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Top Stories of The Day

- *RBI Keeps Repo Rate Unchanged at 5.25%, Maintaining Neutral Policy Amid Economic Uncertainties and Inflation Risks*
- *Lok Sabha Passes Appropriation Bill Authorising Consolidated Fund Withdrawal for Central Government Expenditure*
- *Finance Ministry Introduces Bill Enabling Merchant Discount Rate Framework for UPI and Digital Payments*
- *ICAR Develops India's First Indigenous African Swine Fever Vaccine for Livestock Disease Protection*
- *Veteran Actor Pradeep Singh Rawat Passes Away at 74 After Iconic Film Career*
- *IAF Concludes ROTOR CLAP III Counter-Drone Exercise to Strengthen Defence Preparedness*
- *GVMC and Moscow Sign MoU for Smart Mobility and Sustainable Urban Development*
- *HDFC Bank Launches SavingsMax Accounts for Seniors and Women with Exclusive Banking Benefits*
- *RBI Reopens Urban Cooperative Bank Licensing Window Through New On-Tap System*
- *BEL and Esri India Partner to Develop GIS and GeoAI Defence Solutions*

RBI Keeps Repo Rate Unchanged at 5.25%

- The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has unanimously decided to keep the policy repo rate unchanged at 5.25% while retaining its neutral monetary policy stance.
- The decision reflects the RBI's cautious approach amid global uncertainties, geopolitical tensions, volatile crude oil prices, and inflationary risks.
- The RBI reaffirmed its commitment to maintaining price stability while supporting economic growth through a data-dependent monetary policy.

Why Did RBI Keep the Repo Rate Unchanged?

The RBI maintained the policy rate due to:

- Persisting global geopolitical uncertainties.
- Volatile international crude oil prices.
- Inflationary pressures, particularly food inflation.
- Need to sustain domestic economic growth.
- A cautious, data-driven monetary policy approach.

What is the Repo Rate?

- The Repo Rate is the interest rate at which the RBI lends short-term funds to commercial banks against government securities.

Significance:

- Primary monetary policy tool of the RBI.
- Helps control inflation and liquidity.
- Influences lending and deposit interest rates.
- Affects borrowing costs, investment, and economic growth.

Monetary Policy Committee (MPC):

- The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) determines India's policy interest rates.

Composition:

6 Members:

• 3 from RBI
• 3 appointed by the Central Government
• Chairperson: RBI Governor (Ex-officio Chairperson)

Legal Basis:

- Constituted under Section 45ZB of the Reserve Bank of India Act, 1934.
- Established through the Finance Act, 2016.

Monetary Policy Instruments:

The RBI uses several instruments to regulate liquidity and inflation:

Instrument	Purpose
Repo Rate	RBI lends to banks
Reverse Repo / Standing Deposit Facility (SDF)	RBI absorbs liquidity
Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR)	Cash reserves maintained by banks with RBI
Statutory Liquidity Ratio (SLR)	Liquid assets maintained by banks
Marginal Standing Facility (MSF)	Emergency borrowing by banks

About the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)

Established	1 April 1935
Nationalised	1 January 1949
Headquarters	Mumbai
Current Governor	Sanjay Malhotra

Inflation Targeting Framework:

- India follows a Flexible Inflation Targeting (FIT) framework.

Key Facts:

• Target CPI Inflation: 4%
• Tolerance Band: 2%–6%
• Introduced through the Finance Act, 2016.

Standing Deposit Facility (SDF):

- Introduced in 2022.
- Allows the RBI to absorb liquidity without providing collateral.
- Marginal Standing Facility (MSF): Enables scheduled commercial banks to borrow overnight from the RBI during liquidity shortages.
- Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR): Percentage of deposits that banks must maintain with the RBI as cash.

