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MONTHLY
CURRENT AFFAIRS
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Aug-2026

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CHINA'S BRAHMAPUTRA MEGA DAM
THREAT OR MYTH?

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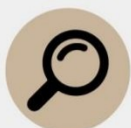


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DEAR ASPIRANTS

“

“Great achievements are the result of disciplined effort sustained with patience, purpose and perseverance.”



For a UPSC aspirant, current affairs are not a separate area of preparation but the living extension of the static syllabus. Developments in polity, governance, international relations, economy, science, environment, defence and society frequently shape questions in the Preliminary Examination, enrich Mains answers and strengthen the perspective required for the Personality Test. Consistent reading, critical analysis and regular revision therefore remain essential for success in the Civil Services Examination.

This edition examines major geopolitical and diplomatic developments, including the impact of Trump's rejection of the USMCA on North American trade, the strategic concerns surrounding China's Brahmaputra mega dam, the fresh challenge facing the Indus Waters Treaty, NATO 2026 discussions on defence, Ukraine and the Middle East, the India–Australia critical minerals partnership and the approval of the US–Saudi civil nuclear agreement. It also explores the constitutional and legal question of who can become an Indian citizen.

The magazine covers important developments in governance and public administration, such as Pralhad Joshi taking charge of the Education Ministry, Anurag Jain being appointed the new NITI Aayog CEO and the Cabinet's action against the paper leak menace. India's growing technological and infrastructural capabilities are reflected in Skyroot's first private orbital rocket and the country's first hydrogen-powered train.

Defence and national security remain central to this edition, with coverage of the new leadership at the top of India's Armed Forces, the induction of another MH-60R Seahawk into the Indian Navy, INS Malvan's role in strengthening coastal defence and the IAF emerging as the world's third-strongest air force. Recognition and achievement are highlighted through PM Modi receiving top civilian honours from Indonesia and Seychelles, Ajit Doval being selected for the Lokmanya Tilak Award 2026 and R. Vairamuthu receiving India's highest literary honour.

The issue also includes Australia's historic seventh Women's T20 World Cup victory, Spain's FIFA World Cup 2026 triumph and the Passport Power 2026 rankings, led by Sweden with India placed at 125. We hope these carefully selected developments help you connect contemporary events with the UPSC syllabus, develop balanced arguments and approach national and global issues with the maturity expected of a future civil servant. Read consistently, revise intelligently and prepare with the conviction that disciplined learning today can shape responsible governance tomorrow.

THIS EDITION

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- Indian Citizenship Defined
- Tougher Anti-Paper Leak Bill
- Right to Protest in India
- SC Judges Amendment Bill, 2026
- Draft Advocates (Amendment) Bill, 2026
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NEWS COVERED

Business News, Financial News, Economy News, Politics News, India News, Breaking News, Indian Economy, International News, Sports News, and many more topics covered.....



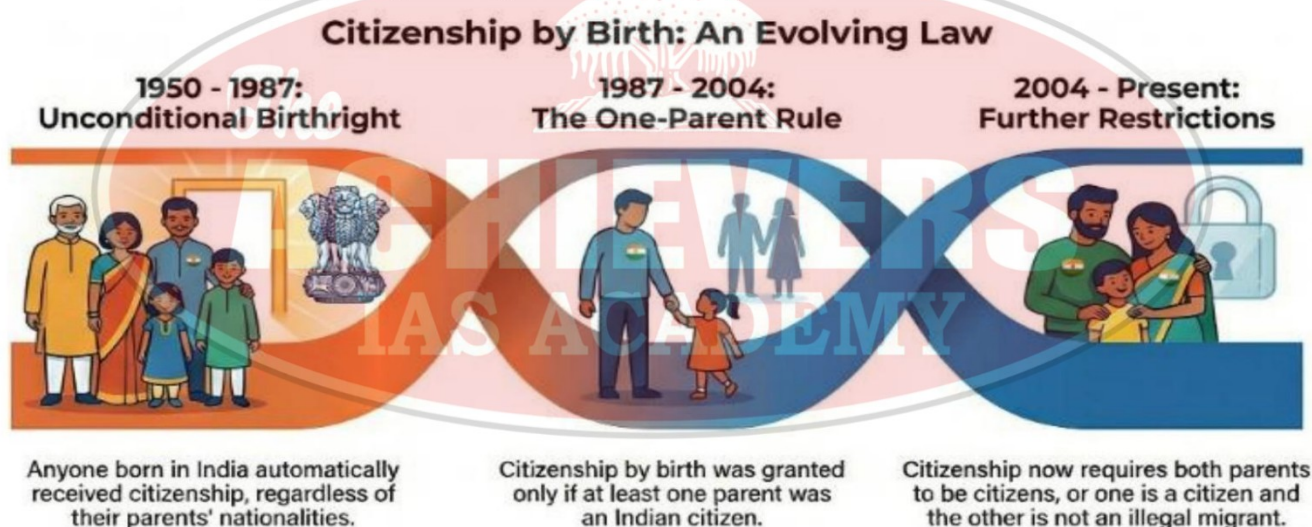
POLITY & GOVERNANCE

Indian Citizenship: What Determines Who Is an Indian Citizen?

The issue of Indian citizenship has once again come into focus following recent debates over the legal status of individuals and the documents that establish citizenship. A common misconception is that possessing an Indian passport, Aadhaar card, or Voter ID automatically proves Indian citizenship. However, under Indian law, citizenship is determined by the Constitution and the Citizenship Act, 1955, and not merely by possession of government-issued identity documents. Understanding the legal framework governing citizenship is important as it defines who enjoys the full political and constitutional rights available in India.

What is Citizenship?

- Citizenship is the legal relationship between an individual and the State, under which a person enjoys constitutional rights and performs certain duties. An Indian citizen enjoys rights such as voting in elections, contesting elections, holding constitutional offices, obtaining an Indian passport, and receiving diplomatic protection abroad.
- The Constitution of India initially dealt with citizenship under Articles 5 to 11, while Parliament was empowered under Article 11 to enact laws governing citizenship. Accordingly, Parliament enacted the Citizenship Act, 1955, which remains the principal legislation governing citizenship in India.



Constitutional Provisions on Citizenship

Articles 5–11 of the Constitution

- The Constitution did not create permanent rules for citizenship. Instead, it identified who would be considered citizens on 26 January 1950, the day the Constitution came into force.
- Article 5: Citizenship at the commencement of the Constitution.
- Article 6: Rights of migrants from Pakistan to citizenship.
- Article 7: Citizenship of persons who migrated to Pakistan but later returned.
- Article 8: Citizenship of Indians residing abroad.
- Article 9: Persons voluntarily acquiring foreign citizenship cannot remain Indian citizens.
- Article 10: Continuance of citizenship.
- Article 11: Parliament's power to regulate citizenship through law.
- Citizenship Act, 1955
- The Citizenship Act lays down the methods through which Indian citizenship can be acquired and terminated.

Modes of Acquiring Citizenship

By Birth

- A person born in India becomes a citizen depending on the date of birth and the citizenship status of parents.
- Born between 26 January 1950 and 1 July 1987: Citizen by birth irrespective of parents' nationality.
- Born between 1 July 1987 and 3 December 2004: At least one parent must be an Indian citizen.
- Born after 3 December 2004: One parent must be an Indian citizen and the other should not be an illegal migrant.

By Descent

- A person born outside India may acquire citizenship if at least one parent is an Indian citizen, subject to conditions prescribed under the Act.
- By Registration
- Certain categories of persons, including persons of Indian origin, spouses of Indian citizens, and overseas Indians fulfilling prescribed conditions, may obtain citizenship through registration.

By Naturalisation

- A foreign national can acquire Indian citizenship after fulfilling residency and other conditions laid down in the Act.
- By Incorporation of Territory
- If a new territory becomes part of India, the Government may specify the persons who become Indian citizens.

How Can Citizenship be Lost?

Citizenship may cease in three ways:

- Renunciation: Voluntary surrender of citizenship.
- Termination: Automatic loss upon voluntarily acquiring another country's citizenship.
- Deprivation: Government may deprive a person of citizenship under specified grounds such as fraud or disloyalty.

Does an Indian Passport Prove Citizenship?

- A major legal issue is whether an Indian passport is conclusive proof of citizenship.
- The answer is No.
- A passport is primarily a travel document issued under the Passports Act, 1967. It enables international travel and identifies the holder as an Indian passport holder. However, courts have clarified that the issuance of a passport does not conclusively establish citizenship if it was obtained based on incorrect information, fraud, or incomplete verification.
- Authorities may cancel or impound a passport if it is found to have been obtained fraudulently or if the holder is subsequently found not to be an Indian citizen.
- Thus, while a passport is strong evidence of nationality, it is not final or irrefutable proof of citizenship under Indian law.

If Not a Passport, Then What Proves Citizenship?

- India does not have a single citizenship certificate issued to every citizen.
- Instead, citizenship is established through legal evidence depending on the circumstances of each case.

Authorities examine a combination of documents such as:

- Birth certificate
- Parents' citizenship records
- School records
- Land and residence records
- Electoral rolls
- Government records
- Citizenship certificate issued under the Citizenship Act (where applicable)

- Courts and competent authorities assess the overall evidence rather than relying on one document alone.

Do Aadhaar and Voter ID Prove Citizenship?

- Aadhaar
- No.
- Aadhaar is only a proof of identity and residence issued by the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI). It can also be issued to eligible residents who are not Indian citizens.
- Therefore, Aadhaar cannot be treated as proof of citizenship.
- Voter ID (EPIC)
- A Voter ID is issued only after enrolment in the electoral roll.
- While only Indian citizens aged 18 years or above are eligible to vote, the Election Commission has clarified that the Elector Photo Identity Card (EPIC) itself is not a citizenship certificate. If a person is found to be ineligible or wrongly enrolled, their name can be removed from the electoral roll.

Is PAN Card Proof of Citizenship?

- No.
- A Permanent Account Number (PAN) is issued for taxation purposes. Foreign nationals and companies may also possess PAN cards.
- Hence, PAN is not proof of Indian citizenship.
- Citizenship and the National Register of Citizens (NRC)
- The issue of citizenship is often discussed in relation to the National Register of Citizens (NRC).
- The NRC is a register containing details of genuine Indian citizens. The only NRC prepared so far is for Assam, under the supervision of the Supreme Court, primarily to identify illegal migrants as required under the Assam Accord.
- The NRC process demonstrated that determining citizenship requires verification of multiple historical and legal documents rather than reliance on a single identity card.

Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 (CAA)

- The Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 amended the Citizenship Act, 1955 to provide a fast-track route to Indian citizenship for Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, and Christians from Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan who entered India on or before 31 December 2014 due to religious persecution.
- The Act does not take away the citizenship of any existing Indian citizen. Instead, it modifies eligibility for acquiring citizenship by naturalisation for specified communities.
- Inconsistent government records.
- Absence of a universal citizenship register.
- Consequently, authorities often rely on documentary evidence, legal procedures, and judicial scrutiny to determine citizenship on a case-by-case basis.

Why is Citizenship Important?

Citizenship determines eligibility for several constitutional and political rights, including:

- Right to vote.
- Right to contest elections.
- Eligibility for constitutional offices such as President, Vice-President, Governor, and Member of Parliament (subject to constitutional requirements).
- Right to obtain an Indian passport.
- Diplomatic protection by India abroad.
- Access to certain public employment and constitutional protections reserved for citizens.
- Challenges in Determining Citizenship

Determining citizenship can become difficult due to:

- Lack of birth registration in earlier decades.
- Migration across borders.
- Forged or fraudulent identity documents.

Way Forward

India requires a transparent, fair, and legally robust system for determining citizenship that protects national security while safeguarding the constitutional rights of genuine citizens. Strengthening civil registration, improving birth and identity record management, ensuring due process in citizenship verification, and enhancing coordination among government agencies will reduce disputes. At the same time, public awareness is essential to distinguish between proof of identity, proof of residence, and proof of citizenship, thereby preventing misinformation and ensuring that citizenship-related decisions remain consistent with constitutional principles and the rule of law.

Tougher Anti-Paper Leak Bill Approved

- The Union Cabinet has approved amendments to the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024 to introduce stricter penalties against paper leaks and organised examination malpractices.
- The proposed amendments provide for imprisonment of up to 10 years, a fine of up to ₹10 crore, and statutory fast-track courts to ensure speedy disposal of paper leak cases. The Bill will now be introduced in Parliament.

About the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024:

The Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024 was enacted to prevent paper leaks, organised cheating, impersonation, and other unfair practices in public examinations.

Public Examinations Covered Under the Act:

The Act applies to examinations conducted by:

- Union Public Service Commission (UPSC).
- Staff Selection Commission (SSC).
- Railway Recruitment Boards (RRBs).
- National Testing Agency (NTA).
- Institute of Banking Personnel Selection (IBPS).
- Any other Central Government-notified public examination authority.

What Constitutes "Unfair Means"?

The Act defines unfair means to include:

- Leakage of question papers or answer keys.
- Unauthorized access to examination papers.
- Impersonation.
- Tampering with computer systems or examination software.
- Manipulation of merit lists.
- Conducting fake examinations.
- Issuing fake admit cards or appointment letters.
- Organized cheating for monetary gain.



Proposed Amendments:

The proposed amendments aim to strengthen the existing law by:

- Increasing punishment for paper leak offences.
- Raising the maximum fine from ₹1 crore to ₹10 crore.
- Prescribing a minimum imprisonment of 5 years for offenders.
- Providing statutory backing to fast-track courts.
- Ensuring disposal of paper leak cases within three months.

Fast-Track Courts:

- Fast-track courts are special courts established for speedy disposal of specific categories of cases.

Objectives:

- Reduce pendency of cases.
- Deliver timely justice.
- Improve judicial efficiency.
- Act as a deterrent against serious offences.

National Testing Agency (NTA):

- Established : 2018
- Headquarters: New Delhi
- Director General: Abhishek Singh

Major Examinations Conducted:

- NEET (UG).
- JEE Main.
- CUET (UG & PG).
- UGC-NET.
- NCET.
- Other national-level entrance examinations

Union Public Service Commission (UPSC):

- Constitutional Provision Articles 315–323
- Established : 1 October 1926 (Public Service Commission); Constitutional status from 1950
- Headquarters: New Delhi
- Chairperson: Ajay Kumar

Functions:

- Conducts Civil Services Examination.
- Conducts recruitment examinations.
- Advises the Government on recruitment and service matters.

Staff Selection Commission (SSC):

- Established: 1975
- Headquarters: New Delhi
- Chairman: S. Gopalakrishnan
- Ministry: Department of Personnel & Training (DoPT)
- Functions
- Recruitment to Group B and Group C posts in Central Government ministries and departments.

Constitutional Provisions:

- Article 315: Public Service Commissions
- Article 320: Functions of Public Service Commissions
- Article 14: Equality before Law
- Article 16: Equality of Opportunity in Public Employment

Exam Focus Points:

- Act: Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Act, 2024.
- Purpose: Prevent paper leaks and examination malpractices.
- Maximum Proposed Punishment: 10 years' imprisonment.
- Maximum Proposed Fine: ₹10 crore.
- Minimum Proposed Imprisonment: 5 years.
- New Provision: Statutory fast-track courts.
- Cases to be Disposed Within: Three months.
- Examinations Covered: UPSC, SSC, NTA, RRB, IBPS, and other notified public examinations.
- Related Constitutional Articles: 14, 16, 315, 320.

Right to protest in India

Why is it in News?

More than 100 civil society organisations protested at Jantar Mantar, New Delhi, against the new restrictions imposed by the Delhi Police on public meetings and demonstrations. They argued that these restrictions limit citizens' constitutional right to peacefully protest and express their views.

Background & Significance:

- Jantar Mantar has long been one of Delhi's designated venues for peaceful protests and public demonstrations.
- Recently, the Delhi Police introduced new rules regulating protests at Jantar Mantar.
- Civil society organisations claim these rules make it difficult for citizens to organise protests and therefore weaken democratic participation.
- They have demanded that the government withdraw or review these restrictions.

Key Highlights:

- Venue: Jantar Mantar, New Delhi.
- Participants: More than 100 civil society organisations.
- Reason for Protest: Opposition to the new Delhi Police rules governing protests at Jantar Mantar.

Main Demands:

- Withdraw the new restrictions on public protests.
- Protect the constitutional right to peaceful assembly.
- Ensure citizens can freely express dissent in a democracy.
- Protesters stated that peaceful demonstrations are an essential part of a democratic society.

Why is it Important?

- Raises concerns about the balance between public order and citizens' fundamental rights.
- Highlights the importance of the Right to Freedom of Speech and Peaceful Assembly under the Constitution.
- The issue is significant for polity, governance, and constitutional rights, making it relevant for competitive examinations.

Constitutional Provisions

Article	Provision
Article 19(1)(a)	Freedom of Speech and Expression
Article 19(1)(b)	Right to Assemble Peacefully and Without Arms
Article 19(1)(c)	Right to Form Associations or Unions
Articles 19(2)–19(6)	Allow the State to impose reasonable restrictions in the interest of sovereignty, security, public order, decency, morality, etc.

About Civil Society Organisations (CSOs)

- Voluntary, non-governmental organisations that work for public welfare and protect citizens' rights.
- They promote awareness, advocate policy changes, and hold governments accountable.
- Examples include NGOs, human rights groups, professional associations, and community organisations.
- Way Forward
- Ensure that citizens' constitutional rights are protected while maintaining public order.
- Review protest regulations to ensure they are reasonable and proportionate.

TEXT OF ARTICLE 19(1)(b)

Article 19 (1)(b) of the Indian Constitution states:

“All citizens shall have the right to assemble peaceably and without arms.”

CONSTITUTIONAL SIGNIFICANCE

Who enjoys the right?
— Only citizens of India.



Nature of the assembly?
— It must be peaceful.



Limitation?
— The assembly must be without arms.



Thus, the right is not absolute; it is subject to inherent qualifications even before considering further restrictions imposed by the State.

Exam Focus Points:

- Place in News: Jantar Mantar, New Delhi.
- Issue: New restrictions on public protests imposed by Delhi Police.
- Key Constitutional Rights: Articles 19(1)(a), 19(1)(b), and 19(1)(c).
- Important Concept: Fundamental Rights are subject to reasonable restrictions under Articles 19(2)–19(6).
- Role of CSOs: Safeguard democratic values and represent citizens' concerns.

- Encourage dialogue between the government and civil society to resolve concerns peacefully.

Supreme Court Judges Amendment Bill, 2026

- Union Minister for Law and Justice Arjun Ram Meghwal introduced the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Bill, 2026 in the Lok Sabha during the Monsoon Session of Parliament.
- The Bill seeks to amend the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act, 1956 to increase the sanctioned strength of Supreme Court judges from 33 to 37 (excluding the Chief Justice of India).
- The Bill replaces the Ordinance promulgated by the President in May 2026 for the same purpose.

Why is the Bill Needed?

- Rising backlog of cases before the Supreme Court.
- Increasing workload due to expanding constitutional, civil, criminal, and public interest litigation.
- Need for faster disposal of appeals and constitutional matters.
- Strengthening access to justice by improving judicial capacity.

What Does the Bill Do?

- The Bill amends Section 2 of the Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act, 1956 by replacing the figure "33" with "37", thereby increasing the number of judges other than the Chief Justice of India.

It does not change:

- Powers of the Supreme Court.
- Jurisdiction of the Supreme Court.
- Appointment process of judges.
- Constitutional provisions relating to the judiciary.

HISTORICAL TIMELINE OF AMENDMENTS			
SUPREME COURT JUDGE STRENGTH (EXCLUDING THE CHIEF JUSTICE OF INDIA)			
YEAR	AMENDMENT / ACT	JUDGE STRENGTH (Excluding CJI)	KEY CHANGE / REMARK
1956	The Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act, 1956	10	Fixed the maximum strength of Supreme Court judges (excluding the CJI) at 10.
1960	The Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Act, 1960	13	Increased the sanctioned strength from 10 to 13.
1977	The Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Act, 1977	17	Increased the sanctioned strength from 13 to 17. However, the working strength was restricted to 15 judges (excluding the CJI) till the end of 1979 by a Cabinet decision.
1979	Cabinet Restriction Withdrawn	17	The restriction was withdrawn at the request of the Chief Justice of India, restoring the full sanctioned strength of 17 judges.
1986	The Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Act, 1986	25	Increased the sanctioned strength from 17 to 25.
2008	The Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Act, 2008	30	Increased the sanctioned strength from 25 to 30.
2019	The Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Act, 2019	33	Increased the sanctioned strength from 30 to 33.
2026	The Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Bill, 2026 (Proposed)	37	Proposes increasing the sanctioned strength from 33 to 37 to address the growing pendency of cases and improve judicial efficiency.

Note: All judge strengths are excluding the Chief Justice of India (CJI).

Constitutional Provisions Related to the Supreme Court:

Article	Provision
Article 124	Establishment and constitution of the Supreme Court
Article 124(2)	Appointment of Supreme Court Judges

Article 124(4)	Removal (Impeachment) of Judges
Article 131	Original Jurisdiction
Article 132–136	Appellate Jurisdiction
Article 137	Review Power
Article 141	Law declared by Supreme Court binding on all courts
Article 142	Complete Justice
Article 143	Advisory Jurisdiction
Article 145	Rules of the Supreme Court

About the Supreme Court of India:

- Established: 28 January 1950.
- Constitutional Basis: Articles 124–147.
- Headquarters: New Delhi.
- Highest Judicial Authority: Apex Court of India.
- Retirement Age of Judges: 65 years.
- Appointment: By the President of India.
- Chief Justice of India: Surya Kant

Evolution of Supreme Court Judge Strength:

Year	Judges (excluding CJI)
1950	7
1956	10
1960	13
1977	17
1986	25
2009	30
2019	33
2026 (Proposed)	37

Exam Focus Points::

- Bill: Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Amendment Bill, 2026.
- Introduced By: Arjun Ram Meghwal.
- Parent Act: Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act, 1956.
- Current Strength (excluding CJI): 33.
- Proposed Strength (excluding CJI): 37.
- Total Strength (including CJI): 38.
- Constitutional Provision: Article 124.
- Retirement Age of Supreme Court Judges: 65 years.
- Ordinance Power: Article 123.
- Binding Nature of Supreme Court Judgments: Article 141.

Supreme Court (Number of Judges) Act, 1956:

- Enacted: 1956.
- Purpose: Prescribes the number of judges of the Supreme Court under Article 124.
- Parliament can increase or decrease the sanctioned strength through an ordinary law.
- No Constitutional Amendment is required to change the number of Supreme Court judges.
- Ordinance Making Power (UPSC Perspective)
- Article 123 empowers the President to promulgate an Ordinance when Parliament is not in session and immediate action is necessary.
- An Ordinance has the same force as an Act of Parliament but must be approved by Parliament within the prescribed constitutional period after reassembly.

Additional Facts:

- The Supreme Court comprises the Chief Justice of India and such number of judges as Parliament may by law prescribe under Article 124.
- The Chief Justice of India is appointed by the President, and other judges are appointed following the Collegium System.
- The Collegium System evolved through the Second Judges Case (1993) and Third Judges Case (1998).
- Judicial Independence forms part of the Basic Structure Doctrine established in the Kesavananda Bharati Case (1973).
- The Supreme Court exercises Original, Appellate, Advisory, Review, and Writ Jurisdiction.

- Article 32 empowers citizens to directly approach the Supreme Court for the enforcement of Fundamental Rights.

Draft Advocates (Amendment) Bill, 2026

- The Ministry of Law and Justice has released the Draft Advocates (Amendment) Bill, 2026 for public and stakeholder consultation.
- The draft has been prepared in consultation with the Bar Council of India (BCI) and has been uploaded on the BCI website.
- Stakeholders and members of the public have been invited to submit their comments to the Bar Council of India and the Department of Legal Affairs by 31 July 2026.
- The initiative reflects the Government's commitment to transparent, participative, and inclusive law-making.

Why is the Bill in News?

- The Government has initiated pre-legislative public consultation before introducing amendments to the Advocates Act, 1961.
- It aims to ensure that reforms reflect the evolving needs of the legal profession while encouraging wider public participation in the legislative process.
- Objectives of the Draft Advocates (Amendment) Bill, 2026
 - Modernise the legal profession.
 - Strengthen the regulatory framework governing advocates.
 - Improve professional standards and accountability.
 - Enhance transparency in the legal system.
 - Align legal regulation with contemporary judicial and technological developments.
 - Promote participatory law-making through stakeholder consultation.

About the Advocates Act, 1961:

- Enacted: 1961.
- Purpose: Regulates the legal profession in India.
- Came into Force: 1961.

Key Objectives:

- Establishes the Bar Council of India and State Bar Councils.
- Regulates enrolment and practice of advocates.
- Prescribes standards of professional conduct and etiquette.
- Promotes legal education.
- Provides disciplinary mechanisms against professional misconduct.

About the Bar Council of India (BCI):

- Established: 1961 under the Advocates Act, 1961.
- Nature: Statutory body.
- Headquarters: New Delhi.
- Chairman: Manan Kumar Mishra

Functions:

- Regulates legal education.
- Prescribes standards of professional conduct.
- Recognises law universities and colleges.
- Conducts the All India Bar Examination (AIBE).
- Protects the rights and interests of advocates.



- Exercises disciplinary jurisdiction over advocates.

About the Department of Legal Affairs:

Ministry: Ministry of Law and Justice.

Functions:

- Advises the Government on legal matters.
- Drafts legislation.
- Conducts litigation on behalf of the Union Government.
- Coordinates legal reforms.

Legislative Process in India :

- Preparation of the draft Bill.
- Stakeholder/Public consultation (where applicable).
- Approval by the Union Cabinet.
- Introduction in Parliament.
- Passage by both Houses.
- Assent of the President.
- Notification in the Official Gazette.
- Enforcement from the notified date.

Additional Facts:

- The Advocates Act, 1961 replaced the earlier system of multiple classes of legal practitioners (such as vakils, pleaders and attorneys) with a single class of advocates.
- Article 19(1)(g) guarantees citizens the right to practise any profession, subject to reasonable restrictions under Article 19(6).
- Article 39A (Directive Principles of State Policy) directs the State to ensure equal justice and free legal aid.
- The Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987 established the framework for providing free legal aid through bodies such as NALSA, State Legal Services Authorities, and District Legal Services Authorities.
- The All India Bar Examination (AIBE) is conducted by the Bar Council of India to assess the eligibility of law graduates to practise as advocates.

Constitutional Provisions Related to the Legal Profession

Article	Subject
Article 19(1)(g)	Freedom to practise any profession
Article 19(6)	Reasonable restrictions on professional freedom
Article 39A	Equal justice and free legal aid
Article 145	Supreme Court rules regarding practice and procedure

Exam Focus Points::

- Draft Bill: Advocates (Amendment) Bill, 2026.
- Parent Law: Advocates Act, 1961.
- Consultation Conducted By: Ministry of Law and Justice.
- Statutory Regulator: Bar Council of India.
- BCI Established: 1961.
- BCI Headquarters: New Delhi.
- Last Date for Public Comments: 31 July 2026.
- Article 39A: Equal justice and free legal aid.
- AIBE Conducted By: Bar Council of India.

Uniform Post-Retirement Policy for HC Judges

- The Supreme Court of India has directed the Union Government to constitute a committee within two weeks to formulate a uniform national policy governing post-retirement facilities for retired Chief Justices and judges of the High Courts.
- The Court observed that there are wide disparities among States in the facilities provided to retired judges, including accommodation, security, drivers, and secretarial assistance.
- The committee has been asked to submit its recommendations within three months and also suggest a mechanism for sharing the financial burden between the Centre and the States.

Key Highlights:

- Institution: Supreme Court of India
- Bench Led By: Chief Justice of India Justice Surya Kant
- Direction Issued To: Union Government

Timeline:

- Committee to be constituted within 2 weeks
- Recommendations to be submitted within 3 months
- Purpose: Formulate a uniform national policy on post-retirement facilities for retired High Court Chief Justices and judges.

Committee's Mandate:

- Recommend uniform post-retirement facilities.
- Suggest a mechanism for sharing financial responsibility between the Centre and the States.
- Reason: Significant variation in benefits provided by different States.

Why is this Issue Important?

- Different States currently provide unequal post-retirement facilities to retired High Court judges.
- Lack of uniformity affects consistency in the treatment of constitutional office holders.

A common policy would:

- Ensure equality and transparency.
- Reduce administrative disparities.
- Clearly define the financial responsibilities of the Union and State Governments.

Post-Retirement Facilities May Include:

- Government accommodation during official visits.
- Security arrangements.
- Official vehicle/driver.
- Secretarial assistance.
- Other administrative support as prescribed under the policy.

About the Supreme Court of India:

- Established: 28 January 1950.
- Constitutional Provision: Articles 124–147 of the Constitution.
- Headquarters: New Delhi.
- Highest Judicial Authority: Apex Court of India.
- Current Chief Justice of India: Justice Surya Kant (2026).
- Retirement Age of Supreme Court Judges: 65 years.
- Appointment: By the President of India under Article 124.

About High Courts:

- Constitutional Provisions: Articles 214–231.
- Every State has a High Court or shares one with another State/UT.
- High Courts are the highest judicial authority at the State level.
- Retirement Age of High Court Judges: 62 years.
- High Court judges are appointed by the President after consultation under the constitutional process.

Additional Facts:



SC emphasizes need for uniform post-retirement benefits for High Court judges across India

- Centre directed to constitute a committee to examine and recommend a national framework
- Ensuring parity, dignity and independence of the judiciary remains a priority

Exam Focus Points::

- Issue: Uniform post-retirement facilities for retired High Court judges.
- Directed By: Supreme Court of India.
- Committee Formation Deadline: 2 weeks.
- Report Submission: Within 3 months.
- Committee to Recommend: Uniform facilities and Centre–State cost-sharing mechanism.
- Retirement Age: Supreme Court – 65 years; High Court – 62 years.
- High Court Articles: 214–231.
- Supreme Court Articles: 124–147.
- Judicial Independence: Part of the Basic Structure doctrine.

- The independence of the judiciary is a part of the Basic Structure of the Constitution.
- The President of India appoints judges of both the Supreme Court and High Courts.
- The Collegium System governs judicial appointments and transfers, based on the Second Judges Case (1993) and Third Judges Case (1998).
- The National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) Act, 2014 was declared unconstitutional by the Supreme Court in 2015, restoring the Collegium System.
- The Supreme Court has original, appellate, advisory (Article 143), and writ jurisdiction under Article 32.

National Investment Policy for Urea (NIPU)-2026

- The Union Cabinet has approved the National Investment Policy for Urea (NIPU)-2026, a new policy framework to encourage investment in gas-based urea manufacturing plants in India.
- The policy aims to establish 8–9 new greenfield and brownfield urea plants, increase domestic urea production, reduce import dependence, and strengthen India's fertilizer security.
- The initiative is expected to attract both public and private investment while supporting the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat and ensuring uninterrupted fertilizer availability for farmers.

Why is NIPU-2026 Needed?

- India consumes around 40 million metric tonnes (MMT) of urea annually.
- Domestic production is about 30 MMT, requiring imports of nearly 10 MMT every year.
- Urea demand is growing at nearly 5% annually.
- The policy seeks to bridge this production gap and improve long-term fertilizer security.

Objectives of NIPU-2026:

- Increase indigenous urea production.
- Encourage investments in modern gas-based fertilizer plants.
- Reduce dependence on imported urea.
- Promote energy-efficient and environmentally sustainable technologies.
- Strengthen India's agricultural and food security.
- Support the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047 and Atmanirbhar Bharat.



About Urea:

- Chemical Formula: $\text{CO}(\text{NH}_2)_2$
- Nutrient Content: 46% Nitrogen (highest among solid nitrogenous fertilizers)
- Type: Nitrogenous fertilizer
- Primary Use: Promotes vegetative growth in crops.

Major Crops Using Urea:

- Rice
- Wheat
- Sugarcane
- Maize
- Cotton

Types of Fertilizers:

Fertilizer	Major Nutrient
Urea	Nitrogen (N)
DAP (Di-Ammonium Phosphate)	Nitrogen & Phosphorus
MOP (Muriate of Potash)	Potassium
SSP (Single Super Phosphate)	Phosphorus

Why are Gas-Based Urea Plants Preferred?

- Lower carbon emissions than naphtha or fuel oil-based plants.
- Higher energy efficiency.
- Reduced production cost.
- Cleaner manufacturing process.
- Supports India's natural gas-based industrial transition.

About the Department of Fertilizers:

Ministry: Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers

Role:

- Formulates fertilizer policies.
- Ensures timely availability of fertilizers.
- Administers fertilizer subsidy schemes.
- Promotes balanced nutrient use.

Major Fertilizer Public Sector Undertakings:

- National Fertilizers Limited (NFL)
- Rashtriya Chemicals and Fertilizers (RCF)
- Fertilizers and Chemicals Travancore (FACT)
- Madras Fertilizers Limited (MFL)
- Brahmaputra Valley Fertilizer Corporation Limited (BVFCL)

Fertilizer Subsidy in India:

- The Government provides subsidies to keep fertilizers affordable for farmers.
- Urea is sold at a government-controlled Maximum Retail Price (MRP).
- India follows the Nutrient-Based Subsidy (NBS) scheme for phosphatic and potassic (P&K) fertilizers, while urea remains outside NBS and is regulated separately.

Additional Facts:

- Neem-Coated Urea was made mandatory in 2015 to reduce diversion and improve nitrogen-use efficiency.
- Nano Urea has been developed by IFFCO as an innovative liquid nitrogen fertilizer.
- India is among the largest producers and consumers of urea in the world.
- Major fertilizer-producing states include Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Punjab.
- Natural gas is the principal feedstock for modern urea production in India.
- The policy is expected to reduce the fertilizer import bill and improve foreign exchange savings over time.

Exam Focus Points::

- Policy: National Investment Policy for Urea (NIPU)-2026.
- Approved By: Union Cabinet.
- Objective: Increase domestic urea production.
- New Plants Proposed: 8–9 gas-based plants.
- Current Urea Demand: ~40 MMT annually.
- Domestic Production: ~30 MMT annually.
- Chemical Formula of Urea: $\text{CO}(\text{NH}_2)_2$.
- Nitrogen Content in Urea: 46%.
- Ministry Concerned: Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers.
- Neem-Coated Urea: Mandatory since 2015.
- Nano Urea: Developed by IFFCO.

National Anti-Doping Laws

The Government of India has notified the commencement of the National Anti-Doping Act, 2022 and the National Anti-Doping (Amendment) Act, 2025 to strengthen India's legal and institutional framework for clean sport. The Acts aim to align India's anti-doping regime with international standards, protect athletes' rights, ensure fair competition, and enhance the credibility of the country's anti-doping programme.

Why in News?

The Central Government has brought into force:

- National Anti-Doping Act, 2022
- National Anti-Doping (Amendment) Act, 2025

- The notification strengthens India's anti-doping governance and institutional independence.

Key Highlights:

Legislation Enforced:

- National Anti-Doping Act, 2022
- National Anti-Doping (Amendment) Act, 2025
- Ministry: Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports.
- Objective: Prevent doping in sports and promote clean competition.

Focus Areas:

- Athlete protection.
- Institutional autonomy.
- Transparent dispute resolution.
- Alignment with global anti-doping standards.
- Strengthens the credibility and effectiveness of India's anti-doping programme.

Objectives of the Acts:

- Prevent the use of prohibited performance-enhancing substances.
- Safeguard athletes' rights through fair procedures.
- Ensure integrity and fairness in sporting competitions.
- Strengthen independent anti-doping institutions.
- Improve transparency in testing, investigations, and adjudication.
- Bring India's anti-doping framework in line with international best practices.

Key Features of the National Anti-Doping Act, 2022:

- Provides a statutory framework for anti-doping regulation.
- Establishes an independent anti-doping governance structure.

Regulates:

- Doping control.
- Sample collection and testing.
- Investigations.
- Results management.
- Appeals and dispute resolution.
- Protects athletes through due process and procedural safeguards.

National Anti-Doping (Amendment) Act, 2025:

The Amendment Act:

- Strengthens institutional autonomy.
- Improves governance and accountability.
- Enhances procedural fairness.
- Streamlines dispute resolution mechanisms.
- Aligns India's framework with evolving global anti-doping standards.

About NADA (National Anti-Doping Agency):

- Established: 2005.
- Administrative Ministry: Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports.

WHY DOPING IN SPORTS IS PROBLEMATIC?



ETHICAL IMPLICATIONS

Against integrity of sports and violates the values of hard work, dedication, and fair competition.



HEALTH IMPACTS

Lead to long- and short-term impacts including organ damage, hormonal imbalances, etc.



IMPACTS ON ATHLETES

Can damage a person's reputation and social relations, and sets poor example for other athletes.



GOVERNANCE ISSUES

Difficulty in maintaining integrity of competitions and enforcing rules and regulations.



SOCIETAL IMPACT

Erosion of trust in sports and athletes by the public and normalization of cheating behavior.

- Director General: Ashish Bhargava
- Headquarters: New Delhi.

Functions:

- Conducts dope testing.
- Implements anti-doping rules.
- Promotes anti-doping education and awareness.
- Coordinates with international anti-doping organisations.
- Monitors compliance with anti-doping regulations.

About WADA (World Anti-Doping Agency):

- Established: 1999.
- Headquarters: Montreal, Canada.
- President: Witold Bańka
- Purpose: Promote, coordinate, and monitor the fight against doping in sports worldwide.
- Publishes the World Anti-Doping Code and the annual Prohibited List of banned substances and methods.

International Framework:

India's anti-doping framework aligns with:

- World Anti-Doping Code (WADA Code).
- UNESCO International Convention against Doping in Sport (2005).
- International standards for testing, education, laboratories, therapeutic use exemptions, investigations, and results management.

Additional Key Facts:

- UNESCO International Convention against Doping in Sport
- Adopted: 2005.
- Facilitates implementation of the World Anti-Doping Code by governments.
- India is a State Party to the Convention.

World Anti-Doping Code:

- Published by WADA.
- Harmonises anti-doping policies across sports and countries.
- Covers: Testing.
- Investigations.
- Prohibited substances.
- Therapeutic Use Exemptions (TUE).
- Education.
- Results management.
- Compliance monitoring

Exam Focus Points:

- Acts: National Anti-Doping Act, 2022 & National Anti-Doping (Amendment) Act, 2025.
- Ministry: Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports.
- National Agency: NADA.
- Global Agency: WADA.
- WADA Headquarters: Montreal, Canada.
- International Convention: UNESCO International Convention against Doping in Sport (2005).
- Global Standard: World Anti-Doping Code.
- Objective: Clean sport, athlete protection, and fair competition.

'Royalty on Royalty' Under MMDR Act

Why is it in News?

