-rated LVM3 (Launch Vehicle Mark-3) rocket.

About the Crew Module:

- The Crew Module (CM) is the habitable capsule that carries astronauts during the mission.
- Designed to withstand extreme temperatures during atmospheric re-entry.

Equipped with:

• Crew Escape System (CES)
• Parachute recovery system
• Uprighting system
• Life support system
• Navigation and communication systems
• Heat shield for atmospheric re-entry.

About ISRO:

• Established: 1969.
• Headquarters: Bengaluru, Karnataka.
• Department: Department of Space (DoS), Government of India.
• Chairman: Dr. V. Narayanan.

Additional Key Facts:

- Gaganyaan means "Sky Craft" in Sanskrit.
- If successful, India will become the fourth country after Russia (formerly USSR), the United States, and China to independently send humans into space.
- The Crew Escape System (CES) is designed to rapidly move astronauts away from the launch vehicle during an emergency.
- The Indian Navy will be responsible for the recovery of the Crew Module after its splashdown in the Bay of Bengal.
- Vyomanaut is the term used for Indian astronauts participating in the Gaganyaan mission.

Exam Focus Points:

• Organisation: Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).
• Mission: Gaganyaan.
• Achievement: Successful completion of three major Crew Module qualification tests.
• Major Systems Tested: CMUS, CSCDS, Crew Module Structure.
• Purpose: Validate astronaut safety and Crew Module reliability.
• Launch Vehicle: Human-rated LVM3.
• Mission Type: India's first human spaceflight mission.
• Crew Capacity: Three astronauts.
• Recovery Agency: Indian Navy.
• Splashdown Location: Bay of Bengal.
• ISRO Headquarters: Bengaluru.
• ISRO Established: 1969.

India Wins Five Gold Medals at the 56th International Physics Olympiad (IPhO) 2026

- India created history by winning five gold medals at the 56th International Physics Olympiad (IPhO) 2026 held in Bucaramanga, Colombia, with all five members of the Indian team securing gold medals.
- The gold medal winners are Kanishk Jain from Pune, Riddhesh Anant Bendale from Indore, Rishit Garg from New Delhi, Shresth Suraiya from Mumbai and Svarit Joshi from Ahmedabad.

- With this achievement, India secured the joint first position, along with Russia, China, Kazakhstan, South Korea and Taiwan, among 381 students from 87 countries.

About the International Physics Olympiad (IPhO):

- The International Physics Olympiad (IPhO) is the world's most prestigious international competition in physics for secondary school students.
- First held: 1967.
- Conducted annually in a different host country.
- Each participating country generally sends a team of five students.

The competition consists of:

- Theoretical examinations
- Experimental (laboratory) examinations
- The objective is to promote excellence in physics education and foster international cooperation among young scientists.

India's Participation in IPhO:

- India is represented by a five-member national team selected through a multi-stage national Olympiad programme.
- The programme is coordinated by the Homi Bhabha Centre for Science Education (HBCSE), a constituent institution of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR).
- HBCSE serves as the national nodal centre for Science Olympiads in India.

About Homi Bhabha Centre for Science Education (HBCSE):

• Established: 1974.
• Location: Mumbai, Maharashtra.
• Director: Prof. Arnab Bhattacharya
• Parent Institution: Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR).
• Role: National centre for promotion of science and mathematics education and coordination of Olympiad programmes in India.

About Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR):

• Established: 1945.
• Founder: Dr. Homi Jehangir Bhabha.
• Headquarters: Mumbai, Maharashtra.
• Director: Jayaram N. Chengalur
• Administrative Ministry: Department of Atomic Energy (DAE), Government of India.
• It is one of India's premier institutions for fundamental scientific research.