Exam Focus Points:

• Repo Rate: 5.25%.
• Policy Stance: Neutral.
• Decision-Making Body: Monetary Policy Committee (MPC).
• RBI Governor: Sanjay Malhotra.
• Legal Basis of MPC: RBI Act, 1934 (Section 45ZB).
• Inflation Target: 4% (±2%).
• RBI Headquarters: Mumbai.

Lok Sabha Passes Appropriation Bill for Withdrawal of Money from the Consolidated Fund of India

- The Lok Sabha has passed the Appropriation (No. 3) Bill, 2026, authorising the withdrawal of specified sums from the Consolidated Fund of India (CFI) to meet the expenditure of the Central Government.
- The Bill empowers the government to legally withdraw money from the Consolidated Fund for approved expenditure after the Demands for Grants have been voted by the Lok Sabha.
- As a Money Bill, it now requires the recommendation of the Rajya Sabha before being presented to the President for assent.

What is an Appropriation Bill?

- An Appropriation Bill is introduced after the Demands for Grants are passed by the Lok Sabha. It authorises the government to withdraw money from the Consolidated Fund of India to meet expenditure during a financial year.

Importance:

- Provides legal authority to spend government funds.
- Essential for implementing the Union Budget.
- No money can be withdrawn from the Consolidated Fund without parliamentary approval.

Consolidated Fund of India (CFI):

- The Consolidated Fund of India is the most important government fund under the Constitution.
- Constitutional Provision: Article 266(1) of the Constitution.

Sources of the Fund:

• Tax revenues.

• Non-tax revenues.
• Borrowings by the Government.
• Loan recoveries.

Expenditure:

- Salaries and pensions.
- Defence expenditure.
- Interest payments on public debt.
- Central government schemes and programmes.

Constitutional Provisions:

Article	Subject
Article 112	Annual Financial Statement (Union Budget)
Article 113	Demands for Grants
Article 114	Appropriation Bill
Article 110	Money Bill
Article 266	Consolidated Fund, Contingency Fund and Public Account of India

Types of Government Funds:

Fund	Constitutional Provision	Purpose
Consolidated Fund of India	Article 266(1)	All government revenues and expenditure
Contingency Fund of India	Article 267	Emergency expenditure
Public Account of India	Article 266(2)	Public money held in trust (e.g., provident funds, small savings)

Money Bill:

- An Appropriation Bill is a Money Bill.

Key Facts:

- Defined under Article 110.
- Can be introduced only in the Lok Sabha.
- Introduced only on the recommendation of the President.
- Rajya Sabha can only make recommendations and must return it within 14 days.
- The Speaker of the Lok Sabha certifies whether a Bill is a Money Bill.

Additional Facts:

Union Budget:

• Presented annually under Article 112.
• Presented by the Union Finance Minister.

Consists of:

• Annual Financial Statement.
• Demands for Grants.
• Finance Bill.
• Appropriation Bill.
• Finance Bill vs Appropriation Bill
• Finance Bill: Implements taxation proposals of the Budget.
• Appropriation Bill: Authorises withdrawal of money from the Consolidated Fund of India.

Exam Focus Points:

• Bill: Appropriation (No. 3) Bill, 2026.
• Purpose: Withdrawal of money from the Consolidated Fund of India.
• Related Constitutional Article: Article 114.
• Consolidated Fund: Article 266(1).
• Money Bill: Article 110.
• Union Budget: Article 112.
• Demands for Grants: Article 113.

Finance Ministry Introduces Bill to Enable Merchant Discount Rate (MDR) on UPI and Digital Payments

- The Ministry of Finance has introduced the Payment and Settlement Systems (Amendment)

Bill, 2026 in Parliament to provide a legal framework for imposing a Merchant Discount Rate (MDR) on specified UPI and other digital payment transactions.

- The Bill does not immediately impose MDR, but empowers the government and regulators to notify such charges in the future.
- The move aims to ensure the long-term financial sustainability of India's digital payments ecosystem, while protecting consumers and small merchants.
- Reports indicate that the proposed MDR, if introduced, may apply only to large merchants and high-value transactions, with person-to-person (P2P) UPI payments remaining free.