The Supreme Court of India has upheld the validity of the 'royalty on royalty' provision under the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 (MMDR Act). The judgment clarifies how royalty-related payments should be calculated for mining leases.

Reason Behind the Move:

- To Clarify Royalty Calculation: The Supreme Court clarified that certain charges under the MMDR Act can legally be calculated based on the royalty amount, ending confusion over the method of calculation.
- To Avoid Revenue Loss: If these charges were not calculated correctly, state governments could lose significant revenue from mining activities.
- To End Long-Standing Legal Disputes: Mining companies had challenged the validity of the "royalty on royalty" provision. The judgment settles this issue and provides legal certainty.
- To Ensure Uniform Implementation: The ruling creates a common method for calculating mining dues across all states, preventing different interpretations.
- To Strengthen Mining Regulation: It reinforces the government's authority to levy statutory mining charges under the MMDR Act, 1957, ensuring better regulation of the mining sector.

“Royalty is not a tax. Royalty is a contractual consideration paid by the mining lessee to lessor for enjoyment of mineral rights. The liability to pay royalty arises out of the contractual conditions of the mining lease. Payments made to the govt cannot be deemed to be a tax merely because the statute provides for their recovery as arrears —SC's majority order

The state legislatures have legislative competence under Article 246 read with Entry 49-List II to tax lands and buildings but not lands which comprise of mines and quarries or have mineral deposits as mineral bearing lands do not fall within the description of lands (under Entry 49-List II)

—Justice B V Nagarathna's dissenting order in 8:1 verdict

What is 'Royalty on Royalty'?

- Royalty: A payment made by mining companies to the government for extracting minerals.
- Royalty on Royalty: Certain additional payments are calculated based on the royalty amount itself, rather than only on the quantity or value of minerals extracted.
- Purpose: To determine the total amount payable by mining lease holders under the MMDR Act.

Exam Focus Points:

- Court: Supreme Court of India
- Act: Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957
- Ministry: Ministry of Mines
- Issue: Royalty on Royalty
- Judgment: Provision upheld as valid
- Sector: Mining and Minerals

About the MMDR Act, 1957:

- Full Form: Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957.
- Objective: Regulates the mining sector, mineral exploration, and mining leases in India.
- Administered By: Ministry of Mines, Government of India.
- Scope: Governs the grant, renewal, and regulation of mining leases and mineral concessions.

Significance:

The judgment provides legal clarity on royalty calculations, reduces uncertainty in the mining sector, and strengthens the government's framework for collecting mining-related revenue.

Additional Key Facts:

- Royalty: A statutory payment made to the government for the extraction of minerals.
- Ministry Responsible: Ministry of Mines.
- MMDR Act: The primary legislation governing the mining and mineral sector in India.

Early Release Policy for Elderly Prisoners

- The Supreme Court of India has directed all States and Union Territories to formulate and notify a comprehensive policy for the early or premature release of elderly and terminally ill prisoners within three months.

- The Court invoked its extraordinary powers under Article 142 of the Constitution while deciding a Public Interest Litigation (PIL), emphasizing that the right to life and dignity under Article 21 continues even during imprisonment.
- The Court also directed that the entire process be integrated with the e-Prisons portal to ensure transparency, accountability, and timely disposal of applications.

Objectives of the Judgment:

- Ensure dignity and humane treatment of elderly and terminally ill prisoners.
- Establish a uniform national framework for compassionate release.
- Reduce delays in considering applications for premature release.
- Improve transparency through digital monitoring.
- Promote prison reforms in line with constitutional values.

Key Directions Issued by the Supreme Court:

- Every State and UT must notify a comprehensive policy within three months.
- The policy should define objective eligibility criteria for release.
- A transparent and time-bound mechanism must be established.
- Cases should be digitally tracked through the e-Prisons Portal.
- The framework should ensure fairness, accountability, and consistency across the country.

Constitutional Significance:

- Article 21: Guarantees the Right to Life and Personal Liberty, including the right to live with dignity.
- Article 142: Empowers the Supreme Court to pass any decree or order necessary for doing complete justice.
- The judgment reiterates that constitutional rights do not cease at the prison gate, and imprisonment does not extinguish human dignity.

About Premature Release of Prisoners:

Premature release refers to the release of a convicted prisoner before completion of the full sentence, subject to:

- Good conduct.
- Statutory remission policies.
- Compassionate or humanitarian grounds.
- Recommendations of competent authorities.
- Applicable State remission policies.

It differs from:

- Parole: Temporary release without suspension of sentence.
- Furlough: Temporary leave granted periodically to maintain family and social ties.
- Remission: Reduction in the duration of a sentence without changing its nature.

About the e-Prisons Project:

- A Mission Mode Project under the National e-Governance Plan (NeGP).
- Implemented by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) in collaboration with the National Informatics Centre (NIC).
- Digitises prison administration and inmate records.
- Facilitates online monitoring of prison management, legal processes, and prisoner information.

Exam Focus Points:

- Court: Supreme Court of India.
- Bench: Justice Vikram Nath and Justice Sandeep Mehta.
- Beneficiaries: Elderly and terminally ill prisoners.
- Time Limit: Three months.
- Constitutional Articles: 21, 72, 142, 161.
- Digital Platform: e-Prisons Portal.
- Parent Ministry (e-Prisons): Ministry of Home Affairs.
- Implemented by: National Informatics Centre (NIC).
- Prisons Subject: State List (Entry 4, List II).
- Key Law: Prisons Act, 1894.
- Guidelines: Model Prison Manual, 2016.

Additional Key Facts:

- Article 72: Power of the President to grant pardon, reprieve, respite, remission, suspension, or commutation of sentences in specified cases.
- Article 161: Similar clemency powers exercised by the Governor of a State.
- Prisons are a State Subject under Entry 4 of the State List (List II) of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution.
- The Model Prison Manual, 2016 provides guidelines on prison administration, rehabilitation, legal aid, healthcare, and welfare of prisoners.
- The Prisons Act, 1894 remains the principal legislation governing prison administration in India, though several States have enacted or proposed modern prison laws.
- The National Legal Services Authority (NALSA) provides free legal aid to eligible prisoners under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987.

‘Seafarer-First’ Initiative

Union Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal has launched the ‘Seafarer-First’ initiative to protect Indian seafarers amid the escalating maritime security crisis in West Asia following attacks on merchant vessels in the Strait of Hormuz. The initiative aims to ensure the safety, welfare, and emergency support of Indian seafarers in the conflict-affected region.

Key Measures under the Initiative:

- Sarbananda Sonowal chaired a high-level inter-ministerial review meeting in New Delhi.
- Directed real-time vessel-by-vessel monitoring of Indian seafarers operating in the Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz, and Gulf of Oman.
- Ordered the appointment of a dedicated liaison officer for every affected Indian seafarer.
- Directed the Directorate General of Shipping (DGS) to establish a real-time operational dashboard to track every Indian seafarer, irrespective of the vessel's flag.
- Instructed authorities to coordinate closely with Indian Missions in Iran, Oman, and the UAE for navigational safety, medical evacuation, and repatriation.
- Directed shipowners, vessel managers, and recruitment agencies to ensure that no Indian seafarer is compelled to sail without adequate information, protection, and support.

✓ NRI STATUS RULES FOR SEAFARERS	🎯 WHAT CAN UNIONS LIKE AISU DO FOR SEAFARERS
BASIC CRITERIUM - Indian seafarers are NRI if stay outside india for 183 days or more in Financial Year (1st April) - Including working on a foreign-going vessel	IMPLEMENTATION PLAN - Legal & policy advocacy - Seafarer Tax Helpline /Susport Cell - Digital tracking & record system - Representation with DG Shipping & CBD - Awareness campaigns - Lobby for tax-free foreign income slab for seafarers
REQUIRED PROOF - CDC entry - Passport stamps - Employment contract - Voyage details with sign-on/sing-off dates	
IF NRI STATUS IS NOT MET: - Taxed as a resident - Taxable: global income investments, taxation	
	ALL INDIA SEAFARERS UNION HELPLINE:

Background

- The initiative follows attacks on MT Al Bahiyah and MT Mombasa in the Strait of Hormuz.
- The two vessels carried 30 Indian seafarers among a total crew of 46.
- One Indian seafarer lost his life, while several others were injured, including two critically injured.
- The Government has assured all possible assistance to affected seafarers and their families.

About Directorate General of Shipping (DGS)

- Ministry: Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW)
- Headquarters: Mumbai

Exam Focus Points

- Initiative: Seafarer-First
- Minister: Sarbananda Sonowal
- Ministry: Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW)
- Implementing Agency: Directorate General of Shipping (DGS)
- Purpose: Protect Indian seafarers and ensure their safety and welfare in the West Asia maritime crisis.
- Affected Region: Persian Gulf, Strait of Hormuz, Gulf of Oman
- Countries Involved in Coordination: Iran, Oman, UAE

- Role: India's maritime administration for merchant shipping and seafarer welfare.
- Function: Regulates shipping and implements the Merchant Shipping Act and international maritime conventions.

About Strait of Hormuz

- Connects the Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and the Arabian Sea.
- Located between Iran and Oman.
- One of the world's most important maritime chokepoints for global oil and trade.

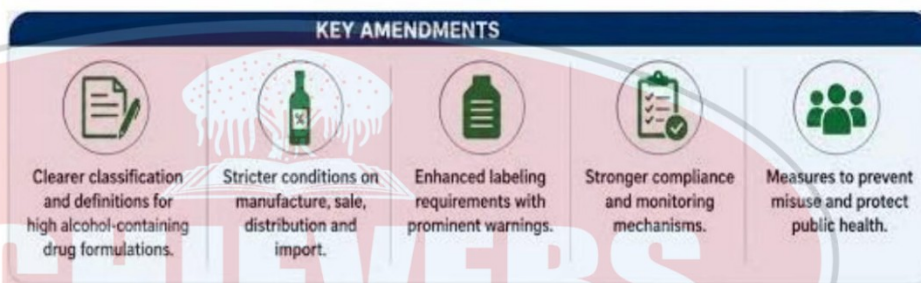
Drugs Rules, 1945

- The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW) has amended the Drugs Rules, 1945 to strengthen regulation of medicinal formulations containing high levels of ethyl alcohol.
- Under the amendment, medicinal formulations containing more than 12% v/v ethyl alcohol in pack sizes exceeding 30 mL will no longer be exempt under Schedule K of the Drugs Rules, 1945.
- These products will now require licensing under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940 and have been brought under Schedule H1, making them prescription-only medicines with stricter monitoring and record-keeping requirements. The move aims to curb misuse of such formulations while ensuring their availability for genuine therapeutic use.

Key Amendments:

Withdrawal of Schedule K Exemption:

- Medicinal formulations containing more than 12% v/v ethyl alcohol in packs exceeding 30 mL will no longer enjoy licensing exemption under Schedule K.



Inclusion under Schedule H1:

- These formulations will now be classified as Schedule H1 drugs.
- Sale only on the prescription of a Registered Medical Practitioner (RMP).
- Pharmacies must maintain a separate sales register and preserve records.

Licensing Requirement:

- Manufacturers and sellers must obtain licences under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940.

Objective:

- Prevent misuse of high alcohol-containing medicinal formulations as intoxicants.
- Ensure safe and regulated therapeutic use.

Why was the Amendment Needed?

- Certain medicinal preparations such as tincture of cardamom, tincture of ginger, and other aromatic tinctures contain 80–90% v/v ethyl alcohol.
- These products were earlier exempt under Schedule K, making them vulnerable to misuse.
- Several State Governments reported misuse and diversion of such products for intoxication.

Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940:

- Principal legislation regulating the import, manufacture, distribution, and sale of drugs and cosmetics in India.
- Ensures the safety, efficacy, and quality of medicines.
- Empowers the Central Government to frame the Drugs Rules, 1945.

Drugs Rules, 1945:

- Framed under the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940.

Prescribe rules relating to:

- Licensing
- Manufacture
- Storage
- Distribution
- Sale
- Labelling
- Prescription requirements for drugs.

About Schedule K:

- Lists specified drugs and medicinal preparations exempt from certain licensing provisions under defined conditions.
- The latest amendment removes this exemption for specified high alcohol-containing formulations.

About Schedule H1:

- Introduced to regulate medicines with a high risk of misuse.

Key features:

- Sale only on prescription.
- Mandatory maintenance of sales records by pharmacies.
- Helps prevent misuse and promotes rational use of medicines.

Exam Focus Points:

- Ministry: Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MoHFW).
- Law: Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940.
- Rules Amended: Drugs Rules, 1945.
- Alcohol Threshold: More than 12% v/v ethyl alcohol.
- Pack Size Covered: More than 30 mL.
- Schedule Affected: Schedule K (licensing exemption withdrawn).
- New Classification: Schedule H1.
- Prescription Requirement: Mandatory prescription by a Registered Medical Practitioner (RMP).
- Objective: Prevent misuse of high alcohol-containing medicinal formulations while ensuring therapeutic use

Jharkhand Draft AI Policy 2026–2031

- The Government of Jharkhand has unveiled the Draft Jharkhand AI Policy 2026–2031, proposing an investment of ₹1,150 crore over the next five years to integrate Artificial Intelligence (AI) into governance and public service delivery.
- The policy aims to build AI infrastructure, strengthen digital capabilities, promote innovation, and accelerate AI adoption across government departments.
- Key focus sectors include healthcare, agriculture, mining, education, disaster management, environmental management, and public administration.
- The policy was presented during the National Stakeholders Consultation 2026 in New Delhi.

Key Features of the Draft AI Policy 2026–2031:

Investment: Proposed investment of ₹1,150 crore over five years.

Objectives:

- Build AI-ready digital infrastructure.
- Improve efficiency, transparency, and citizen-centric governance.

Exam Focus Points:

- State: Jharkhand.
- Policy: Draft Jharkhand AI Policy 2026–2031.
- Investment: ₹1,150 crore.
- Duration: Five years (2026–2031).
- Objective: AI-driven governance and digital transformation.
- Flagship Platform: Chief Minister's Data Intelligence Platform (CM-DIP).
- Priority Sectors: Healthcare, agriculture, mining, education, disaster management, environment, and governance.
- Related National Initiative: IndiaAI Mission.
- Related Flagship Programme: Digital India.
- Nodal Ministry (IndiaAI & Digital India): Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).

- Promote AI innovation, research, startups, and skill development.
- Develop an ethical and responsible AI ecosystem.

Priority Sectors:

- Healthcare
- Agriculture
- Mining
- Education
- Disaster Management
- Environmental Management
- Urban Governance
- Public Service Delivery

Flagship Digital Initiative:

Chief Minister's Data Intelligence Platform (CM-DIP) to enable data-driven governance and AI-powered decision-making across departments.

Vision and Targets:

- Position Jharkhand as a leading AI-enabled state.
- Attract significant investments in AI and emerging technologies.
- Develop AI innovation hubs and Centres of Excellence.
- Promote AI adoption in MSMEs, startups, and academia.
- Create employment opportunities in AI and digital technologies.

Shariat vs 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.

WHAT DID THE COURT HOLD?

- 1 Muslim Personal Law (Shariat) cannot override central laws enacted by Parliament for child protection.
- 2 The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act, 2006 (PCMA) applies equally to all citizens, irrespective of religion.
- 3 The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (POCSO) prevails over any personal law permitting marriage after puberty.
- 4 Attaining puberty does not make the marriage of a minor legally valid under Indian statutory law, nor does it exempt anyone from criminal liability under POCSO.

- 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.

Waqf Board Reconstituted

- Madhya Pradesh has become the first state in India to reconstitute its Waqf Board under the provisions of the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025.
- The newly constituted 10-member Madhya Pradesh Waqf Board includes two non-Muslim (Hindu) members for the first time, reflecting the changes introduced by the amended law.
- Sanwar Patel has been appointed as the Chairman of the Board. The reconstitution was notified through the Madhya Pradesh Gazette.

What is the Waqf Board?

- A Waqf Board is a statutory body constituted by the State Government under the Waqf Act, 1995 for the administration, supervision, protection, and management of Waqf properties in the state.
- A Waqf is a permanent endowment of movable or immovable property dedicated by a Muslim for religious, charitable, or pious purposes under Islamic law.

Key Highlights:

- Historic Feature: Inclusion of two non-Muslim (Hindu) members for the first time.

Exam Focus Points

- First State: Madhya Pradesh.
- Act: Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025.
- Board Chairman: Sanwar Patel.
- Board Size: 10 members.
- Historic Change: Inclusion of two non-Muslim members.
- Administrative Ministry (Central Waqf Council): Ministry of Minority Affairs.
- Parent Legislation: Waqf Act, 1995 (renamed as UWMEED Act, 1995 under the amendment).
- Purpose of Waqf: Administration and protection of Waqf properties dedicated for religious, charitable, and social welfare purposes.

Non-Muslim Members:

- Manoj Malpani (Indore)
- Animesh Bhargava (Guna)
- Notification: Issued through the Madhya Pradesh Gazette.

About the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025

The Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025 was enacted to improve the governance, transparency, and accountability of Waqf properties across India.

Major Provisions:

- Permits the inclusion of non-Muslim members in State Waqf Boards.
- Enhances transparency and accountability in Waqf property administration.
- Strengthens digitisation and record management of Waqf assets.
- Seeks to improve the protection and utilisation of Waqf properties.
- Renames the Waqf Act, 1995 as the Unified Waqf Management, Empowerment, Efficiency and Development (UWMEED) Act, 1995.

About the Central Waqf Council:

- Established: 1964.
- Administrative Ministry: Ministry of Minority Affairs.
- Nature: Statutory advisory body.

Role:

- Advises the Central and State Governments on matters relating to Waqf administration.
- Monitors the functioning of State Waqf Boards.
- Promotes better management and development of Waqf properties.

About Waqf Properties:

Waqf properties are dedicated permanently for:

- Religious purposes.
- Educational institutions.
- Charitable activities.
- Social welfare.
- Once declared as Waqf, the property generally cannot be transferred, sold, or inherited except as permitted under law.



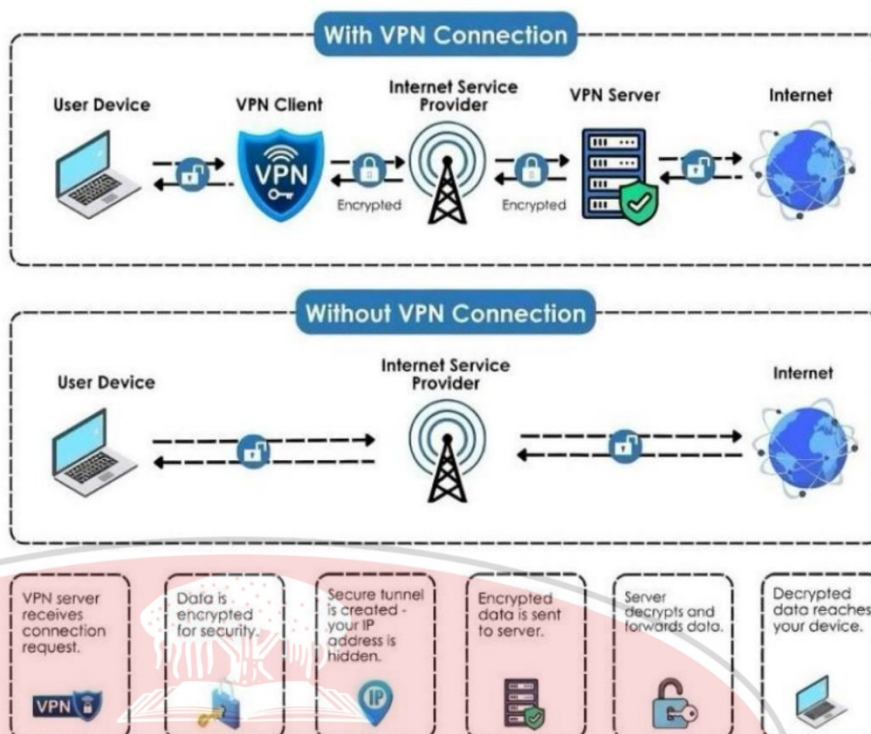
VPN Rules Tightened

Why is it in News?

The Government of India is considering stricter regulations for Virtual Private Network (VPN) service providers. The proposed rules aim to improve compliance with Indian laws and strengthen cybersecurity.

Key Highlights

- The government is planning to introduce stricter compliance requirements for VPN service providers operating in India.
- VPN companies may be required to establish a physical office in India.
- They may also have to appoint designated compliance officers responsible for ensuring adherence to Indian laws.
- The proposed framework seeks to improve coordination between VPN providers and law enforcement agencies during investigations.
- The move is intended to strengthen cybersecurity, improve accountability, and address concerns related to cybercrime and misuse of anonymous online services.
- The proposal is currently under consideration and has not yet been implemented.



What is a VPN?

A Virtual Private Network (VPN) is a technology that creates a secure and encrypted connection between a user's device and the internet. It protects online activities by encrypting data and masking the user's IP address.

Common Uses of VPN

- Protects privacy while browsing the internet.
- Secures data on public Wi-Fi networks.
- Enables secure remote access to office networks.
- Helps safeguard sensitive personal and business information.

Why is the Government Proposing New Rules?

- To ensure VPN providers comply with Indian laws.
- To improve cooperation during cybercrime investigations.
- To strengthen digital security and accountability.
- To prevent the misuse of anonymous internet services for unlawful activities.

Significance

- May improve India's cybersecurity framework.

Exam Focus Points

- Topic: Virtual Private Network (VPN) Regulation
- Country: India
- Proposed By: Government of India
- Objective: Strengthen cybersecurity and improve legal compliance of VPN providers
- Key Proposal: VPN providers may be required to establish a physical office in India
- Additional Requirement: Appointment of designated Compliance Officers
- Purpose of Compliance Officer: Ensure adherence to Indian laws and coordinate with law enforcement agencies
- VPN Full Form: Virtual Private Network
- VPN Function: Creates an encrypted and secure internet connection
- Related Organisation: Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In)

- Enhances regulatory oversight of digital service providers.
- Supports faster investigation of cybercrimes.
- Balances digital privacy with national security and legal compliance.

Three Rules Under VB-G RAM G Act

The Ministry of Rural Development has notified three sets of rules under the Viksit Bharat–Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) [VB-G RAM G] Act, 2025, laying down the operational framework for the transition from Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS/MGNREGA) to the new rural employment guarantee regime. The rules cover transitional provisions, payment of wages and unemployment allowance, and procedures for expenditure beyond the Centre's normative allocation, including funding arrangements for Union Territories without legislatures.

Three Rules Notified

- Transitional Provisions Rules, 2026
- Ensure a smooth transition from MGNREGA to the VB-G RAM G framework.
- States must verify all MGNREGA liabilities up to 30 June 2026.
- Admissible dues must be settled and audited utilisation certificates submitted within 180 days (extendable by another 90 days by the Centre).
- Existing e-KYC-verified MGNREGA job cards will remain valid until new Gramin Rozgar Guarantee Cards are issued.
- Ongoing MGNREGA works, assets and records will continue under the new Act.

Wage Payment and Unemployment Allowance Rules

- All wages and unemployment allowance will be paid only through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT).
- Payments will be credited directly to beneficiaries' bank or post office accounts.
- Cash payments are prohibited, except in extraordinary circumstances approved by the Centre.
- Payments will be processed electronically through the Management Information System (MIS) and authenticated through the Aadhaar Payment Bridge System (APBS) or other approved mechanisms.

Normative Allocation & Expenditure Rules

- Prescribe procedures for expenditure exceeding the Centre's approved state-wise normative allocation.
- Lay down funding arrangements for Union Territories without legislatures.
- Aim to improve financial discipline, transparency and accountability in rural employment programmes.

What is the VB-G RAM G Act, 2025?

The Viksit Bharat–Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) [VB-G RAM G] Act, 2025 is the new rural employment guarantee law that came into force on 1 July 2026, replacing MGNREGA. It provides a statutory guarantee of up to 125 days of wage employment per year to eligible rural households, compared to 100 days under the previous law.

Objectives:

- Enhance livelihood security in rural areas.
- Guarantee wage employment to eligible households.
- Create durable rural infrastructure and productive assets.
- Strengthen transparency through digital governance and DBT.
- Improve financial accountability in programme implementation.

Key Features of VB-G RAM G:

- Administrative Ministry: Ministry of Rural Development
- Employment Guarantee: Up to 125 days per eligible rural household annually.

- Mode of Wage Payment: Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)
- Authentication: Aadhaar-based payment systems

Focus Areas:

- Water conservation
- Natural resource management
- Rural infrastructure
- Agriculture and allied activities
- Women's empowerment

MGNREGA (Background):

- Full Form: Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act.
- Enacted: 2005
- Implemented: 2 February 2006
- Employment Guarantee: At least 100 days of wage employment per financial year.
- Considered one of the world's largest rights-based rural employment programmes.

MGNREGA	Viksit Bharat-G RAM G
100 days of wage employment per rural household	125 days of wage employment per rural household
Multiple and scattered categories of works with limited strategic focus	4 clearly defined priority areas focusing on water security, rural infrastructure, livelihoods and climate resilience
Center bears unskilled wage costs, states bear unemployment allowance	State cost-sharing for wages, 60:40 for most states, 90:10 for certain special-category regions
No explicit statutory "pause window"	States can notify up to 60 days in a FY when work will not be executed
Demand based funding with unpredictable allocations	Normative funding ensuring predictable budgeting while protecting the employment guarantee
Gram Panchayat planning is central	Integrates institutionalised convergence and infrastructure planning

Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT):

- Launched: 1 January 2013
- Objective: Transfer government benefits directly into beneficiaries' bank accounts.
- Reduces leakages, delays, and duplication.
- Uses the Public Financial Management System (PFMS) and Aadhaar-enabled authentication.

Aadhaar Payment Bridge System (APBS):

- Operated by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).
- Enables Aadhaar-linked electronic transfer of government payments directly into beneficiaries' bank accounts.
- Widely used for welfare schemes and subsidy transfers.

Three Rules Notified:

1. Transitional Provisions Rules
 2. Wage Payment & Unemployment Allowance Rules
 3. Normative Allocation & Expenditure Rules
- Payment Mode: Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)
 - Authentication System: Aadhaar Payment Bridge System (APBS)
 - Objective: Ensure a seamless transition, transparent fund management, and stronger fiscal oversight.

Exam Focus Points:

- Act: Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Aajeevika Mission (Gramin) Act, 2025
- Implemented From: 1 July 2026
- Replaced: MGNREGA
- Administrative Ministry: Ministry of Rural Development
- Employment Guarantee: 125 days per rural household annually

FCRA 2.0 Portal and e-OCI Card

- Union Home Minister Amit Shah launched the FCRA 2.0 Portal and the e-OCI Card in New Delhi to enhance digital governance, transparency, and citizen-centric services.
- The FCRA 2.0 Portal enables end-to-end online registration, renewal, filing of annual returns, and compliance under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), 2010.
- The e-OCI Card introduces a fully digital system for Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) services, benefiting over 50 lakh OCI cardholders worldwide by simplifying document management and online verification.

What is FCRA 2.0 Portal?

The FCRA 2.0 Portal is an upgraded digital platform developed by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) for monitoring and regulating foreign contributions received by NGOs and associations in India.

Objectives:

- Simplify FCRA registration and renewal.
- Improve transparency and compliance.
- Strengthen monitoring of foreign funds.
- Enhance digital governance.



What is e-OCI Card?

The e-OCI Card is a digital version of the Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) card that enables online application, verification, and document management, reducing paperwork and improving convenience for OCI cardholders.

Additional Key Facts:

- Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA), 2010:
- Administered by: Ministry of Home Affairs.
- Regulates the acceptance and utilisation of foreign contributions by individuals and organisations.

FCRA (Amendment) Act, 2020:

- Mandatory FCRA Account at SBI, New Delhi Main Branch.
- Administrative expenditure limit reduced from 50% to 20%.
- Prohibits transfer of foreign contributions to other NGOs.

Overseas Citizen of India (OCI):

- Introduced under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2005.
- Provides lifelong visa and multiple-entry benefits.
- OCI cardholders cannot vote, contest elections, or hold constitutional offices.

NGO Darpan Portal:

- Developed by NITI Aayog.
- Provides a unique identification number to NGOs for better transparency.

MeghRaj (GI Cloud):

- Government Cloud Computing Initiative.
- Implemented by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).

Exam Focus Points

- Initiatives: FCRA 2.0 Portal & e-OCI Card
- Launched By: Amit Shah
- Ministry: Ministry of Home Affairs
- Related Act: Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010
- Beneficiaries: NGOs and over 50 lakh OCI cardholders
- Key Features: End-to-end digital compliance, e-Sign, OCR, NGO Darpan integration

International Relations & Events

Venezuela to Exit ICC

Why is it in News?

Venezuela has officially informed the United Nations (UN) of its decision to withdraw from the International Criminal Court (ICC). The government accused the ICC of showing "geographical bias", claiming that it disproportionately targets countries in Africa and Latin America (Global South).

Background & Significance:

- The International Criminal Court (ICC) is the world's first permanent court that tries individuals for genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and the crime of aggression.
- Venezuela has been under ICC investigation since 2021 over alleged crimes against humanity during the government's crackdown on anti-government protests in 2017.
- In December 2025, Venezuela's National Assembly voted to withdraw from the Rome Statute, the treaty that established the ICC.
- The latest decision formally begins Venezuela's withdrawal process. Under Article 127 of the Rome Statute, withdrawal takes effect one year after notification to the UN. Ongoing investigations are not automatically terminated.

Why is it Important?

- Raises questions about the credibility and impartiality of international judicial institutions.
- Highlights growing tensions between some countries and the International Criminal Court.
- Could affect international efforts to ensure accountability for serious international crimes.
- Important for understanding international law, global governance, and the Rome Statute.

About the International Criminal Court (ICC):

Particular	Details
Established	2002
Founded By	Rome Statute (1998)
Headquarters	The Hague, Netherlands
Nature	Permanent international criminal court
Tries Crimes	Genocide, Crimes Against Humanity, War Crimes, Crime of Aggression
Jurisdiction	Tries individuals (not States) when national courts are unwilling or unable to prosecute
Withdrawal Clause	Article 127 of the Rome Statute

Exam Focus Points:

- Country in News: Venezuela.
- Organisation: International Criminal Court (ICC).
- Headquarters: The Hague, Netherlands.
- Founded By: Rome Statute (1998).
- Operational Since: 2002.
- Withdrawal Provision: Article 127 of the Rome Statute.
- Reason for Withdrawal: Alleged geographical bias against the Global South.
- Key Fact: Withdrawal does not automatically stop ongoing ICC investigations.

Way Forward:

- Strengthen the independence and impartiality of international judicial institutions.
- Encourage constructive engagement between member states and the ICC.
- Improve transparency and cooperation to enhance confidence in international justice.
- Continue ensuring accountability for serious international crimes through international legal mechanisms.

India–Romania Sign Three Agreements

India and Romania signed three Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) to strengthen bilateral cooperation in the fields of Science & Technology, Education, and Sports. The agreements aim to promote scientific research, innovation, academic collaboration, sports development, and people-to-people exchanges, thereby deepening India's engagement with Central and Eastern Europe.

Science & Technology Agreement:

The Science & Technology (S&T) MoU aims to promote cooperation in scientific research, innovation, and emerging technologies. It includes joint research projects, exchange of scientists, technology transfer, startup collaboration, capacity building, and cooperation in areas such as AI, Biotechnology, and Renewable Energy.

Education Agreement:

The Education MoU aims to strengthen academic collaboration through student and faculty exchanges, joint research, university partnerships, scholarships, and skill development. It also supports the objectives of National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 by promoting internationalisation of higher education.

Sports Agreement:

The Sports MoU promotes cooperation in sports and physical education through the exchange of athletes, coaches, and sports experts. It covers sports training, sports science, sports medicine, youth development, infrastructure, and capacity building to enhance sporting excellence.

India–Romania Bilateral Relations:

India and Romania established diplomatic relations in 1948 and have maintained friendly ties for more than seven decades. The relationship has gradually expanded to include trade and investment, information technology, pharmaceuticals, defence, agriculture, renewable energy, culture, education, and scientific research. The Embassy of India is located in Bucharest, while Romania maintains its Embassy in New Delhi.

Trade and Economic Relations:

Trade between the two countries has been steadily growing. India's major exports to Romania include pharmaceuticals, engineering goods, textiles, chemicals, automobiles, and IT services, while Romania exports machinery, electrical equipment, industrial products, metallurgical products, and chemicals to India.

About Romania:

Romania is a country located in Southeastern Europe with its capital at Bucharest. The official language is Romanian, and the national currency is the Romanian Leu (RON). Romania became a member of NATO in 2004 and joined the European Union in 2007, making it an important strategic partner in the European region.

- President: Nicușor Dan
- Prime Minister: Ilie Bolojan

Geographical Features of Romania:

Romania is bordered by Ukraine, Moldova, Hungary, Serbia, and Bulgaria, and has a coastline along the Black Sea. The Danube River, Europe's second-longest river, flows through Romania before emptying into the Black Sea, forming the ecologically significant Danube Delta, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of Europe's largest wetland ecosystems. The country is also home to the Carpathian Mountains, one of the major mountain ranges of Europe.

Black Sea:

The Black Sea is bordered by Romania, Bulgaria, Turkey, Georgia, Russia, and Ukraine. It is strategically important for international trade, energy transportation, maritime security, and regional geopolitics, serving as a key link between Europe and Asia.

Danube River:

The Danube River, approximately 2,850 km long, is the second-longest river in Europe after the Volga. It originates in the Black Forest of Germany and flows through Germany, Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Romania, Moldova, and Ukraine before draining into the Black Sea through the Danube Delta.

India's Scientific Cooperation Framework:

International scientific cooperation in India is coordinated by the Department of Science and Technology (DST) under the Ministry of Science and Technology. The department promotes joint research programmes, innovation, technology transfer, international collaborations, capacity building, and scientific exchanges with partner countries across the world.

National Education Policy (NEP), 2020:

The National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 encourages the internationalisation of higher education by promoting student and faculty mobility, global academic collaborations, joint research programmes, multidisciplinary education, and partnerships with foreign universities.

Khelo India Programme:

The Khelo India Programme, launched in 2018 by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, aims to identify sporting talent at the grassroots level, improve sports infrastructure, enhance coaching standards, and promote a strong sporting culture in the country. International sports cooperation agreements, such as the India-Romania Sports MoU, complement these national objectives.

European Union (EU):

The European Union (EU) was established through the Maastricht Treaty in 1993 and is headquartered in Brussels, Belgium. It comprises 27 member states and represents one of the world's largest economic and political unions. Romania has been a member of the EU since 2007.

Exam Focus Point:

- Country: Romania
- Capital: Bucharest
- Currency: Romanian Leu (RON)
- Agreements Signed: Science & Technology, Education, and Sports
- Diplomatic Relations Established: 1948
- Romania joined NATO: 2004
- Romania joined the European Union: 2007
- Major River: Danube
- Major Sea: Black Sea
- Indian Nodal Department (S&T): Department of Science and Technology (DST)
- Related Indian Policy: National Education Policy (NEP), 2020

Romania in International Organisations:

Romania is a member of several major international organisations, including the United Nations (UN), European Union (EU), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), World Trade Organization (WTO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Bank, reflecting its active role in global governance and international cooperation.

US Defence Bill FY 2026

Why is it in News?

The US House of Representatives has passed the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) 2026, authorising a record \$1.15 trillion for defence spending. The bill aims to strengthen the US military, modernise defence capabilities, and address emerging global security challenges.

Background & Significance:

- The National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) is an annual law that authorises funding and sets policies for the US Department of Defense.

- It does not directly allocate money but provides the legal framework for defence programmes, military operations, procurement, and personnel policies.
- The FY 2026 NDAA reflects the US focus on maintaining military superiority amid rising geopolitical tensions, particularly in the Indo-Pacific, Europe, and the Middle East.

Key Highlights:

- Bill: National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), FY 2026.
- Passed by: US House of Representatives.
- Authorised Defence Spending: \$1.15 trillion (record-high).
- Purpose: Strengthen national security and modernise US armed forces.

Major Focus Areas:

- Modernisation of military equipment and weapons.
- Investment in advanced technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), cyber security, and space capabilities.
- Strengthening deterrence in the Indo-Pacific region.
- Improving military readiness and welfare of service personnel.

Why is it Important?

- Marks the largest defence authorisation in US history.
- Reflects increasing emphasis on competition with China and Russia.
- Enhances investment in next-generation military technologies.
- Reinforces the US commitment to maintaining global military presence and strategic alliances.

Exam Focus Points:

- NDAA: National Defense Authorization Act.
- Country: United States.
- Passed by: US House of Representatives.
- Authorised Amount: \$1.15 trillion.
- Nature: Authorises defence spending and policies; does not directly appropriate funds.
- Key Focus: AI, cyber security, space, military modernisation, Indo-Pacific strategy.
- Strategic Context: Countering China and Russia; enhancing global military readiness

Top 5 nations in SIPRI Military Expenditure Report 2026 (Data for 2025)

Rank	Country	Military Spending (US\$ Billion)	Share of Global Spending	% of GDP
1	United States	954.0	33.0%	3.1%
2	China	336.0	12.0%	1.7%
3	Russia	190.0	6.6%	7.5%
4	Germany	114.0	3.9%	2.3%
5	India	92.1	3.2%	2.3%

France's Social Media Ban Law

France's Parliament has approved a landmark law prohibiting children below the age of 15 from accessing social media platforms, making France the first European Union (EU) country to adopt such a nationwide restriction. The legislation aims to protect children from the harmful effects of excessive social media use, including cyberbullying, addiction, and mental health issues.

Why is it in News?

- France has become the first EU member state to enact a nationwide law banning social media use for children under 15.
- The legislation reflects growing global concerns over children's online safety and digital well-being.
- The European Commission will examine whether the law is fully compatible with the EU Digital Services Act (DSA).

Major Provisions of the Law:

- Children below 15 years cannot create or maintain social media accounts.

Social media companies must:

- Verify users' ages.
- Remove existing accounts of underage users.
- The law also complements France's broader measures to reduce excessive screen time among children.
- The government has promoted the measure as part of its child protection and responsible digital citizenship agenda.

About the European Union (EU):

- Established: 1993 (Treaty of Maastricht)
- Headquarters: Brussels, Belgium
- Member States: 27
- President of the European Council: António Costa
- Parliament Seat: Strasbourg, France
- Executive Body: European Commission
- Court: Court of Justice of the European Union (Luxembourg)
- Currency: Euro (€) (used by 20 member states)

What is the EU Digital Services Act (DSA)?

- The Digital Services Act (DSA) is a landmark European Union regulation designed to create a safer digital environment.

Key Objectives:

- Protect users' fundamental rights online.
- Increase transparency of online platforms.
- Regulate very large online platforms (VLOPs).
- Remove illegal content more effectively.
- Protect children from harmful digital content.
- Improve accountability of technology companies.