Exam Focus Points:

• Event: 56th International Physics Olympiad (IPhO).
• Year: 2026.
• Venue: Bucaramanga, Colombia.
• India's Medal Tally: 5 Gold Medals.
• Achievement: All five Indian participants won gold; India finished jointly first.
• Competition Level: International physics competition for secondary school students.
• Indian Nodal Institution: Homi Bhabha Centre for Science Education (HBCSE).
• Parent Institution of HBCSE: Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR).
• TIFR Administrative Ministry: Department of Atomic Energy (DAE).
• IPhO First Held: 1967.
• Team Size: Five students per participating country.
• Indian Gold Medal Winners:
• Kanishk Jain – Pune, Maharashtra.
• Riddhesh Anant Bendale – Indore, Madhya Pradesh.
• Rishit Garg – New Delhi.
• Shresth Suraiya – Mumbai, Maharashtra.

- Svarit Joshi – Ahmedabad, Gujarat.

EPFO Launches Amnesty Scheme 2026 for Exempted Provident Fund Trusts

- The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO), under the Ministry of Labour and Employment, has launched the Amnesty Scheme 2026, providing a one-time opportunity for establishments operating Exempted Provident Fund (PF) Trusts to regularise their status under the Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions (EPF & MP) Act, 1952.
- The scheme will remain open for six months from its notification on 29 June 2026.
- It aims to bring eligible PF trusts into compliance with the revised legal framework following amendments introduced through the Finance Act, 2026.

Purpose:

- Provide a one-time opportunity to regularise exempted PF trusts.
- Bring employer-managed PF trusts under a uniform statutory framework.
- Improve legal compliance and governance of provident fund trusts.
- Protect employees' retirement savings and ensure statutory benefits.
- Reduce pending litigation and administrative disputes.

Key Benefits of the Scheme:

- Provides retrospective exemption under Section 17 of the EPF & MP Act, 1952 and Section 143 of the Code on Social Security, 2020, subject to prescribed conditions.
- Waives certain eligibility requirements such as minimum employee strength, corpus size, and mandatory compliance period.
- Allows withdrawal of pending assessments relating to PF dues, damages, and interest where statutory conditions are fulfilled.
- Improves legal certainty for employees covered under exempted PF trusts.

Eligibility:

- Applies to establishments operating Provident Fund Trusts recognised under the Income Tax Act, 1961 but without a formal exemption notification from the Central or State Government under the EPF Act.
- The scheme covers:
- Establishments seeking retrospective regularisation while operating as un-exempted establishments.
- Establishments seeking retrospective regularisation while continuing as exempted establishments under the Code on Social Security, 2020.

About Exempted Provident Fund Trust:

- An Exempted PF Trust is an employer-managed provident fund trust that administers employees' PF contributions instead of depositing them directly with EPFO.
- Such trusts must provide benefits equal to or better than those available under the EPF Scheme.

About Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO):

- Established: 1952.
- Administrative Ministry: Ministry of Labour and Employment.

•	Headquarters: New Delhi.
•	Organisation executive: Ramesh Krishnamurthi
•	Statutory Basis: Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions (EPF & MP) Act, 1952.

EPFO administers:

•	Employees' Provident Fund (EPF)
•	Employees' Pension Scheme (EPS), 1995
•	Employees' Deposit Linked Insurance (EDLI) Scheme, 1976.

Additional Key Facts:

- Section 17 of the EPF & MP Act, 1952 allows exemption from the EPF Scheme if an establishment provides PF benefits that are not less favourable than those under EPFO.
- The Finance Act, 2026 aligned the Income Tax framework governing recognised provident funds with the EPF Act, 1952 and the Code on Social Security, 2020.
- The Code on Social Security, 2020 consolidates nine central labour laws relating to social security into a single code.
- EPFO functions under the Central Board of Trustees (CBT), a tripartite body comprising representatives of the Government, employers, and employees.