What is Merchant Discount Rate (MDR)?

- Merchant Discount Rate (MDR) is the fee paid by a merchant to a bank or payment service provider for processing digital payment transactions.

Key Features:

- Paid by the merchant, not the customer.
- Covers payment processing, settlement, fraud prevention, and infrastructure costs.
- Commonly charged on credit and debit card transactions.
- Since January 2020, MDR has been zero for UPI and RuPay debit card transactions.

Why is the Amendment Important?

The government is considering this amendment because:

- UPI transaction volumes have increased rapidly.
- Banks and fintech companies incur rising technology, cybersecurity, and infrastructure costs.
- A sustainable revenue model is needed for payment service providers.
- The amendment provides flexibility to introduce MDR where necessary without affecting financial inclusion.

About UPI (Unified Payments Interface):

- Unified Payments Interface (UPI) is India's real-time digital payment system developed by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).

Features:

- Instant 24×7 fund transfers.
- Interoperable across banks.
- Supports person-to-person (P2P) and person-to-merchant (P2M) payments.
- Uses mobile numbers, QR codes, or Virtual Payment Addresses (VPAs).

- In July 2026, UPI processed 23.6 billion transactions worth nearly ₹29.9 lakh crore, making it one of the world's largest real-time payment systems.

National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI):

- Established: 2008
- Type: Umbrella organisation for retail payments
- Promoted By: Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and Indian Banks' Association (IBA)
- Headquarters: Mumbai
- MD & CEO: Dilip Asbe

Major Products

- UPI.
- RuPay.
- BHIM.
- IMPS.

• NACH.	• India's domestic card payment network.
• FASTag.	• Developed by NPCI.
• National Common Mobility Card (NCMC).	• Launched in 2012.

Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007:

- The Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007 provides the legal framework for payment systems in India.

Regulated By

- Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

Purpose

- Regulate payment and settlement systems.
- Authorise payment system operators.
- Ensure safety and efficiency of digital payments.

BHIM (Bharat Interface for Money):

• Launched: 30 December 2016.
• Developed by NPCI.
• Based on the UPI platform.
• RuPay

Exam Focus Points:

• Bill: Payment and Settlement Systems (Amendment) Bill, 2026.
• Purpose: Enable legal framework for MDR on digital payments.
• MDR: Fee paid by merchants for processing digital transactions.
• Digital Payment Platform: Unified Payments Interface (UPI).
• Developed By: National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).
• Regulator: Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
• Parent Law: Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007.
• BHIM Launch: 30 December 2016.
• RuPay Launch: 2012.

ICAR Develops Indigenous Vaccine for African Swine Fever (ASF)

- The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has developed India's first indigenous vaccine against African Swine Fever (ASF), marking a major breakthrough in veterinary biotechnology and livestock disease control.
- The vaccine, named the MA-104 Cell-Based Live Attenuated African Swine Fever Vaccine, has been developed by the ICAR–National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases (NIHSAD), Bhopal.
- It is designed to protect domestic pigs from the highly contagious ASF virus, which has caused severe economic losses to the pig farming sector, particularly in India's North-Eastern states.
- The vaccine is expected to strengthen India's biosecurity, reduce dependence on imported technologies, and support the livestock economy.

About African Swine Fever (ASF):

- African Swine Fever is a highly contagious viral disease affecting domestic and wild pigs.

Key Facts:

• Causative Agent: African Swine Fever Virus (ASFV).

• Affected Animals: Domestic pigs and wild boars.
• Mortality Rate: Can reach nearly 100%.
• Transmission: Direct contact, contaminated feed, infected pork products, and soft ticks.
• Human Health: Does not infect humans and is not a food safety risk.

About ICAR:

- The Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) is India's apex body for agricultural research and education.