About France:

- Capital: Paris
- Currency: Euro (€)
- President: Emmanuel Macron
- National Day: 14 July (Bastille Day)

Additional Facts:

- France is a founding member of the European Union and NATO.
- The EU Digital Services Act (DSA) became fully applicable in 2024 to strengthen regulation of online platforms.
- Australia became the first country globally to legislate a nationwide minimum age for social media use (under 16), influencing similar debates worldwide.
- The European Commission acts as the executive arm of the EU and ensures the implementation of EU laws.
- The Court of Justice of the European Union (CJEU), located in Luxembourg, interprets EU law and ensures its uniform application across member states.

Comparison: Digital Regulation Initiatives

Exam Focus Points::

- Country in News: France.
- Age Limit: Under 15 years.
- Objective: Child online safety and mental health protection.
- Related EU Law: Digital Services Act (DSA).
- EU Headquarters: Brussels.
- European Parliament Seat: Strasbourg.
- EU Court: Court of Justice of the European Union, Luxembourg.
- President of France: Emmanuel Macron.
- Capital of France: Paris.

Country/Region	Provision / Law
France	Ban on social media for children under 15
Australia	Social media ban for children under 16
European Union	Digital Services Act (DSA)
India	Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 and IT Act, 2000 regulate aspects of digital governance and online safety

BRICS Standardisation MoU

- Under India's BRICS Chairship 2026, the BRICS member countries signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Cooperation in Standardisation during the 5th Meeting of Heads of BRICS National Standardisation Bodies (NSBs) held in Bengaluru, Karnataka.
- The agreement establishes the first formal institutional framework for cooperation among the national standards bodies of all 11 BRICS member countries. It aims to enhance information sharing, technical collaboration, capacity building, harmonisation of standards, and cooperation in emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), thereby facilitating trade and strengthening the collective role of BRICS in global standard-setting.

Significance:

- Reduces technical barriers to trade among BRICS countries.
- Improves quality infrastructure and product interoperability.
- Strengthens the voice of developing economies in framing global standards.
- Supports innovation, manufacturing competitiveness, and sustainable development.
- Reinforces India's leadership during its BRICS Chairship.

About the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS):

- Established: 1987.
- Parent Ministry: Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution.
- Headquarters: New Delhi.
- Director General: Sanjay Garg
- Statutory Basis: Bureau of Indian Standards Act, 2016.

Functions:

- National Standards Body of India.
- Formulates Indian Standards (IS).
- Product certification through the ISI Mark.
- Hallmarking of gold and silver jewellery.
- Conformity assessment and quality assurance.

About BRICS:



- BRICS is an intergovernmental grouping of major emerging economies aimed at promoting cooperation in economic growth, trade, finance, technology, sustainable development, and global governance.

Current Members (11):

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

Additional Key Facts:

- BRICS was founded in: 2009 (South Africa joined in 2010, making it BRICS).

New Development Bank (NDB):

- Established: 2014.
- President: Dilma Rousseff
- Headquarters: Shanghai, China.
- Purpose: Finance infrastructure and sustainable development projects.

Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA):

- Established in 2014 to provide liquidity support to member countries during balance-of-payments pressures.

International Standardisation Organisations:

- ISO (International Organization for Standardization): Headquarters – Geneva, Switzerland.
- IEC (International Electrotechnical Commission): Headquarters – Geneva, Switzerland.
- BIS represents India in both ISO and IEC.

The concept of Quality Infrastructure (QI) comprises:

- Standardisation.
- Metrology.
- Accreditation.
- Conformity Assessment.
- India has increasingly focused on standards for Artificial Intelligence (AI), Electric Vehicles (EVs), renewable energy, semiconductors, and digital technologies.

Exam Focus Points:

- Event: 5th BRICS Heads of National Standardisation Bodies Meeting.
- Venue: Bengaluru, Karnataka.
- Chairship: India (BRICS 2026).
- Major Outcome: BRICS MoU on Cooperation in Standardisation.
- Indian Agency: Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS).
- Parent Ministry (BIS): Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution.
- BIS Headquarters: New Delhi.
- BIS Act: Bureau of Indian Standards Act, 2016.
- BRICS Members: 11.
- NDB Headquarters: Shanghai, China.
- ISO Headquarters: Geneva, Switzerland.
- IEC Headquarters: Geneva, Switzerland.

India–Belgium Relations

- India and Belgium have launched the first India–Belgium Strategic Dialogue in Brussels, marking a significant step towards strengthening bilateral ties through a structured and comprehensive partnership.
- The inaugural dialogue was co-chaired by External Affairs Minister Dr. S. Jaishankar and Belgium's Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Affairs and Development Cooperation, Maxime Prévot. Both countries agreed to expand cooperation in trade and investment, green energy transition,

innovation and technology, connectivity, defence, security, regional and global issues, and people-to-people exchanges.

- The Strategic Dialogue will be supported by regular high-level engagements to ensure sustained political momentum.

About India–Belgium Relations:

- Diplomatic relations were established in 1947.
- Belgium is among India's important trading partners in the European Union.
- Belgium is a global hub for the diamond trade, with Antwerp serving as one of the world's largest diamond trading centres.

India and Belgium cooperate in:

- Trade and investment.
- Clean energy.
- Pharmaceuticals.
- Logistics and ports.
- Space and science.
- Defence and security.
- Higher education and innovation.

India–EU Business Forum:

- The launch of the Strategic Dialogue coincided with the India–EU Business Forum held at the Federation of Belgian Enterprises (FEB) in Brussels.
- The forum brought together Indian, Belgian, and European businesses to explore opportunities in trade, investment, innovation, and industrial cooperation.

About Belgium:

- Capital: Brussels.
- Currency: Euro (€).
- Prime Minister: Bart De Wever
- Official Languages: Dutch, French, and German.
- Political System: Federal Parliamentary Constitutional Monarchy.
- Head of State: King Philippe.

Exam Focus Points:

- Dialogue: India–Belgium Strategic Dialogue.
- First Meeting: Brussels, Belgium.
- Indian Representative: Dr. S. Jaishankar (External Affairs Minister).
- Belgian Representative: Maxime Prévot.
- Key Areas: Trade, investment, green energy, innovation, defence, security, connectivity, and people-to-people exchanges.
- Supporting Platform: India–EU Business Forum.
- Capital of Belgium: Brussels.
- Currency: Euro (€).
- Official Languages: Dutch, French, German.
- Major Global Institutions in Brussels: European Union and NATO Headquarters.
- Major Commercial Hub: Antwerp (Diamond Trade).

Belgium hosts the headquarters of several major international organisations, including:

- European Union (EU) institutions.
- North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Headquarters.

Additional Key Facts:

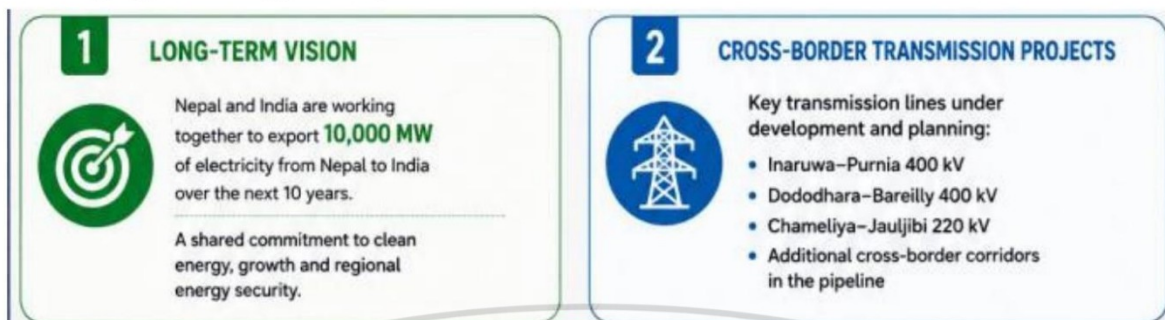
- Brussels is often referred to as the "Capital of Europe" as it hosts the headquarters of the European Commission, Council of the European Union, and NATO.
- Antwerp, Belgium, is one of the world's leading centres for diamond cutting and trading, with India maintaining strong commercial links through Surat's diamond industry.
- Belgium has consistently supported India's aspiration for a permanent seat in a reformed United Nations Security Council (UNSC).
- India and the European Union elevated their partnership through a Strategic Dialogue on Foreign and Security Policy and a Security and Defence Partnership, reflecting growing cooperation in the Indo-Pacific and global governance.

India–Nepal Cooperation

Nepal and India held high-level meetings in Kathmandu to strengthen cooperation in the energy sector. The Indian delegation included Power Secretary Pankaj Agarwal and Additional Foreign Secretary Munu Mahawar.

Focus Areas of Discussion:

- Expansion of cross-border electricity trade.
- Strengthening transmission connectivity between the two countries.
- Cooperation in hydropower development.
- Enhancing regional energy security.



Objective of the Meeting:

- Deepen bilateral energy cooperation.
- Promote clean and renewable energy.
- Improve regional power connectivity and energy integration.

India–Nepal Energy Relations:

- India is Nepal's largest market for electricity exports.
- Both countries are expanding cross-border transmission infrastructure.
- Nepal exports surplus hydropower to India, particularly during the monsoon season.
- Energy cooperation is a key pillar of the India–Nepal bilateral partnership.

Exam Focus Points:

- Countries: India and Nepal
- Venue: Kathmandu, Nepal
- Nepal's Minister: Biraj Bhakta Shrestha
- Indian Officials: Pankaj Agarwal and Munu Mahawar
- Key Sectors: Cross-border electricity trade, hydropower, transmission connectivity, regional energy security
- Capital of Nepal: Kathmandu
- Currency: Nepalese Rupee (NPR)

About Nepal:

- Capital: Kathmandu
- Currency: Nepalese Rupee (NPR)
- Prime Minister: K. P. Sharma Oli
- President: Ram Chandra Poudel
- Major Rivers: Koshi, Gandaki, Karnali
- Bordering Countries: India and China

Other Recent Bilateral Developments:

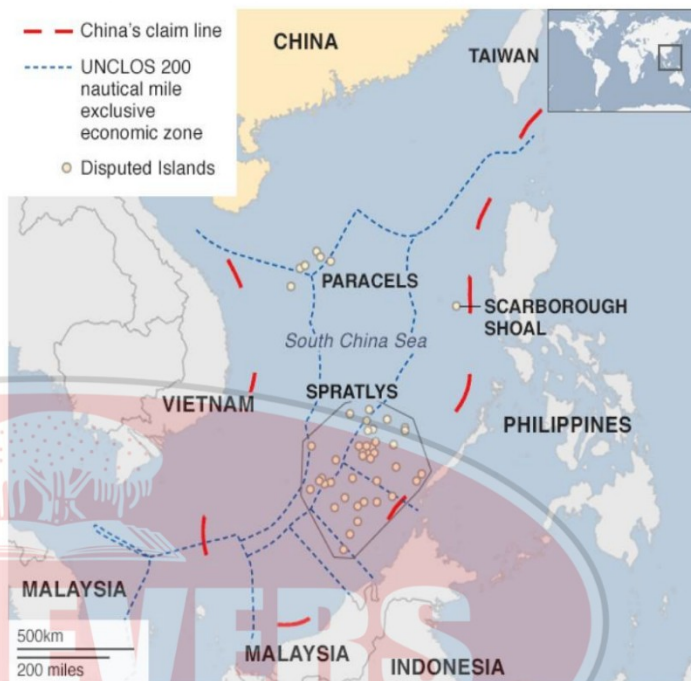
- India and Nepal continue to expand cross-border electricity trade under the Long-Term Power Trade Agreement.
- Both countries are collaborating on hydropower projects and regional energy connectivity under the BBIN (Bangladesh-Bhutan-India-Nepal) framework.
- India has supported the development of several transmission lines connecting the two countries.

South China Sea Arbitration Ruling

- The United States, United Kingdom, and 12 other countries have jointly reaffirmed the 2016 South China Sea Arbitration Award, stating that China's expansive maritime claims have no legal basis under international law.
- The joint statement was issued on the 10th anniversary of the landmark ruling delivered by the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA), The Hague, in a case brought by the Philippines under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).
- The participating countries urged the peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with international law and opposed coercive actions that threaten regional peace, maritime security, and freedom of navigation in the South China Sea. China, however, reiterated that it does not recognise or accept the 2016 ruling.

Countries Supporting the Joint Statement:

- United States
- United Kingdom
- Australia
- Canada
- Czech Republic
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Japan
- Netherlands
- New Zealand
- Philippines
- Denmark
- Lithuania
- The European Union (EU) also issued a separate statement reaffirming the 2016 arbitral award.



Objectives:

- Reaffirm the authority of the 2016 South China Sea Arbitration Award.
- Support the peaceful settlement of maritime disputes.
- Uphold the principles of UNCLOS.
- Ensure freedom of navigation and overflight in international waters.
- Promote peace, stability, and a rules-based maritime order in the Indo-Pacific.

Significance:

- Reinforces international support for the rules-based maritime order.
- Highlights the importance of international arbitration in resolving maritime disputes.
- Reflects growing international concern over tensions in the South China Sea.
- Strengthens diplomatic backing for the Philippines and other claimant states.

About the 2016 South China Sea Arbitration Award:

- Delivered on 12 July 2016 by a tribunal constituted under Annex VII of UNCLOS.
- The case was initiated by the Philippines against China in 2013.

The tribunal ruled that:

- China's "Nine-Dash Line" claim has no legal basis under UNCLOS.
- China has no historic rights over resources beyond the maritime zones recognised by UNCLOS.
- Several disputed maritime features in the Spratly Islands are legally "rocks" or low-tide elevations and are not entitled to a 200-nautical-mile Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).
- China's large-scale land reclamation activities caused environmental damage to coral reefs.

- The tribunal did not decide questions of sovereignty over islands or delimit maritime boundaries. China rejected the award as "null and void."

About the South China Sea:

- A strategically important semi-enclosed sea in the western Pacific Ocean.

Bordered by:

- China
- Taiwan
- Philippines
- Vietnam
- Malaysia
- Brunei
- Indonesia
- The region is rich in fisheries, hydrocarbons, and is one of the world's busiest maritime trade routes, with nearly one-third of global maritime trade passing through it annually.

About UNCLOS:

- Full Form: United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.
- Adopted: 1982.
- Entered into Force: 1994.
- Known as the "Constitution of the Oceans."

Defines:

- Territorial Sea (12 nautical miles)
- Contiguous Zone (24 nautical miles)
- Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) (200 nautical miles)
- Continental Shelf
- Rights and responsibilities of coastal and maritime states.

Exam Focus Points:

- Issue: South China Sea Dispute.
- Joint Statement By: US, UK, and 12 other countries.
- Legal Basis: 2016 South China Sea Arbitration Award.
- Arbitration Body: Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA), The Hague.
- Convention: United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).
- Case Filed By: Philippines (2013).
- Award Delivered: 12 July 2016.
- Key Finding: China's Nine-Dash Line has no legal basis under UNCLOS.
- China's Position: Rejects and does not recognise the ruling.
- PCA Headquarters: The Hague, Netherlands.
- UNCLOS Adopted: 1982.
- UNCLOS Came into Force: 1994.
- Strategic Water Body: South China Sea.

About the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA):

- Established: 1899.
- Headquarters: The Hague, Netherlands.
- Provides arbitration and dispute resolution services between states, international organisations, and private parties.
- The PCA administered the South China Sea arbitration proceedings under UNCLOS.

Additional Key Facts:

- The "Nine-Dash Line" is China's demarcation line covering nearly 90% of the South China Sea, which overlaps with the EEZs of several Southeast Asian countries.
- The South China Sea contains the Spratly Islands, Paracel Islands, Scarborough Shoal, and Pratas Islands, all of which are strategically significant.
- Freedom of Navigation Operations (FONOPs) are conducted by several countries, including the United States, to challenge excessive maritime claims.
- India supports the peaceful resolution of disputes in accordance with UNCLOS and advocates freedom of navigation, overflight, and unimpeded commerce in the Indo-Pacific.
- The Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) extends up to 200 nautical miles from a coastal state's baseline, within which the coastal state has sovereign rights over natural resources.

India Removes Yemen Travel Restrictions

- 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.

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).

- 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.

India–Vietnam Parliamentary Cooperation

- 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).

SMR Deployment Cooperation

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

Key Features of the Trilateral Agreement:

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

Signed By:

- Cho Hyun – Foreign Minister of South Korea.
- Marco Rubio – US Secretary of State.
- Toshimitsu Motegi – Foreign Minister of Japan.
- Focus: Joint deployment of SMRs in partner countries.

- Objective: Provide safe, affordable, and reliable clean energy solutions.
- Venue: Signed on the sidelines of the NATO Summit.

What are Small Modular Reactors (SMRs)?

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

What are the Advantages of SMRs?

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

Challenges Associated with SMRs:

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

About Nuclear Energy:

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

Nuclear Energy in India:

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

About the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA):

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

Exam Focus Points:

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

➤ Director General: Rafael Mariano Grossi.

BRICS Guwahati Declaration

Why is it in News?

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

Key Highlights

- The Guwahati Declaration was adopted at the conclusion of the BRICS Heads of Anti-Drug Agencies Meeting held on 6–7 July 2026 in Guwahati, Assam.
- BRICS countries agreed to strengthen intelligence sharing, exchange of best practices, and operational cooperation to tackle cross-border drug trafficking.
- The declaration emphasizes the use of digital technologies, data-driven policing, and innovative enforcement tools to combat synthetic drugs and organised crime.
- Member countries pledged to improve coordination in accordance with national laws and international obligations.
- India proposed the creation of a BRICS Virtual Task Force on Narcotics to enable faster intelligence sharing and coordinated action against international drug cartels.
- India also presented its 2026–2029 Anti-Drug Roadmap, which focuses on dismantling drug networks, preventing drug abuse through awareness campaigns, and strengthening treatment and rehabilitation facilities.

What is the Guwahati Declaration?

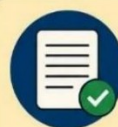
The Guwahati Declaration is a joint commitment adopted by BRICS nations to enhance cooperation against illicit drug trafficking and transnational organised crime through intelligence sharing, technology-driven enforcement, capacity building, and coordinated policy action.

Significance

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

GUWAHATI DECLARATION 2026

BRICS UNITED AGAINST DRUG TRAFFICKING



A joint declaration adopted by **BRICS** nations to strengthen cooperation against illicit drug trafficking and related organized crime.

Venue:
Guwahati, Assam

Meeting:
BRICS Heads of Anti-Drug Agencies Meeting (July 2026)

1. KEY PillARS



Information Exchange
Timely sharing of information, intelligence & best practices.



Technology & Innovation
Use of modern technology, digital tools & data-driven approaches.



Demand Reduction
Reduce drug demand, promote healthy living & protect children and youth.



Coordinated Action
Joint efforts to prevent & fight transnational organised crime & narcotics trafficking.

2. WHY DECLARATION WAS NEEDED



Encryption & darknet markets widely used by traffickers.



Synthetic drugs easy to alter, hard to detect.



Golden Triangle routes impact Northeast India.



Precursor chemicals not tightly controlled; production can continue.

Common threats need concerted BRICS action.

Exam Focus Points

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

About BRICS

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

History

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

Current Members (11)

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

Major Institutions

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

Global Passport Index 2026

Why is it in News?

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

Key Highlights

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

What is the Global Passport Index?

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

Parameters Used:

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

Significance

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

Top 5 Countries – Global Passport Index 2026

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

Bottom 5 Countries – Global Passport Index 2026

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

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

Exam Focus Points

- Report: Global Passport Index 2026
- Top-Ranked Country: Sweden
- India's Rank: 125th
- Ranking Basis: Visa-free, Visa-on-arrival, and Electronic Travel Authorisation (eTA) access
- Purpose: Measure the global strength and travel freedom of passports
- Indicator: International mobility and diplomatic relations
- Best Passport Holder: Sweden
- Key Concept: Passport Strength / Global Mobility Index
- Factors Considered: Visa-free access, Visa-on-arrival, eTA, travel freedom, international agreements

AITIGA Joint Committee Meeting

Why is it in News?

- India is hosting the 13th Joint Committee Meeting of the ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA) in New Delhi to accelerate the review and modernization of the trade pact. The meeting aims to make the agreement more business-friendly and boost trade between India and ASEAN countries.
- Key Highlights
- India is hosting the 13th AITIGA Joint Committee Meeting and related meetings from 6–10 July 2026 in New Delhi in a hybrid format.
- The meeting is reviewing the ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA) to simplify trade rules and improve market access.

ASEAN Member Countries



Three Sub-Committees are meeting alongside the Joint Committee:

- Customs Procedures and Trade Facilitation (SC-CPTF)
- National Treatment and Market Access (SC-NTMA)
- Rules of Origin (SC-ROO)
- The Joint Committee has directed the Sub-Committees to complete pending negotiations within agreed timelines.

- The meeting was co-chaired by Nitin Kumar Yadav (India) and Mastura Ahmad Mustafa (Malaysia), with participation from all 10 ASEAN member countries.

What is AITIGA?

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

About AITIGA

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

Why is the Review Important?

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

Significance

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

Exam Focus Points

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

PM Modi's Three-Nation Tour

Why is it in News?

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has begun a three-nation visit to Ghana, Trinidad & Tobago, and Argentina to deepen India's diplomatic, economic, and strategic partnerships. The visit is aimed at strengthening India's global engagement under its Act East Policy and expanding cooperation with partner countries.

Key Highlights

- The tour seeks to enhance cooperation in trade, investment, energy, critical minerals, agriculture, technology, healthcare, and defence.
- Bilateral meetings with the leaders of the three countries are scheduled to discuss regional and global issues of mutual interest.
- The visit aims to strengthen India's relations with countries in Africa, the Caribbean, and Latin America.

Country-wise Focus

Ghana

- Strengthening cooperation in trade, investment, mining, critical minerals, healthcare, defence, and capacity building.
- Discussions are expected to focus on expanding economic and development partnerships.

Trinidad & Tobago

- Focus on energy, digital technology, pharmaceuticals, education, and cultural ties.
- The visit also highlights India's close relationship with the large Indian diaspora in the country.

Argentina

- Discussions on critical minerals (especially lithium), renewable energy, agriculture, defence, and trade.
- Argentina is an important partner for India's clean energy and electric vehicle ambitions due to its vast lithium reserves.

Significance

- Strengthens India's diplomatic presence in Africa, the Caribbean, and Latin America.
- Enhances cooperation in energy security, critical minerals, and trade.
- Supports India's engagement with the Global South.
- Reinforces India's strategy of diversifying economic and strategic partnerships.

Exam Focus Points

- Visit: Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Three-Nation Tour (2026)
- Countries Visited: Ghana, Trinidad & Tobago, Argentina
- Special Focus (Argentina): Lithium and critical minerals
- Special Focus (Ghana): Mining, trade, and capacity building
- Special Focus (Trinidad & Tobago): Energy, digital cooperation, and Indian diaspora
- Related Policy: Act East Policy (as reported)
- Related Foreign Policy Theme: Global South Cooperation
- Key Sector: Critical Minerals, Renewable Energy, Trade, Defence

India–Israel Bilateral Investment Agreement

The India–Israel Bilateral Investment Agreement (BIA) came into force. Signed on 8 September 2025, the agreement aims to promote and protect cross-border investments by providing a transparent, predictable, and secure legal framework for investors. It is expected to boost investment flows and strengthen economic cooperation between the two countries.

What is a Bilateral Investment Agreement (BIA)?

A BIA is a treaty between two countries that promotes and protects investments by ensuring fair treatment, legal protection, and dispute resolution mechanisms for investors.

WHAT THIS AGREEMENT BRINGS



STRONGER ECONOMIC TIES

Deepens the partnership and builds a stronger economic foundation between India and Israel.



GREATER PROTECTION FOR INVESTORS

Ensures fair and equitable treatment and protection for investors from both countries.



STABLE INVESTMENT ENVIRONMENT

Promotes transparency, predictability and confidence for investors.



BOOST TO CROSS-BORDER INVESTMENTS

Encourages more investments and business opportunities across sectors.



LONG-TERM ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Paves the way for sustainable growth and shared prosperity.

India–Israel Economic Relations:

- Diplomatic Relations Established: 1992

- Strategic Partnership: Upgraded in 2017 during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Israel.

Bilateral cooperation spans:

- Defence and homeland security
- Agriculture
- Water conservation and irrigation
- Cybersecurity
- Artificial Intelligence
- Space cooperation
- Innovation and start-up ecosystems.

India–Israel Trade Relations:

Israel is an important economic partner for India in West Asia.

Major Indian exports:

- Petroleum products
- Chemicals
- Machinery
- Pharmaceuticals
- Textiles

Major imports from Israel:

- Diamonds
- Defence equipment
- Electronic equipment
- Fertilisers
- Medical and precision instruments.
- Israeli investments in India are concentrated in technology, manufacturing, renewable energy, and water technologies.

Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)

FDI refers to investment made by a company or individual of one country into business assets located in another country.

Benefits of FDI:

- Capital inflow.
- Technology transfer.
- Employment generation.
- Higher exports.
- Industrial development.
- Improved productivity and competitiveness.

Significance

- Enhances investor confidence.
- Increases cross-border investment.
- Strengthens India–Israel economic ties.
- Supports technology and innovation partnerships.

Exam Focus Points:

- Agreement: India–Israel Bilateral Investment Agreement (BIA)
- Came into Force: 4 July 2026
- Signed: 8 September 2025
- Objective: Promote and protect bilateral investments
- Key Benefit: Increase FDI and investor confidence

US–Japan Cybersecurity Cooperation

- The United States and Japan have agreed to strengthen bilateral cooperation in cybersecurity following the 11th US–Japan Cyber Dialogue held in Washington, D.C.
- In a joint statement, both countries committed to expanding cyber threat intelligence sharing, protecting critical infrastructure, combating cybercrime across the Indo-Pacific, leveraging Artificial Intelligence (AI) for cybersecurity, strengthening secure cloud infrastructure, and accelerating the adoption of Post-Quantum Cryptography (PQC).
- They also agreed to coordinate technical assistance to improve cyber resilience in third countries across the Indo-Pacific and align their national cyber policies to address evolving cyber threats.

Key Outcomes of the 11th US–Japan Cyber Dialogue:

The two countries agreed to:

- Expand intelligence and cyber threat information sharing.
- Protect critical infrastructure from cyberattacks.
- Strengthen cooperation against cybercrime and online scam networks.
- Promote secure and trusted cloud infrastructure.
- Accelerate adoption of Post-Quantum Cryptography (PQC).
- Leverage Artificial Intelligence (AI) to enhance cybersecurity.
- Build cyber resilience in Indo-Pacific partner countries.
- Improve interoperability and align cyber policies.

Exam Focus Points:

- Event: 11th US–Japan Cyber Dialogue
- Venue: Washington, D.C.
- Major Focus: Cybersecurity cooperation
- Key Areas: AI, cyber intelligence, critical infrastructure, PQC, cloud security
- Related Technology: Post-Quantum Cryptography (PQC)
- Indian Cyber Agencies: CERT-In, NCIIPC
- Related Treaty: Budapest Convention on Cybercrime

What is Cybersecurity?

Cybersecurity refers to the protection of computer systems, digital networks, software, and data from cyberattacks, unauthorized access, malware, ransomware, and other cyber threats.

Objectives:

- Protect critical information infrastructure.
- Prevent cyber espionage and cyber terrorism.
- Safeguard personal and financial data.
- Ensure secure digital governance and economic activities.
- Strengthen national security.

Post-Quantum Cryptography (PQC):

Post-Quantum Cryptography refers to cryptographic algorithms designed to remain secure against attacks by quantum computers, which could potentially break current encryption methods.

India–Seychelles Sign 9 Agreements

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi held bilateral talks with President Dr. Patrick Herminie during his State Visit to Seychelles in Victoria, the capital of Seychelles.
- The leaders reviewed the entire spectrum of India–Seychelles bilateral relations and exchanged views on regional and global issues of mutual interest, with a special focus on maritime security, the Blue Economy, climate resilience, digital cooperation, defence, and development partnership.
- During the visit, PM Modi became the first Indian Prime Minister to address the National Assembly of Seychelles.
- India and Seychelles signed nine agreements covering sectors such as health, agriculture, finance, space cooperation, legal cooperation (extradition), digital public infrastructure, and capacity building.

- India further announced a Line of Credit of ₹1,250 crore to support priority development projects in Seychelles. PM Modi also attended the Golden Jubilee (50th) National Day celebrations of Seychelles as the Guest of Honour.

Why is Seychelles Important for India?

Seychelles is a strategically located island nation in the Western Indian Ocean, making it an important partner in India's maritime and Indo-Pacific strategy.

Importance

- Strategic location along major sea lanes of the Indian Ocean.
- Key partner in India's maritime security architecture.
- Supports India's MAHASAGAR and SAGAR vision.
- Important for anti-piracy operations and maritime domain awareness.
- Enhances India's engagement with Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

India–Seychelles Relations:

- Diplomatic Relations Established: 1976
- 2026 marks 50 years of diplomatic relations.
- India is one of Seychelles' key development and security partners.

Cooperation includes:

- Maritime security
- Defence training
- Coastal surveillance
- Renewable energy
- Healthcare
- Education
- Digital governance

MAHASAGAR:

Full Form: Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions

Objective:

- Promote security, prosperity, and sustainable development across the Indian Ocean Region.
- Strengthen maritime cooperation and regional connectivity.
- Build resilient partnerships based on mutual respect.

SAGAR:

- Full Form: Security and Growth for All in the Region
- Announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2015.
- Serves as India's maritime cooperation vision in the Indian Ocean Region.

Focuses on:

- Maritime security
- Capacity building
- Disaster relief
- Sustainable Blue Economy

Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA):

9 MAJOR AGREEMENTS SIGNED

	1. UPI IN SEYCHELLES UPI based digital payments to be introduced, boosting tourism, trade & digital economy.	
	2. EXTRADITION TREATY Strengthening cooperation against terrorism, organized crime & fugitive offenders.	
	3. HEALTHCARE COOPERATION Better medical services, training & public health collaboration.	
	4. SPACE COOPERATION Collaboration in satellite apps, earth observation & space technology.	
	5. AGRICULTURE & FOOD SECURITY Cooperation in modern farming, agri research & food security.	
	6. MARITIME SECURITY Coastal surveillance, maritime domain awareness & Indian Ocean security.	
	7. CAPACITY BUILDING Training, governance, development assistance & institutional support.	
	8. DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP Infrastructure, finance & sustainable development projects.	
	9. SECURITY COOPERATION Enhanced defense cooperation & strategic partnership.	

- Established: 1997
- Headquarters: Ebene, Mauritius

Promotes:

- Maritime safety
- Trade and investment
- Fisheries management
- Blue Economy
- Disaster risk management

Small Island Developing States (SIDS):

A group recognized by the United Nations.

Highly vulnerable to:

- Climate change
- Sea-level rise
- Extreme weather events

India supports SIDS through:

- Climate finance
- Renewable energy
- Disaster resilience
- Capacity building

Seychelles:

- Capital: Victoria
- Currency: Seychellois Rupee (SCR)
- Location: Western Indian Ocean
- Member of: African Union (AU), Commonwealth, Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)

Exam Focus Points (Quick Revision Notes):

- Country in News: Seychelles
- Capital: Victoria
- President: Dr. Patrick Herminie
- Event: PM Modi's State Visit
- Major Achievement: First Indian PM to address Seychelles National Assembly
- National Day: Golden Jubilee (50th Anniversary)
- Agreements Signed: 9
- Indian Assistance: ₹1,250 crore Line of Credit
- Strategic Vision: MAHASAGAR & SAGAR
- Key Areas of Cooperation: Maritime security, Blue Economy, Digital Public Infrastructure, Space, Health, Agriculture

Operation Amistad

- India has launched Operation Amistad, a Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) mission, to support Venezuela after devastating earthquakes caused heavy loss of life and widespread destruction.
- As part of the operation, the Indian Air Force (IAF) deployed two C-17 Globemaster aircraft carrying a 41-member rescue and medical team, an Indian Army Field Hospital, 30 tonnes of relief material, 6 tonnes of medicines and medical equipment, and two BHISHM Cube portable hospitals.
- The mission reflects India's commitment to providing rapid humanitarian assistance to countries affected by natural disasters.
- The Ministry of External Affairs stated that India stands in solidarity with the people of Venezuela and remains ready to provide further assistance if required. The operation also reinforces India's role as a first responder in global humanitarian crises and its commitment to the Global South.

What is Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR)?

HADR refers to military and civilian assistance provided during natural or man-made disasters to save lives and reduce suffering.

HADR includes:

- Search and rescue operations
- Medical assistance
- Emergency shelters

- Food and water supply
- Restoration of essential services
- Evacuation and logistics support
- India has emerged as a leading HADR provider in the Indian Ocean Region and beyond.

Additional Key Facts

BHISHM Cube

BHISHM (Bharat Health Initiative for Sahyog, Hita & Maitri) Cube is an indigenous portable modular field hospital developed under Project Aarogya Maitri.

Features

- Rapid deployment during disasters
- Advanced trauma and emergency care
- Portable and modular design
- Can function as a temporary field hospital
- Supports mass casualty management

C-17 Globemaster III

- Strategic military transport aircraft
- Operated by the Indian Air Force

Used for:

- Troop movement
- Heavy cargo transport
- Disaster relief
- Humanitarian missions
- Strategic airlift operations

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

-  **Launched by the Government of India.**
-  **Relief transported by two Indian Air Force C-17 Globemaster III aircraft.**
-  **41-member Indian Army medical contingent deployed with a field hospital.**

Included:



Medicines and medical equipment



Tents and emergency shelters



Food and essential relief materials

India's Major HADR Operations Abroad

Operation	Country	Purpose
Operation Maitri (2015)	Nepal	Earthquake relief
Operation Dost (2023)	Türkiye & Syria	Earthquake relief
Operation Brahma (2025)	Myanmar	Earthquake relief
Operation Amistad (2026)	Venezuela	Earthquake relief

India's Humanitarian Diplomacy

- India follows the principle of "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" (The World is One Family) and has increasingly emerged as a first responder by providing:
- Disaster relief
- Medical assistance
- Evacuation operations
- Humanitarian aid
- Capacity building to partner countries

About Venezuela:

- Capital: Caracas
- Currency: Venezuelan Bolívar
- President: Delcy Rodríguez
- Continent: South America

Exam Focus Points (Quick Revision Notes)

- Operation in News → Operation Amistad
- Country Assisted → Venezuela
- Purpose → Earthquake relief (HADR Mission)
- Aircraft Used → IAF C-17 Globemaster III
- Rescue Team → 41-member medical and rescue contingent
- Special Equipment → BHISHM Cube portable hospitals

Economy & Trade

Trump Rejects USMCA Renewal

The United States has decided not to renew the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) in its current form, marking a significant development in North American trade relations. The decision, announced by the Trump administration during the mandatory six-year review of the agreement in July 2026, has created uncertainty for businesses and investors across the region. However, contrary to popular belief, the agreement has not ended immediately. Instead, it enters an annual review process and will remain in force until 2036 unless all three countries agree to extend it or one of them withdraws.

Why Did the Trump Administration Refuse Renewal?

The Trump administration stated that it would not renew the agreement "in its current form." According to U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer, Washington wants substantial changes before agreeing to extend the pact.

Several factors influenced this decision:

- **Trade Imbalance:** The administration argues that the existing agreement has not adequately reduced America's trade deficit with Canada and Mexico.
- **Stricter Rules of Origin:** The U.S. seeks tougher rules requiring a larger share of products—particularly automobiles—to be manufactured within North America to qualify for tariff-free trade.
- **Tariff Strategy:** The administration has increasingly relied on tariffs as a negotiating tool, using them to pressure trading partners into accepting revised trade terms.
- **Protection of Domestic Manufacturing:** The U.S. wants stronger provisions that encourage companies to manufacture more goods within the country, thereby creating American jobs.
- **Broader Trade Policy:** The decision is consistent with Trump's "America First" trade agenda, which emphasizes renegotiating trade agreements perceived as unfavourable to the United States.

What is the USMCA?

The USMCA is a free trade agreement between the United States, Canada, and Mexico, which came into force on 1 July 2020, replacing the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). It governs trade worth more than \$1.8 trillion annually and supports deeply integrated supply chains in sectors such as automobiles, agriculture, manufacturing, energy, and digital commerce. One of its unique features is a mandatory review every six years, with a possible 16-year extension if all three members agree.

What Happens Next?

Although the United States declined renewal, the USMCA does not expire immediately.

Instead:

- The agreement remains operational until 2036.
- Annual reviews will now take place to determine whether the three countries can agree on revisions and an extension.
- If all members eventually agree, the agreement can be renewed for another 16-year term.
- Any country retains the right to withdraw separately by providing the required notice.

Likely Economic Impact



- The decision introduces uncertainty into one of the world's most integrated trading regions.
- For Businesses: Companies may delay investments because they are unsure about future trade rules.
- Automobile Industry: The automotive sector is expected to face the greatest uncertainty since production depends on highly integrated supply chains spread across all three countries. Changes in rules of origin could significantly increase manufacturing costs.
- Agriculture and Manufacturing: Exporters may face uncertainty regarding future tariff benefits if negotiations become prolonged.
- Investors: Markets generally dislike policy uncertainty, which could reduce long-term investment in North American manufacturing.

Significance

The refusal to renew the USMCA is not a withdrawal from the agreement, but rather a negotiating strategy aimed at securing tougher trade terms. While trade among the United States, Canada, and Mexico will continue under existing rules for now, the annual review process means businesses and policymakers will closely monitor future negotiations. The outcome could reshape North American trade, investment patterns, and regional supply chains over the coming decade.

Way Forward

The three USMCA partners should use the annual review process to negotiate a modernised agreement that addresses trade imbalances while preserving the benefits of free trade. A balanced and predictable trade framework will strengthen regional supply chains, boost investor confidence, and enhance North America's global competitiveness.

Central KYC (CKYC)

The Central Know Your Customer (CKYC) system enables customers to complete the Know Your Customer (KYC) process only once and use it across multiple regulated financial institutions such as banks, mutual funds, insurance companies, pension funds, and NBFCs. Every customer receives a unique 14-digit CKYC Identifier, which helps eliminate repeated submission of KYC documents and simplifies financial onboarding. The initiative has gained renewed attention as India prepares to strengthen the CKYC 2.0 framework for seamless customer identification across the financial sector.

What is CKYC?

Central Know Your Customer (CKYC) is a centralized repository of KYC records that allows financial institutions to retrieve a customer's verified KYC information using a unique CKYC Identifier instead of collecting documents repeatedly.

What is a CKYC Number?