Exam Focus Points:

•	Organisation: Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO).
•	Ministry: Ministry of Labour and Employment.
•	Scheme: Amnesty Scheme 2026.
•	Launch Date: 29 June 2026.
•	Validity: Six months.
•	Beneficiaries: Exempted Provident Fund Trusts.
•	Objective: Regularisation of PF trusts and improved statutory compliance.
•	Relevant Law: EPF & MP Act, 1952.
•	Relevant Provision: Section 17 (Exemption).
•	Related Legislation: Code on Social Security, 2020.
•	EPFO Headquarters: New Delhi.
•	EPFO Established: 1952.

Former Emir of Qatar Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani Passes Away at 74

- Former Emir of Qatar, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, passed away at the age of 74.
- He served as the Emir of Qatar from 1995 to 2013 and is widely regarded as the architect of modern Qatar, transforming the country into a global economic, energy, and diplomatic power.
- Under his leadership, Qatar emerged as the world's leading exporter of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), significantly expanded its sovereign wealth investments, and enhanced its global influence. Following his demise, Qatar declared four days of national mourning, while India announced one day of national mourning on 13 July 2026 as a mark of respect.

About Qatar:

•	Capital: Doha.
•	Currency: Qatari Riyal (QAR).
•	Current Emir: Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani.
•	Official Language: Arabic.
•	Region: West Asia (Middle East).
•	Major Natural Resource: Natural Gas.

- Qatar shares the North Field, the world's largest natural gas field, with Iran (where it is known as the South Pars Gas Field).

It is a member of:

Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC):

- Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) (Qatar withdrew from OPEC in 2019)
- United Nations (UN)
- World Trade Organization (WTO).

India–Qatar Relations:

India and Qatar enjoy strong ties in:

• Energy cooperation (especially LNG imports)
• Trade and investment
• Defence and maritime security
• Indian diaspora welfare
• Qatar is among India's major suppliers of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG), making it an important energy partner.

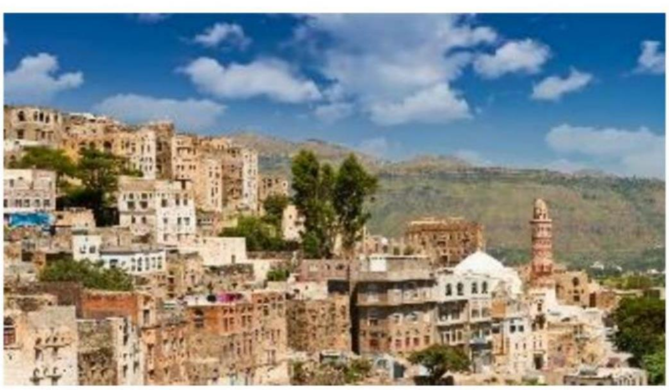
Additional Key Facts:

- Qatar is one of the world's largest exporters of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG).
- The Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) is the sovereign wealth fund of Qatar.
- Al Jazeera, one of the world's leading international news networks, was launched in 1996 during Sheikh Hamad's reign.
- The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) was established in 1981 and comprises Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

Exam Focus Points:

• Person: Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani.
• Country: Qatar.
• Position: Former Emir of Qatar (1995–2013).
• Successor: Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani.
• Age at Death: 74 years.
• Capital of Qatar: Doha.
• Currency: Qatari Riyal (QAR).
• Major Export: Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG).
• Sovereign Wealth Fund: Qatar Investment Authority (QIA).
• Major Media Network Founded During His Reign: Al Jazeera.
• India's Tribute: One-day national mourning on 13 July 2026.
• Qatar's Mourning Period: Four days.

India Withdraws 2017 Special Travel Conditions for Yemen



- The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has withdrawn the 2017 notification that imposed special travel conditions on Indian citizens travelling to Yemen.
- The restrictions were originally imposed following the deterioration of the security situation due to the Yemeni Civil War. While the legal restrictions have now been removed, the MEA continues to advise Indian nationals to avoid non-essential travel to Yemen and to avoid conflict-affected areas. Indians residing in or travelling to Yemen have also been advised to register with the Embassy of India in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, to facilitate assistance during emergencies.