• Established: 16 July 1929
• Headquarters: New Delhi
• Director: Mangi Lal Jat
• President: Union Minister of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare (Shivraj Singh Chauhan)

About ICAR-NIHSAD:

- The ICAR–National Institute of High Security Animal Diseases (NIHSAD) is located in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh.

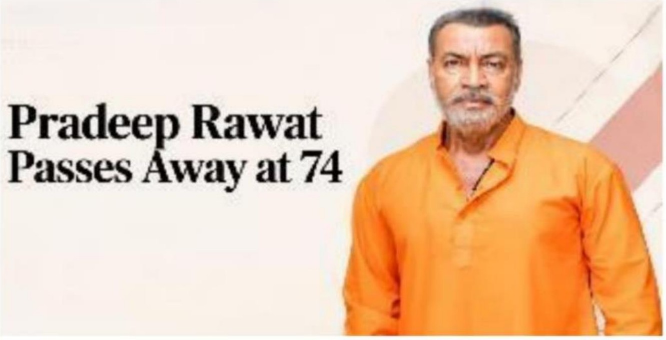
Functions:

- Research on high-risk animal diseases.
- Vaccine and diagnostic development.
- Disease surveillance.
- Strengthening livestock biosecurity.

Exam Focus Points:

• Disease: African Swine Fever (ASF).
• Developed By: ICAR–NIHSAD, Bhopal.
• Vaccine: MA-104 Cell-Based Live Attenuated ASF Vaccine.
• Target Animals: Domestic and wild pigs.
• Mortality: Up to 100%.
• Human Infection: No.
• ICAR Headquarters: New Delhi.
• ICAR Established: 16 July 1929.

Veteran Actor Pradeep Singh Rawat Passes Away at 74



- Veteran Indian actor Pradeep Singh Rawat, known for his powerful performances in Ghajini, Lagaan, and B.R. Chopra's Mahabharat, passed away at the age of 74.
- He was widely recognised for portraying memorable antagonist roles across Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, Bengali, and Bhojpuri cinema.

Career Highlights

- Pradeep Rawat began his acting career with B.R. Chopra's television serial Mahabharat, where he portrayed Ashwatthama.

He later gained nationwide recognition for his performances in:

• Ghajini (2008) – Played the antagonist Ghajini Dharmatma.
• Lagaan (2001) – Played Deva Singh.
• Acted extensively in Hindi, Telugu, Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, Bengali, and Bhojpuri films.

Awards:

• 2004: Winner, Filmfare Best Villain Award (Telugu) for Sye
• 2004: Winner, Santosham Best Villain Award for Sye

• 2004: Winner, Nandi Award for Best Villain for Sye

Exam Focus Points:

• Person: Pradeep Singh Rawat.
• Known For: Ghajini, Lagaan, and Mahabharat.
• Iconic TV Role: Ashwatthama.

• Highest Indian Cinema Award: Dadasaheb Phalke Award.
• National Film Awards: Instituted in 1954.
• IFFI Venue: Goa.

Indian Air Force Concludes Counter-Drone Exercise ROTOR CLAP III in Rajasthan

- The Indian Air Force (IAF) successfully concluded Exercise ROTOR CLAP III, a week-long counter-drone exercise, at the Pokhran Field Firing Range in Jaisalmer, Rajasthan.
- The exercise was conducted to enhance the IAF's capability to detect, track, identify, and neutralise hostile drones and unmanned aerial systems (UAS).
- It focused on strengthening India's preparedness against emerging drone and swarm drone threats, which have become a significant component of modern warfare.

What is Counter-Drone Technology?

- Counter-drone systems are designed to detect and neutralise unauthorised or hostile drones.

Major Components:

• Radar-based detection.
• Electro-optical and infrared sensors.
• Radio Frequency (RF) jammers.
• GPS spoofing and jamming.
• Directed Energy Weapons (DEWs), including laser systems.
• Hard-kill systems such as missiles and anti-drone guns.

Importance of Counter-Drone Capability:

- The increasing use of drones in surveillance, reconnaissance, and attacks has made counter-drone systems essential for national security.