A CKYC Number, also called the KYC Identifier (KIN), is a 14-digit unique identification number allotted to every customer after successful registration in the CKYC system.

Central KYC Records Registry (CKYCRR):

- The Central KYC Records Registry (CKYCRR) is the central repository responsible for storing and managing KYC records.

Operated By	Central Registry of Securitisation Asset Reconstruction and Security Interest of India (CERSAI)
Purpose	Central storage and retrieval of KYC records

CERSAI:

The Central Registry of Securitisation Asset Reconstruction and Security Interest of India (CERSAI) is a Government-backed company established to maintain centralized registries relating to financial assets and KYC records.

- Established: 2011
- Administrative Ministry: Ministry of Finance
- Headquarters: New Delhi

Functions

- Maintains CKYCRR.
- Prevents multiple financing and fraud.
- Maintains security interest records.
- Supports financial transparency.
- Know Your Customer (KYC)
- Know Your Customer (KYC) is the process through which financial institutions verify the identity and address of customers before providing financial services.

Objectives

- Prevent money laundering.
- Prevent terrorist financing.
- Verify customer identity.
- Detect financial fraud.
- Strengthen financial integrity.

Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002:

The Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002 is India's principal law to combat money laundering and financing of terrorism.

Objectives:

- Prevent laundering of illicit money.
- Confiscate proceeds of crime.
- Strengthen financial integrity.
- Comply with international AML standards.

Exam Focus Point:

- Full Form: Central Know Your Customer (CKYC).
- Unique Identifier: 14-digit KYC Identifier (KIN).
- Registry: Central KYC Records Registry (CKYCRR).
- Maintained By: CERSAI.
- Legal Framework: Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 and Prevention of Money Laundering (Maintenance of Records) Rules, 2005.
- Purpose: One-time KYC for multiple financial institutions.
- Major Regulators: RBI, SEBI, IRDAI, and PFRDA.
- International Body: Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

Karlapat Bauxite Block

- The Karlapat Bauxite Block in Kalahandi district, Odisha, has emerged as one of India's most strategically significant mineral blocks, attracting major interest from leading aluminium producers.
- With an estimated over 200 million tonnes of bauxite reserves, the block is expected to strengthen India's aluminium value chain, enhance domestic raw material security, and reduce dependence on imported bauxite.

Why is it in News?

- The Karlapat Bauxite Block has become a highly sought-after mineral block due to its large reserve base and strategic importance for India's aluminium industry.
- The block is expected to play a crucial role in ensuring long-term raw material availability for aluminium manufacturing in India.

Importance of Karlapat Bauxite Block

- One of India's largest undeveloped bauxite deposits.
- Ensures uninterrupted supply of raw material to alumina refineries.
- Reduces dependence on imported bauxite.
- Promotes value addition within India.
- Supports the Make in India initiative.

- Generates employment and regional economic development in Odisha.
- Strengthens India's position among the world's leading aluminium producers.

About Bauxite

Bauxite is the principal ore of aluminium.

Major Minerals Present:

- Gibbsite
- Boehmite
- Diaspore

Uses

- Aluminium production
- Aerospace industry
- Automobile manufacturing
- Electrical cables
- Packaging
- Defence equipment
- Construction sector
- Renewable energy infrastructure

Aluminium Production Process:

Stage	Details
Product	Bauxite
Ore	Bauxite
Bayer Process	Alumina (Al ₂ O ₃)
Hall-Héroult Process	Aluminium Metal
Global Position	Among the leading producers of bauxite
Major Producing States	Odisha, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh
Largest Producer State	Odisha
Principal Use	Aluminium manufacturing

Major Aluminium Companies in India:

- National Aluminium Company Limited (NALCO): Bhubaneswar
- Hindalco Industries Ltd.: Mumbai
- Vedanta Aluminium: Jharsuguda (major operations in Odisha)
- Bharat Aluminium Company (BALCO): Korba, Chhattisgarh



Exam Focus Points::

- Mineral Block: Karlapat Bauxite Block.
- Location: Kalahandi, Odisha.
- Major Mineral: Bauxite.
- Largest Bauxite Producing State: Odisha.
- Ore of Aluminium: Bauxite.
- Major PSU: NALCO.
- Relevant Law: Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957.
- Nearby Protected Area: Karlapat Wildlife Sanctuary.

India-Myanmar Partnership

Why is it in News?

India and Myanmar are strengthening cooperation in rare earth elements (REEs) and critical minerals to secure a stable supply of strategic resources. The move comes as China continues to dominate the global rare earth supply chain, raising concerns over supply disruptions.

The partnership aims to:

- Secure a reliable supply of rare earths for India.
- Reduce dependence on China.
- Promote sustainable mining and investment.
- Strengthen bilateral economic and strategic ties.
- Myanmar can benefit through investment, technology, and responsible mining practices.

Background & Significance:

- Rare earth elements (REEs) are essential for manufacturing electric vehicles (EVs), wind turbines, semiconductors, smartphones, defence equipment, and missiles.
- China controls most of the world's rare earth processing capacity, making many countries dependent on it.
- Myanmar's Kachin State is one of the world's largest sources of heavy rare earth elements, many of which are currently exported to China for processing.
- India is diversifying its supply sources to strengthen critical mineral security and support the Make in India and Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiatives.

Exam Focus Points:

- Partner Countries: India and Myanmar.
- Resource: Rare Earth Elements (REEs) and Critical Minerals.
- Myanmar's Key Mining Region: Kachin State.
- Key Concern: China's dominance in rare earth processing.
- Major Use: EVs, semiconductors, renewable energy, electronics, and defence.
- Related Initiative: National Critical Minerals Mission.
- Strategic Objective: Secure supply chains and reduce dependence on China.

Why is it Important?

- Strengthens India's critical mineral supply chain.
- Reduces vulnerability to Chinese export restrictions.
- Supports India's EV, renewable energy, electronics, and defence industries.
- Enhances India's strategic presence in Southeast Asia and the Indo-Pacific.

About Rare Earth Elements (REEs)

A group of 17 metallic elements used in high-tech and clean energy industries.

Classified into:

- Light Rare Earth Elements (LREEs)
- Heavy Rare Earth Elements (HREEs) – more scarce and strategically important.
- Major applications: Electric vehicles, Wind turbines, Smartphones, Defence equipment, Aerospace and satellites & Permanent magnets

India–Myanmar Relations at a Glance

Aspect	Details
Diplomatic Relations	Established after Myanmar's independence in 1948.
Neighbourhood	Myanmar is India's only land bridge to Southeast Asia and shares a 1,643 km border with Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur, and Mizoram.
Act East Policy	Myanmar is the gateway for India's Act East Policy and connectivity with ASEAN.
Neighbourhood First Policy	Myanmar is a key partner under India's Neighbourhood First Policy.
Strategic Importance	Crucial for border security, counter-insurgency operations, maritime security, and Indo-Pacific strategy.
Trade	Bilateral trade exceeds US\$2 billion annually (varies by year). India imports pulses, beans, timber, and minerals; exports pharmaceuticals, steel, machinery, and petroleum products.

Connectivity Projects	Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project, India–Myanmar–Thailand Trilateral Highway, and border infrastructure development.
Defence & Security	Joint military exercises, intelligence sharing, coordinated border patrols, and operations against insurgent groups.
Energy & Minerals	Cooperation in oil & gas, rare earth elements, and critical minerals.
Development Assistance	India supports capacity building, healthcare, education, IT, agriculture, and infrastructure projects.
Regional Groupings	Both are members of BIMSTEC and Mekong–Ganga Cooperation (MGC). Myanmar is also an ASEAN member.
People-to-People Ties	Strong cultural and Buddhist links; India provides scholarships, training programmes, and humanitarian assistance.
Border Trade Points	Moreh (Manipur) – Tamu (Myanmar) and Zokhawthar (Mizoram) – Rih (Myanmar).

Way Forward

- Diversify imports through partnerships with mineral-rich countries.
- Develop domestic mining and refining capacity under the National Critical Minerals Mission.
- Invest in rare earth processing and recycling technologies.
- Strengthen international cooperation for resilient critical mineral supply chains.

50% Tariff on Canadian Imports

- The United States has announced a 50% tariff on selected Canadian imports, alleging that Canada discriminates against American products.
- The new duties are scheduled to come into force 30 days after the announcement, further escalating trade tensions between the two North American partners.
- The measure has been announced by U.S. President Donald Trump under Section 338 of the U.S. Tariff Act of 1930, a rarely invoked trade provision.

The U.S. alleges that Canada has discriminated against American goods such as:

- Dairy products
- Alcoholic beverages
- Automobiles

What is a Tariff?

A tariff is a tax imposed by a government on imported goods and services.

Objectives of Tariffs:

- Protect domestic industries.
- Generate government revenue.
- Reduce imports.
- Correct trade imbalances.
- Counter unfair trade practices.
- Strengthen negotiating leverage in trade disputes.

Types of Tariffs:

- Ad Valorem Tariff – Levied as a percentage of the value of goods.
- Specific Tariff – Fixed amount per unit imported.
- Protective Tariff – Protects domestic industries.
- Revenue Tariff – Primarily imposed to generate revenue.
- Retaliatory Tariff – Imposed in response to another country's trade restrictions.

About Section 338 of the U.S. Tariff Act, 1930:

- Enacted under the Tariff Act (Smoot–Hawley Tariff Act), 1930.
- Authorizes the U.S. President to impose additional duties on imports from countries that discriminate against U.S. commerce.
- It is a rarely used provision in U.S. trade law.

About the United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA):

- Signed: 30 November 2018
- Came into Force: 1 July 2020
- Members: United States, Canada, Mexico
- Replaced: North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA)
- Objective: Promote free trade, investment, and regional economic integration

India–Canada Trade Relations:

- Bilateral Merchandise Trade: Around US\$8–9 billion annually (recent years)
- Major Indian Exports: Pharmaceuticals, textiles, machinery, gems & jewellery
- Major Imports from Canada: Pulses, fertilizers, wood pulp, minerals
- Proposed Agreement: Early Progress Trade Agreement (EPTA) under discussion

World Trade Organization (WTO):

- Established: 1 January 1995
- Headquarters: Geneva, Switzerland
- Members: 166 (as of 2026)
- Successor to: General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), 1947
- Objective: Promote free, fair, and predictable international trade

Canada:

- Capital: Ottawa.
- Currency: Canadian Dollar (CAD).
- Prime Minister: Mark Carney.

United States:

- Capital: Washington, D.C.
- Currency: U.S. Dollar (USD).
- President: Donald Trump.

Difference Between Tariff and Quota:

- Tariff: Quota
- Tax imposed on imports: Quantitative limit on imports
- Generates government revenue: Does not directly generate revenue
- Imports continue after paying duty: Imports stop after quota limit is reached

Exam Focus Points::

- Country imposing tariff: United States.
- Country affected: Canada.
- Tariff rate: 50%.
- Legal basis: Section 338 of the Tariff Act, 1930.
- Regional Trade Agreement: USMCA.
- Predecessor Agreement: NAFTA.
- Global Trade Organization: WTO.
- WTO Headquarters: Geneva, Switzerland.

Investment Friendliness Index 2026

- NITI Aayog released the first-ever Investment Friendliness Index (IFI) 2026 to assess the investment ecosystem across States and Union Territories.
- Gujarat emerged as the most investment-friendly large state, while Uttarakhand topped the Hilly & North-Eastern States category and Goa ranked first among Union Territories & City States.
- The Index aims to promote competitive and cooperative federalism by encouraging reforms that attract domestic and foreign investments.

- The report found that no State or Union Territory achieved the 'Top Performer' benchmark of 60 marks, highlighting significant scope for further reforms.

Peer Group Categories:

- Large States
- Hilly & North-Eastern States
- Union Territories & City States
- No State scored above 60, indicating no "Top Performer" under the benchmark.

Top Performers:

Large States:

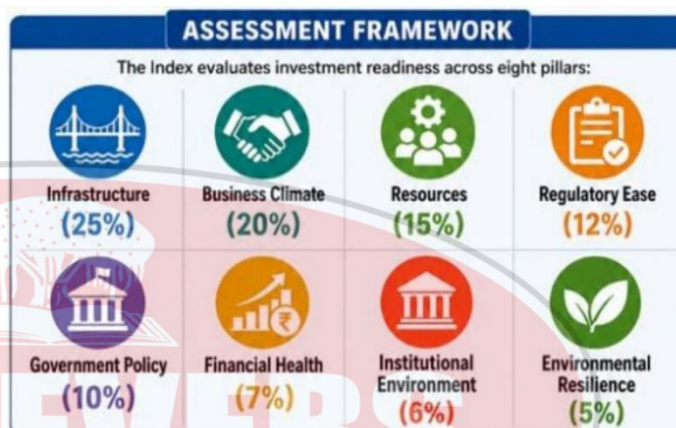
1. Gujarat
2. Maharashtra
3. Tamil Nadu
4. Odisha
5. Goa

Hilly & North-Eastern States:

1. Uttarakhand
2. Assam
3. Himachal Pradesh

Union Territories & City States:

1. Goa
2. Delhi
3. Chandigarh



About Investment Friendliness Index (IFI):

- Launched By: NITI Aayog
- First Edition: 2026
- Objective: Measure how effectively States and UTs create an environment conducive to investments.
- Announced In: Union Budget 2025–26.
- Origin: Prepared following the Prime Minister's direction at the 9th Governing Council Meeting of NITI Aayog (2024).

Focus Areas:

- Government Policy
- Regulatory Framework
- Infrastructure
- Business Environment
- Resource Availability
- Financial Health
- Institutional Capacity

About NITI Aayog:

- Full Form: National Institution for Transforming India (NITI) Aayog.
- Established: 1 January 2015.
- Headquarters: New Delhi.
- Chairperson: Prime Minister of India.
- Replaced: Planning Commission.

Exam Focus Points::

- First Edition: Investment Friendliness Index 2026.
- Released By: NITI Aayog.
- Large State Leader: Gujarat.
- Hilly & North-Eastern State Leader: Uttarakhand.
- UT & City State Leader: Goa.
- Coverage: 36 States and UTs.
- Indicators: 84.
- Announced in: Union Budget 2025–26.
- NITI Aayog Established: 1 January 2015.
- Replaced: Planning Commission.
- Headquarters: New Delhi.
- Objective: Promote competitive and cooperative federalism.

- Objective: Promote cooperative federalism, policy innovation, and sustainable development..

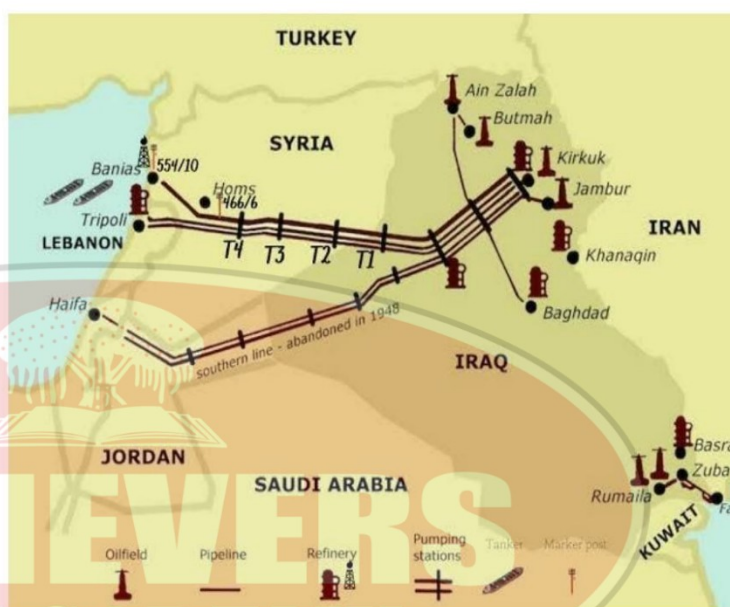
Syria Pipeline Revival Agreement

Why is it in News?

The Government of Iraq has signed several agreements with Western oil companies to increase oil and gas production. One of the key agreements aims to revive the Iraq–Syria oil pipeline, which has remained inactive for many years.

Key Considerations:

- Country: Iraq
- Partners: Western oil companies, including BP (United Kingdom) and TotalEnergies (France).
- Sector: Oil and Gas
- Key Agreement: Revival of the Iraq–Syria oil pipeline.
- Objective: To increase oil exports, boost energy production, and strengthen regional energy cooperation.
- Pipeline Route: Connects Iraq's oil fields to Syria's Mediterranean coast for exporting crude oil.
- Additional Focus: Development of oil fields, natural gas projects, and energy infrastructure.



About the Iraq–Syria Oil Pipeline:

- Purpose: To transport Iraqi crude oil to Mediterranean ports through Syria.
- Status: The pipeline has remained largely inactive due to decades of conflict and political instability.
- Benefit: Its revival will provide Iraq with an additional export route and improve regional energy connectivity.

About Iraq:

- Capital: Baghdad
- Currency: Iraqi Dinar (IQD)
- Official Languages: Arabic and Kurdish
- President: Abdul Latif Rashid
- Prime Minister: Mohammed Shia' Al Sudani
- Neighbouring Countries: Türkiye, Iran, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Syria.

Significance:

The agreements are expected to increase Iraq's oil production, improve export capacity, attract foreign investment, and support economic growth. Reviving the Iraq–Syria pipeline could also strengthen regional energy cooperation and diversify Iraq's oil export routes.

Additional Key Facts:

- BP: A multinational oil and gas company headquartered in London, United Kingdom.

Exam Focus Points:

- Country: Iraq
- Partners: BP and TotalEnergies
- Project: Revival of the Iraq–Syria oil pipeline
- Objective: Increase oil exports and strengthen regional energy cooperation
- Capital: Baghdad
- Currency: Iraqi Dinar (IQD)
- Organisation: OPEC
- Significance: Expanding Iraq's energy infrastructure and export network.

- TotalEnergies: A multinational energy company headquartered in Paris, France.
- Iraq: One of the world's largest holders of proven crude oil reserves and a founding member of OPEC (Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries).
- OPEC Headquarters: Vienna, Austria.

India–Finland Collaboration

- India and Finland have agreed to deepen bilateral cooperation in digitalisation, emerging technologies, trade, investment, innovation, and research & development (R&D) during the official visit of Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal to Helsinki, Finland.
- During the visit, Piyush Goyal held bilateral meetings with Finland's Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Riikka Purra and Minister of Economic Affairs Sakari Puisto. Both sides discussed enhancing collaboration in Artificial Intelligence (AI), 6G, quantum technologies, semiconductors, space, sustainability, startups, and innovation, while also exploring opportunities under the proposed India–European Union Free Trade Agreement (India–EU FTA). The visit also witnessed the signing of two institutional Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) and the India–Finland Business Forum in Helsinki.

India–Finland Relations:

- Diplomatic Relations Established: 1949.

India and Finland cooperate in:

- Information and Communication Technology (ICT).
- Telecommunications.
- Clean energy.
- Circular economy.
- Education and research.
- Digital innovation.
- Sustainable development.
- Arctic research and climate studies.

About the India–EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA):

India and the European Union (EU) are negotiating a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement aimed at:

- Increasing bilateral trade.
- Reducing tariffs and non-tariff barriers.
- Promoting investment.
- Strengthening supply chains.
- Expanding cooperation in digital trade, sustainability, and technology.
- The FTA is expected to significantly boost India's trade with EU member countries, including Finland.

Exam Focus Points:

- Countries: India and Finland.
- Venue: Helsinki, Finland.
- Indian Representative: Piyush Goyal.
- Finnish Representatives: Riikka Purra and Sakari Puisto.
- Key Areas: AI, 6G, quantum technologies, semiconductors, space, startups, sustainability, digitalisation.
- Business Event: India–Finland Business Forum.
- Related Agreement: India–EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA).
- Diplomatic Relations Established: 1949.
- Capital of Finland: Helsinki.
- Currency: Euro (€).
- Official Languages: Finnish and Swedish.
- Major Technology Company: Nokia.

About Finland:

- Capital: Helsinki.
- Currency: Euro (€).
- Official Languages: Finnish and Swedish.
- Prime Minister: Petteri Orpo.
- President: Alexander Stubb.
- Member Of: European Union (EU), NATO, Schengen Area, OECD, and Eurozone.

Additional Key Facts:

- Finland is globally recognised for its leadership in 5G/6G research, digital innovation, and telecommunications.
- Finland is home to Nokia, one of the world's leading telecommunications technology companies.
- India and Finland are expanding cooperation in AI, quantum computing, semiconductors, clean technologies, and digital infrastructure as part of future-oriented economic engagement.
- The India–EU FTA is expected to strengthen India's trade and investment ties with all 27 EU member states.
- Finland consistently ranks among the world's leading countries in innovation, education, digital governance, and sustainability.

India–Poland Cooperation

- India and Poland have agreed to strengthen bilateral cooperation in the Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector during high-level bilateral talks held in New Delhi.
- The meeting was attended by a Polish delegation led by Deputy Minister of Economic Development and Technology Michał Baranowski, while the Indian side was led by MSME Secretary Bharat Khara. Both countries discussed expanding collaboration in digital transformation, innovation, technology adoption, sustainable manufacturing, startup ecosystems, and market access to make MSMEs globally competitive.

India's MSME Sector:

- India has over 8.6 crore (86 million) registered MSMEs.
- The sector contributes around 30% of India's GDP.
- MSMEs account for nearly 45% of India's exports.
- The sector provides employment to approximately 33 crore (330 million) people, making it one of the country's largest employment generators.

Key Government Initiatives for MSMEs:

- Udyam Registration Portal – Online registration platform for MSMEs.
- Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) – Provides collateral-free credit support.
- Zero Defect Zero Effect (ZED) Certification Scheme – Promotes quality manufacturing with minimal environmental impact.
- MSME Technology Centres – Enhance skill development, product design, and technology support.
- Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance (RAMP) Programme – World Bank-supported initiative to improve MSME competitiveness.
- PM Vishwakarma Scheme – Supports traditional artisans and craftspeople through credit, skilling, and market linkages.

About the Ministry of MSME:

- Administrative Ministry: Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises.
- Cabinet Minister: Jitan Ram Manjhi.
- The Ministry is responsible for the promotion, development, and competitiveness of MSMEs through policy support, finance, technology upgradation, and entrepreneurship development.

About Poland:

- Capital: Warsaw.

Exam Focus Points:

- Countries: India and Poland.
- Sector: MSMEs.
- Venue: New Delhi.
- Indian Representative: Bharat Khara.
- Polish Representative: Michał Baranowski.
- Key Areas: Digital transformation, innovation, sustainable manufacturing, technology adoption, market access.
- Registered MSMEs in India: Over 8.6 crore.
- Contribution to GDP: Around 30%.
- Employment: Around 33 crore people.
- Key Schemes: Udyam Registration, CGTMSE, ZED Certification, RAMP Programme, PM Vishwakarma.
- MSME Day: 27 June.
- MSMED Act: 2006.
- Capital of Poland: Warsaw.
- Currency: Polish Złoty (PLN).

- Currency: Polish Złoty (PLN).
- Official Language: Polish.
- President: Karol Nawrocki
- Prime Minister: Donald Tusk.
- Member Of: European Union (EU), NATO, OECD, and Schengen Area.

Additional Key Facts:

- MSME Day is observed annually on 27 June, as designated by the United Nations General Assembly in 2017.
- The MSMED Act, 2006 provides the legal framework for the promotion and development of MSMEs in India.
- The revised MSME classification (effective 1 July 2020) is based on investment in plant & machinery/equipment and annual turnover.
- Poland is one of India's most important partners in Central and Eastern Europe, with growing cooperation in manufacturing, clean technologies, defence, food processing, mining, and education.
- India and Poland maintain regular engagement through the Joint Commission on Economic Cooperation (JCEC) to strengthen bilateral trade and investment.

India's Trial Index of Services Production

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has released India's first trial Index of Services Production (ISP) with 2024–25 as the base year.

Key Highlights

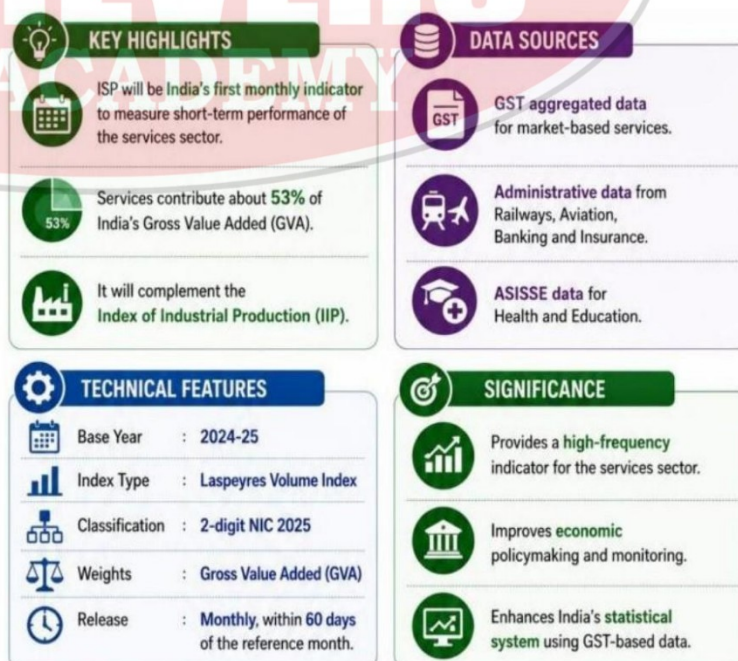
- The trial index covers 19 formal services sub-sectors, accounting for about 60% of India's services economy.
- 14 out of 19 sub-sectors recorded double-digit year-on-year growth in April 2026.
- The overall ISP will be introduced after expanding coverage and assessing the stability of the trial series.
- Sub-sectoral indices will be released on the 29th of every month.
- Sector-wise Performance

Top-performing sectors:

- Accommodation & Food Services – 37.2%
- Retail Trade – 30.8%
- Administrative & Support Services – 28.7%
- Real Estate – 27.7%
- Telecommunications – 22.8%
- Banking – 12.2%

Declining sectors:

- Air Transport – –13.9%
- Railway Transport – –0.4%
- Major Weightage in ISP
- Wholesale & Retail Trade – 23%
- Information & Banking-related Services – 22.5%
- Administrative & Support Services – 15%
- Banking – 11%
- Road Transport – 7.68%
- Accommodation & Food Services – 4.27%
- Telecommunications – 3.24%
- These eight sectors account for 86.8% of the trial ISP.



Background

- The services sector contributes more than 50% of India's economic activity.
- India previously had the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) for manufacturing but lacked a monthly production index for services.
- The ISP has been introduced to improve high-frequency measurement of services sector performance.

About MoSPI

- Full Name: Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation.
- Function: Nodal ministry for official statistics and programme implementation in India.
- Key Role: Conducts national surveys and releases major economic indicators such as GDP, CPI, and IIP.
- New Initiative: Trial Index of Services Production (ISP).
- Other Recent Statistical Initiatives
- MoSPI has adopted 2024–25 as the new base year for the trial ISP.
- The ministry plans to expand the ISP's coverage beyond the current 60% before launching the overall index.

Exam Focus Points

- Ministry: Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)
- Index: Index of Services Production (ISP)
- Base Year: 2024–25
- Coverage: 19 formal services sub-sectors
- Current Coverage: About 60% of the services economy
- Purpose: High-frequency measurement of India's services sector
- Highest Growth Sector: Accommodation & Food Services (37.2%)
- Release Frequency: 29th of every month (sub-sectoral indices)

India–UK CETA Comes into Force

The India–UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) came into effect on 16 July 2026, marking one of India's most significant Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with a developed economy. The agreement aims to boost bilateral trade, investment, market access, and economic cooperation between the two countries.

Key Highlights:

Implementation of CETA:

- It is the sixth Free Trade Agreement (FTA) implemented during the Narendra Modi government's tenure.
- It is among India's first major trade agreements with a developed economy in recent years.

Objective of the Agreement:

- Increase bilateral trade and investment.
- Provide greater market access for goods and services.
- Reduce or eliminate tariffs on several products.
- Strengthen supply chains and global value chain integration.
- Enhance economic cooperation between India and the UK.

Benefits for India:

Duty-free access to the UK market for labour-intensive products such as:

- Textiles & garments
- Footwear
- Carpets
- Processed food
- Cereals
- Fruits & vegetables
- Spices

- Fish and meat products

Boost to exports of:

- Automobiles & auto components
- Engineering goods
- Electronics
- Machinery
- Ceramics, glass, stone and cement products
- Indian IT companies will benefit through the Double Contribution Convention, exempting employees posted in the UK from paying social security contributions for up to five years.

Benefits for Consumers in India:

Lower tariffs on UK products will make imports more affordable, including:

- Scotch whisky
- Salmon and lamb
- Chocolates
- Cosmetics and perfumes
- Soft drinks
- Electronics
- Machinery

Major Tariff Reductions:

- Import duty on Scotch Whisky reduced from 150% to 75% initially, and to 40% over 10 years.
- Tariff on UK-made cars reduced gradually from 110% to 10%.
- Import duty on silver will be reduced to zero over 10 years.
- Duty on UK trucks reduced from 44% to 8.8% in phases.
- Products Excluded by India

India has excluded:

- Fresh apples
- Walnuts
- Whey products
- Blue-veined cheese
- Gold bars
- Smartphones
- Certain seeds
- UK Exclusion List

The UK excluded:

- Meat products
- Egg-based products
- Rice
- Cane and beet sugar
- Trade & Investment Highlights
- Bilateral Trade (2025–26): USD 25.12 billion
- India's Exports: USD 13.44 billion

KEY HIGHLIGHTS			
	The UK will eliminate tariffs on 96.8% of tariff lines (covering 97.7% of trade value) immediately.		India will remove tariffs on 30.3% of trade value immediately, with further reductions phased over time.
	Covers 30 chapters , including: - Digital Trade - Government Procurement - MSMEs - Labour - Environment - Gender - Innovation		Addresses SPS (Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures) and TBT (Technical Barriers to Trade) to reduce non-tariff barriers.
	India has protected sensitive sectors such as dairy, cereals, pulses, vegetables, gold & jewellery, smartphones, and critical polymers.		Under the DCC, Indian professionals working in the UK for up to 5 years will be exempt from paying UK social security if they are already contributing in India, benefiting: 75,000+ workers 900+ employers

- India's Imports: USD 11.68 billion
- UK FDI into India (2025–26): USD 1 billion

Significance:

- Strengthens the India–UK strategic economic partnership.
- Improves competitiveness of Indian exports.
- Enhances India's participation in global value chains.
- Promotes employment in labour-intensive industries.
- Supports the Government's export-led growth strategy.
- Makes premium UK products more affordable for Indian consumers.

Background:

- The India–UK FTA negotiations began in 2022.
- The agreement was concluded in 2026 after multiple rounds of negotiations.
- The UK is among India's major trading partners in Europe.

India has previously signed FTAs with:

- UAE
- Australia
- Mauritius
- European Free Trade Association (EFTA)

About Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA):

- Type: Free Trade Agreement (FTA)
- Countries: India and the United Kingdom
- Implemented: 16 July 2026

Coverage:

- Trade in Goods
- Trade in Services
- Investment
- Government Procurement
- Intellectual Property Rights (IPR)
- Digital Trade
- Labour Mobility
- Rules of Origin

Other Key Provisions:

Government Procurement:

- UK firms will gain access to around 40,000 high-value procurement contracts floated by Indian central ministries.

Intellectual Property Rights (IPR):

- India retained the right to use Compulsory Licensing.
- No patent-term extension or pharmaceutical data exclusivity was accepted.

Steel Trade:

- India's steel exports may face challenges due to the UK's new steel safeguard measures introduced in 2026.

Exam Focus Points:

- Agreement: India–UK Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA)
- Implemented On: 16 July 2026
- Purpose: Increase bilateral trade and investment, reduce tariffs, improve market access, strengthen supply chains, and promote economic cooperation.
- Partner Countries: India and the United Kingdom
- Major Beneficiaries: Textiles, garments, footwear, engineering goods, automobiles, IT services, agriculture, marine products.
- Social Security Benefit: Indian professionals exempt from UK social security contributions for 5 years.
- Bilateral Trade (2025–26): USD 25.12 billion
- FDI from UK (2025–26): USD 1 billion

India–New Zealand Strategic Partnership

- India and New Zealand have signed five Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) covering defence, animal husbandry and dairy, tourism, sports, and disaster management following delegation-level talks between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon in Auckland.
- The agreements aim to strengthen bilateral cooperation in strategic, economic, and people-to-people sectors while enhancing collaboration in the Indo-Pacific region.
- The visit marks the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to New Zealand in nearly 40 years.

Five MoUs Signed:

Defence Cooperation:

- Memorandum of Arrangement between the Ministry of Defence (India) and the New Zealand Defence Force.
- Focus on maritime cooperation, defence exchanges, and Indo-Pacific security.
- Animal Husbandry and Dairy: Cooperation in livestock management, dairy research, innovation, and exchange of best practices.
- Tourism Cooperation: Promotion of tourism, visitor exchanges, and collaboration between tourism stakeholders.
- Joint Action Plan on Sports: Cooperation in sports development, athlete exchanges, coaching, and sports administration.
- Disaster Management: Collaboration in disaster preparedness, emergency response, risk reduction, and resilience building.

India–New Zealand Relations:

- Diplomatic Relations: Established in 1952.
- Strategic Partnership: Relations elevated to a Strategic Partnership during the Prime Ministerial visit.
- First Indian PM Visit: First visit by an Indian Prime Minister to New Zealand in about 40 years.

Both countries cooperate in:

- Indo-Pacific security
- Trade and investment
- Agriculture and dairy
- Education
- Science & Technology
- Sports
- Climate and disaster resilience.
- Defence Cooperation

About New Zealand:

- Capital: Wellington.
- Largest City: Auckland.
- Currency: New Zealand Dollar (NZD).
- Parliament: Unicameral Parliament (House of Representatives).
- Neighbouring Water Bodies: Tasman Sea and South Pacific Ocean.

Other Recent Bilateral Developments:

- Free Trade Agreement (FTA): Signed in April 2026 to boost bilateral trade.

TRADE & ECONOMY
Aspirational target to double bilateral trade to NZ\$7 billion by 2030 and fast-track FTA

DEFENCE & SECURITY
Expand defence cooperation, maritime security, cyber security and counter-terrorism efforts

EDUCATION & INNOVATION
Stronger partnerships in education, research, science, technology and digital innovation

PEOPLE & CULTURE
Boost tourism, sports, cultural exchanges and diaspora connections

REGIONAL & GLOBAL COOPERATION
Work together for a rules-based Indo-Pacific, climate action and stronger multilateral engagement

Exam Focus Points:

- Countries: India and New Zealand.
- Venue: Auckland, New Zealand.
- Leaders: Narendra Modi and Christopher Luxon.
- MoUs Signed: Five.
- Key Sectors: Defence, animal husbandry & dairy, tourism, sports, and disaster management.
- Defence Focus: Maritime cooperation and Indo-Pacific security.
- Diplomatic Relations: 1952.
- First Indian PM Visit in: Nearly 40 years.
- Capital of New Zealand: Wellington.
- Currency: New Zealand Dollar (NZD).

- International Solar Alliance (ISA): New Zealand has ratified the ISA Framework Agreement.
- Customs Cooperation Arrangement: Signed to facilitate trade and improve customs cooperation.

India–Tajikistan 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–Australia Uranium & Critical Minerals Cooperation

- 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

Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) and Free Trade Agreement (FTA)

- India and the Maldives have reaffirmed their commitment to expedite the signing of the Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) and conclude the proposed Free Trade Agreement (FTA).
- The commitment was reiterated during a meeting between Union Minister of Commerce and Industry Piyush Goyal and Maldives' Minister of Economic Development and Trade Mohamed Saeed in New Delhi.
- Both sides agreed to deepen cooperation in trade, tourism, startups, digital payments, MSMEs, and investment, while celebrating 60 years of diplomatic relations between the two countries in 2026.

What is a Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT)?

A Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) is an agreement between two countries that provides legal protection and promotion for investments made by investors of one country in the other.

Objectives:

- Promote foreign direct investment (FDI).
- Protect investors against arbitrary government action.
- Ensure fair and equitable treatment of investments.
- Provide dispute resolution mechanisms.
- Increase investor confidence and economic cooperation.

What is a Free Trade Agreement (FTA)?

A Free Trade Agreement (FTA) is an agreement between two or more countries to reduce or eliminate tariffs and non-tariff barriers on goods and services, thereby promoting bilateral trade.

Key Features:

- Reduction or elimination of customs duties.
- Easier market access.
- Promotion of trade in goods and services.
- Facilitation of investment flows.
- Strengthening economic integration.

India–Maldives Relations:

India and the Maldives enjoy close relations based on the principles of Neighbourhood First Policy, Vision MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions), and cooperation in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

Key Facts

- Diplomatic Relations Established: 1966.
- India was among the first countries to recognise the Maldives after its independence.
- High Commission of India: Malé.
- High Commission of Maldives: New Delhi.
- Shared Maritime Boundary: Indian Ocean.

Major Areas of Cooperation

- Trade and Investment.
- Defence and Maritime Security.
- Tourism.
- Digital Public Infrastructure (including UPI integration).
- Healthcare.
- Capacity Building.
- Disaster Management.
- Renewable Energy.
- Fisheries.
- Blue Economy.

Recent India–Maldives Cooperation:

- Greater Malé Connectivity Project (GMCP): India's largest infrastructure project in the Maldives, funded through a Line of Credit and grant assistance.
- Unified Payments Interface (UPI): India is supporting the adoption of UPI-based digital payment systems in the Maldives.
- Operation Cactus (1988): India successfully intervened to foil a coup attempt in the Maldives, demonstrating its role as a regional security provider.
- India remains one of the Maldives' largest development and infrastructure partners.

About the Maldives:

- Official Name: Republic of Maldives.
- Capital: Malé.
- Currency: Maldivian Rufiyaa (MVR).
- President: Mohamed Muizzu.

Hierarchy of Trade Agreements



Exam Focus Points:

- Countries: India and Maldives.
- Major Agreements: Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) and proposed Free Trade Agreement (FTA).
- Indian Minister: Piyush Goyal.
- Maldivian Minister: Mohamed Saeed.
- Year of Diplomatic Relations: 1966.
- 60 Years of Relations: 2026.
- Key Areas: Trade, Investment, Tourism, Startups, Digital Payments, MSMEs.
- India's Policy: Neighbourhood First Policy.
- Regional Vision: MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions).
- Flagship Connectivity Project: Greater Malé Connectivity Project (GMCP).

- Location: Indian Ocean.

Major Regional Groupings:

SAARC.

- Commonwealth of Nations.
- Indian Ocean Rim cooperation initiatives.
- United Nations.