Purpose:

- Remove outdated legal travel restrictions imposed in 2017.
- Facilitate travel in line with the current security assessment.

- Continue ensuring the safety and welfare of Indian nationals abroad.
- Strengthen consular support through mandatory registration for travellers in emergencies.

About the 2017 Notification:

- Issued under the Passports Act, 1967, after the outbreak of the Yemeni Civil War and the worsening security situation.
- It imposed special conditions on Indian citizens travelling to Yemen to safeguard their safety.
- The notification has now been rescinded with immediate effect, though the travel advisory remains in force.

About Yemen:

• Capital: Sana'a (constitutional capital; internationally recognized government currently operates mainly from Aden due to the conflict).
• Currency: Yemeni Rial (YER).
• Prime Minister: Shaea al-Zindani
• Region: West Asia (Middle East).
• Neighbouring Countries: Saudi Arabia and Oman.
• Strategic Waterway: Bab el-Mandeb Strait, connecting the Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Sea.
• Yemen has been facing a prolonged civil war since 2014, resulting in one of the world's worst humanitarian crises.

About the Bab el-Mandeb Strait:

- Located between Yemen, Djibouti, and Eritrea.
- Connects the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden.
- One of the world's most important maritime trade routes, linking the Suez Canal with the Indian Ocean.
- A significant portion of global oil and commercial shipping passes through this chokepoint.

About the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA):

- Minister: Subrahmanyam Jaishankar
- Responsible for India's foreign policy, diplomatic relations, and protection of Indian citizens abroad.
- Issues travel advisories and evacuation guidelines during international crises.
- Administers Indian Embassies and High Commissions across the world.

Additional Key Facts:

- Operation Rahat (2015): India evacuated over 6,700 people, including around 4,700 Indians and citizens of several other countries, from war-torn Yemen.
- Operation Sankat Mochan (2016): India evacuated its nationals from conflict zones in South Sudan, highlighting India's overseas evacuation capabilities.
- The Passports Act, 1967 regulates the issuance, suspension, impounding, and revocation of Indian passports.
- Travel Advisory and legal travel restrictions are distinct: withdrawal of legal restrictions does not automatically mean the destination is considered safe for travel.

Exam Focus Points:

• Country: Yemen.
• Ministry: Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).
• Decision: Withdrawal of the 2017 special travel conditions.
• Legal Basis of 2017 Notification: Passports Act, 1967.
• Current Advisory: Avoid non-essential travel to Yemen.
• Registration Required With: Embassy of India, Riyadh (Saudi Arabia).
• Strategic Waterway: Bab el-Mandeb Strait.
• Neighbouring Countries: Saudi Arabia and Oman.
• Major Evacuation Mission from Yemen: Operation Rahat (2015).
• Conflict: Yemeni Civil War (since 2014).

RBI Absorbs ₹1.10 Lakh Crore Surplus Liquidity from Banking System

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) absorbed ₹1.10 lakh crore of surplus liquidity from the banking system through its Variable Rate Reverse Repo (VRRR) auction under the Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF).
- The move was undertaken to manage excess liquidity in the banking system, ensure effective transmission of monetary policy, and maintain short-term interest rates close to the policy repo rate. RBI uses such liquidity management operations to balance the supply of money without altering the policy interest rates.

Purpose:

- Manage excess liquidity in the banking system.
- Keep overnight money market rates aligned with the policy repo rate.
- Improve monetary policy transmission.
- Maintain financial stability and control inflationary pressures.
- Ensure efficient liquidity management in the banking sector.

About Variable Rate Reverse Repo (VRRR):

- A liquidity absorption tool used by the RBI under the Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF).
- Banks park their surplus funds with the RBI by participating in an auction.
- The interest rate is determined through competitive bidding rather than being fixed in advance.
- VRRR is generally used when there is excess liquidity in the banking system.

About Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF):

• Introduced by the RBI in 2000.
• It enables the RBI to manage short-term liquidity in the banking system through:
• Repo operations (liquidity injection)
• Reverse Repo/VRRR operations (liquidity absorption)

- LAF is one of the RBI's key monetary policy instruments for maintaining liquidity and interest rate stability.

About the Reserve Bank of India (RBI):

• Established: 1 April 1935.
• Nationalised: 1 January 1949.
• Headquarters: Mumbai, Maharashtra.
• Governor: Sanjay Malhotra.
• Statutory Basis: Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934.
• The RBI is India's central bank responsible for monetary policy, currency issuance, banking regulation, and management of foreign exchange reserves.

Additional Key Facts:

- Repo Rate: The rate at which the RBI lends short-term funds to commercial banks against government securities.
- Reverse Repo/VRRR: Used by the RBI to absorb excess liquidity from banks.
- Standing Deposit Facility (SDF): Introduced in 2022 as the floor of the Liquidity Adjustment Facility corridor; it enables the RBI to absorb liquidity without providing collateral.
- Open Market Operations (OMO): Purchase or sale of government securities by the RBI to inject or absorb durable liquidity.

- Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR): Percentage of a bank's Net Demand and Time Liabilities (NDTL) that must be maintained with the RBI in cash.
- Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR): Percentage of NDTL that banks must maintain in liquid assets such as cash, gold, or approved government securities.

Exam Focus Points:

• Institution: Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
• Amount Absorbed: ₹1.10 lakh crore.
• Instrument: Variable Rate Reverse Repo (VRRR).
• Framework: Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF).
• Purpose: Absorb surplus liquidity from the banking system.
• LAF Introduced: 2000.
• RBI Established: 1935.
• RBI Headquarters: Mumbai.
• RBI Governor: Sanjay Malhotra.
• Related Monetary Tools: Repo Rate, Standing Deposit Facility (SDF), Open Market Operations (OMO), CRR, and SLR.

SEBI Allows Mutual Funds to Avail Intraday Borrowing Facility

- The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has allowed mutual funds to avail intraday borrowing facilities under a new regulatory framework to manage temporary liquidity mismatches arising due to differences in market settlement timings.
- The new framework will come into effect from 1 September 2026 and aims to provide greater operational flexibility while ensuring adequate safeguards for investor protection. The facility can be used only for specified purposes, and all borrowings must be repaid before the close of the same trading day.

Permitted Uses of Intraday Borrowing:

Unitholder payouts, including:

- Redemptions
- Income Distribution cum Capital Withdrawal (IDCW) payments

Interest payments:

• Settlement of investments.
• Mark-to-Market (MTM) obligations.
• Foreign exchange (Forex) settlements.
• Repayment of existing borrowings.

Key Safeguards:

- Intraday borrowings must be repaid before the end of the trading day.
- The facility cannot be used for long-term financing.
- Asset Management Companies (AMCs) will bear all borrowing costs.
- AMCs must maintain proper records and have Board-approved policies for availing such borrowings.
- The framework is intended solely for liquidity management and not for leveraging investments.

Purpose:

- Enable efficient management of temporary cash flow mismatches.
- Ensure timely redemption and payout to investors.
- Improve operational efficiency of mutual funds.

- Strengthen liquidity management without increasing systemic risk.
- Enhance investor confidence through a regulated borrowing framework.

About Mutual Funds:

- A Mutual Fund is a professionally managed investment vehicle that pools money from multiple investors and invests it in equities, debt securities, money market instruments, gold, or other assets.
- Mutual funds in India are regulated by SEBI under the SEBI (Mutual Funds) Regulations, 2026.
- They are managed by Asset Management Companies (AMCs) on behalf of investors.