Applications

- Border security.
- Protection of airbases and military installations.
- Counter-terrorism operations.
- Critical infrastructure protection.
- Disaster response and emergency operations.

About the Indian Air Force (IAF):

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

Major Commands:

• Western Air Command – New Delhi.
• Eastern Air Command – Shillong.
• Southern Air Command – Thiruvananthapuram.
• South Western Air Command – Gandhinagar.
• Central Air Command – Prayagraj.
• Maintenance Command – Nagpur.
• Training Command – Bengaluru.

About Pokhran Field Firing Range:

- Located in Jaisalmer district, Rajasthan.
- One of India's premier military testing and firing ranges.
- Hosts major military exercises such as Vayu Shakti.
- Also known for India's Pokhran-I (1974) and Pokhran-II (1998) nuclear tests.

Additional:

- Vayu Shakti Exercise
- A flagship firepower demonstration exercise of the Indian Air Force.
- Conducted at the Pokhran Field Firing Range.
- Demonstrates the IAF's air combat, precision strike, and integrated warfare capabilities.

Exam Focus Points:

• Exercise: ROTOR CLAP III.
• Conducted By: Indian Air Force.
• Venue: Pokhran Field Firing Range, Jaisalmer (Rajasthan).
• Objective: Enhance counter-drone capabilities.
• Related Exercise: Vayu Shakti.
• IAF Motto: Nabhah Sparsham Deeptam.
• IAF Established: 8 October 1932.

GVMC and Moscow Sign MoU to Boost Smart Mobility and Urban Development in Visakhapatnam

- The Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) and the Government of Moscow have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to collaborate on smart mobility, digital innovation, intelligent transport systems (ITS), and sustainable urban development in Visakhapatnam (Vizag), Andhra Pradesh.
- The partnership aims to leverage Moscow's expertise in urban mobility, traffic management, and smart city technologies to improve public transport, reduce congestion, and enhance citizen-centric governance in Vizag.
- The agreement aligns with India's Smart Cities Mission and broader urban transformation initiatives.

About the Smart Cities Mission:

- The Smart Cities Mission is a flagship programme of the Government of India.
- Launched: 25 June 2015
- Objective: Develop 100 citizen-friendly, sustainable, and technology-enabled cities

Core Components

• Smart mobility.
• Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS).
• E-governance.
• Water and waste management.
• Energy-efficient infrastructure.
• Digital public services.

About GVMC:

- The Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation (GVMC) is the Urban Local Body responsible for the administration of Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh.

Functions:

• Urban planning.
• Public transport and road infrastructure.
• Water supply and sanitation.

• Solid waste management.
• Smart city implementation.
• Public health services.

Intelligent Transport System (ITS):

- An Intelligent Transport System (ITS) integrates information and communication technologies (ICT) with transport infrastructure.

Benefits:

• Smart traffic signals.
• Real-time traffic monitoring.
• Reduced congestion.
• Improved road safety.
• Efficient public transport.
• Lower fuel consumption and emissions.

About Visakhapatnam:

• State: Andhra Pradesh
• Popular Name: Vizag
• Coast: Bay of Bengal
• Major Port: Visakhapatnam Port
• Importance: Major port city, industrial and naval hub

Exam Focus Points:

• MoU Partners: GVMC and the Government of Moscow.
• City: Visakhapatnam (Vizag).
• Focus: Smart mobility and digital urban development.
• Related Scheme: Smart Cities Mission.
• Launch Year: 2015.
• Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.
• Relevant Constitutional Amendment: 74th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992.
• Relevant Schedule: Twelfth Schedule.

HDFC Bank Launches SavingsMax for Seniors and SavingsMax for Her Savings Accounts

- HDFC Bank has launched two new customised savings account variants—SavingsMax for Seniors and SavingsMax for Her—to cater to the specific financial, healthcare, lifestyle, and banking needs of senior citizens and women, respectively.
- The initiative reflects the growing trend of segment-based banking, offering personalised products with enhanced value-added services beyond conventional banking.