India–Saudi Water Cooperation

- India and Saudi Arabia signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on cooperation in water resources during the Saudi Water Week held in Jeddah.
- The agreement was signed by India's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia, Dr. Suhel Khan, and Saudi Arabia's Minister of Environment, Water and Agriculture, Eng. Abdulrahman Abdulmohsen Al-Fadley.
- The MoU aims to strengthen bilateral cooperation in water resources planning, sustainable water management, modern irrigation systems, capacity building, and exchange of technical expertise and best practices. It marks another milestone in the growing India–Saudi Arabia Strategic Partnership.



What is the India–Saudi Arabia Water Resources MoU?

The MoU is a bilateral agreement aimed at enhancing cooperation in sustainable water resource management through knowledge sharing, technology transfer, and institutional collaboration.

Objectives

- Promote sustainable management of water resources.
- Improve water-use efficiency.
- Strengthen irrigation and water conservation practices.
- Enhance capacity building and technical cooperation.
- Exchange best practices in water governance.
- Improve long-term water security.

Key Areas of Cooperation:

- Water resources planning
- Sustainable water management
- Modern irrigation technologies
- Capacity building and skill development
- Research and technical collaboration
- Exchange of experts and best practices
- Water conservation and efficiency
- Institutional cooperation

Additional Key Facts:

India–Saudi Arabia Relations:

- Diplomatic Relations Established: 1947

- Strategic Partnership Council (SPC): Established in 2019 during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Saudi Arabia.
- Saudi Arabia is one of India's largest trading partners and a major supplier of crude oil.

Key areas of cooperation:

- Energy security
- Trade and investment
- Defence and security
- Digital technology
- Renewable energy
- Food security
- Water resource management

Strategic Partnership Council (SPC):

- Established: 2019
- Co-Chaired by: Prime Minister of India and Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia.

Purpose:

- Strengthen strategic cooperation.
- Promote economic and investment partnerships.
- Enhance cooperation in defence, energy, technology, and sustainability.

Saudi Water Week:

A major international platform hosted in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

Focuses on:

- Water sustainability
- Water security
- Desalination technologies
- Innovation in water management
- International collaboration

Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM):

A globally accepted approach promoted by the United Nations.

Seeks coordinated development and management of:

- Water
- Land
- Related natural resources

Objective:

- Maximise economic and social welfare.
- Ensure environmental sustainability.

Jal Shakti Ministry:

Established: 2019

Formed by merging:

- Ministry of Water Resources, River Development & Ganga Rejuvenation
- Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation
- Cabinet Minister: C. R. Patil

Exam Focus Points (Quick Revision Notes)

- Agreement in News: India–Saudi Arabia MoU on Water Resources
- Signed During: Saudi Water Week
- Venue: Jeddah, Saudi Arabia
- Indian Signatory: Dr. Suhel Khan (Ambassador to Saudi Arabia)
- Saudi Signatory: Eng. Abdulrahman Abdulmohsen Al-Fadley
- Focus Areas: Water planning, sustainable water management, irrigation, capacity building
- Related Ministry (India): Ministry of Jal Shakti
- Strategic Mechanism: India–Saudi Arabia Strategic Partnership Council (2019)
- Related Concepts: Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), Water Security

Jal Jeevan Mission (JJM):

- Launched: 2019
- Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Jal Shakti

Objective:

- Provide Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTCs) to all rural households.
- Improve rural drinking water security.

Atal Bhujal Yojana (Atal Jal):

- Launched: 2019
- Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Jal Shakti

Objective:

- Sustainable groundwater management.
- Community participation in groundwater conservation.
- Implemented in seven water-stressed states.

Real-Time Forex Settlement via UPI

- The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) has partnered with HSBC India and J.P. Morgan Payments to enable real-time foreign exchange (FX) conversion and settlement for international Unified Payments Interface (UPI) transactions.
- Under the new arrangement, Indian users making UPI payments abroad will be able to view the exact amount payable in Indian Rupees before confirming the transaction, ensuring greater transparency and eliminating uncertainty due to fluctuating exchange rates. The initiative is expected to make cross-border digital payments faster, more efficient, and user-friendly, while strengthening UPI's global expansion.
- The collaboration combines NPCI's global UPI network with the foreign exchange capabilities of HSBC India and J.P. Morgan Payments.
- While overseas merchants will continue to receive payments in their local currencies, Indian customers will benefit from real-time exchange rates, faster settlement, and improved pricing transparency. The initiative comes as UPI continues to expand globally, with Cambodia becoming the ninth country to accept UPI payments. International UPI transaction volumes crossed 1 million for the first time in FY26, reflecting the growing adoption of India's digital payment ecosystem worldwide.

What is Real-Time FX Settlement?

Real-Time Foreign Exchange (FX) Settlement allows the instant conversion of one currency into another at the prevailing exchange rate during an international payment transaction.

Benefits

- Displays the exact payable amount before payment.
- Eliminates exchange-rate uncertainty.
- Faster settlement of international transactions.
- Improves transparency and customer convenience.
- Promotes seamless cross-border digital payments.

Additional Key Facts

- Unified Payments Interface (UPI):
- Launched: 2016
- Developed By: National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)
- Regulated By: Reserve Bank of India (RBI)

Features

- Real-time bank-to-bank fund transfer.
- 24×7 digital payment system.
- Supports Person-to-Person (P2P) and Person-to-Merchant (P2M) transactions.
- One of the world's largest real-time payment systems.

How an overseas UPI payment works



National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI):

- Established: 2008
- Headquarters: Mumbai
- Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer: Mr. Dilip Asbe
- Promoted by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Indian Banks' Association (IBA).

Operates retail payment systems including:

- UPI
- RuPay
- IMPS
- BHIM
- NACH
- FASTag

NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL):

- International subsidiary of NPCI.
- Promotes UPI and RuPay globally.
- Expands India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) to other countries.
- Managing Director & Chief Executive Officer: Mr Ritesh Shukla

Exam Focus Points:

- Organisation: National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)
- Partner Banks: HSBC India & J.P. Morgan Payments
- Objective: Real-time FX conversion and settlement for overseas UPI payments
- Key Benefit: Exact INR amount shown before payment
- Technology: Real-time Foreign Exchange (FX) settlement
- UPI Launched: 2016
- NPCI Established: 2008
- Regulator: Reserve Bank of India (RBI)
- Global Expansion: UPI accepted in 9 countries

Foreign Exchange (Forex):

Foreign Exchange (Forex) refers to the conversion of one country's currency into another for international trade, travel, investment, and remittances.

Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)

India's Digital Public Infrastructure comprises:

- Aadhaar – Digital Identity.
- UPI – Digital Payments.
- DigiLocker – Digital Documents.
- Account Aggregator Framework – Data Sharing.
- India's DPI model is increasingly being adopted by several countries.

Sunset Clause in India–US Trade Deal

Why is it in News?

India and the United States are discussing the inclusion of a Sunset Clause in their proposed bilateral trade agreement. The clause would allow the agreement to be reviewed, renewed, or terminated after a fixed period, making it adaptable to changing economic and strategic conditions.

What is a Sunset Clause?

- A Sunset Clause is a legal provision in a law, policy, or agreement that sets a predefined expiry date. Once this period ends, the law or agreement automatically ceases to be effective unless it is renewed or extended by the concerned parties.
- In simple terms, it ensures that a policy or agreement does not continue indefinitely without periodic review.

Key Features

- Fixes a time limit for the validity of an agreement or law.
- Requires periodic review before renewal.
- Allows governments to amend, renegotiate, extend, or terminate the agreement based on changing circumstances.
- Prevents outdated provisions from remaining in force indefinitely.
- Improves accountability and policy flexibility.

History of the Sunset Clause

- The concept of a sunset clause has existed in legal systems for several centuries, especially in the United Kingdom and the United States, where temporary laws were enacted during wars or emergencies.
- Its modern use expanded during the 20th century, particularly after the 1970s, when governments increasingly began using time-bound legislation to ensure periodic legislative oversight.
- Since then, sunset clauses have become common in trade agreements, taxation laws, emergency powers, environmental regulations, and national security legislation.
- In international trade, the clause gained wider attention after being proposed in the renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which later became the United States–Mexico–Canada Agreement (USMCA).

Exam Focus Points

- Topic: Sunset Clause
- Context: Proposed India–US Trade Agreement
- Definition: Legal provision that sets an expiry date for a law, policy, or agreement unless renewed
- Purpose: Periodic review, renewal, amendment, or termination of an agreement
- Validity: Effective only for a fixed period specified in the agreement
- First Major Modern Use: Widely adopted in the 20th century for temporary laws and emergency legislation

Why is it Important?

- Keeps trade agreements aligned with changing economic realities.
- Allows countries to respond to technological advancements, geopolitical developments, and market changes.
- Encourages periodic dialogue and cooperation between partner countries.
- Prevents countries from being locked into outdated commitments.

- Increases transparency and ensures agreements continue to serve national interests.

Possible Advantages

- Ensures regular evaluation of the agreement.
- Provides flexibility to modify trade rules.
- Protects national economic interests.
- Helps address new trade challenges and emerging sectors.
- Promotes accountability in long-term agreements.

Possible Concerns

- Frequent renewal requirements may create uncertainty for investors and businesses.
- Companies may hesitate to make long-term investments if the agreement's future is unclear.
- Repeated negotiations can become politically sensitive and time-consuming.

Eurobank Launches UPI Remittance Service

- Eurobank, one of Greece's leading banks, has launched a Unified Payments Interface (UPI)-based cross-border remittance service for money transfers from Greece to India.
- The service has been introduced under a strategic collaboration with NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL), the international arm of the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).
- It enables eligible customers in Greece to transfer money to India instantly, securely, and at significantly lower transaction costs using the UPI platform.
- Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal described the launch as another milestone in the global expansion of India's digital payment ecosystem. During his visit to Greece, he also met Eurobank CEO Fokion Karavias to discuss strengthening India-Greece economic relations, encouraging Greek investments in India, and expanding cooperation in manufacturing and infrastructure. Greece has become one of the latest European countries to integrate with India's UPI ecosystem, reflecting the growing international acceptance of India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI).

What is UPI (Unified Payments Interface)?

UPI is a real-time digital payment system developed by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) that enables instant bank-to-bank fund transfers using mobile devices.

Objectives:

- Facilitate instant digital payments.
- Promote a cashless economy.
- Enable interoperable payment services.
- Support secure domestic and cross-border transactions.

Key Features:

- Instant 24×7 fund transfers.
- Interoperable across banks.
- Supports Person-to-Person (P2P) and Person-to-Merchant (P2M) transactions.
- QR code-based and UPI ID-based payments.
- Low-cost and secure payment system.

What is NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL)?

NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL) is the international subsidiary of NPCI, established to expand India's digital payment systems globally.

Functions:

- Internationalisation of UPI.
- Global acceptance of RuPay cards.
- Cross-border remittance solutions.
- Partnerships with foreign banks and payment networks.

Additional Key Facts:

- National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI):
- Established: 2008
- Promoted by: Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and Indian Banks' Association (IBA)
- Headquarters: Mumbai

Operates:

- UPI
- RuPay
- IMPS

Unified Payments Interface (UPI)

- Launched: 2016
- Developer: NPCI
- Regulated by: Reserve Bank of India (RBI)
- Built on the Immediate Payment Service (IMPS) infrastructure.
- Considered one of the world's largest real-time payment systems.

India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI):

The three pillars of India's DPI are:

- Aadhaar – Digital Identity
- UPI – Digital Payments
- DigiLocker – Digital Document Storage
- India is increasingly exporting DPI solutions to partner countries through international collaborations.

India–Greece Relations

- Diplomatic Relations Established: 1950
- Greece is an important gateway connecting India with Europe and the Mediterranean region.

Key areas of cooperation:

- Trade and investment
- Shipping and maritime services
- Renewable energy
- Digital payments and fintech
- Infrastructure

India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC):

- Announced during the G20 Summit 2023 in New Delhi.
- Connects India, the Middle East, and Europe through integrated rail, ports, shipping, energy, and digital connectivity.
- Greece is expected to play an important role as a European gateway for the corridor.

Exam Focus Points (Quick Revision Notes):

- Development in News: UPI-based remittance service launched in Greece
- Bank: Eurobank
- Partner Organisation: NPCI International Payments Limited (NIPL)
- Payment System: Unified Payments Interface (UPI)
- Country: Greece
- Purpose: Instant and low-cost cross-border remittances to India
- UPI Launched: 2016
- Developer: NPCI
- Regulator: Reserve Bank of India (RBI)
- Related Initiative: Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)
- Strategic Corridor: India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)

Defence & Security

Samudra Pradakshina

- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh flagged in 'Samudra Pradakshina', India's first-ever Tri-Service all-women circumnavigation sailing expedition, marking the successful completion of a 314-day global voyage.
- Aboard the Indian Army Sailing Vessel (IASV) Triveni, nine women officers from the Indian Army, Indian Navy, and Indian Air Force returned to Mumbai after sailing nearly 25,500 nautical miles across four oceans, symbolising Nari Shakti, Tri-Service jointness, and Aatmanirbhar Bharat.

What is Circumnavigation?

- Circumnavigation refers to a voyage that completely circles the Earth by crossing all major meridians and returning to the starting point while meeting internationally recognised sailing criteria.
- Requirements for Global Circumnavigation
- Cross all longitudes.
- Cross the Equator.
- Cross the International Date Line.
- Sail continuously around the globe.
- Round the major capes where applicable.

IASV Triveni:

- IASV Triveni (Indian Army Sailing Vessel Triveni) is an indigenously built 50-foot sailing vessel used for long-distance ocean expeditions and adventure sailing.

Features

- Indigenous design and construction.
- Long-range ocean sailing capability.
- High endurance.
- Navigation through extreme weather.
- Supports adventure and military sailing missions.

What is Tri-Service Jointness?

Tri-Service Jointness refers to the integrated functioning of the Indian Army, Indian Navy, and Indian Air Force for planning, training, logistics, and operations to improve combat effectiveness and resource utilisation.

Military Diplomacy:

Military diplomacy refers to the use of defence cooperation, military exchanges, joint exercises, port visits, and humanitarian missions to strengthen international relations.

Importance:

- Builds strategic partnerships.
- Enhances defence cooperation.
- Promotes goodwill.
- Strengthens India's maritime outreach.
- Supports India's foreign policy objectives.

Three Great Capes:

Cape	Location
Cape of Good Hope	South Africa

Cape Leeuwin	Australia
Cape Horn	Chile

These capes are among the most challenging maritime routes in the world and are important milestones in global circumnavigation.

Drake Passage:

- The Drake Passage is a narrow stretch of sea between Cape Horn (South America) and Antarctica, connecting the Atlantic Ocean and the Pacific Ocean.

Importance

- One of the roughest sea passages in the world.
- Known for strong winds and massive waves.
- Important route for global circumnavigation.

International Date Line (IDL):

- The International Date Line is an imaginary line located roughly along 180° longitude in the Pacific Ocean.

Importance

- Crossing it changes the calendar date by one day.
- Used for international timekeeping.

Important Maritime Expeditions of India:

- Navika Sagar Parikrama-I (2017–18) – First all-women Indian Navy circumnavigation.
- Navika Sagar Parikrama-II (2024–25) – Two-woman global circumnavigation aboard INSV Tarini.
- Samudra Pradakshina (2025–26) – First-ever Tri-Service all-women circumnavigation aboard IASV Triveni.

Cape Horners

- The Cape Horners fraternity comprises sailors who have successfully rounded Cape Horn, one of the world's most challenging maritime routes.

Exam Focus Points:

- Expedition: Samudra Pradakshina.
- Type: First-ever Tri-Service all-women circumnavigation sailing expedition.
- Flagged In By: Rajnath Singh.
- Vessel: IASV Triveni.
- Crew: Nine women officers from Army, Navy, and Air Force.
- Duration: 314 days.
- Distance Covered: Approximately 25,500 nautical miles.
- Major Achievements: Crossed the Equator twice, crossed the International Date Line, rounded the Three Great Capes, navigated the Drake Passage.
- Theme: Nari Shakti, Tri-Service Jointness, Aatmanirbhar Bharat.
- Related Concept: Military Diplomacy.

Kusha LRSAM

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully conducted the maiden flight test of the indigenous Long-Range Surface-to-Air Missile (LRSAM) 'Kusha' from Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam Island, off the coast of Odisha.
- The missile successfully intercepted a high-speed, high-altitude electronic aerial target, marking a significant milestone in India's efforts to develop an indigenous long-range air defence system.

About Project Kusha:

- Project Kusha is an indigenous Long-Range Surface-to-Air Missile (LRSAM) programme being developed by DRDO to provide area air defence against a wide spectrum of aerial threats.

Major Features:

- Long-range interception capability.
- Multi-target engagement.
- Network-centric operations.
- All-weather capability.
- High mobility.

- Integrated command and control.
- Indigenous radar and fire-control systems.

What is a Surface-to-Air Missile (SAM)?

- A Surface-to-Air Missile (SAM) is a missile launched from the ground to intercept and destroy hostile aerial targets.

Targets:

- Aircraft.
- Helicopters.
- Cruise missiles.
- Drones.
- Airborne warning and surveillance aircraft.

Exam Focus Point:

- Missile: Kusha Long-Range Surface-to-Air Missile (LRSAM).
- Developer: DRDO.
- First Flight Test: 23 July 2026.
- Test Site: Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam Island, Odisha.
- Type: Long-Range Surface-to-Air Missile.
- Targets: Aircraft, cruise missiles, UAVs and AEW&C aircraft.
- Administrative Ministry: Ministry of Defence.
- Related Initiative: Aatmanirbhar Bharat.
- Missile Testing Facility: Integrated Test Range (ITR), Odisha.
- Comparison: Indigenous long-range air defence system complementing India's layered air defence.

Types of Air Defence Missiles

Type	Typical Range	Example
Very Short Range (VSHORAD)	Up to 10 km	VSHORADS
Short Range (SRSAM)	10–40 km	VL-SRSAM
Medium Range (MRSAM)	40–100 km	MRSAM (Barak-8)
Long Range (LRSAM)	Above 100 km	Kusha

Comparison: Kusha vs S-400

Feature	Kusha	S-400 Triumph
Origin	India	Russia
Developer	DRDO	Almaz-Antey
Type	Long-Range Surface-to-Air Missile	Long-Range Surface-to-Air Missile
Purpose	Air defence against aircraft, cruise missiles and drones	Multi-layered air defence including aircraft, cruise missiles and certain ballistic missile threats
Status	Under development and testing	Operational with Indian Air Force

Note: Kusha is often described as India's indigenous counterpart to the S-400 in terms of long-range air defence, but it is not designed as a dedicated ballistic missile interceptor.

Air Defence Systems of India:

System	Origin	Range Category
Akash	India	Medium Range
Akash-NG	India	Medium Range (Next Generation)
MRSAM (Barak-8)	India–Israel	Medium Range
VL-SRSAM	India	Short Range
QRSAM	India	Quick Reaction
Kusha	India	Long Range
S-400 Triumph	Russia	Long Range

Related DRDO Missile Programmes:

- Akash Missile System.
- Akash-NG.
- QRSAM (Quick Reaction Surface-to-Air Missile).

- VL-SRSAM.
- Astra Air-to-Air Missile.
- BrahMos Supersonic Cruise Missile.
- Pralay Quasi-Ballistic Missile.
- Agni Ballistic Missile Series.
- Pinaka Multi-Barrel Rocket Launcher.

US–Saudi Civil Nuclear Deal

Why is it in News?

The United States and Saudi Arabia have signed a civil nuclear cooperation agreement to strengthen bilateral ties and support Saudi Arabia's peaceful nuclear energy programme. The agreement aims to help Saudi Arabia diversify its energy sources while ensuring that nuclear technology is used only for peaceful purposes.

Background & Significance:

- Saudi Arabia is seeking to develop nuclear energy as part of its Vision 2030 programme to reduce dependence on oil and meet its growing electricity demand.
- The United States has been negotiating a nuclear cooperation agreement with Saudi Arabia for several years.
- The deal comes amid growing competition among major powers, particularly the US and China, for strategic influence in the Middle East.
- Civil nuclear cooperation can help Saudi Arabia generate clean electricity and support industrial development while reducing carbon emissions.

Key Highlights:

- Partner Countries: United States and Saudi Arabia.
- Type of Agreement: Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement.
- Objective: Develop Saudi Arabia's peaceful nuclear energy programme.

Key Areas of Cooperation:

- Nuclear technology and technical expertise.
- Capacity building and workforce training.
- Nuclear safety and security.
- Development of civilian nuclear infrastructure.
- Both countries reaffirmed that cooperation will be for peaceful civilian purposes and in line with international nuclear safety standards.

Why is it Important?

- Strengthens the US–Saudi strategic partnership.
- Supports Saudi Arabia's Vision 2030 economic diversification plan.
- Promotes clean energy through nuclear power.
- Reinforces US influence in the Middle East amid increasing Chinese engagement in the region.
- Highlights the growing global importance of civil nuclear energy in achieving energy security and reducing carbon emissions.

About Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement

A Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement is an agreement between two or more countries to cooperate in the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

It generally includes:

- Exchange of nuclear technology and expertise.
- Development of nuclear power plants.

- Training of scientists and engineers.
- Nuclear safety and security measures.
- Supply of nuclear fuel, equipment, and related technology (subject to international rules).

About Saudi Vision 2030

- Launched: 2016
- Launched by: Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS)
- Objective: Diversify Saudi Arabia's economy and reduce dependence on oil.

Major Focus Areas:

- Renewable and nuclear energy.
- Industrial development.
- Tourism and infrastructure.
- Foreign investment.
- Technology and innovation.

Way Forward

- Ensure that nuclear cooperation fully complies with International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguards and non-proliferation norms.
- Promote transparency in nuclear activities to build international confidence.
- Expand cooperation in clean energy technologies while maintaining the highest standards of nuclear safety and security.

Saudi Arabia

- Capital: Riyadh
- Currency: Saudi Riyal
- King: Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud
- Continent: Asia

Exam Focus Points:

- Partner Countries: United States and Saudi Arabia.
- Agreement: Civil Nuclear Cooperation Agreement.
- Purpose: Peaceful use of nuclear energy.
- Related Programme: Saudi Vision 2030.
- International Organisation: International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).
- Key Objective: Energy diversification, clean energy, and reduced dependence on oil.

INS Malvan

Why is it in News?

The Indian Navy has commissioned INS Malvan, the second Mahe-class Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft (ASW-SWC), at Karwar Naval Base, Karnataka. The warship will strengthen India's ability to detect and neutralise enemy submarines operating in shallow coastal waters.

Background & Significance:

- India's coastline of over 7,500 km and growing maritime interests require a strong coastal defence network.
- The increasing presence of submarines in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) has highlighted the need for specialised anti-submarine platforms.
- The Mahe-class ASW-SWC project was launched to replace the ageing Abhay-class corvettes with modern, indigenously built shallow-water anti-submarine vessels.
- The induction of INS Malvan strengthens India's coastal surveillance, port security, and underwater warfare capabilities while promoting indigenous defence manufacturing under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative.

Key Highlights:

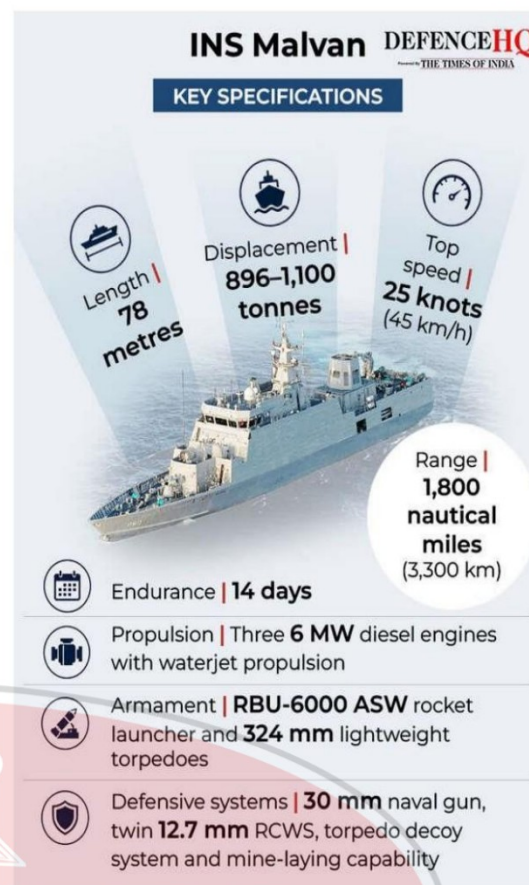
- Ship: INS Malvan
- Class: Mahe-class Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft (ASW-SWC)
- Commissioned at: Karwar Naval Base, Karnataka
- Built by: Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL), Kochi
- Indigenous Content: Over 80%
- Primary Role: Detect, track, and destroy enemy submarines in shallow coastal waters.
- Other Roles: Coastal surveillance, search and rescue (SAR), low-intensity maritime operations, and protection of strategic ports and naval bases.

About Mahe-class ASW Shallow Water Craft

- Specially designed for anti-submarine warfare in shallow waters.
- Equipped with advanced sonars, lightweight torpedoes, anti-submarine rockets, and modern surveillance systems.
- Can also undertake mine-laying operations and coordinated coastal security missions.
- A total of eight ships are being built for the Indian Navy.

Exam Focus Points:

- INS Malvan is the second Mahe-class ASW Shallow Water Craft (ASW-SWC).
- Built by: Cochin Shipyard Limited, Kochi.
- Commissioned at: Karwar, Karnataka.
- Primary Role: Anti-submarine warfare in shallow coastal waters.
- Replaces: Abhay-class corvettes.
- Indigenous Content: More than 80%.
- Related Initiative: Aatmanirbhar Bharat.
- Strategic Importance: Enhances coastal security and India's anti-submarine capability in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).



Way Forward

- Commission the remaining Mahe-class vessels to strengthen India's coastal defence network.
- Integrate these ships with maritime patrol aircraft, helicopters, underwater sensors, and coastal radar chains for enhanced maritime domain awareness.

Continue promoting indigenous defence production to reduce dependence on imports and improve self-reliance in naval capabilities.

MH-60R Seahawk

Why is it in News?

The Indian Navy has received another MH-60R Seahawk multi-role helicopter from the United States, strengthening India's maritime defence capabilities. The helicopter is part of India's ongoing defence procurement programme to enhance surveillance and anti-submarine warfare operations.

Key Considerations

- Organisation: Indian Navy
- Helicopter: MH-60R Seahawk
- Manufacturer: Lockheed Martin (Sikorsky Aircraft)
- Supplier: United States
- Role: Multi-role maritime helicopter

- Purpose: To strengthen maritime surveillance, anti-submarine warfare (ASW), anti-surface warfare (ASuW), search and rescue (SAR), and surveillance operations.
- Procurement: Part of India's agreement to acquire 24 MH-60R Seahawk helicopters from the United States.
- Delivery: The newly delivered helicopter is among the remaining aircraft under the contract.

About MH-60R Seahawk

- Type: Multi-role naval helicopter.
- Primary Roles: Anti-submarine warfare, anti-surface warfare, maritime surveillance, search and rescue, and logistics support.
- Features: Equipped with advanced radar, sonar, torpedoes, missiles, and electronic warfare systems.
- Operator: Used by the United States Navy and several allied countries.

About the Indian Navy

- Headquarters: New Delhi
- Chief of the Naval Staff: Admiral Krishna Swaminathan
- Role: Safeguards India's maritime interests, protects sea lanes, and ensures national security in the Indian Ocean Region.
- Significance
- The induction of another MH-60R Seahawk enhances the Indian Navy's operational readiness and strengthens its capability to monitor and respond to maritime threats, particularly in the Indian Ocean Region.

Exam Focus Points

- Organisation: Indian Navy
- Helicopter: MH-60R Seahawk
- Manufacturer: Lockheed Martin (Sikorsky)
- Supplier: United States
- Total Helicopters Ordered: 24
- Primary Role: Anti-submarine warfare and maritime surveillance

Additional Key Facts

- Foreign Military Sales (FMS): India's MH-60R helicopters are being procured from the United States through the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) programme.
- Lockheed Martin: An American aerospace and defence company headquartered in Bethesda, Maryland, USA.
- Sikorsky Aircraft: A subsidiary of Lockheed Martin that manufactures the MH-60R Seahawk helicopters.

US Arms Sale to Saudi Arabia

Why is it in News?

- The United States (US) has approved a \$1.96 billion arms sale to Saudi Arabia. The deal aims to strengthen Saudi Arabia's defence capabilities and enhance security amid rising tensions in the Middle East.

Key Considerations

- Country: United States (US)
- Buyer: Saudi Arabia
- Approved By: US State Department
- Value of Deal: Nearly \$1.96 billion
- Weapon System: Advanced Precision Kill Weapon System (APKWS) II guidance kits
- Purpose: To convert unguided rockets into precision-guided weapons.
- Additional Package: Spare parts, maintenance equipment, training, logistics support, and technical assistance.

About Advanced Precision Kill Weapon System (APKWS) II

- Type: Laser-guided weapon system developed by the United States.
- Function: Converts 70 mm unguided rockets into precision-guided rockets.
- Advantage: Improves targeting accuracy while reducing collateral damage.
- Users: Operated by the US military and several allied countries.

About Saudi Arabia

- Capital: Riyadh
- Currency: Saudi Riyal (SAR)
- Official Language: Arabic
- King: Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud
- Crown Prince & Prime Minister: Mohammed bin Salman
- Major Water Bodies: Red Sea and Persian Gulf
- Neighbouring Countries: Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, United Arab Emirates, Oman, and Yemen.
- Significance
- The arms deal strengthens the long-standing strategic partnership between the United States and Saudi Arabia. It is expected to enhance Saudi Arabia's ability to respond to regional security threats and reflects the US commitment to maintaining stability in the Middle East through defence cooperation.

Exam Focus Points

- Country: Saudi Arabia
- Seller: United States (US)
- Approved By: US State Department
- Value of Deal: Nearly \$1.96 billion
- Weapon System: Advanced Precision Kill Weapon System (APKWS) II
- Purpose: Convert unguided rockets into precision-guided weapons.
- Next Step: Review by the US Congress.
- Objective: Strengthen Saudi Arabia's defence capabilities and regional security.

Additional Key Facts

- US Congress: Has the authority to review and, if necessary, block major foreign arms sales.
- Saudi Arabia: One of the world's largest importers of defence equipment.
- US State Department: Oversees foreign military sales in line with US foreign policy and national security objectives.
- APKWS: Widely used for precision strikes against ground targets.

Europe's Missile Defence

- Ukraine and nine European countries have announced the formation of a Coalition for Europe's Ballistic Missile Defence to strengthen the continent's protection against the growing threat of ballistic missile attacks.
- The announcement was made during a high-level meeting in Paris, France, attended by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy and the leaders of Denmark, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom.
- The coalition aims to develop an integrated European anti-ballistic missile defence architecture by combining technological innovation, industrial cooperation, and Ukraine's battlefield experience in countering missile attacks.

Participating Countries:

- Ukraine
- Denmark
- France
- Germany
- Italy
- Netherlands
- Norway
- Spain
- Sweden
- United Kingdom.

About Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD):

- A Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) system is designed to detect, track, intercept, and destroy ballistic missiles during different phases of their flight.

A typical BMD system consists of:

- Early warning radars
- Satellites and surveillance systems
- Command and control networks
- Interceptor missiles
- Ballistic missiles travel at very high speeds and follow a ballistic trajectory, making them more difficult to intercept than cruise missiles. Successful BMD requires layered and integrated air defence systems.

About NATO Ballistic Missile Defence:

- NATO operates a Ballistic Missile Defence (BMD) system to protect member countries from ballistic missile threats originating outside the Euro-Atlantic area.

It integrates:

- Ground-based interceptors
- Radar systems
- Naval assets
- Command and control infrastructure
- The new coalition is intended to complement Europe's defence capabilities rather than replace existing national or NATO systems.

About Ukraine:

- Capital: Kyiv.
- Currency: Ukrainian Hryvnia (UAH).
- President: Volodymyr Zelenskyy.
- Ukraine has been defending itself against Russia's full-scale invasion since 2022, gaining extensive operational experience in air and missile defence.

Additional Key Facts:

- Ballistic missiles are powered during the initial launch phase and then follow a ballistic trajectory under gravity.
- Cruise missiles fly at lower altitudes using onboard propulsion and are generally more manoeuvrable than ballistic missiles.
- Europe is also pursuing the European Sky Shield Initiative (ESSI), a separate multinational project aimed at developing an integrated ground-based air and missile defence system involving several European countries.
- Modern missile defence systems include technologies such as the Patriot, SAMP/T, Aegis Ballistic Missile Defense, THAAD, and Arrow systems, depending on the country's defence architecture.
- Integrated Air and Missile Defence (IAMD) combines surveillance, interception, command and control, and multiple layers of defence against aircraft, drones, cruise missiles, and ballistic missiles.

Ukraine's evolving air defence

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Interception rates up from 80% in December to **89.9%** in March



Ukraine is increasingly relying on interceptor drones



33,000
Russian drones in March 2026



Ukraine scaling production of cheap interceptor drones

■ Machine guns with thermal imagers deployed for cost-effective defence

■ Ukraine working with European partners to develop cheaper Patriot alternative

■ Ukraine's Air Force reports very high intercept rates of Mirage-2000s

■ Future challenges include

Layered defence includes **Patriot systems** and low-cost interceptors



Four Indigenous Naval Platforms

- The Indian Navy has inducted four new-generation indigenous naval platforms within a span of one month, significantly strengthening India's maritime defence capabilities under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative.

Why INS Dunagiri, INS Sanshodhak and INS Agray are more powerful together than separately

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INS SANSHODHAK
THE MAPPER
Survey Vessel (Large)



MAPS THE BATTLEFIELD

Creates accurate seabed maps and collects ocean data.

Key Capabilities

- Hydrographic surveys & seabed mapping
- Oceanographic data collection
- Equipped with sonar, AUVs & survey systems
- Over 80% indigenous content

INS AGRAY
THE HUNTER
Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft



HUNTS THE THREAT

Detects, tracks and engages enemy submarines in coastal waters.

Key Capabilities

- Anti-submarine warfare operations
- Advanced sonar & underwater sensors
- Lightweight torpedoes & depth charges
- High manoeuvrability in shallow waters

INS DUNAGIRI
THE PROTECTOR
Stealth Guided Missile Frigate



PROTECTS THE BATTLESPACE

Provides long-range protection and striking capability.

Key Capabilities

- Multi-role: Anti-air, anti-surface, anti-submarine warfare
- BrahMos supersonic missiles
- Advanced radar, EW suite & helicopters
- Designed for blue-water operations

HOW THEY WORK TOGETHER

Sanshodhak maps an area
Provides detailed seabed and environment data.



Agray patrols it
Detects and neutralises submarine threats.



Dunagiri provides long-range protection
Detects and neutralises submarine threats.

Together they create a layered maritime picture of awareness, surveillance and combat power.

- The latest addition is INS Mahendragiri, the sixth Project 17A (Nilgiri-class) stealth frigate, commissioned at Visakhapatnam.
- Earlier, the Navy inducted INS Dunagiri (Project 17A stealth frigate), INS Sanshodhak (Survey Vessel Large), and INS Agray (Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft).
- These inductions mark a major milestone in India's indigenous warship-building programme and enhance the Navy's operational readiness across multiple maritime roles.

Newly Inducted Naval Platforms:

1. INS Mahendragiri – Project 17A (Nilgiri-class) Stealth Guided Missile Frigate.
2. INS Dunagiri – Project 17A Stealth Guided Missile Frigate.
3. INS Sanshodhak – Survey Vessel (Large).
4. INS Agray – Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft (ASW-SWC).

About Project 17A:

- Project 17A is the follow-on programme to Project 17 (Shivalik-class) stealth frigates.
- It involves the construction of seven advanced stealth-guided missile frigates.

The ships are being built by:

- Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL), Mumbai
- Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE), Kolkata

The frigates are equipped with:

- Advanced stealth features
- BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles
- Barak-8 surface-to-air missile system
- Modern radar and electronic warfare systems
- Indigenous combat management systems.

About INS Mahendragiri:

- Class: Nilgiri-class (Project 17A).
- Type: Stealth Guided Missile Frigate.
- Commissioned: 11 July 2026.
- Commissioned At: Naval Dockyard, Visakhapatnam.

- Commissioned By: Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.
- It is the sixth indigenously designed Project 17A frigate and incorporates enhanced automation, survivability, and stealth technology.

About INS Sanshodhak:

A Survey Vessel (Large) designed for:

- Hydrographic surveys
- Coastal and deep-sea mapping
- Oceanographic data collection
- Support to safe navigation and maritime infrastructure development.

About INS Agray:

- An Anti-Submarine Warfare Shallow Water Craft (ASW-SWC).

Designed to:

- Detect and neutralise enemy submarines in coastal waters.
- Conduct low-intensity maritime operations.
- Protect ports and offshore assets.

About the Indian Navy:

- Established: 26 January 1950 (modern Indian Navy).
- Headquarters: New Delhi.
- Motto: Sham No Varunah ("May the Lord of the Oceans be auspicious unto us").
- Chief of the Naval Staff: Admiral Krishna Swaminathan
- The Indian Navy is responsible for safeguarding India's maritime interests and ensuring security in the Indian Ocean Region.

Additional Key Facts:

- Project 17A is one of India's flagship indigenous warship-building programmes aimed at enhancing stealth, survivability, and network-centric warfare capabilities.
- The Nilgiri-class frigates are among the most advanced warships built in India and are equipped with indigenous and modern weapon systems.
- GRSE (Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers) and MDL (Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited) are two major Defence Public Sector Undertakings (DPSUs) engaged in indigenous warship construction.
- India follows the vision of becoming a Blue Water Navy, capable of operating across the deep waters of the Indian Ocean and beyond.
- The Indian Ocean Region (IOR) is strategically important as it carries a significant share of global maritime trade and energy shipments.

Exam Focus Points:

- Organisation: Indian Navy.
- Achievement: Four indigenous naval platforms inducted within one month.
- Latest Induction: INS Mahendragiri.
- Class: Project 17A (Nilgiri-class) Stealth Frigate.
- Other Platforms: INS Dunagiri, INS Sanshodhak, INS Agray.
- Programme: Project 17A.
- Shipbuilders: Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) and Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE).
- Objective: Strengthen indigenous naval capability and maritime security.
- Initiative: Aatmanirbhar Bharat.
- Indian Navy Headquarters: New Delhi.
- Chief of the Naval Staff: Admiral Krishna Swaminathan

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.