About SEBI:

• Established: 12 April 1988 (Statutory status in 1992).
• Headquarters: Mumbai, Maharashtra.
• Chairperson: Tuhin Kanta Pandey
• Statutory Basis: SEBI Act, 1992.
• Role: Regulates the securities market, protects investors' interests, and promotes the development of India's capital markets.

Additional Key Facts:

- Intraday Borrowing refers to borrowing that is taken and repaid within the same trading day.
- Liquidity mismatch occurs when payment obligations arise before expected cash inflows are received.
- Asset Management Company (AMC) manages mutual fund schemes and invests funds collected from investors.
- AMFI (Association of Mutual Funds in India) is the industry body representing registered mutual funds in India.
- Income Distribution cum Capital Withdrawal (IDCW) is the term introduced by SEBI in place of the earlier term Dividend for mutual fund payouts.
- SEBI approved the broader framework for intraday borrowing at its June 2026 Board meeting, followed by the issuance of detailed operational guidelines in July 2026.

Exam Focus Points:

• Regulator: Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).
• Decision: Mutual Funds allowed to avail Intraday Borrowing Facility.
• Effective Date: 1 September 2026.
• Purpose: Manage temporary liquidity mismatches.
• Applicable To: Mutual Funds and Asset Management Companies (AMCs).
• Borrowing Duration: Must be repaid within the same trading day.
• Permitted Uses: Redemptions, IDCW payouts, investment settlements, MTM obligations, forex settlements, repayment of existing borrowings.
• Related Industry Body: Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI).
• SEBI Headquarters: Mumbai.
• SEBI Act: 1992.

Jannik Sinner Retains Wimbledon Men's Singles Title; Guo Hanyu and Kristina Mladenovic Win Women's Doubles Crown

- World No. 1 Jannik Sinner successfully defended his Wimbledon Men's Singles title by defeating Alexander Zverev in the final to claim his second consecutive Wimbledon title and fifth Grand Slam singles title.
- In the Women's Doubles event, the pair of Guo Hanyu (China) and Kristina Mladenovic (France) won their first Grand Slam title

together by defeating Gabriela Dabrowski (Canada) and Luisa Stefani (Brazil) in the final.

2026 Champions:

- Men's Singles: Jannik Sinner (Italy)
- Women's Singles: Linda Nosková (Czech Republic)
- Men's Doubles: Harri Heliövaara (Finland) / Henry Patten (United Kingdom)
- Women's Doubles: Guo Hanyu (China) / Kristina Mladenovic (France)
- Mixed Doubles: Marcelo Arévalo (El Salvador) / Jeļena Ostapenko (Latvia)

About Wimbledon Championships:

- The Wimbledon Championships is the oldest tennis tournament in the world, first held in 1877.
- It is organised by the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club (AELTC).
- It is the only Grand Slam tournament played on grass courts.
- Held annually in London, United Kingdom, usually during June–July.
- Wimbledon is one of the four Grand Slam tournaments in tennis.

About the Grand Slam Tournaments:

The four Grand Slam tournaments are:

- Australian Open – Hard Court
- French Open (Roland Garros) – Clay Court
- Wimbledon Championships – Grass Court
- US Open – Hard Court

- Winning all four Grand Slam singles titles in the same calendar year is known as the Calendar Grand Slam.

About Jannik Sinner:

- Country: Italy.
- Current Ranking: World No. 1 (ATP).
- Playing Style: Right-handed (two-handed backhand).
- He became the first Italian player to win the Wimbledon Men's Singles title in 2025 and successfully defended it in 2026.
- He is one of the leading players of the current generation in men's tennis.

About Kristina Mladenovic:

- Country: France.
- Former World No. 1 in Women's Doubles.
- Multiple Grand Slam doubles champion.
- Known for her success in women's doubles and mixed doubles competitions.