Features of SavingsMax for Seniors:

Designed to meet the needs of senior citizens, the account offers:

• Complimentary doorstep banking services.
• Higher fixed deposit (FD) interest rates (as applicable).
• Healthcare and pharmacy-related discounts.
• Insurance benefits and premium debit card facilities.
• Special offers from partner brands.

Features of SavingsMax for Her:

Designed specifically for women, the account provides:

- Lifestyle and wellness benefits.
- Health and insurance coverage.
- Cashback and debit card offers.
- Automatic sweep facility (Money Maximiser).
- Exclusive partner discounts and financial benefits.

About HDFC Bank:

- Established: 1994
- Headquarters: Mumbai, Maharashtra
- MD & CEO: Sashidhar Jagdishan

Financial Inclusion in India:

Major initiatives inclde:

- Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY).
- Digital banking and UPI.
- India Post Payments Bank (IPPB).
- Business Correspondent (BC) model.

Exam Focus Points:

- Bank: HDFC Bank.
- New Accounts: SavingsMax for Seniors and SavingsMax for Her.
- Target Groups: Senior citizens and women.
- Sector: Personalised retail banking.
- Banking Regulator: Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- HDFC Bank Headquarters: Mumbai.

RBI to Reopen Window for Fresh Urban Cooperative Bank (UCB) Licences

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has announced that it will reopen the window for granting fresh licences to Urban Cooperative Banks (UCBs) after a gap of more than two decades.
- The RBI also plans to introduce an 'on-tap' licensing system, allowing eligible entities to apply for licences throughout the year instead of waiting for specific licensing windows.
- The decision follows stakeholder feedback on the Discussion Paper on Licensing of Urban Cooperative Banks, released in January 2026, and aims to strengthen the cooperative banking sector while promoting financial inclusion.

What is On-Tap Licensing?

- On-tap licensing allows eligible applicants to submit licence applications at any time, instead of waiting for a specific application window announced by the regulator.

Benefits:

- Continuous entry of eligible institutions.
- Faster licensing process.
- Greater transparency.
- Improved ease of doing business.

About Urban Cooperative Banks (UCBs)

- Urban Cooperative Banks are cooperative financial institutions that primarily serve urban and semi-urban areas.

Features:

- Registered under State Cooperative Societies Acts or the Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act.
- Regulated by the Reserve Bank of India for banking functions.
- Provide savings accounts, deposits, loans, and other banking services.

- Focus on small businesses, traders, salaried individuals, and middle-income groups.

Why Were Fresh Licences Stopped?

The RBI had stopped issuing new UCB licences in 2004 due to:

- Weak financial health of several UCBs.
- Governance issues.
- Poor capital adequacy.
- Rising Non-Performing Assets (NPAs).
- Weak risk management systems.
- Following regulatory reforms and improvements in governance, the RBI has now decided to resume licensing.

RBI's Discussion Paper (2026):

- The RBI's Discussion Paper on Licensing of Urban Cooperative Banks proposed:
- Licensing financially strong cooperative credit societies.
- Preference for institutions with a minimum capital of ₹300 crore.
- Wider geographical presence to improve financial viability.
- Strong governance and regulatory compliance before granting licences.

Why is the Decision Significant?

The move is expected to:

- Expand banking access in urban and semi-urban areas.
- Promote financial inclusion.
- Increase competition in the cooperative banking sector.
- Encourage well-governed cooperative credit societies to become banks.
- Strengthen the resilience and sustainability of Urban Cooperative Banks.

Exam Focus Points:

- Regulator: Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- Decision: Resume licensing of Urban Cooperative Banks.
- New System: On-tap licensing.
- Previous Licensing Halt: 2004.
- Discussion Paper: January 2026.
- Preferred Applicants: Large cooperative credit societies.
- Related Law: Banking Regulation (Amendment) Act, 2020.
- Deposit Insurance Agency: DICGC.
- Deposit Insurance Limit: ₹5 lakh.