WDMMA's top 10 air forces

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RANK		TVR
1	United States Air Force	242.9
2	Russian Air Force	114.2
3	Indian Air Force	69.4
4	Chinese Air Force	63.8
5	Japanese Air Force	58.1
6	Israeli Air Force	56.3
7	French Air Force	55.3
8	Royal Air Force (UK)	55.3
9	South Korean Air Force	53.4
10	Italian Air Force	51.9

Source: WDMMA

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.

- 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.

Pinaka Long Range Guided Rocket (LRGR)

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully conducted the flight test of the Pinaka Long Range Guided Rocket (LRGR) at the Integrated Test Range (ITR), Chandipur, Odisha. The rocket was tested at its user-defined minimum operational range of 60 km, successfully achieving all mission objectives with high accuracy. The successful trial validates the weapon system's precision, reliability, and operational capability, marking another major milestone in India's indigenous long-range artillery programme under the Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative.

What is the Pinaka Long Range Guided Rocket (LRGR)?

The Pinaka LRGR is an indigenously developed precision-guided artillery rocket designed for the Pinaka Multi Barrel Rocket Launcher (MBRL) System. It is an upgraded version of the Pinaka rocket with enhanced range, navigation, and strike accuracy, capable of engaging high-value targets at extended distances.



Objectives:

- Enhance the Indian Army's long-range precision strike capability.
- Strengthen indigenous artillery systems under Atmanirbhar Bharat.
- Reduce dependence on imported rocket artillery.
- Improve battlefield firepower with accurate, guided rockets.
- Support rapid and effective engagement of enemy targets.

About the Pinaka Multi Barrel Rocket Launcher (MBRL):

The Pinaka MBRL is an indigenous artillery rocket system developed for the Indian Army.

Key Facts

- Developed By: DRDO.



Production Agencies:

- Tata Advanced Systems Limited (TASL)
- Larsen & Toubro (L&T)
- Economic Explosives Limited
- Munitions India Limited
- Type: Multi Barrel Rocket Launcher (MBRL).
- Launcher Capacity: 12 rockets.
- Salvo Capability: Can fire all 12 rockets within 44 seconds.
- Mobility: High-mobility wheeled platform suitable for rapid deployment.
- Role: Area saturation, precision strikes, counter-battery fire, and destruction of enemy infrastructure.

Development of Pinaka:

- Development Began: Late 1980s.
- Developed to replace the imported BM-21 Grad rocket launcher system.
- Named after "Pinaka", the divine bow of Lord Shiva.
- Successfully inducted into the Indian Army and deployed along sensitive borders.

About DRDO:

- Established: 1958.
- Headquarters: New Delhi.
- Administrative Ministry: Ministry of Defence.
- Chairman: Dr. Samir V. Kamat.
- Role: India's premier defence research organisation responsible for developing indigenous defence technologies.

About the Integrated Test Range (ITR):

- Location: Chandipur, Odisha.
- Operated By: DRDO.
- Purpose: Testing of missiles, rockets, and strategic defence systems.

Major systems tested include:

- Agni series
- Prithvi series
- Akash
- BrahMos
- Pinaka
- Pralay

Exam Focus Points:

- Weapon System: Pinaka Long Range Guided Rocket (LRGR).
- Developed By: DRDO.
- Test Location: Integrated Test Range (ITR), Chandipur, Odisha.
- Test Date: 8 July 2026.
- Range Tested: 60 km.
- Future Maximum Range: Up to 120 km.
- Launch Platform: Pinaka Multi Barrel Rocket Launcher (MBRL).
- Administrative Ministry: Ministry of Defence.
- DRDO Headquarters: New Delhi.
- Significance: Indigenous precision-guided rocket system enhancing India's long-range artillery capability.

India-Rwanda Defence Partnership

- India and Rwanda agreed to deepen their bilateral defence cooperation during the 2nd Joint Defence Cooperation Committee (JDCC) Meeting held in New Delhi.
- Both countries decided to expand collaboration in military training, joint military exercises, defence industries, and military medical cooperation.
- They also approved an implementation plan with timelines for the agreed action points, reflecting their commitment to strengthening long-term defence ties.
- The meeting was co-chaired by Amitabh Prasad, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Defence, India, and Brigadier General Louis Kanobayire, Chief for Joint Force Development, Training and Doctrine (Chief J7), Rwanda Defence Force Headquarters.

Additional Developments:

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

About the Joint Defence Cooperation Committee (JDCC):

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

Functions

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

India–Rwanda Defence Relations:

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

Areas of cooperation include:

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

India–Rwanda Bilateral Relations:

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

Key Areas of Cooperation:

- Defence and Security.
- Agriculture.
- Healthcare.
- Education and Capacity Building.
- Digital Public Infrastructure.
- Trade and Investment.
- Development Partnership under the Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation (ITEC) Programme.

About Rwanda

- Official Name: Republic of Rwanda.
- Capital: Kigali.
- Currency: Rwandan Franc (RWF).
- President: Paul Kagame.
- Region: East Africa.

Member of:

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

About ITEC (Indian Technical and Economic Cooperation):

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

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

- Training programmes.

Exam Focus Points:

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

- Scholarships.
- Expert deputation.
- Technology transfer.
- Institutional development.

The 2026 NATO summit

Why is it in News?

The 2026 NATO Summit is being held against the backdrop of the ongoing Russia–Ukraine war and rising tensions in the Middle East. The summit is expected to focus on increasing defence spending, strengthening collective security, and addressing global geopolitical challenges.

Key Highlights

- Leaders of NATO member countries are discussing ways to strengthen the alliance's collective defence.
- A major agenda item is increasing defence spending by member nations to address evolving security threats.
- The summit will review continued military and financial support for Ukraine amid its conflict with Russia.
- Leaders are also discussing the security implications of the Iran–Israel conflict and its impact on regional and global stability.
- The summit aims to improve cooperation on cybersecurity, defence capabilities, and military preparedness.

What is NATO?

The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) is a political and military alliance established to ensure the collective defence and security of its member countries.

About NATO

- Established: 4 April 1949
- Treaty: North Atlantic Treaty (Washington Treaty)
- Headquarters: Brussels, Belgium
- Current Members: 32
- Latest Members: Finland (2023) and Sweden (2024)
- Secretary General: Mark Rutte
- Founding Members: 12 countries, including the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, France, Italy, Belgium, Netherlands, Luxembourg, Norway, Denmark, Iceland, and Portugal.

What is Article 5 of NATO?

Article 5 is the cornerstone of NATO. It states that an armed attack against one member is considered an attack against all members, and all allies will assist the affected country.

Significance



- Reinforces NATO's collective security framework.
- Strengthens military preparedness against emerging threats.
- Demonstrates continued support for Ukraine.
- Addresses security concerns arising from conflicts in Europe and the Middle East.
- Promotes greater cooperation on defence, cybersecurity, and strategic stability.

UNICORN Naval Mast Systems

- India and Japan have signed their first-ever bilateral defence co-development agreement for the joint development and licensed production of UNICORN (Unified Complex Radio Antenna) Naval Mast Systems for the Indian Navy.
- The agreement marks a major milestone in the defence partnership between the two countries and aims to enhance the stealth, communication, and electronic warfare capabilities of future Indian naval warships.
- The project will be implemented through Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL) in collaboration with Japanese partners under a Memorandum of Implementation (MoI). The pact reflects the growing strategic convergence between India and Japan in the Indo-Pacific region.

What is the UNICORN Naval Mast?

- The UNICORN (Unified Complex Radio Antenna) is an advanced integrated naval mast system developed by Japan that combines multiple communication, radar, and electronic sensors into a single structure.
- It replaces conventional standalone antennas with a compact integrated mast, thereby reducing the ship's Radar Cross Section (RCS) and significantly improving its stealth capability.

Benefits:

- Reduced radar signature (stealth).
- Integrated communication and radar systems.
- Improved electronic warfare capability.
- Better situational awareness.
- Reduced maintenance and weight compared to conventional mast systems.

About Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL):

- Established: 1954.
- Headquarters: Bengaluru, Karnataka.
- Administrative Ministry: Ministry of Defence.
- Type: Navratna Defence Public Sector Undertaking (DPSU).

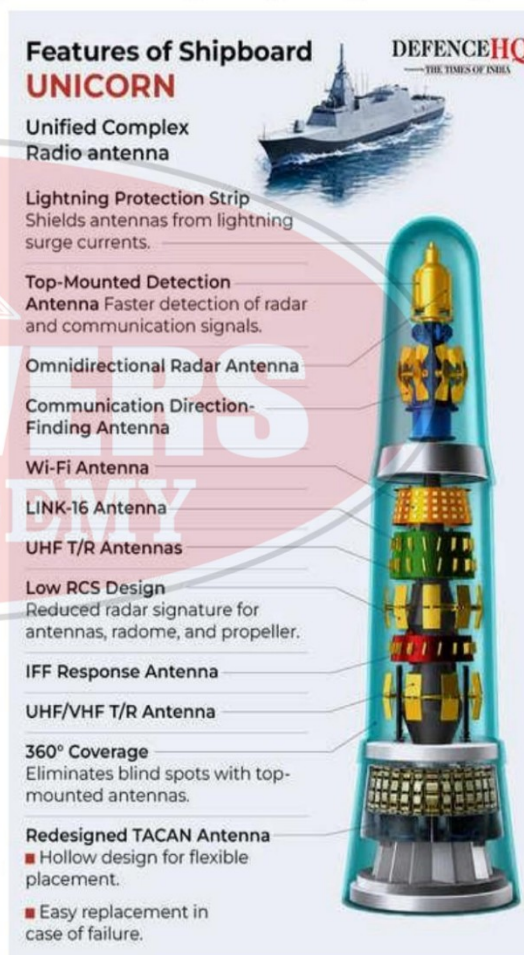
Role:

- Develops defence electronics.
- Manufactures radar systems, communication equipment, electronic warfare systems, and missile electronics.
- Supplies advanced defence equipment to the Indian Armed Forces.

India-Japan Defence Cooperation:

- Special Strategic and Global Partnership: Since 2014.
- 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue: Foreign and Defence Ministers of both countries meet to enhance strategic cooperation.

Major Areas of Cooperation:



- Defence technology.
- Maritime security.
- Indo-Pacific cooperation.
- Cyber security.
- Space cooperation.
- Critical and emerging technologies.
- Supply chain resilience.

About the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI):

- Launched By: Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- Year: 2019 (East Asia Summit, Bangkok).
- Objective: Promote a free, open, inclusive, and rules-based Indo-Pacific.

Key Pillars:

- Maritime Security.
- Maritime Ecology.
- Disaster Risk Reduction.
- Capacity Building.
- Resource Sharing.
- Science, Technology & Academic Cooperation.
- Trade Connectivity.

About Radar Cross Section (RCS):

- Radar Cross Section (RCS) is a measure of how detectable an object is by radar.
- A lower RCS makes naval ships more difficult to detect and track by enemy radar systems.
- Integrated mast systems like UNICORN contribute significantly to reducing a warship's radar signature.

Exam Focus Points::

- Agreement: First India–Japan Defence Co-Development Pact.
- Project: UNICORN (Unified Complex Radio Antenna) Naval Mast.
- Indian Partner: Bharat Electronics Limited (BEL).
- Sector: Naval Defence Technology.
- Purpose: Enhance stealth, communication, and electronic warfare capabilities.
- Administrative Ministry of BEL: Ministry of Defence.
- Strategic Partnership: India–Japan Special Strategic and Global Partnership.
- Key Region: Indo-Pacific.
- National Initiative Supported: Atmanirbhar Bharat and Make in India.
- Major Advantage: Reduced Radar Cross Section (RCS) of naval warships.

BrahMos Missile Supply

- India and Indonesia signed a series of strategic agreements during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's official visit to Jakarta, significantly strengthening bilateral cooperation in defence, maritime security, critical minerals, healthcare, and emerging technologies.
- A major highlight was the agreement for the supply of the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile system to Indonesia, making it one of India's most significant defence export deals.
- The two countries also signed agreements to enhance maritime safety, coast guard cooperation, and Indo-Pacific security, reinforcing their Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.

Key Agreements Signed

- BrahMos Missile Supply Agreement between India and Indonesia.
- Air-to-Air Missile Cooperation Agreement involving the Astra missile system.
- Maritime Security and Safety Cooperation.
- Cooperation in critical minerals and strategic supply chains.
- Agreements on healthcare, education, digital technology, and capacity building.
- Enhanced collaboration in the Blue Economy and disaster management.

BrahMos Missile System

Defence, Security & Maritime Ties

BrahMos Missile Pact

- Indonesia to expand BrahMos inventory
- India to supply BrahMos missile batteries

Indonesia to import India's indigenous Astra Mk1 air-to-air missile



To jointly develop Sabang port

- Overlooks the Strait of Malacca
- 100 miles away from India's Great Nicobar port project

The BrahMos is a supersonic cruise missile jointly developed by India's DRDO and Russia's NPO Mashinostroyeniya.

Key Features

- Type: Supersonic Cruise Missile.
- Joint Venture: BrahMos Aerospace.
- Developed By: DRDO (India) and NPO Mashinostroyeniya (Russia).
- Speed: Up to Mach 2.8–3.0.
- Range: More than 290 km (extended-range variants have longer ranges).

Launch Platforms:

- Land-based
- Ship-based
- Submarine-launched

Air-launched (Su-30MKI):

- Capability: Precision strike against land and sea targets.
- Named after the Brahmaputra River (India) and the Moskva River (Russia).

About BrahMos Aerospace:

- Established: 1998.
- Nature: Indo-Russian Joint Venture.
- Indian Partner: Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- Russian Partner: NPO Mashinostroyeniya.
- Headquarters: New Delhi.
- Objective: Design, development, production, and export of BrahMos missile systems.

About Astra Missile:

- Type: Beyond Visual Range Air-to-Air Missile (BVRAAM).
- Developed By: DRDO.
- Primary User: Indian Air Force.
- Purpose: Air combat and interception of enemy aircraft.
- Designed for integration with fighter aircraft such as the Su-30MKI, LCA Tejas, and other compatible platforms.

Exam Focus Points:

- Countries: India and Indonesia.
- Major Defence Deal: BrahMos Supersonic Cruise Missile System.
- Additional Defence Cooperation: Astra Air-to-Air Missile.
- Strategic Focus: Maritime Security and Indo-Pacific Cooperation.
- Joint Venture: BrahMos Aerospace (DRDO–NPO Mashinostroyeniya).
- BrahMos Speed: Mach 2.8–3.0.
- India–Indonesia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership: 2018.
- Shared Strategic Waterway: Strait of Malacca.
- Key Indian Policy: Act East Policy and MAHASAGAR Vision.
- Significance: Boost to India's defence exports and Indo-Pacific strategic partnership.

UGRAM Rifle

- Hyderabad-based defence startup Dvipa Defence, in collaboration with the Armament Research and Development Establishment (ARDE), a laboratory of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), has developed the UGRAM 7.62×51 mm Battle Rifle in just 100 days.
- The rifle has successfully cleared key Indian Army General Staff Qualitative Requirement (GSQR) trials, extensive field evaluations, and Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) trials.
- It is now moving towards procurement by several Central Armed Police Forces (CAPFs), including the CRPF, ITBP, SSB, and NSG.

What is the UGRAM Battle Rifle?

The UGRAM is an indigenous 7.62×51 mm NATO calibre battle rifle designed for military and internal security operations. It has been jointly developed by Dvipa Defence and DRDO's ARDE to provide a modern, lightweight, and highly reliable weapon system capable of operating in diverse climatic conditions.

Key Features:

- Weapon: UGRAM Battle Rifle.
- Developed By: Dvipa Defence and DRDO's Armament Research and Development Establishment (ARDE).
- Development Time: 100 days.
- Calibre: 7.62×51 mm NATO.
- Operating System: Gas-operated rotating bolt mechanism.
- Weight: Less than 4 kg.
- Effective Range: Approximately 500 metres.

Successfully completed:

- Indian Army GSQR trials.
- MHA Board trials.
- Reliability and endurance testing in varied climatic conditions.

Proposed users:

- Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF)
- Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP)
- Sashastra Seema Bal (SSB)
- National Security Guard (NSG).

About ARDE:

- Armament Research and Development Establishment (ARDE) is a premier laboratory of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- Established: 1958.
- Location: Pune, Maharashtra.
- Parent Organisation: DRDO.

Role:

- Development of small arms.
- Artillery systems.
- Tank guns.
- Ammunition.
- Rocket and missile launcher systems.
- Major indigenous systems developed include INSAS, Pinaka Multi Barrel Rocket Launcher, ASMI Submachine Gun, and various artillery systems.

About DRDO:

- Established: 1958.
- Headquarters: New Delhi.
- Chairman: Rajesh Kumar Singh,

About the General Staff Qualitative Requirement (GSQR):

- GSQR is a set of operational and technical specifications prepared by the Indian Army for defence equipment procurement.
- Any indigenous or imported defence system must satisfy GSQR standards before induction into service.

	DEVELOPED IN JUST 100 DAYS
	EFFECTIVE RANGE 500 METRES
	CALIBRE 7.62 × 51 MM
	WEIGHT UNDER 4 KG
	DESIGNED FOR ARMY, PARAMILITARY & SPECIAL FORCES

Exam Focus Points

- Weapon: UGRAM 7.62×51 mm Battle Rifle.
- Developed By: Dvipa Defence and DRDO's ARDE.
- Development Time: 100 days.
- Calibre: 7.62×51 mm NATO.
- Parent Organisation of ARDE: DRDO.
- ARDE Location: Pune, Maharashtra.
- Administrative Ministry of DRDO: Ministry of Defence.
- Procurement Agencies: CRPF, ITBP, SSB, NSG.
- Trial Cleared: Indian Army GSQR and MHA trials.

Indigenous Tactical Aerostat

- The Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi, in collaboration with the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), has developed India's first indigenous tactical aerostat—a tethered, lighter-than-air surveillance platform designed for military reconnaissance and border monitoring.
- The aerostat can carry advanced surveillance payloads such as electro-optical/infrared (EO/IR) sensors, communication equipment, and radar systems, providing persistent aerial surveillance.
- The development marks a significant step towards Aatmanirbhar Bharat in defence technology by reducing dependence on imported surveillance systems.

What is a Tactical Aerostat?

A tactical aerostat is a helium-filled, tethered balloon equipped with surveillance and communication payloads. It remains anchored to the ground while operating at high altitudes for extended durations, enabling continuous monitoring of strategic areas.

Objectives

- Enhance border and battlefield surveillance.
- Detect low-flying aircraft, drones, and enemy movements.
- Support intelligence, reconnaissance, and communication.
- Reduce dependence on imported defence systems.

Key Features

- Developed by: IIT Delhi & DRDO
- Type: Indigenous tactical aerostat
- Gas Used: Helium
- Role: Persistent aerial surveillance and reconnaissance

Payloads:

- Electro-Optical/Infrared (EO/IR) cameras
- Communication equipment
- Radar and surveillance sensors

Applications:

- Border security
- Military operations
- Disaster management
- Critical infrastructure protection

DRDO:

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) is India's premier defence research agency responsible for developing indigenous defence technologies and weapon systems.
- Established: 1958
- Headquarters: New Delhi
- Chairman: Rajesh Kumar Singh
- Administrative Ministry: Ministry of Defence
- Motto: Balasya Mulam Vigyanam ("Strength's Origin is in Science")



INDIGENOUS & COLLABORATIVE

Developed by IIT Delhi, DRDO & an Indian startup.



HIGH-ALTITUDE CAPABILITY

Operates up to 20 km altitude.



MULTI-MISSION PAYLOADS

Carries surveillance, infrared & communication systems.



LONG ENDURANCE

Remains airborne for extended periods with heavy payloads.



REDUCING IMPORT DEPENDENCE

A cost-effective alternative to foreign aerostat systems.

Exam Focus Points

- Development: India's first indigenous tactical aerostat
- Developed by: IIT Delhi and DRDO
- Purpose: Persistent aerial surveillance and reconnaissance
- Technology: Helium-filled tethered aerostat
- Applications: Border security, military surveillance, disaster response
- Significance: Boosts indigenous defence capability under Aatmanirbhar Bharat

- Develops missiles, radars, aircraft systems, electronic warfare systems, UAVs, and advanced defence technologies.

Advantages of Tactical Aerostats

- Continuous surveillance for long durations.
- Cost-effective compared to aircraft and satellites.
- Early warning against drones and low-flying threats.
- Improves situational awareness along borders.
- Can operate in remote and difficult terrains.

Netra AEW&C System

- The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has achieved a major milestone in India's defence self-reliance with the Final Operational Clearance (FOC) of the indigenous Netra Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) System.
- The clearance certifies that the system is fully combat-ready for operational deployment by the Indian Air Force (IAF) after successfully meeting all operational and performance requirements.
- The development strengthens India's indigenous defence capabilities under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative by reducing dependence on imported airborne surveillance platforms.
- The system acts as an "Eye in the Sky", capable of detecting, tracking, and monitoring enemy aircraft, missiles, drones, and other aerial threats from long distances. It also provides real-time intelligence, command, and battle management support to air defence operations.
- Developed by DRDO's Centre for Airborne Systems (CABS), Bengaluru, the Netra AEW&C integrates advanced radar, electronic intelligence, secure communication systems, and mission control technologies, significantly enhancing India's air defence capabilities.

About Netra AEW&C System

- AEW&C stands for Airborne Early Warning and Control.
- It is an airborne surveillance platform that detects aerial threats beyond the range of ground-based radars and provides real-time battlefield information to military commanders.

Major Features

- Indigenous airborne surveillance system.
- Developed by DRDO's Centre for Airborne Systems (CABS).
- Operated by the Indian Air Force (IAF).
- Equipped with Active Electronically Scanned Array (AESA) Radar.
- Provides 360° situational awareness.
- Supports command, control, surveillance, and battle management.
- Tracks multiple airborne and maritime targets simultaneously.

TOI

AEW&C (DRDO NETRA)

Indigenous airborne surveillance system



DEVELOPMENT

- Developed by DRDO
- Mounted on Embraer ERJ-145 aircraft
- Fully Indian mission system

CORE FUNCTION	TECHNICAL CAPABILITY
■ Airborne early warning	■ Active electronically scanned radar
■ Tactical airspace control	■ 240–300 km detection range
■ Monitoring hostile aircraft and drones	■ Secure data links Smaller footprint than AWACS

STRATEGIC VALUE

- Indigenous technology boost

- Rapid deployment capability

- Supplements larger AWACS fleet



Functions of AEW&C Systems

- Long-range air surveillance.
- Early detection of enemy aircraft and missiles.
- Tracking of multiple aerial targets.
- Airspace management.
- Guidance to fighter aircraft.
- Network-centric warfare support.
- Real-time intelligence sharing.

About DRDO:

- Full Form: Defence Research and Development Organisation
- Established: 1958
- Headquarters: New Delhi
- Chairman: Samir V. Kamat
- Objective: Develop indigenous defence technologies and systems for India's Armed Forces.

Exam Focus Points (Quick Revision Notes)

- Organisation in News: DRDO
- System: Netra AEW&C
- Full Form: Airborne Early Warning and Control
- Developer: DRDO – Centre for Airborne Systems (CABS)
- User: Indian Air Force (IAF)
- Status: Final Operational Clearance (FOC)
- Key Technology: AESA Radar
- Objective: Airborne surveillance, early warning, command and control
- Headquarters of DRDO: New Delhi
- Established: 1958

About Centre for Airborne Systems (CABS)

- A premier DRDO laboratory.
- Located in Bengaluru, Karnataka.
- Specializes in airborne surveillance and command systems.
- Developer of India's indigenous AEW&C programmes.

AEW&C vs AWACS

AEW&C	AWACS
Smaller airborne surveillance platform	Larger strategic airborne warning aircraft
Tactical surveillance and battle management	Strategic command and control
Moderate radar coverage	Longer radar range and wider coverage
Lower operational cost	Higher operational cost

Network-Centric Warfare

A military concept where all sensors, aircraft, radars, satellites, and command centres are interconnected through secure communication networks, enabling faster decision-making and coordinated military operations.

Airborne Early Warning Systems

Countries operating AEW&C/AWACS systems include:

- India
- United States
- Russia
- China
- Israel
- United Kingdom
- France

Defence Exercise

Pitch Black 2026

The Indian Air Force (IAF) has deployed its Rafale fighter aircraft to Australia to participate in Exercise Pitch Black 2026, the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF)'s premier multinational air combat exercise.

- The Indian contingent comprises 4 Rafale fighter aircraft, 2 C-17 Globemaster III transport aircraft, and over 120 Air Warriors.
- The exercise will be held from 20 July to 7 August 2026 at RAAF Bases Darwin, Tindal, and Amberley in Australia and involves the participation of 19 countries.
- It aims to enhance interoperability, operational cooperation, and combat readiness among friendly air forces.

Key Highlights

- Exercise: Pitch Black 2026.
- Host Country: Australia.
- Participating Nations: 19.
- Theme: High-end multinational air combat training and interoperability.

About Exercise Pitch Black:

- Hosted by the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF).
- First conducted: 1981.
- Frequency: Biennial (every two years).
- Primarily conducted in Northern Australia.



Focuses on:

- Offensive Counter Air (OCA) operations.
- Defensive Counter Air (DCA) operations.
- Large-force employment.
- Multinational interoperability.
- Complex simulated combat missions.

About the Rafale Fighter Aircraft:

- Manufacturer: Dassault Aviation (France).
- Generation: 4.5-generation multirole fighter aircraft.
- Inducted into IAF: 2020.

Indian Air Force Bases:

- Ambala (Haryana).
- Hasimara (West Bengal).

Capable of:

- Air superiority missions.
- Precision ground strikes.
- Maritime strike operations.
- Nuclear deterrence.

Equipped with:

- Meteor Beyond Visual Range (BVR) air-to-air missile.
- SCALP long-range cruise missile.

- HAMMER precision-guided weapon system.

About the C-17 Globemaster III:

- Strategic heavy-lift transport aircraft.
- Manufacturer: Boeing (USA).

Used for:

- Strategic airlift.
- Troop deployment.
- Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR).
- Heavy equipment transportation.

India–Australia Defence Cooperation:

Major bilateral and multilateral engagements include:

- AUSINDEX (Naval Exercise).
- Exercise AUSTRALIND (Army Exercise).
- Exercise Malabar (Quad Naval Exercise).
- Exercise Pitch Black (Air Force).
- Defence cooperation is guided by the India–Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) established in 2020.

Both India and Australia are members of:

- Quad (Quadrilateral Security Dialogue).
- Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA).
- East Asia Summit (EAS).
- G20.
- India hosted its first multinational air exercise, Exercise Tarang Shakti, in 2024, showcasing growing defence cooperation with friendly air forces.

Exam Focus Points:

- Exercise: Pitch Black 2026.
- Host: Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF).
- Host Country: Australia.
- Venue: Darwin, Tindal, and Amberley Air Bases.
- Indian Aircraft: Rafale and C-17 Globemaster III.
- Indian Contingent: 4 Rafales, 2 C-17s, 120+ Air Warriors.
- Participating Nations: 19.
- Frequency: Biennial.
- First Held: 1981.
- Related Partnership: India–Australia Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (2020).

ABOUT EX PITCH BLACK



Exercise Pitch Black is the RAAF's premier biennial multinational air combat exercise.

WHY "PITCH BLACK"?



The exercise derives its name from its emphasis on **night flying** over the vast un-populated areas of **northern Australia**.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

-  One of the largest and most complex multi-national air exercises in the world.
-  Focus on integrated air operations, interoperability and realistic combat scenarios.
-  Provides opportunity to share best practices and enhance collective security.

VENUE

Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) Base Darwin, Northern Territory, Australia



PARTICIPATION

Pitch Black 2026 will see participation from air forces across the globe, fostering strong partnerships and building combat-ready capabilities.



IMPORTANCE FOR IAF



Enhances operational capability in complex and realistic environments.



Strengthens interoperability with leading air forces.



Provides valuable experience in night flying and diverse mission profiles.



Reinforces India's commitment to global peace, security and collaboration.

Environment & Ecology

China's Brahmaputra Mega Dam

China's construction of the world's largest hydropower project on the Yarlung Tsangpo River (known as the Brahmaputra in India and the Jamuna in Bangladesh) has once again attracted global attention. While the project is expected to significantly boost China's clean energy capacity, it has also raised concerns over geological safety, water security, ecological impacts, and regional geopolitics. Recently, Chinese geologists warned that the dam site lies in a highly seismic zone with an active fault line, increasing the risks of earthquakes and landslides. At the same time, recent hydrological data suggest that fears of China drastically reducing the Brahmaputra's flow into India may be overstated because a large share of the river's water originates within India itself. These developments have revived the debate over transboundary river management in South Asia.

Why is the Dam Significant?

The Yarlung Tsangpo originates in Tibet, enters India through Arunachal Pradesh as the Siang River, becomes the Brahmaputra in Assam, and finally flows into Bangladesh as the Jamuna before joining the Ganga. The Brahmaputra is one of South Asia's most important transboundary rivers. It supports:

- Drinking water for millions.
- Agriculture and irrigation.
- Hydropower generation.
- Fisheries and biodiversity.
- Livelihoods across India and Bangladesh.
- Therefore, any upstream intervention naturally attracts attention from downstream countries.
- The New Geological Concern
- A recent report by Chinese government-backed geologists highlights that the mega dam is being constructed directly above an active fault line.



The region is highly prone to:

- Earthquakes.
- Landslides.
- Rockfalls.
- Mudflows.
- Glacial and geological instability.
- The steep Himalayan terrain and high seismic activity increase the possibility that a major earthquake could damage dam infrastructure or trigger secondary disasters such as landslide-dammed lakes and flash floods.
- Experts have therefore argued that the project's greatest challenge may be geological safety rather than engineering capability.

About the Project

China is constructing the Medog (Motuo) Hydropower Station in Tibet on the Great Bend of the Yarlung Tsangpo River. Once completed, it is expected to become the largest hydropower project in the world, surpassing the Three Gorges Dam. The project aims to generate nearly 60 GW of electricity, supporting China's transition to clean energy while stimulating economic development in Tibet. Construction officially began in 2025, with power generation expected in the early 2030s.

Why Has India Been Concerned?

India has consistently expressed concerns over the project due to several reasons:

Water Security

- The Brahmaputra is a lifeline for Arunachal Pradesh and Assam. Any upstream alteration of river flow could affect irrigation, drinking water, navigation, and hydropower generation.
- Strategic Concerns
- Since China controls the river's upper reaches, many analysts fear that it could potentially regulate water releases during periods of diplomatic or military tension.

Ecological Impact

Large dams may alter:

- Sediment transport.
- Fish migration.
- Floodplain ecology.
- River biodiversity.
- Reduced sediment flow may also affect agriculture downstream.
- Lack of Transparency
- China has released limited technical information regarding the project's design and environmental impact, making downstream countries apprehensive.

Does China Really Control India's Water Supply?

Recent hydrological data provide a more balanced picture.

Although the Brahmaputra originates in Tibet, most of its annual water volume is generated after entering India due to:

- Heavy monsoon rainfall.
- Numerous tributaries joining the river.
- Runoff from the Eastern Himalayas.
- Scientific assessments indicate that only about 25–35% of the river's total annual flow originates in the Tibetan reaches, while roughly 65–70% is contributed within India, particularly during the monsoon season.
- Therefore, even if China regulates upstream flows, its ability to significantly reduce the river's annual discharge into India is limited. Some experts have even noted that reduced upstream discharge during the monsoon could marginally lessen flooding in Assam, though such benefits remain uncertain and situation-specific.

Environmental and Disaster Risks

Apart from geopolitics, the project raises several environmental concerns:

- Disturbance to fragile Himalayan ecosystems.
- Increased landslide risks during construction.
- Impact on aquatic biodiversity.
- Changes in natural sediment movement.
- Potential consequences of dam failure in a seismically active zone.
- Given the Himalayan region's vulnerability to earthquakes and extreme weather events, disaster preparedness remains a critical issue.

India's Response

India has adopted a multi-pronged approach:

- Raising concerns through diplomatic channels.
- Seeking greater transparency from China.
- Requesting continuous sharing of hydrological data.
- Monitoring upstream developments through satellite imagery and technical assessments.

- Considering additional hydropower and storage projects on the Siang/Brahmaputra to enhance water management and strategic preparedness.

Broader Geopolitical Significance

- The Brahmaputra issue highlights the growing importance of hydro-diplomacy in Asia. Unlike several international rivers, India and China do not have a comprehensive water-sharing treaty for the Brahmaputra. This makes regular data sharing, transparency, and confidence-building measures particularly important.
- The project also illustrates the broader challenge of balancing renewable energy development with environmental conservation, disaster resilience, and regional cooperation.

Way Forward

India and China should strengthen hydrological data sharing, improve transparency regarding upstream infrastructure, and enhance cooperation on disaster management and river basin monitoring. At the same time, India should continue investing in scientific monitoring, flood forecasting, and sustainable water management in the Brahmaputra basin. A cooperative, rules-based approach to managing transboundary rivers will be essential for ensuring long-term water security, ecological sustainability, and regional stability across South Asia.

Tamil Nadu's Climate-Resilient Village

Why is it in News?

Killai village in Cuddalore district, Tamil Nadu, has become the State's first Climate-Resilient Village.

Background & Significance:

- Killai is located near the ecologically significant Pichavaram Mangrove Forest, one of the world's largest mangrove ecosystems.
- The village has adopted community-based climate adaptation measures to tackle the impacts of climate change.
- It serves as a model for protecting vulnerable coastal communities from cyclones, floods, sea-level rise, and coastal erosion.
- The initiative demonstrates how ecosystem conservation and community participation can enhance climate resilience while improving livelihoods.

Objective

Build resilience against climate-related disasters through sustainable development and community participation.

Major Climate Adaptation Measures:

- Conservation and restoration of mangrove forests.
- Community-led climate planning.
- Strengthening disaster preparedness and early warning systems.
- Development of climate-resilient infrastructure.
- Rainwater harvesting and improved water resource management.
- Promotion of climate-smart agriculture and sustainable fishing.
- Diversification of livelihoods for local communities.

Climate Challenges Addressed:

- Cyclones
- Flooding due to extreme rainfall
- Coastal erosion
- Sea-level rise
- Saltwater intrusion into groundwater and agricultural land
- Livelihood insecurity among fishing and farming communities

Nature-Based Solutions (NbS):

- Protection and restoration of mangrove ecosystems
- Conservation of wetlands and coastal biodiversity
- Enhancement of natural barriers against storms and erosion
- Improved carbon sequestration through ecosystem restoration

Why is it Important?

- Demonstrates an effective model for climate change adaptation in coastal regions.
- Strengthens disaster resilience through community participation.
- Protects biodiversity and critical coastal ecosystems.
- Supports sustainable livelihoods and water security.
- Provides a replicable model for other climate-vulnerable coastal villages across India.

About Climate-Resilient Village

- A Climate-Resilient Village is a community that develops the capacity to prepare for, adapt to, recover from, and withstand climate-related disasters while ensuring sustainable development.
- Key Features
 - Community participation.
 - Disaster preparedness.
 - Climate-resilient infrastructure.
 - Sustainable natural resource management.
 - Livelihood diversification.
 - Environmental conservation.

Exam Focus Points:

- Village: Killai.
- State: Tamil Nadu.
- District: Cuddalore.
- Purpose: Build resilience against climate change impacts through community-based adaptation.
- Key Objective: Protect coastal communities from cyclones, floods, sea-level rise, and coastal erosion.
- Important Ecosystem: Pichavaram Mangrove Forest.
- Key Strategy: Nature-Based Solutions (NbS).

About Pichavaram Mangrove Forest

- Located in Cuddalore District, Tamil Nadu.
- One of the largest mangrove forests in India.
- Situated between the Vellar and Coleroon (Kollidam) rivers.
- Acts as a natural barrier against cyclones, storm surges, and coastal erosion.
- Supports rich biodiversity and serves as an important carbon sink.

Additional Key Facts

- First Climate-Resilient Village in Tamil Nadu: Killai
- District: Cuddalore
- State: Tamil Nadu
- Nearby Ecosystem: Pichavaram Mangrove Forest
- Approach: Community-Based Climate Adaptation
- Key Focus: Climate adaptation, disaster resilience, and ecosystem conservation
- Nature-Based Solution: Mangrove conservation and restoration

India's First AI-Powered Bird Sanctuary

- The Government of Maharashtra has approved the development of India's first AI-powered Bird Sanctuary at the Thane Creek Flamingo Sanctuary (TCFS) as part of a ₹45-crore Eco-Nature Park Project.
- The sanctuary will feature an Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based Bird Detection and Monitoring Centre to improve bird conservation, biodiversity monitoring, and eco-tourism.

What is an AI-Powered Bird Sanctuary?

- An AI-powered bird sanctuary integrates Artificial Intelligence, cameras, sensors, drones, and data analytics to monitor bird species and habitats.

AI Applications:

- Automated bird identification.
- Bird counting.
- Species recognition.
- Migration tracking.
- Nest monitoring.
- Habitat assessment.
- Illegal activity detection.
- Real-time biodiversity database.

Benefits of AI in Wildlife Conservation:

- Continuous monitoring.
- Higher accuracy than manual surveys.
- Early warning against habitat degradation.
- Improved conservation planning.
- Reduced human disturbance.
- Better policy decisions based on scientific data.

About Thane Creek Flamingo Sanctuary (TCFS):

- State: Maharashtra
- District: Thane & Mumbai Metropolitan Region
- Declared Sanctuary: 2015
- Type: Marine & Wetland Sanctuary
- Area: Approximately 1,690 hectares
- Ramsar Site: Yes (part of Thane Creek Flamingo Sanctuary Ramsar Site)

Importance of Thane Creek Flamingo Sanctuary:

- India's largest flamingo habitat in an urban area.
- Habitat for thousands of migratory birds.
- Supports marine biodiversity.
- Acts as an important carbon sink through mangroves.
- Serves as a breeding and feeding ground for several waterbirds.

Exam Focus Points:

- Location: Thane Creek Flamingo Sanctuary (TCFS), Maharashtra.
- Project: India's first AI-powered Bird Sanctuary.
- Major Technology: Artificial Intelligence (AI)-based Bird Detection & Monitoring Centre.
- Project Cost: ₹45 crore.
- Flyway: Central Asian Flyway.
- International Convention: Ramsar Convention, 1971.
- Wildlife Law: Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.
- Wetland Rules: Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017.
- Related Mission: IndiaAI Mission.
- Habitat: Mangrove and coastal wetland ecosystem.