Exam Focus Points:

- Tournament: Wimbledon Championships 2026.
- Venue: London, United Kingdom.
- Men's Singles Champion: Jannik Sinner (Italy).
- Runner-up: Alexander Zverev (Germany).
- Women's Doubles Champions: Guo Hanyu (China) and Kristina Mladenovic (France).
- Men's Singles Achievement: Jannik Sinner retained the Wimbledon title and won his fifth Grand Slam singles title.
- Surface: Grass Court.
- Oldest Grand Slam: Wimbledon (1877).
- Organiser: All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club (AELTC).
- Global Governing Body: International Tennis Federation (ITF).

Jurassic Park Star Sam Neill Passes Away at 78

- Renowned New Zealand actor Sir Sam Neill, best known for portraying Dr. Alan Grant in the Jurassic Park film franchise, passed away at the age of 78 in Sydney, Australia.
- With a career spanning over five decades, Sam Neill was regarded as one of the most versatile actors in international cinema, appearing in more than 150 films and television productions, including Jurassic Park, The Piano, The Hunt for Red October, and Peaky Blinders. He was also honoured with a Knighthood in 2022 for his services to film and acting.

Notable Films:

- Jurassic Park (1993)
- Jurassic Park III (2001)
- Jurassic World Dominion (2022)
- The Piano (1993)
- The Hunt for Red October (1990)
- Dead Calm (1989)

About New Zealand:

- Capital: Wellington.
- Largest City: Auckland.
- Currency: New Zealand Dollar (NZD).
- Prime Minister: Christopher Luxon.
- Official Languages: English, Māori, and New Zealand Sign Language.

Additional Key Facts:

- The New Zealand Order of Merit (NZOM) is one of New Zealand's highest civilian honours, awarded for outstanding service to the nation.
- Sam Neill was born in Northern Ireland but moved to New Zealand during childhood, where he built his acting career.
- Jurassic Park revolutionised visual effects through the pioneering use of Computer-Generated Imagery (CGI) in filmmaking.
- The Academy Awards (Oscars) are presented annually by the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS) in the United States.

Exam Focus Points:

- Person: Sir Sam Neill.
- Nationality: New Zealand.
- Age at Death: 78 years.
- Most Famous Role: Dr. Alan Grant in Jurassic Park.
- Notable Film: Jurassic Park (1993).
- Director of Jurassic Park: Steven Spielberg.
- Original Author: Michael Crichton.
- Knighthood Received: 2022.
- Capital of New Zealand: Wellington.
- Currency: New Zealand Dollar (NZD).
- Prime Minister of New Zealand: Christopher Luxon.

Indian Air Force Ranked World's 3rd Most Powerful Air Force in WDMMA Global Air Power Rankings 2026

- The Indian Air Force (IAF) has been ranked as the 3rd most powerful air force in the world in the 2026 Global Air Power Rankings released by the World Directory of Modern Military Aircraft (WDMMA).

- The IAF has retained this position for the fifth consecutive year, continuing to rank ahead of China's People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF).
- The rankings assess not only the number of aircraft but also factors such as modernization, combat capability, logistics, training, operational readiness, and force balance.

Key Highlights:

- Ranking Agency: World Directory of Modern Military Aircraft (WDMMA).
- India's Rank: 3rd Most Powerful Air Force.
- Achievement: Retained 3rd position for the fifth consecutive year.
- Position Ahead Of: China's People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF).
- Top Ranked Air Forces: United States Air Force (1st) and Russian Aerospace Forces (2nd).

Purpose of WDMMA Rankings:

- Assess the overall combat effectiveness of global air forces.
- Evaluate qualitative and quantitative aspects of military aviation.
- Measure operational capability rather than merely aircraft numbers.
- Compare modernization, logistics, survivability, and mission readiness of air forces.

Ranking Parameters:

- Aircraft quality and combat capability.
- Fleet modernization.
- Logistics and maintenance support.
- Attack and defensive capabilities.
- Training standards and operational readiness.
- Force structure and mission versatility.
- The ranking uses the TruVal Rating (TVR), which emphasizes capability over numerical strength.