BEL and Esri India Partner to Boost Defence with GIS and GeoAI Technologies

Why is it in News?

- Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Esri India to develop advanced Geographic Information System (GIS) and GeoAI solutions for India's defence and strategic sectors. The partnership aims to improve decision-making, surveillance, mission planning, and situational awareness using geospatial intelligence and artificial intelligence.

Key Highlights

- Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) and Esri India have signed an MoU for collaboration in defence technologies.
- The partnership will develop GIS and GeoAI-based solutions for defence and homeland security.
- The technologies will support real-time mapping, surveillance, intelligence analysis, mission planning, and asset management.

About BEL

- Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) is a Navratna Defence Public Sector Undertaking (DPSU) under the Ministry of Defence. Established in 1954, BEL develops advanced electronic systems for the Indian Armed Forces, including radars, communication systems, electronic warfare systems, missile electronics, and defence networks.

What is GIS?

- A Geographic Information System (GIS) is a computer-based system used to collect, store, analyse, and display geographic or spatial data. It helps in mapping, navigation, disaster management, defence planning, and infrastructure development.

What is GeoAI?

- GeoAI (Geospatial Artificial Intelligence) combines Artificial Intelligence (AI) with geospatial data such as satellite imagery, maps, GPS, and remote sensing. It helps analyse large volumes of location-based data to improve decision-making, threat detection, and predictive analysis.

Significance

- The partnership will enhance India's defence preparedness by integrating AI with geospatial intelligence. It will improve operational efficiency, border surveillance, disaster response, and strategic planning while reducing dependence on foreign technologies.

Exam Focus Points

• MoU Signed Between: Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) and Esri India.
• Purpose: Develop GIS and GeoAI solutions for defence.
• BEL Status: Navratna Defence PSU.
• Ministry: Ministry of Defence.
• Technology Used: GIS (Geographic Information System) and GeoAI (Geospatial Artificial Intelligence).
• Applications: Surveillance, mapping, mission planning, intelligence analysis, and asset management.
• Supports: Aatmanirbhar Bharat in defence.

BEL

• Founded: 1954
• Headquarters: Bengaluru, Karnataka, India
• Chairman & Managing Director: Manoj Jain

Way Forward

- Expanding the use of AI-powered geospatial technologies, strengthening indigenous defence innovation, and fostering collaboration between public sector enterprises and technology companies will enhance India's national security and technological self-reliance.

Lets Revise

- At what rate has the RBI retained the policy repo rate in its latest Monetary Policy Committee meeting? 5.25%.
- Which Bill authorises the withdrawal of money from the Consolidated Fund of India? Appropriation Bill.
- Which Bill was recently introduced to provide a legal framework for Merchant Discount Rate (MDR) on digital payments? Payment and Settlement Systems (Amendment) Bill, 2026.
- What is the name of the indigenous African Swine Fever vaccine developed by ICAR? MA-104 Cell-Based Live Attenuated African Swine Fever Vaccine.
- Which veteran actor known for Ghajini and Lagaan recently passed away? Pradeep Singh Rawat.
- Recenlty, Exercise ROTOR CLAP III was conducted in which state? Rajasthan.
- Which Indian city recently signed an MoU with the Government of Moscow to promote smart mobility? Visakhapatnam (Vizag).
- Which bank recently launched the SavingsMax for Seniors and SavingsMax for Her savings accounts? HDFC Bank.
- Recenlty, which licensing system has the RBI proposed for Urban Cooperative Banks? On-tap licensing.
- Which two organisations have signed an MoU to develop GIS and GeoAI solutions for India's defence sector? Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) and Esri India.
- What is the main objective of the BEL–Esri India partnership? To develop GIS and GeoAI-based solutions for defence, homeland security, and strategic applications.
- What does GIS stand for? Geographic Information System.

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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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