Important Bird Sanctuaries in India:

Bird Sanctuary	State	Significance
Keoladeo National Park	Rajasthan	UNESCO World Heritage Site
Ranganathittu Bird Sanctuary	Karnataka	Riverine bird sanctuary
Nal Sarovar Bird Sanctuary	Gujarat	Ramsar Site
Vedanthangal Bird Sanctuary	Tamil Nadu	One of India's oldest bird sanctuaries
Sultanpur National Park	Haryana	Important wintering site
Kumarakom Bird Sanctuary	Kerala	Vembanad Lake ecosystem

Previous Conservation Technologies in India

- Camera Traps: Tiger estimation
- Drone Surveillance: Forest monitoring
- GPS Collars: Animal movement tracking
- AI Bird Monitoring: Bird identification & migration tracking
- Satellite Remote Sensing: Habitat mapping

Indus Waters Treaty Renegotiation

- India has reiterated the need to renegotiate the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT), 1960, citing fundamental changes in circumstances, including climate change, demographic growth, increasing water requirements, clean energy needs, and evolving security concerns.
- India has argued that the treaty, negotiated over six decades ago, does not adequately address present-day realities and has sought a review and modification of its provisions to ensure equitable and sustainable utilisation of the Indus River system.
- The issue has gained renewed attention after India kept the treaty in abeyance following the 2025 Pahalgam terrorist attack and has continued to press for renegotiation.

Why India Wants Renegotiation:

- Climate change has altered rainfall patterns and river flows.
- Growing population has increased demand for drinking water, irrigation, and hydropower.
- Need for improved water storage and infrastructure development.
- Requirement to maximise clean energy generation through hydropower.
- National security concerns following cross-border terrorism.
- Need to modernise a treaty negotiated under vastly different circumstances in 1960.

About the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT):

- Signed on 19 September 1960 in Karachi.

Signed by:

- Jawaharlal Nehru (Prime Minister of India).
- Field Marshal Ayub Khan (President of Pakistan).
- Brokered by the World Bank after nearly nine years of negotiations.

The treaty allocates the six rivers of the Indus Basin into two groups:

Eastern Rivers (Allocated to India):

- Ravi
- Beas
- Sutlej

Western Rivers (Primarily Allocated to Pakistan):

- Indus
- Jhelum
- Chenab

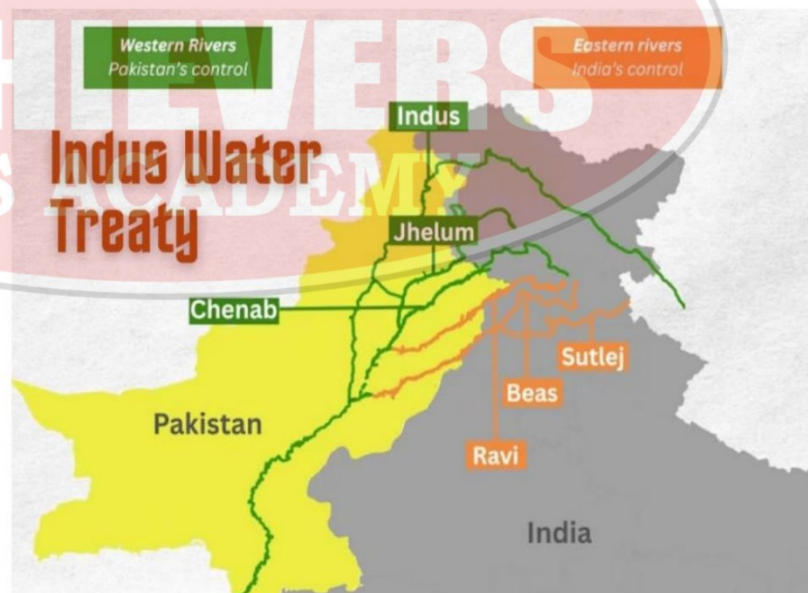
India is permitted limited uses on the western rivers, including:

- Run-of-the-river hydropower projects.
- Domestic use.
- Non-consumptive use.
- Limited irrigation, subject to treaty conditions.

Institutional Mechanism:

Permanent Indus Commission (PIC):

- Established under the treaty.
- Consists of one Commissioner each from India and Pakistan.



- Responsible for data sharing, inspections, and resolving technical issues.

If disputes remain unresolved:

- Neutral Expert examines technical differences.
- Court of Arbitration (CoA) deals with legal disputes under specified treaty provisions.

Significance:

- One of the world's longest-standing international river water-sharing agreements.
- Has survived wars and prolonged diplomatic tensions between India and Pakistan.
- Serves as an important example of transboundary river governance.
- Its future has major implications for regional water security, agriculture, hydropower, and bilateral relations.

About the Indus River System:

- Origin of Indus River: Near Lake Manasarovar, Tibet.
- Flows through India and Pakistan before draining into the Arabian Sea.

Major Tributaries:

- Indus
- Jhelum
- Chenab
- Ravi
- Beas
- Sutlej

About the World Bank's Role:

- The World Bank facilitated negotiations leading to the treaty and is a signatory to the agreement in a limited facilitative capacity.
- It may assist in procedural aspects such as the appointment of a Neutral Expert or members of a Court of Arbitration but is not responsible for enforcing the treaty.

Exam Focus Points:

- Treaty: Indus Waters Treaty (IWT).
- Signed: 19 September 1960.
- Signed At: Karachi.
- Parties: India and Pakistan.
- Mediator: World Bank.
- Eastern Rivers: Ravi, Beas, Sutlej.
- Western Rivers: Indus, Jhelum, Chenab.
- Institution: Permanent Indus Commission (PIC).
- Dispute Resolution: Neutral Expert and Court of Arbitration.
- Reason for Renegotiation: Climate change, demographic growth, development needs, hydropower, and national security.
- Origin of Indus River: Near Lake Manasarovar, Tibet.
- Outfall: Arabian Sea.

Additional Key Facts:

- The Indus Basin is one of the largest river basins in Asia and supports millions of people in India and Pakistan.
- Under the treaty, India received exclusive rights over the Eastern Rivers, while Pakistan received rights over the Western Rivers, subject to specified Indian uses.
- The treaty contains 12 Articles and 8 Annexures (A–H).
- The Permanent Indus Commission is required to meet regularly to exchange hydrological data and discuss treaty implementation.
- India has consistently maintained that changing climatic, hydrological, developmental, and security conditions warrant a review of the treaty framework.

Delhi Ridge Rejuvenation

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.

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.

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.

Yamuna Water Project

- The Governments of Haryana and Rajasthan signed a Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) for the construction and implementation of the Yamuna Water Project in the presence of Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Union Jal Shakti Minister C. R. Patil.
- The agreement operationalises the long-pending 1994 Upper Yamuna River Board (UYRB) water-sharing agreement, resolving a nearly three-decade-old inter-state water issue.
- Under the project, Rajasthan's allocated share of Yamuna water will be conveyed from the Hathnikund Barrage (Haryana) through an underground pipeline network via the Western Yamuna Canal. Around 580 million cubic metres (MCM) of water will be supplied during the July–October monsoon period, benefiting water-scarce districts such as Churu, Sikar, and Jhunjhunu in Rajasthan, while also improving water management in parts of Haryana. The project is estimated to cost about ₹34,102 crore.

What is the Yamuna Water Project?

The Yamuna Water Project is an interstate water infrastructure project aimed at delivering Rajasthan's allocated share of Yamuna River water through a dedicated underground pipeline system, in accordance with the 1994 Upper Yamuna water-sharing agreement.

Objectives:

- Ensure equitable sharing of Yamuna waters.
- Provide drinking water to drought-prone regions.
- Reduce groundwater depletion.
- Strengthen inter-state water cooperation.
- Improve long-term water security.

Key Features:

- States Involved: Haryana and Rajasthan
- Project Cost: Approximately ₹34,102 crore
- Water Source: Hathnikund Barrage
- Water Transfer: Through the Western Yamuna Canal and underground pipelines
- Water Allocation: About 580 MCM during July–October
- Major Beneficiary Districts: Churu, Sikar, Jhunjhunu (Rajasthan)
- Based on the 1994 Upper Yamuna River Board Agreement

FACTS ABOUT YAMUNA WATER AGREEMENT	
➤ PROJECT OVERVIEW MoU was signed among Rajasthan, Haryana, and the Central govt in Feb 2024 regarding the share of Yamuna water	➤ PHASE 1 FOCUS Phase one will provide drinking water and irrigation in Churu, Sikar, and Jhunjhunu districts
➤ IRRIGATION IMPACT 105,000 hectare of land in Churu and Jhunjhunu will receive water, boosting agricultural productivity	➤ COLLABORATION AND TASK FORCE A joint task force will implement the project with technical assistance from the Upper Yamuna River Board
➤ PIPELINE INFRASTRUCTURE Three pipelines (3300-3400 mm) will be laid from Hathani Kund Barrage to supply water for irrigation	➤ OPPOSITION CONCERNS Congress criticises the MoU, alleging it prioritises Haryana's water needs over Rajasthan's, misleading Shekhawati residents

Upper Yamuna Basin States:

The Upper Yamuna water-sharing agreement covers:

- Haryana
- Uttar Pradesh
- Rajasthan
- Himachal Pradesh
- Delhi

Additional Key Facts:

Upper Yamuna River Board (UYRB):

- Constituted: 1995
- Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Jal Shakti
- Established to implement the 1994 Memorandum of Understanding on sharing the utilisable waters of the Upper Yamuna.
- Regulates water distribution among basin states.

Yamuna River

- Origin: Yamunotri Glacier, Uttarkashi district, Uttarakhand
- Length: Approximately 1,376 km
- Confluence: Joins the Ganga at Prayagraj (Triveni Sangam).

Major States Traversed:

- Uttarakhand
- Himachal Pradesh (forms boundary in parts)
- Haryana
- Delhi
- Uttar Pradesh

Major Tributaries of the Yamuna:

- Chambal
- Betwa
- Ken
- Sind
- Tons
- Hindons

Exam Focus Points (Quick Revision Notes):

- Project in News: Yamuna Water Project
- States: Haryana & Rajasthan
- Agreement Signed: Memorandum of Agreement (MoA)
- Based On: 1994 Upper Yamuna River Board Agreement
- Project Cost: ₹34,102 crore
- Water Allocation: Approximately 580 MCM
- Water Source: Hathnikund Barrage
- Transfer Route: Western Yamuna Canal + underground pipeline
- Beneficiary Districts: Churu, Sikar, Jhunjhunu
- Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Jal Shakti

Social Issues & Schemes

BHAVYA Rasayan Scheme

- The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved the Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojana Rasayan (BHAVYA Rasayan) Scheme with a financial outlay of ₹3,030 crore for establishing three dedicated Chemical Parks across India.
- The scheme aims to strengthen India's chemical manufacturing ecosystem through plug-and-play infrastructure, attract domestic and foreign investments, reduce import dependence, boost exports, and promote sustainable industrial growth. It was announced in the Union Budget 2026–27.

Objectives of BHAVYA Rasayan Scheme:

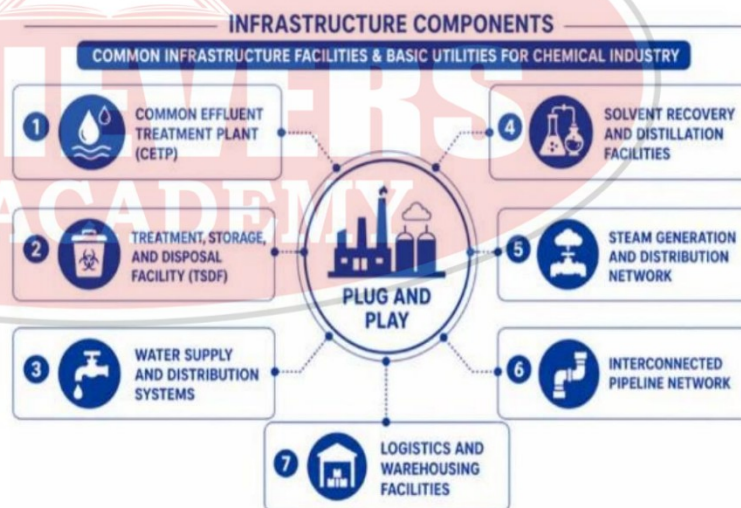
The scheme seeks to:

- Develop world-class chemical manufacturing hubs.
- Strengthen upstream, downstream, and ancillary chemical industries.
- Reduce logistics and production costs.
- Promote Atmanirbhar Bharat through import substitution.
- Increase exports and integrate India into Global Value Chains (GVCs).
- Attract domestic and foreign investments.
- Generate employment.
- Promote environmentally sustainable industrial development.

Major Infrastructure Facilities:

Each Chemical Park will provide plug-and-play infrastructure, including:

- Common Effluent Treatment Plant (CETP).
- Treatment, Storage and Disposal Facility (TSDF).
- Hazardous waste management facilities.
- Water supply and distribution systems.
- Steam generation and distribution network.
- Solvent recovery and distillation facilities.
- Interconnected pipeline network.
- Logistics and warehousing infrastructure.



What is a Chemical Park?

A Chemical Park is an integrated industrial cluster where multiple chemical manufacturing units operate with shared infrastructure and common utilities.

Benefits:

- Lower infrastructure costs.
- Better environmental compliance.
- Efficient resource utilisation.
- Improved supply chain connectivity.
- Enhanced global competitiveness.
- Easier investment and industrial expansion.

Plug-and-Play Infrastructure:

Plug-and-play infrastructure refers to ready-to-use industrial facilities where companies can start production with minimal additional investment.

Advantages:

- Faster project implementation.
- Reduced capital expenditure.
- Shared utilities.
- Lower operating costs.
- Improved ease of doing business.

Additional Facts:

- Common Effluent Treatment Plant (CETP): A CETP is a centralized facility that treats industrial wastewater from multiple industries before discharge.
- Treatment, Storage and Disposal Facility (TSDF): A TSDF is an authorised facility for the safe treatment, storage, and disposal of hazardous industrial waste.

Major Chemical Producing States:

- Gujarat.
- Maharashtra.
- Tamil Nadu.
- Andhra Pradesh.
- Odisha.

Exam Focus Points:

- Scheme: Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojana Rasayan (BHAVYA Rasayan).
- Approved By: Union Cabinet.
- Financial Outlay: ₹3,030 crore.
- Chemical Parks: 3.
- Duration: FY 2026–27 to FY 2030–31.
- Central Grant: Up to ₹1,000 crore per park.
- Minimum State Contribution: ₹500 crore.
- Selection Method: Challenge Route.
- Minimum Land Requirement: 8 sq. km (2,000 acres).
- Major Infrastructure: CETP, TSDF, logistics, pipeline network, warehousing.
- Related Initiative: Atmanirbhar Bharat.
- Implementing Ministry: Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers.

NPS to OPS One-Time Option

- The Government of India has reopened the one-time option for a select category of Central Government employees covered under the National Pension System (NPS) to switch to the Old Pension Scheme (OPS).
- The option is available only to employees who satisfy the eligibility conditions laid down by the Department of Pension & Pensioners' Welfare (DoPPW).

Why is it in News?

- The Centre has reopened the one-time option for eligible Central Government employees to opt for the Old Pension Scheme (OPS) instead of the National Pension System (NPS).
- The move follows judicial decisions and government notifications providing relief to employees recruited through vacancies advertised before the introduction of NPS.

Key Highlights:

- Eligible Employees: Central Government employees covered under NPS who satisfy prescribed conditions.
- Eligibility Criterion: Employees appointed against posts/vacancies advertised or notified before 22 December 2003, but who joined service on or after 1 January 2004.
- Such employees can exercise a one-time option to be covered under the Central Civil Services (Pension) Rules, i.e., the Old Pension Scheme.
- The option is available only within the period notified by the Government.

Who is Eligible?

A Central Government employee may opt for OPS if:

- The post was advertised or notified before 22 December 2003.
- Appointment was made on or after 1 January 2004.

- The employee is presently covered under the National Pension System (NPS).
- The employee fulfills the conditions specified by the Department of Pension & Pensioners' Welfare (DoPPW).

About the Old Pension Scheme (OPS):

- The Old Pension Scheme (OPS) is a Defined Benefit Pension Scheme, under which the Government guarantees a fixed pension after retirement.

Features:

- Pension generally based on the last drawn basic pay and qualifying service under applicable pension rules.
- Government bears the pension liability.
- Periodic Dearness Relief (DR) is payable.
- Family pension provisions are available.
- No mandatory employee contribution towards the pension corpus.

About the National Pension System (NPS):

- The National Pension System (NPS) is a Defined Contribution Pension Scheme.
- Introduced for: Central Government Employees 1 January 2004
- Regulator: Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA)
- Nature: Market-linked Defined Contribution Scheme
- Coverage: Government employees, private sector employees and all eligible Indian citizens

Features:

- Employee and Government both contribute.
- Pension depends upon accumulated corpus and investment returns.
- Market-linked returns.
- Portable across jobs.
- Regulated by PFRDA.

OPS vs NPS:

Feature	Old Pension Scheme (OPS)	National Pension System (NPS)
Nature	Defined Benefit	Defined Contribution
Pension	Government-guaranteed	Depends on corpus and market returns
Employee Contribution	Not required for pension corpus	Mandatory
Investment Risk	Government	Subscriber
Pension Amount	Fixed as per rules	Variable

Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA):

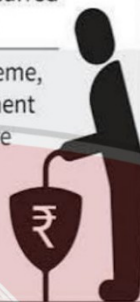
- Established: 2003 (Interim); Statutory status under the PFRDA Act, 2013
- Ministry: Ministry of Finance
- Headquarters: New Delhi
- Function: Regulates and develops the National Pension System

Functions:

Old vs New

A look at the difference between the old and the new pension schemes

Old Pension Scheme	National Pension Scheme
■ The scheme guarantees a life-long income, post-retirement ■ Government bears the expenditure incurred on the pension ■ Under the scheme, a monthly payment is assured, where the amount is equivalent to 50% of the last drawn salary	■ It is a participatory scheme, where employees contribute to their pension corpus from their salaries, with matching contribution from the government ■ The funds are invested in earmarked investment schemes through Pension Fund Managers ■ On retirement, 60% of the corpus, which is tax-free, is withdrawn while the remaining 40% is invested in annuities, which is taxed



- Regulates pension funds.
- Protects subscribers' interests.
- Promotes old-age income security.
- Oversees NPS intermediaries.

Unified Pension Scheme (UPS):

The Government has also introduced the Unified Pension Scheme (UPS) as an optional pension framework for Central Government employees covered under NPS.

Features:

- Effective from 1 April 2025.
- Employees can choose between UPS and NPS, subject to eligibility.
- Seeks to provide greater certainty in post-retirement benefits while retaining a contributory structure.

Constitutional Provisions:

- Article 309: Empowers Parliament and State Legislatures to regulate recruitment and conditions of service of public servants.
- Article 300A: Pension has been recognized through judicial interpretation as an important statutory right; it cannot be denied except by authority of law.

Exam Focus Points::

- Eligible employees: Posts advertised before 22 December 2003.
- NPS implemented for Central Government employees: 1 January 2004.
- Regulator of NPS: PFRDA.
- PFRDA Act: 2013.
- Policy Department: Department of Pension & Pensioners' Welfare (DoPPW).
- Nature of OPS: Defined Benefit Scheme.
- Nature of NPS: Defined Contribution Scheme.
- Related Pension Reform: Unified Pension Scheme (UPS).

VISHWAS 2026 Scheme

- The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has launched VISHWAS 2026, a one-time dispute resolution scheme to facilitate the amicable settlement of disputes relating to damages and penalties imposed under the Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions (EPF & MP) Act, 1952 and the Code on Social Security, 2020.
- The scheme seeks to promote voluntary compliance, reduce litigation, and provide employers with a transparent, fully digital, and time-bound mechanism for resolving pending disputes.
- It came into force on 29 June 2026 and will remain operational for six months.

 ONE-TIME SETTLEMENT SCHEME A one-time opportunity to settle pending damages and penalty disputes.	 FULLY DIGITAL PROCESS End-to-end online filing, verification, and resolution – paperless and hassle-free.	 TIME-BOUND DISPOSAL Applications will be resolved within a specified timeline for faster closure.	 VOLUNTARY COMPLIANCE Encourages employers to come forward, settle disputes and avoid further legal action.	 REDUCES LITIGATION Eases burden on courts and promotes a harmonious compliance ecosystem.
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Key Features of the Scheme:

- Applications to be filed online through the EPFO Employer Portal using Digital Signature Certificate (DSC) or e-Sign.
- Provides a time-bound digital settlement process.
- Dedicated VISHWAS Cells to be established in EPFO field offices for implementation.

Covers eligible disputes relating to damages and penalties under:

- Section 14B of the EPF & MP Act, 1952.
- Section 128 of the Code on Social Security, 2020.
- Categories of Cases Covered

ELIGIBILITY	DISPUTES COVERED
 • Establishments having pending EPF damages and penalty disputes. • Applies to pre-notice and post-notice cases as notified.	 • EPF damages • Penalties under EPF & MP Act, 1952 • Interest and related charges (as per scheme guidelines)

The scheme covers four broad categories:

- Cases where damages or penalty orders are under challenge before judicial forums.
- Final orders where recovery is pending or only partly completed.
- Cases where notices have been issued but final orders are yet to be passed.
- Cases where notices for damages or penalties have not yet been issued.

Reduced Penalty Rates under VISHWAS 2026:

For defaults prior to 14 June 2024, damages/penalties will be recalculated at concessional rates:

Period of Default	Reduced Rate
Up to 2 months	0.25% per month
2 to less than 4 months	0.50% per month
More than 4 months	1.00% per month

These reduced rates are intended to encourage speedy settlement of pending cases.

About EPFO:

- Established: 1952.
- Parent Ministry: Ministry of Labour and Employment.
- Chief: Ramesh Krishnamurthi
- Headquarters: New Delhi.
- Statutory Basis: Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952.

Functions:

- Administers the Employees' Provident Fund (EPF).
- Manages Employees' Pension Scheme (EPS), 1995.
- Manages Employees' Deposit Linked Insurance Scheme (EDLI), 1976.
- Provides retirement savings and social security to organised sector workers.

About the EPF & MP Act, 1952:

- Principal legislation governing provident fund, pension, and insurance benefits for organised sector workers.
- Applicable to specified establishments employing the prescribed minimum number of employees.
- Section 14B empowers EPFO to recover damages for delayed PF contributions.
- Interest on delayed payments is governed under Section 7Q of the Act.

About the Code on Social Security, 2020:

- One of the four Labour Codes enacted by Parliament.
- Consolidates 9 central labour laws relating to social security.

Extends social security provisions to:

- Organised workers.
- Unorganised workers.
- Gig workers.
- Platform workers.
- Section 128 deals with damages and penalties for defaults under the Code.

Additional Key Facts:

Exam Focus Points:

- Scheme: VISHWAS 2026.
- Implementing Agency: EPFO.
- Parent Ministry: Ministry of Labour and Employment.
- Effective Date: 29 June 2026.
- Duration: Six months.
- Nature: One-time dispute resolution scheme.
- Applicable Laws: EPF & MP Act, 1952; Code on Social Security, 2020.
- Relevant Sections: Section 14B (EPF Act), Section 128 (Code on Social Security).
- Application Mode: EPFO Employer Portal (DSC/e-Sign).
- Headquarters of EPFO: New Delhi.

- The Four Labour Codes
- Code on Wages, 2019
- Industrial Relations Code, 2020
- Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020
- Code on Social Security, 2020

Social Security Schemes under EPFO:

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

Ministry:

- Ministry of Labour and Employment
- Headquarters: New Delhi
- Minister: Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya

Mobile Phone Manufacturing Scheme (MPMS)

- The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has approved the Mobile Phone Manufacturing Scheme (MPMS) with a budgetary outlay of ₹62,500 crore.
- The scheme will be implemented for five years (FY 2026–27 to FY 2030–31) to strengthen India's position as a global mobile phone manufacturing hub by increasing production, deepening domestic value addition, strengthening supply chains, boosting exports, and promoting Indian mobile phone brands.

SALIENT FEATURES	EXPECTED OUTCOMES	CONTEXT
• Incentive support on eligible sales for manufacturing of mobile phones in India at differentiated rates ranging from 2.25% to 5%. • Additional incentive of up to 1.5% linked to domestic sourcing of key components / sub-assemblies. • For building Indian brands, an additional incentive @3% on Eligible Sales for design and R&D of the product. • Aims to scale up production, deepen value addition, build Indian brands and achieve technological sovereignty.	• Cumulative mobile phone production in the country expected to reach approximately ₹39,00,000 CRORE • Significant increase in exports of mobile phones • Around 60,000 direct jobs to be generated • Contributing to economic growth, employment generation and strengthening India's position in global electronics manufacturing hub.	• Electronics manufacturing has grown 7 times and exports 11 times since FY 2014-15 under Make in India. • Mobile phone manufacturing is the key driver and anchor of India's electronics ecosystem. • India is now the world's second-largest mobile phone manufacturer by volume, with 99.2% of mobile phones used in India being manufactured domestically. • Smartphones became India's single largest exported product category in 2025, surpassing diesel fuel and cut diamonds. • The PLI-LSEM scheme played a transformative role and its tenure ended on 31st March 2026.

Key Features of the Scheme:

- Provides performance-linked incentives on eligible sales of mobile phones manufactured in India.
- Incentive Rate: 2.25% to 5% on eligible sales.
- Additional incentive of up to 1.5% for greater domestic sourcing of key components and sub-assemblies.
- An additional 3% incentive is provided to promote Indian brands undertaking design and R&D activities.
- Focuses on moving India from assembly-led manufacturing to design-led manufacturing.

Expected Outcomes:

- Scale up India's mobile phone production and exports.
- Increase domestic value addition in electronics manufacturing.
- Strengthen India's position in global value chains.
- Encourage development of indigenous technologies and patents.
- Generate large-scale employment in electronics manufacturing.

About the Mobile Phone Manufacturing Scheme (MPMS):

- The MPMS succeeds the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for Large Scale Electronics Manufacturing (PLI-LSEM), which concluded on 31 March 2026.

- It aims to build a globally competitive electronics manufacturing ecosystem by encouraging investment in manufacturing, component production, and product design.

About the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY):

- Established: 2016 (as a separate ministry).
- Cabinet Minister: Ashwini Vaishnaw

Additional Key Facts:

- India has emerged as the world's second-largest mobile phone manufacturer, after China.
- Mobile phones have become one of India's top export commodities, reflecting rapid growth in the electronics manufacturing sector.

The MPMS complements flagship initiatives such as:

- Make in India
- Digital India
- Aatmanirbhar Bharat
- India Semiconductor Mission (ISM) 2.0
- The India Semiconductor Mission (ISM) was launched in 2021 to develop a complete semiconductor and display manufacturing ecosystem in India.
- Electronics manufacturing is one of the 24 priority sectors under the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme.
- India aims to become a global hub for electronics manufacturing by expanding component manufacturing, semiconductor fabrication, and design capabilities.

Exam Focus Points:

- Scheme: Mobile Phone Manufacturing Scheme (MPMS).
- Approved By: Union Cabinet.
- Budgetary Outlay: ₹62,500 crore.
- Duration: FY 2026–27 to FY 2030–31.
- Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).
- Incentive Rate: 2.25%–5% on eligible sales.
- Additional Incentive: Up to 1.5% for domestic sourcing; 3% for Indian brands undertaking design & R&D.
- Previous Scheme: Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for Large Scale Electronics Manufacturing.
- Objective: Boost production, exports, domestic value addition, and Indian brands.
- Related Initiative: India Semiconductor Mission (ISM) 2.0.
- India's Global Position: Second-largest mobile phone manufacturer.

Mahila Samriddhi Yojana

- The Government of the National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi has officially renamed its flagship Mahila Samriddhi Yojana as the Delhi Lakshmi Yojana.
- The scheme aims to provide ₹2,500 per month through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) to eligible women from economically weaker sections to promote financial security and women's empowerment. The Delhi Government plans to roll out the scheme around Raksha Bandhan after completing beneficiary verification and administrative formalities.

Likely Eligibility Criteria:

- Women aged 21–60 years.
- Permanent resident of Delhi for the prescribed period.
- Annual family income within the notified limit.
- Only one eligible woman per family.
- Applicant or family members should not have a criminal record.
- Other detailed eligibility conditions will be notified by the Delhi Government.

UNDER THE PROPOSED SCHEME, ELIGIBLE WOMEN AGED 21 TO 60 YEARS

WILL RECEIVE ₹2,500 PER MONTH AS FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

- TRANSPARENT ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**
have been put in place to ensure that the benefits reach genuinely deserving women.
- AIMED AT STRENGTHENING WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT**
and promoting financial independence.
- A STEP TOWARDS A STRONGER DELHI**
by supporting the financial well-being of women across the city.

About Delhi Lakshmi Yojana:

- It is the renamed version of the Mahila Samridhi Yojana.
- Provides monthly financial assistance of ₹2,500 to eligible women through DBT.
- The scheme is intended to strengthen women's economic participation and improve household financial security.
- Implementation will be overseen by the Government of NCT of Delhi through the concerned departments.

About Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT):

- Launched by the Government of India in 2013.
- Transfers welfare benefits directly into beneficiaries' bank accounts.
- Reduces leakages, duplication, and delays in subsidy delivery.

Linked with the JAM Trinity:

- Jan Dhan Accounts
- Aadhaar
- Mobile
- DBT is a key component of Digital India and promotes transparency and efficient delivery of government benefits.

About the Government of NCT of Delhi:

- Status: National Capital Territory (NCT).
- Constitutional Provision: Article 239AA of the Constitution (inserted by the 69th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1991).
- Delhi has a Legislative Assembly and a Council of Ministers headed by the Chief Minister, while public order, police, and land remain under the Union Government through the Lieutenant Governor.

Additional Key Facts:

- Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) aims to ensure targeted and transparent transfer of welfare benefits directly into beneficiaries' bank accounts.
- The JAM Trinity (Jan Dhan–Aadhaar–Mobile) forms the backbone of India's digital welfare delivery system.
- Article 239AA grants special constitutional status to the National Capital Territory of Delhi.
- The 69th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1991 created the Legislative Assembly for Delhi and the office of the Chief Minister.
- Women-centric DBT schemes are increasingly being adopted by states to improve financial inclusion and strengthen women's economic empowerment.

Exam Focus Points:

- Scheme: Delhi Lakshmi Yojana.
- Former Name: Mahila Samridhi Yojana.
- State/UT: Delhi (NCT).
- Benefit: ₹2,500 per month.
- Transfer Mode: Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT).
- Beneficiaries: Eligible women from economically weaker sections.
- Objective: Women's financial empowerment and social security.
- Launch Target: Around Raksha Bandhan 2026.
- Related Initiative: JAM Trinity.
- Constitutional Provision for Delhi: Article 239AA.
- Relevant Constitutional Amendment: 69th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1991

Amnesty Scheme 2026

- 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.

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

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.

'Pink Saheli Card'

- The Delhi Government has made the Pink Saheli Smart Card mandatory for women to avail free travel in Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) and Cluster buses.
- The new system will come into effect from 1 August 2026, replacing the existing paper-based pink ticket system introduced in 2019.
- Women commuters will have to carry and tap the NCMC-enabled Pink Saheli Card while boarding buses to avail the free travel benefit.
- The initiative aims to digitize the scheme, improve transparency, prevent misuse, and streamline beneficiary verification.

Technology Used:

- NCMC-enabled (National Common Mobility Card) smart card.
- Passengers must tap the card on the Electronic Ticketing Machine (ETM) while boarding.

Purpose:

- Replace paper pink tickets.
- Ensure transparency and reduce fraud.
- Digitize beneficiary verification.
- Improve efficiency in public transport service delivery.

About the National Common Mobility Card (NCMC):

- Popularly known as "One Nation, One Card."
- Launched by the Government of India to enable seamless digital payments across public transport and retail.
- Developed under the guidance of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) and NPCI.
- Based on the RuPay payment system.

Can be used for:

- Metro rail
- Buses
- Parking
- Toll payments
- Retail purchases
- ATM withdrawals (where applicable).

About Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC):

- Established: 1971.

SMART CARDS PLANNED FOR SENIOR CITIZENS TOO

Delhi govt to introduce Pink Saheli Cards for women availing free travel in DTC buses. Two private vendors to issue the cards

How it will unfold

- Special counters to be opened across Delhi for card registration
- Aadhaar with Delhi address to be mandatory for availing the card
- Card compulsory for girls and women aged 12 years and above
- Women to tap the card on electronic ticketing machines for free bus travel
- Nearly 2 crore women commute by Delhi buses every month

Three types of smart cards planned

Pink Saheli Card exclusively for women

Separate smart cards for various bus pass holders, including senior citizens and divyangjans

General smart card for all commuters, similar to a metro card



Easy access through multiple counters

- Counters to be set up at DM and SDM offices, bus depots and CSC centres
- Banks responsible for managing and operating the counters
- Rollout expected after Jan 14, subject to final readiness

Free bus travel scheme in numbers

Over **12 crore** women travelled by buses between March and Aug this financial year

13.3 crore women benefited from the scheme in 2023

Govt allocated **₹300 crore** for the scheme in the current financial year

Exam Focus Points:

- State/UT: Delhi.
- Scheme: Pink Saheli Smart Card.
- Mandatory From: 1 August 2026.
- Beneficiaries: Women and girls aged 12 years and above who are Delhi residents.
- Transport Covered: DTC and Cluster buses.
- Technology: National Common Mobility Card (NCMC).
- Purpose: Replace paper pink tickets with a digital smart card.
- Objective: Transparent, efficient, and fraud-resistant free bus travel for women.
- Related Initiative: One Nation, One Card (NCMC).
- Nodal Ministry for NCMC: Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA).

- Chairman: Niharika Rai,
- Managing Director: Jitender Yadav
- Administrative Control: Government of the National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi.
- Operates one of India's largest urban bus transport systems.

Uttarakhand 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.

STATES/UTs THAT HAVE ACHIEVED FULL LITERACY UNDER ULLAS			
	LADAKH (UTs) First fully literate Union Territory	97%	 24 June 2024
	MIZORAM First fully literate State	98.2%	 20 May 2025
	GOA Fully literate State	99.7%	 30 May 2025
	TRIPURA Fully literate State	95.6%	 23 June 2025
	HIMACHAL PRADESH Fully literate State	99.30%	 8 September 2025
	CHANDIGARH (UTs) Fully literate Union Territory	99.93%	 31 December 2025
	ANDAMAN & NICOBAR ISLANDS (UTs) Fully literate Union Territory	99%	 26 January 2026
	SIKKIM Fully literate State	99.82%	 27 May 2026
 ULLAS continues to empower every individual towards lifelong learning and an inclusive, literate New India.			

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).
- Five Components of ULLAS
- Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN)
- Critical Life Skills
- Basic Education
- Vocational Skills
- Continuing Education

Exam Focus Points:

- 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.

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.

Chief Minister's Cashless Medical Scheme

- The Government of Uttar Pradesh launched the Chief Minister's Cashless Medical Scheme for Teachers to provide cashless medical treatment of up to ₹5 lakh per year to teachers, non-teaching staff, and their eligible family members.

- The scheme was launched by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in Varanasi and will benefit around 15 lakh personnel associated with basic and secondary education across the state.
- Besides regular teachers, the scheme also covers Shiksha Mitras, instructors, cooks (Mid-Day Meal workers), and eligible staff of Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalayas (KGBVs).

What is the Chief Minister's Cashless Medical Scheme?

The Chief Minister's Cashless Medical Scheme is a state-funded health insurance initiative that enables eligible teachers and education staff to receive cashless treatment up to ₹5 lakh annually at empanelled hospitals. The scheme aims to provide financial protection against medical expenses and improve healthcare access for education sector employees.

Additional Welfare Initiative:

Along with the launch of the health scheme, the Basic Education Department signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the State Bank of India (SBI) to provide Group Term Life Insurance for permanent teachers.



Insurance Benefits:

- Life Insurance Cover: ₹10 lakh.
- Strengthens social and financial security for teachers.
- Covers around 4.5 lakh permanent teachers in the state.

About Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV):

- Launched: 2004.
- Ministry: Ministry of Education.
- Implemented Under: Samagra Shiksha.
- Objective: Provide residential schooling for girls from disadvantaged communities, especially in educationally backward blocks.

Target Groups:

- Scheduled Castes (SCs).
- Scheduled Tribes (STs).
- Other Backward Classes (OBCs).
- Minority communities.
- Below Poverty Line (BPL) families.

About Samagra Shiksha:

- Launched: 2018.
- Ministry: Ministry of Education.
- Type: Centrally Sponsored Scheme.
- Coverage: School education from Pre-primary to Class XII.

Objectives:

- Improve quality of school education.
- Promote inclusive and equitable education.

Exam Focus Points:

- Scheme: Chief Minister's Cashless Medical Scheme for Teachers.
- State: Uttar Pradesh.
- Launched By: Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath.
- Health Coverage: ₹5 lakh per family per year.
- Beneficiaries: Approximately 15 lakh teachers and non-teaching staff.
- Additional Beneficiaries: Shiksha Mitras, instructors, cooks, and KGBV staff.
- Insurance Partner: State Bank of India (SBI).
- Additional Benefit: ₹10 lakh Group Term Life Insurance for permanent teachers.
- Related Scheme: Samagra Shiksha.
- Related Institution: Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya (KGBV).

- Strengthen digital learning and teacher training.
- Improve school infrastructure.

Mission Kayakalp

Why is it in News?

The Delhi Government has launched Mission Kayakalp, a major initiative to transform government schools into safe, clean, modern, and student-friendly learning spaces through infrastructure upgrades and community participation.

Key Highlights

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

What is Mission Kayakalp?

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

Objectives

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

Significance

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

Exam Focus Points

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

NRC Demand in Manipur

Why is it in News?

Several valley-based civil society organisations in Manipur have demanded that the National Register of Citizens (NRC) be updated before the Population Census 2027. They argue that this would help identify illegal immigrants and ensure accurate population data.

1 What is NRC?  • An official register of Indian citizens. • It is meant to record who is a citizen of India.	2 Legal Basis  • Citizenship Act, 1955 • Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and Issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003	3 Purpose  • Maintain an official record of citizens • Help identify eligible citizens • Support citizenship documentation
4 Important Assam NRC Facts  • The NRC update was carried out in Assam. • It used legacy records such as the 1951 NRC and old electoral rolls. • For Assam, 24 March 1971 is an important cut-off date.	5 Key Terms - Legacy Data - Family Tree Verification - NRC Seva Kendra - Document Verification	6 Remember  • NRC is about citizenship records. • It is different from the Census and voter list.

Key Highlights

- Valley-based groups in Manipur want the NRC to be implemented before Census 2027.
- They believe that conducting the NRC first will help identify illegal immigrants and prevent them from being counted in the Census.
- According to these organisations, an updated NRC would make the population census more accurate and reliable.
- The demand has been linked to concerns over illegal migration, demographic changes, and protection of the rights of indigenous communities.
- Supporters argue that the NRC would help ensure that government benefits and electoral rolls include only eligible Indian citizens.

What is the National Register of Citizens (NRC)?