About the Indian Air Force (IAF):

• Established: 8 October 1932.
• Headquarters: New Delhi.
• Motto: Nabha Sparsham Deeptam ("Touch the Sky with Glory").
• Chief of the Air Staff: Air Chief Marshal Amar Preet Singh.

- The IAF is the air arm of the Indian Armed Forces and is responsible for safeguarding Indian airspace, conducting aerial warfare, strategic airlift, reconnaissance, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) operations.

Major Aircraft in the IAF:

• Rafale
• Su-30 MKI
• LCA Tejas
• Mirage 2000
• MiG-29
• Jaguar
• C-17 Globemaster III
• C-130J Super Hercules
• Chinook Heavy-Lift Helicopter
• AH-64E Apache Attack Helicopter
• LCH Prachand

Additional Key Facts:

- The World Directory of Modern Military Aircraft (WDMMA) publishes the annual Global Air Power Rankings.
- WDMMA evaluates air forces using the TruVal Rating (TVR), which gives greater importance to capability, modernization, logistics, and mission effectiveness than fleet size alone.

- The IAF is undergoing modernization through the induction of LCA Tejas Mk-1A, future Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA), additional Rafale aircraft, and indigenous unmanned systems.
- The IAF participates in major multinational exercises such as Tarang Shakti, Garuda, Cope India, Indradhanush, Pitch Black, and Red Flag.
- Marshal of the Indian Air Force Arjan Singh is the only officer to have been awarded the five-star rank in the IAF.

Exam Focus Points:

• Organisation: Indian Air Force (IAF).
• Ranking Agency: World Directory of Modern Military Aircraft (WDMMA).
• Global Rank (2026): 3rd Most Powerful Air Force.
• Achievement: Retained 3rd rank for the fifth consecutive year.
• Ranked Ahead Of: China's People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF).
• Top Two Air Forces: United States Air Force and Russian Aerospace Forces.
• Ranking Methodology: TruVal Rating (TVR).
• IAF Established: 8 October 1932.
• IAF Headquarters: New Delhi.
• IAF Motto: Nabha Sparsham Deeptam ("Touch the Sky with Glory").
• Chief of the Air Staff: Air Chief Marshal Amar Preet Singh.

Lets Revise

❖ Which three Crew Module systems were recently qualified by ISRO for the Gaganyaan Mission? Crew Module Uprighting System (CMUS), Crew Module–Service Module Connect & Disconnect System (CSCDS), and Crew Module Structure (Apex Cover Separation Load) Qualification System.

❖ Which institution is the national nodal centre for selecting and training India's team for the International Physics Olympiad (IPhO)? Homi Bhabha Centre for Science Education (HBCSE), Mumbai.

❖ Which organisation launched the Amnesty Scheme 2026 to regularise exempted Provident Fund Trusts? Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO).

- Who was the former Emir of Qatar who transformed the country into a global LNG and investment hub and passed away in July 2026? Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani.
- Which strategic maritime chokepoint, located near Yemen, connects the Red Sea with the Gulf of Aden and the Arabian Sea? Bab el-Mandeb Strait.
- Which RBI monetary policy instrument was used to absorb ₹1.10 lakh crore of surplus liquidity from the banking system on 9 July 2026? Variable Rate Reverse Repo (VRRR) auction under the Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF).
- Which market regulator has allowed mutual funds to avail intraday borrowing facilities for managing temporary liquidity mismatches? Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI).
- Who won the Men's Singles title at the Wimbledon Championships 2026? Jannik Sinner (Italy).
- Who was the New Zealand actor known for portraying Dr. Alan Grant in the Jurassic Park franchise, who passed away at the age of 78 in July 2026? Sir Sam Neill.
- Which organisation publishes the Global Air Power Rankings that ranked the Indian Air Force as the world's 3rd most powerful air force in 2026? World Directory of Modern Military Aircraft (WDMMA).

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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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