The National Register of Citizens (NRC) is an official register containing the names of genuine Indian citizens. Its purpose is to identify Indian citizens and distinguish them from illegal migrants.

NRC in India

- The first NRC was prepared in 1951 after the first Census of independent India.
- So far, Assam is the only state where the NRC has been updated under the supervision of the Supreme Court of India.
- The final NRC for Assam was published on 31 August 2019.

Objectives of the NRC

- Identify illegal immigrants residing in India.
- Prepare an authentic register of Indian citizens.
- Ensure that government welfare schemes benefit eligible citizens.
- Improve the accuracy of electoral rolls and official population records.

Significance

- Helps maintain an authentic record of Indian citizens.
- Supports better planning and implementation of welfare schemes.
- Improves the accuracy of population and electoral data.
- Plays an important role in discussions related to migration, citizenship, and internal security.
- Note: The demand for implementing the NRC before Census 2027 in Manipur is currently a proposal by certain organisations. No decision has been announced by the Central Government regarding such an exercise.

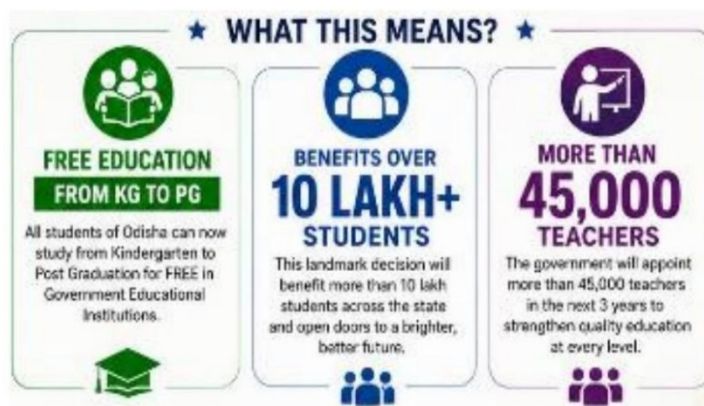
KG to PG Scheme

Why is it in News?

The Odisha Cabinet has approved the "Shishu Vatika to Post-Graduation (KG to PG)" scheme with an outlay of ₹5,468 crore to provide free education to eligible students from pre-primary (Kindergarten) to postgraduate level.

Key Highlights

- The scheme aims to provide free education from Kindergarten (KG) to Post-Graduation (PG).
- It has been approved with a total budget of ₹5,468 crore.
- The scheme will be implemented over a five-year period (2025–26 to 2029–30).
- It seeks to improve access to quality education, reduce financial barriers, and increase enrolment and retention of students.
- The initiative covers government educational institutions across the state.
- It is expected to strengthen inclusive and equitable education, especially for economically weaker sections.



Objectives of the Scheme

- Ensure free and continuous education from early childhood to higher education.
- Reduce school and college dropout rates.
- Promote equal educational opportunities for all eligible students.
- Improve literacy, skill development, and human capital in the state.

Significance

- It is one of the few state-level initiatives offering free education across the entire educational journey—from KG to PG.
- The scheme supports the goal of making education accessible, affordable, and inclusive.
- It is expected to contribute to Odisha's long-term socio-economic development by improving educational outcomes.

Odisha

- Capital: Bhubaneswar
- Districts: 30 (3 divisions)
- Governor: Kambhampati Hari Babu
- Chief Minister: Mohan Charan Majhi
- Deputy Chief Minister: Kanak Vardhan Singh Deo & Pravati Parida

Exam Focus Points

- Scheme: Shishu Vatika to Post-Graduation (KG to PG) Scheme
- State: Odisha
- Approved By: Odisha Cabinet
- Objective: Free education from Kindergarten (KG) to Post-Graduation (PG)
- Outlay: ₹5,468 crore
- Implementation Period: 2025–26 to 2029–30 (5 years)
- Beneficiaries: Eligible students studying in government educational institutions
- Coverage: Pre-primary (Shishu Vatika/KG) to Postgraduate (PG) level
- Target Group: Economically weaker and eligible students across Odisha
- Related Constitutional Provision: Article 21A – Right to Education (RTE) (applicable to children aged 6–14 years)
- Related Law: Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education (RTE) Act, 2009

PM Family Care Tracker

- Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah launched the PM Family Care Tracker (PM-FCT) Pilot Project along with the Health Passport in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.
- The integrated digital platform aims to strengthen technology-driven welfare delivery by tracking the health, nutrition, education, and social welfare of children and families, ensuring that no eligible beneficiary is left out of government schemes. The pilot project initially covers the Gandhinagar Lok Sabha constituency and integrates data from multiple government departments into a unified digital system.
- The platform digitally tracks children from the prenatal stage up to 16 years of age, generating automatic alerts if a child misses vaccination, drops out of school, or requires nutritional intervention. It integrates records relating to birth and death registration, health, nutrition, education, and welfare schemes, enabling timely action by local authorities. The initiative also issues a Health Passport linked with digital health records to facilitate continuous healthcare and service delivery.

What is the PM Family Care Tracker (PM-FCT)?

The PM Family Care Tracker (PM-FCT) is an integrated digital governance platform that consolidates data from multiple government departments to monitor the health, nutrition, education, and welfare status of every family, especially mothers and children.

Objectives:

- Ensure no eligible beneficiary is excluded from welfare schemes.
- Digitally monitor child health from pregnancy to adolescence.
- Improve immunization, nutrition, and school enrolment.
- Enable timely intervention through automated alerts.
- Promote evidence-based governance through integrated databases.

Key Features:

Pilot project launched in Gandhinagar, Gujarat.

Integrates data from:

- Health Department
- Women and Child Development Department
- Education Department
- Tracks children from pregnancy up to 16 years.

Generates alerts for:

- Missed vaccinations
- School dropouts
- Nutritional deficiencies

Links beneficiaries using:

- ABHA (Ayushman Bharat Health Account)
- Birth Registration Number
- Provides a Health Passport containing digital health records.
- Supports real-time monitoring and targeted welfare delivery.

Additional Key Facts:

- Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM):
- Launched: 2021
- Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Health and Family Welfare

Objective:

- Create a nationwide digital health ecosystem.
- Provide every citizen with a unique digital health identity.
- Enable secure sharing of electronic health records.

ABHA (Ayushman Bharat Health Account):

- A 14-digit unique digital health ID issued under the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM).
- Allows individuals to securely store and access their digital health records across healthcare providers.

POSHAN Tracker:

Developed under Mission Saksham Anganwadi and POSHAN 2.0.

Digitally monitors:

- Nutrition services
- Growth of children
- Maternal health
- Anganwadi service delivery
- Used by Anganwadi workers for real-time data collection.

Mission Saksham Anganwadi and POSHAN 2.0:

Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Women and Child Development.

Focuses on:

- Maternal nutrition
- Child nutrition
- Reduction of stunting, wasting, and anaemia
- Strengthening Anganwadi services through technology.

Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI):

India's Digital Public Infrastructure includes:

- Aadhaar – Digital identity
- UPI – Digital payments
- DigiLocker – Digital document storage
- ABHA – Digital health identity
- DPI enables transparent, efficient, and inclusive public service delivery.

Exam Focus Points (Quick Revision Notes):

- Project in News: PM Family Care Tracker (PM-FCT)
- Launched by: Amit Shah
- Pilot State: Gujarat
- Pilot Location: Gandhinagar Lok Sabha Constituency
- Purpose: Integrated digital tracking of family welfare, health, nutrition, and education
- Health Identity: ABHA ID
- Digital Record: Health Passport
- Target Group: Mothers and children (prenatal stage to 16 years)
- Related Mission: Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM)
- Related Platform: POSHAN Tracker

Samagra Shishu Bal Swasthya Karyakram (SSBSK)

Union Health and Family Welfare Minister Jagat Prakash Nadda launched the Samagra Shishu Bal Swasthya Karyakram (SSBSK) during the 16th Conference of the Central Council of Health and Family Welfare (CCHFW) in New Delhi. The programme aims to provide comprehensive, continuous, home- and community-based healthcare for children from birth to 36 months, with a special focus on the critical first three years of life under the vision "Pehle Teen Saal, Sampoorna Dekhbhal."

Key Highlights:

- Objective: Ensure integrated healthcare, nutrition, growth, and early childhood development for children aged 0–3 years.
- Integrates two existing programmes:
- Home-Based Newborn Care (HBNC)

- Home-Based Care for Young Child (HBYC)

Introduces a risk-stratified approach for the first time:

- "At-risk" newborns to receive up to 9 home visits during the first 42 days.
- "At-risk" children to receive up to 8 home visits up to 36 months.

Strengthens coordination through joint home visits by:

- ASHA workers
- Auxiliary Nurse Midwives (ANMs)
- Community Health Officers (CHOs)
- Anganwadi Workers (AWWs)

Introduces:

- Well-Baby Sessions during Village Health, Sanitation and Nutrition Days (VHSNDs).
- Monthly Shishu Shivirs at Ayushman Arogya Mandirs for early screening and management of high-risk children.
- Includes post-partum maternal mental health screening and promotes Early Childhood Development (ECD) through responsive caregiving, play, nutrition, and family engagement.

Uses digital technologies such as:

- Decision Support Systems (DSS)
- Child-tracking applications
- Referral and alert mechanisms

Digital integration with:

- JANANI Portal
- U-WIN Portal
- MPCDSR Portal
- RBSK 2.0 Portal
- POSHAN Tracker
- ABHA and Baal-ABHA IDs
- Special strategies target urban slums, migrant populations, and underserved communities.

Additional Key Facts:

- Home-Based Newborn Care (HBNC):
- Launched under the National Health Mission (NHM).
- Provides scheduled home visits by ASHA workers during the neonatal period (first 42 days).
- Focuses on breastfeeding, thermal care, immunization, infection detection, and newborn survival.



Exam Focus Points (Quick Revision Notes):

- Scheme in News: Samagra Shishu Bal Swasthya Karyakram (SSBSK)
- Launched by: Jagat Prakash Nadda
- Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
- Target Age Group: Birth to 36 months (0–3 years)
- Vision: Pehle Teen Saal, Sampoorna Dekhbhal
- Integrated Programmes: HBNC + HBYC
- Implementation: ASHA, ANM, CHO, Anganwadi Worker
- Health Facilities: Ayushman Arogya Mandirs
- Digital Integration: ABHA, U-WIN, POSHAN Tracker, JANANI Portal
- Focus Areas: Child health, nutrition, early childhood development, maternal mental health

Home-Based Care for Young Child (HBYC):

- Extends home-based care from 3 months to 15 months (now integrated into SSBSK up to 36 months).
- Promotes complementary feeding, immunization, growth monitoring, and developmental milestones.

Early Childhood Development (ECD):

- Covers the period from birth to 8 years.
- Emphasizes health, nutrition, responsive caregiving, early learning, and protection.
- The first 1,000 days (from conception to 2 years) are considered the most critical for brain development.

Ayushman Arogya Mandir:

- Formerly known as Health and Wellness Centres (HWCs).
- Established under Ayushman Bharat to provide comprehensive primary healthcare services.

ABHA (Ayushman Bharat Health Account):

- A 14-digit unique digital health ID under the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM).
- Enables secure storage and sharing of health records.

Village Health, Sanitation and Nutrition Day (VHSND):

- A monthly outreach platform under the National Health Mission.
- Provides immunization, antenatal care, nutrition counselling, family planning, and child health services.

SHATAYU Dashboard

- The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has expanded the SHATAYU (Senior Holistic Care Assistance and Training for Your Utility) Dashboard to strengthen caregiving services for senior citizens across India. Launched on 22 May 2026, the dashboard serves as a digital platform where trained geriatric caregivers can register themselves and connect with elderly citizens requiring professional care services. The Ministry also clarified that some technical glitches are being resolved and advised citizens not to rely on misleading social media posts regarding the platform.
- The initiative aims to build an inclusive and age-responsive ecosystem for senior citizens by improving access to trained caregivers, promoting healthy ageing, and enhancing the quality of elder care services across the country.

About SHATAYU Dashboard

SHATAYU stands for Senior Holistic Care Assistance and Training for Your Utility.

Objectives

- Create a national database of trained geriatric caregivers.
- Connect caregivers with senior citizens in need.
- Improve access to professional elderly care.
- Promote community-based care for ageing populations.
- Support healthy and independent living for senior citizens.

Additional Key Facts

- Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment
- Nodal ministry for the welfare of senior citizens.

Implements schemes related to:

- Senior citizens
- Scheduled Castes
- Persons with Disabilities

- Social defence and rehabilitation

National Policy on Older Persons (NPOP), 1999

Launched to improve the quality of life of older persons.

Focuses on:

- Financial security
- Healthcare
- Shelter
- Welfare
- Protection of life and property
- Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007
- Provides legal protection for parents and senior citizens.
- Makes it a legal obligation for children and heirs to maintain senior citizens.
- Provides for Maintenance Tribunals to ensure speedy relief.

Exam Focus Points (Quick Revision Notes)

- Initiative in News → SHATAYU Dashboard
- Full Form → Senior Holistic Care Assistance and Training for Your Utility
- Launched On → 22 May 2026
- Ministry → Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment
- Purpose → Connect trained geriatric caregivers with senior citizens
- Beneficiaries → Senior citizens across India
- Related Scheme → Atal Vayo Abhyuday Yojana (AVYAY)
- Related Law → Maintenance and Welfare of Parents and Senior Citizens Act, 2007

Atal Vayo Abhyuday Yojana (AVYAY)

- Umbrella scheme of the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.

Aims to improve the quality of life of senior citizens through:

- Integrated care
- Healthcare
- Shelter
- Helplines
- Productive ageing initiatives

Demographic Ageing in India

- According to government projections, the share of elderly persons in India is expected to rise significantly due to increasing life expectancy and declining fertility rates.
- Population ageing has become an important policy issue in healthcare, social security, and long-term care.

LAUNCH OF



JEEVAN

(Joint Elderly Empowerment & Virtual Assistance Network)

Mobile Application for Senior Citizens

- Safety & Emergency Support
- Healthcare Access & Support Services
- Information on Government Schemes
- Senior Citizen Homes & Facilities
- User-Friendly Interface Easy to Use, Easy to Access



CARE DIGNITY EMPOWERMENT



SHATAYU

(Senior Holistic Care Assistance and Training For Your Utility)

Geriatric Caregiver Dashboard

- Information on Availability of Geriatric Caregivers
- District & State-wise Caregiver Data
- Training & Capacity Building Support
- Strengthening Elder Care Ecosystem
- Easy Access for Effective Service Delivery



A STEP TOWARDS SAFETY, CARE, DIGNITY AND EMPOWERMENT OF SENIOR CITIZENS AND ENABLING ELDER CARE ECOSYSTEM THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

Science & Technology

First Indigenous Expendable Turbojet Engine

- India has achieved a major milestone in indigenous defence technology with the successful development of its first Indigenous Expendable Turbojet Engine (ETJE) in the 350 kg thrust class.
- The engine has been designed by the Gas Turbine Research Establishment (GTRE), a laboratory of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), and manufactured and assembled by Azad Engineering Ltd., Hyderabad. This breakthrough significantly strengthens India's self-reliance in advanced aero-engine technology under the Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative.

Objectives of the Programme:

- Develop indigenous aero-engine capability.
- Reduce dependence on imported propulsion systems.
- Support indigenous missile and UAV programmes.
- Strengthen India's defence industrial ecosystem.
- Promote public-private collaboration in strategic technologies.

What is an Expendable Turbojet Engine?

- An Expendable Turbojet Engine (ETJE) is a compact jet engine designed primarily for one-time-use aerial platforms.
- Major Applications
 - Cruise Missiles.
 - Loitering Munitions.
 - Target Drones.
 - Long-range UAVs.
 - Decoy Systems.
- Unlike reusable aircraft engines, expendable turbojet engines are optimized for cost-effective, high-speed, long-range missions.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

-  India's **First Indigenous** Expendable Turbo Jet Engine in the 350 kg thrust class developed.
-  Designed by DRDO's Gas Turbine Research Establishment (**GTRE**).
-  Successfully manufactured and delivered to GTRE by **Azad Engineering**.
-  Reflects the growing technological capabilities of India's defence industry.
-  Jet engine technology is one of the most sophisticated engineering disciplines in the world.

What is a Turbojet Engine?

A turbojet is a gas turbine engine that generates thrust by compressing air, mixing it with fuel, burning the mixture, and expelling high-speed exhaust gases.

Working Principle:

- Air Intake.
- Compressor.
- Combustion Chamber.
- Turbine.
- Exhaust Nozzle.

Types of Aircraft Engines:

Engine Type:	Major Application
Turbojet	Missiles, high-speed aircraft
Turbofan	Commercial and fighter aircraft
Turboprop	Regional aircraft
Turboshaft	Helicopters
Ramjet	Supersonic missiles
Scramjet	Hypersonic vehicles

About DRDO:

- Established: 1958
- Headquarters: New Delhi
- Chairman: Rajesh Kumar Singh
- Motto: "Balasya Mulam Vigyanam" (Strength's Origin is Science)

Gas Turbine Research Establishment (GTRE):

- Parent Organisation: DRDO
- Location: Bengaluru, Karnataka
- Director: Dr. S V Ramana Murthy
- Specialisation: Aero-engine research and gas turbine technology

Major Projects:

- Kaveri Engine Programme.
- Indigenous Gas Turbine Engines.
- Advanced propulsion systems.
- Aero-engine technology for military platforms.

Exam Focus Points:

- Engine: Indigenous Expendable Turbojet Engine (ETJE).
- Thrust Class: 350 kg.
- Developer: GTRE, DRDO.
- Manufacturing Partner: Azad Engineering, Hyderabad.
- Administrative Ministry: Ministry of Defence.
- Potential Applications: Cruise missiles, UAVs, loitering munitions.
- GTRE Location: Bengaluru.
- DRDO Established: 1958.
- Related Programme: Kaveri Engine Programme.
- Initiative: Aatmanirbhar Bharat in Defence.

Private Turbofan Engine Programme

Why is it in News?

Hyderabad-based startup Paninian India Private Limited has unveiled the 'Yantur 4.5 kN Turbofan Engine Programme'.

Background & Significance:

- The programme aims to establish indigenous private-sector capability in compact turbofan propulsion technology.
- It supports the Aatmanirbhar Bharat initiative by reducing dependence on foreign propulsion systems.
- The engine is being developed for Svayatt L1, a long-range autonomous cruise missile platform designed for the Ministry of Defence's Make-I programme.
- Compact turbofan engines are among the most strategic technologies for advanced autonomous missiles and unmanned combat aircraft.

Key Highlights:

- Programme Name: Yantur 4.5 kN Turbofan Engine Programme.
- Developer: Paninian India Private Limited, Hyderabad.
- Claim: India's first privately developed turbofan engine in the 4.5 kN class.

Objective

- Develop an indigenous compact turbofan engine for strategic autonomous aerospace platforms.
- Strengthen India's sovereign capability in advanced propulsion technologies.

Applications

- To power Svayatt L1, a long-range autonomous cruise missile platform.
- Designed to meet the Ministry of Defence's Make-I programme requirements for the Long-Range Land Attack Cruise Missile (LRLACM).
- Engine core can be further scaled up to 12.5 kN for the Svayatt CCAV (Collaborative Combat Aerial Vehicle) platform.

- Current Status
- Conceptual and detailed design phases have been completed.

Programme is progressing towards:

- Subsystem testing.
- Validation.
- Full engine certification.
- Key Innovations

Five patent claims covering:

1. Engine family architecture.
2. Combustor and diffuser-nozzle design.
3. Compressor technology.
4. Digital twin-based health monitoring.
5. Advanced manufacturing techniques.

Why is it Important?

- Marks a major milestone in India's private aerospace and defence manufacturing sector.
- Reduces dependence on imported aircraft and missile propulsion systems.
- Supports indigenous development of long-range autonomous defence platforms.
- Enhances India's capabilities in advanced aerospace technologies and strategic defence manufacturing.
- Promotes innovation through collaboration between startups, industry, and government.

About Turbofan Engine

A turbofan engine is a type of jet engine in which a large fan at the front generates additional thrust, making it more efficient than a turbojet.

It is widely used in:

- Military aircraft.
- Cruise missiles.
- Unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs).
- Commercial aircraft.
- Advantages
- Higher fuel efficiency.
- Greater thrust.
- Lower noise.
- Better performance over long distances.

About Make-I Programme

- A category under the Defence Acquisition Procedure (DAP).
- Supports government-funded development of advanced defence equipment.
- Aims to promote indigenous design, development, and manufacturing under Atmanirbhar Bharat.

Additional Key Facts

- Startup: Paninian India Private Limited.
- Headquarters: Hyderabad, Telangana.
- Engine Name: Yantur 4.5 kN.
- Missile Platform: Svayatt L1.
- Future Platform: Svayatt CCAV.
- MoD Programme: Make-I.

Exam Focus Points:

- Company: Paninian India Private Limited.
- Programme: Yantur 4.5 kN Turbofan Engine Programme.
- Purpose: Develop India's first privately built compact turbofan engine for autonomous strategic platforms.
- Key Objective: Achieve self-reliance in aerospace propulsion technology.
- Related Defence Programme: Make-I (Defence Acquisition Procedure).
- Platform Powered: Svayatt L1.
- Future Expansion: Svayatt CCAV with 12.5 kN engine.

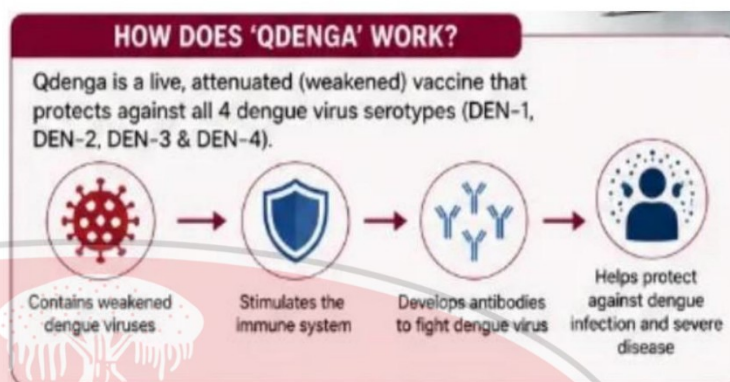
- Target Missile: Long-Range Land Attack Cruise Missile (LRLACM).
- Potential Engine Upgrade: Up to 12.5 kN thrust.

India's First Dengue Vaccine – QDENG A

- India's drug regulator, the Drug Controller General of India (DCGI), has granted market authorisation to QDENG A, making it the first dengue vaccine approved in India.
- Developed by Takeda Biopharmaceuticals (Japan), the vaccine is approved for individuals aged 4–60 years.
- QDENG A can be administered without prior dengue infection or pre-vaccination screening, marking a major shift in India's dengue prevention strategy.
- The approval is significant as India accounts for nearly one-third of the global dengue burden, and dengue cases have increased sharply over the past two decades.

About QDENG A (TAK-003):

- Type: Live attenuated tetravalent dengue vaccine.
- Target: All four dengue virus serotypes.
- Administration: Two-dose schedule (generally administered three months apart).
- WHO Status: WHO-prequalified vaccine.
- Global Approval: Approved in 43 countries.
- Global Distribution: More than 32 million doses distributed since its launch in 2022.



Why is this Approval Important?

Introduces India's first vaccine-based dengue prevention strategy.

Until now, dengue control relied mainly on:

- Mosquito/vector control
- Public awareness
- Early diagnosis
- Supportive treatment (no specific antiviral drug)
- Reduces the risk of severe dengue and dengue-related hospitalisation.
- Supports India's efforts to reduce the disease burden in endemic regions.

About Dengue:

- Cause: Dengue virus (Flavivirus).
- Vector: Female Aedes aegypti mosquito (also Aedes albopictus).
- Transmission: Mosquito bite.
- Virus Serotypes: DENV-1, DENV-2, DENV-3, DENV-4.

Common Symptoms:

- High fever
- Severe headache
- Muscle and joint pain
- Skin rash

Severe Forms:

- Dengue Hemorrhagic Fever (DHF)
- Dengue Shock Syndrome (DSS)

About Drug Controller General of India (DCGI):

- Drugs Controller General of India (Incumbent): Dr. Rajeev Singh Raghuvanshi
- Organisation: Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO).
- Ministry: Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.

Functions:

- Approves new drugs and vaccines.
- Regulates clinical trials.
- Grants market authorisation for medicines.
- Ensures safety, quality, and efficacy of pharmaceuticals.

About CDSCO:

- Full Form: Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation.
- National Drug Regulatory Authority of India.
- Headquarters: New Delhi.
- Works Under: Directorate General of Health Services (DGHS), Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.

About Takeda Pharmaceutical Company:

- Headquarters: Tokyo, Japan.
- Founded: 1781.
- Business: Global biopharmaceutical company focused on vaccines, oncology, gastroenterology, neuroscience, and rare diseases.

Exam Focus Points::

- India's first approved dengue vaccine: QDENGGA.
- Developer: Takeda Biopharmaceuticals.
- Approved by: DCGI.
- Target age group: 4–60 years.
- Protects against: Four dengue virus serotypes.
- **No pre-vaccination screening required.**
- Vector: Aedes aegypti mosquito.
- Regulatory authority: CDSCO under the Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.
- Takeda Headquarters: Tokyo, Japan.
- WHO-prequalified vaccine: QDENGGA.

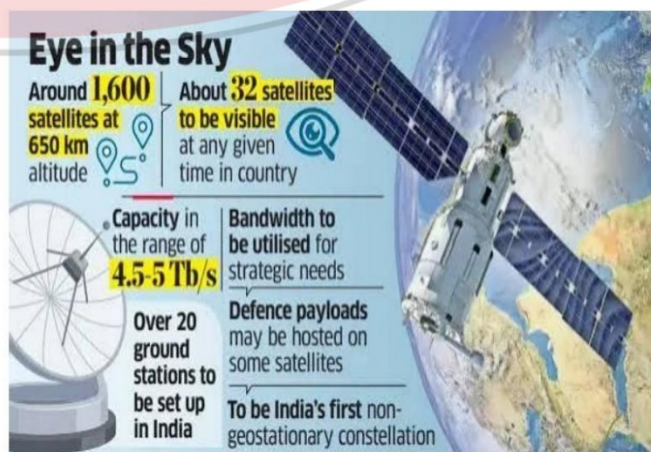
Jio's LEO Satellite Constellation

Why is it in News?

The Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre (IN-SPACe) has granted approval to Reliance Jio to establish a Low Earth Orbit (LEO) satellite constellation comprising up to 1,600 satellites. The project aims to provide high-speed satellite-based broadband services across India, including remote and underserved areas.

Key Considerations

- Organisation: Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre (IN-SPACe)
- Company: Reliance Jio Platforms Ltd.
- Project: Low Earth Orbit (LEO) Satellite Constellation
- Number of Satellites: Up to 1,600
- Orbit: Low Earth Orbit (LEO)
- Purpose: To provide satellite-based broadband internet services across India.
- Target Areas: Remote, rural, and underserved regions with limited internet connectivity.
- Approval: Authorisation granted by IN-SPACe under India's space sector reforms.



About IN-SPACe

- Full Form: Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Centre.
- Established: 2020.
- Headquarters: Ahmedabad, Gujarat.
- Parent Department: Department of Space (DoS), Government of India.
- Role: Promotes, authorises, and regulates the participation of private companies in India's space sector.

About Low Earth Orbit (LEO)

- Altitude: Approximately 160 km to 2,000 km above the Earth's surface.
- Advantages: Lower communication delay (latency), faster internet speeds, and better coverage.
- Uses: Satellite internet, Earth observation, navigation, and scientific research.
- Significance
- The approval marks a major step in India's growing private space ecosystem. It is expected to improve digital connectivity in remote regions, bridge the digital divide, and strengthen India's satellite communication infrastructure.

Additional Key Facts

- Satellite Internet: Provides broadband connectivity through satellites, making internet access possible in areas where fibre or mobile networks are unavailable.
- Space Sector Reforms: Introduced by the Government of India in 2020 to encourage greater private sector participation in space activities.
- IN-SPACE: Functions as the single-window agency for authorising private space missions and infrastructure.

Exam Focus Points

- Organisation: IN-SPACe
- Company: Reliance Jio Platforms Ltd.
- Project: LEO Satellite Constellation
- Satellites Approved: Up to 1,600
- Orbit: Low Earth Orbit (LEO)
- Objective: Satellite-based broadband internet services
- IN-SPACe Headquarters: Ahmedabad, Gujarat
- Parent Department: Department of Space (DoS)

India's First Private Orbital Rocket

Why is it in News?

Skyroot Aerospace successfully launched Vikram-1, India's first privately developed orbital rocket, from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota. The mission marks a historic milestone in India's private space sector by successfully placing multiple payloads into Low Earth Orbit (LEO).

About Mission Aagaman

- Mission Name: Mission Aagaman
- Launched By: Skyroot Aerospace
- Launch Vehicle: Vikram-1
- Launch Site: Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC), Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh
- Objective: To demonstrate the capability of India's first privately developed orbital launch vehicle and deploy multiple satellites into Low Earth Orbit (LEO).
- Mission Type: Technology demonstration and commercial satellite launch mission.
- Payloads: Carried multiple customer and technology demonstration payloads.
- Significance: Mission Aagaman marks the first successful orbital mission by an Indian private space company, opening a new era for commercial space launches in India.



Why is it called 'Aagaman'?

The word "Aagaman" means "arrival" in Hindi. The mission symbolizes the arrival of India's private space industry into the field of orbital launches, marking the beginning of a new chapter in the country's space journey.

About Vikram-1

- Developer: Skyroot Aerospace

- Named After: Dr. Vikram Sarabhai, the father of India's space programme.
- Type: Four-stage small satellite launch vehicle.
- Payload Capacity: Up to 350 kg to Low Earth Orbit (LEO).
- Technology: Uses three solid-fuel stages and a restartable liquid-fuel upper stage with advanced propulsion and guidance systems.

About Skyroot Aerospace

- Founded: 2018
- Headquarters: Hyderabad, Telangana
- Founders: Pawan Kumar Chandana and Naga Bharath Daka (former ISRO scientists).
- Significance: India's first private space startup to successfully launch an orbital-class rocket.
- Significance
- The successful launch marks the beginning of India's private orbital launch era. It strengthens India's commercial space capabilities, encourages private participation in the space sector, and supports the country's goal of becoming a major player in the global space economy.

Exam Focus Points

- Rocket: Vikram-1
- Mission: Mission Aagaman
- Company: Skyroot Aerospace
- Launch Site: Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota
- Achievement: India's first private orbital rocket
- Payload Capacity: 350 kg to LEO
- Founded: 2018
- Headquarters: Hyderabad, Telangana
- Named After: Dr. Vikram Sarabhai

Additional Key Facts

- IN-SPACE: Established in 2020 to promote and regulate private participation in India's space sector.
- ISRO: Continues to provide technical support and infrastructure for private space missions.
- Low Earth Orbit (LEO): Extends from about 160 km to 2,000 km above Earth's surface and is commonly used for Earth observation and communication satellites.

Expedition 75 to ISS

NASA and Russia's Roscosmos successfully launched the Expedition 75 crew to the International Space Station (ISS) from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan. The mission highlights continued U.S.–Russia cooperation in human spaceflight despite ongoing geopolitical tensions.

Objective of the Mission:

- Conduct scientific experiments in microgravity.
- Carry out maintenance and technological upgrades aboard the ISS.
- Support long-duration human spaceflight research.
- Strengthen international cooperation in space exploration.
- Ensure continuous human presence aboard the ISS.

Significance:

- Demonstrates that NASA–Roscosmos cooperation continues despite the Russia–Ukraine conflict.
- Supports research for future Moon and Mars missions.
- Highlights the importance of international collaboration in space science.
- Marks another milestone for Indian-origin astronaut Anil Menon.



Background:

- The International Space Station (ISS) is the world's largest habitable space laboratory.
- It has been continuously occupied by astronauts since 2 November 2000.
- The ISS is expected to remain operational until around 2030, after which it will be decommissioned.

Crew Members:

- Anil Menon (NASA) – First spaceflight.
- Sergey Kud-Sverchkov Dubrov (Roscosmos) – Second spaceflight.
- Anna Kikina (Roscosmos) – Second spaceflight and one of Russia's active female cosmonauts.

NASA–Roscosmos Cooperation:

- The mission reflects continued cooperation between NASA and Roscosmos despite the Russia–Ukraine conflict.
- Joint missions continue because both agencies depend on each other for ISS operations.

NASA Administrator's Visit:

- NASA Administrator Jared Isaacman visited the Baikonur Cosmodrome and met Roscosmos Director Dmitry Bakanov.
- It was the first visit by a NASA Administrator to Baikonur since 2018.

ISS Operations:

- U.S. solar panels provide electrical power to the ISS.
- Russian propulsion systems help maintain the station's orbit.
- Both agencies continue to cooperate on maintenance and astronaut safety.

Exam Focus Points:

- Mission: Expedition 75
- Purpose: Conduct scientific research in microgravity, maintain the ISS, support long-duration human spaceflight, and strengthen international cooperation.
- Destination: International Space Station (ISS)
- Launch Site: Baikonur Cosmodrome, Kazakhstan
- NASA Administrator: Jared Isaacman
- Roscosmos Director: Dmitry Bakanov
- Indian-Origin Astronaut: Anil Menon
- ISS Operational Since: 2 November 2000
- Orbit: Low Earth Orbit (LEO)
- Expected Retirement: Around 2030

About the International Space Station (ISS):

- Launch of First Module: 1998
- Continuous Human Presence: Since 2 November 2000
- Orbit: Low Earth Orbit (LEO)
- Altitude: Approximately 400 km
- Partners: NASA, Roscosmos, ESA, JAXA, and CSA
- Purpose: Scientific research, technology demonstration, and human spaceflight.

Other Recent Space Developments:

- NASA and Roscosmos continue joint astronaut exchange missions despite geopolitical tensions.
- The agencies are working on ensuring the safe operation of the aging ISS until its planned retirement.
- International discussions are underway regarding future commercial space stations after the ISS.

NIDAR 2.0

- The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), in collaboration with the Drone Federation India (DFI), has launched the second edition of the National Innovation Challenge for Drone Application and Research (NIDAR 2.0) under the SwaYaan Initiative.

- The programme aims to encourage college students, researchers, and innovators to develop autonomous drones powered by India's indigenous VEGA processor, promoting self-reliance in drone electronics and semiconductor technologies.
- NIDAR 2.0 offers a prize pool of over ₹65 lakh, along with startup incubation, cloud credits, software support, and industry internships for participating teams.

Key Features:

- Participants will build autonomous drone systems using the VEGA processor, an indigenous RISC-V-based microprocessor.

The challenge includes real-world problem statements such as:

- Search and rescue during disasters.
- Autonomous swarm drone operations.
- Precision agriculture and smart monitoring.

Winning teams will receive:

- Startup incubation support.
- Cloud computing credits.
- Software development tools.
- Corporate internships.
- Mentorship from industry experts.

About NIDAR 2.0:

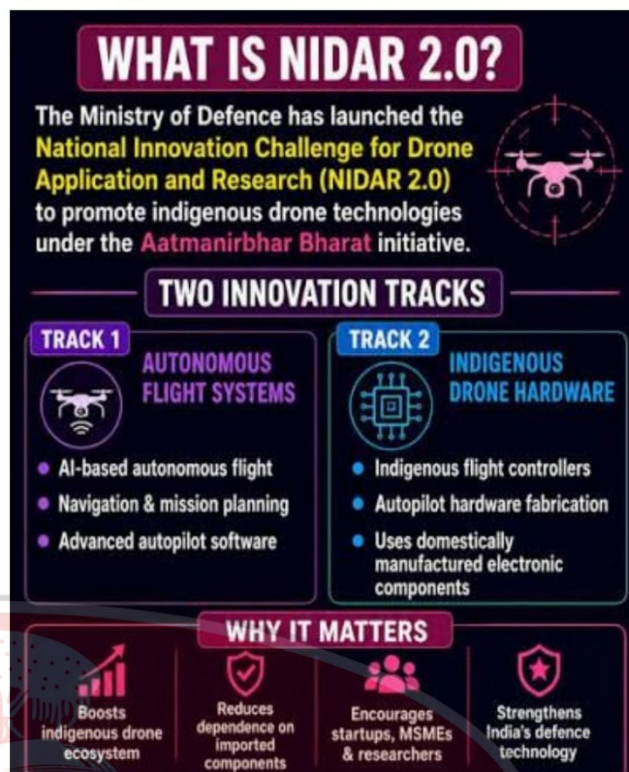
- Full Form: National Innovation Challenge for Drone Application and Research.
- Organised under the SwaYaan Initiative of MeitY.
- Focuses on developing indigenous autonomous drone technologies using Indian-designed processors.
- Promotes collaboration among academia, industry, and startups to build next-generation drone solutions.

About the SwaYaan Initiative:

- Launched by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).
- Aims to build a robust indigenous drone ecosystem through innovation, research, skilling, and semiconductor-based drone technologies.
- Supports India's vision of becoming a global hub for drone design and manufacturing.

About VEGA Processor:

- Developed under the Digital India RISC-V (DIR-V) Programme.
- Designed by the Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC).
- Based on the open-source RISC-V Instruction Set Architecture (ISA).



Exam Focus Points:

- Programme: NIDAR 2.0 (National Innovation Challenge for Drone Application and Research).
- Ministry: Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).
- Partner: Drone Federation India (DFI).
- Initiative: SwaYaan.
- Launch Date: 13 July 2026.
- Prize Pool: Over ₹65 lakh.
- Technology Used: Indigenous VEGA processor.
- Processor Architecture: RISC-V.
- Processor Developer: C-DAC.
- Objective: Develop autonomous drones powered by Indian-made chips.
- Related Initiative: Digital India RISC-V (DIR-V) Programme.
- Supporting Vision: Aatmanirbhar Bharat and Semiconductor Mission.

- Represents India's effort to build indigenous semiconductor and embedded computing technologies.

About Drone Federation India (DFI):

- India's leading industry body representing the drone ecosystem.
- Works to promote drone manufacturing, innovation, policy advocacy, and skill development.
- Collaborates with government, industry, startups, and academia to strengthen India's drone sector.
- Chairperson: Vipul Singh
- President: Smit Shah

Additional Key Facts:

- RISC-V is an open-standard Instruction Set Architecture (ISA) that enables countries to design processors without proprietary licensing.
- India launched the Drone Rules, 2021 to simplify regulations and promote drone manufacturing and innovation.
- The Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for Drones and Drone Components was launched in 2021 to boost domestic manufacturing.
- The Drone Shakti initiative was announced in the Union Budget 2022–23 to promote drones as a service (Drone-as-a-Service) through startups.
- Drones are increasingly used in precision agriculture, disaster management, infrastructure inspection, defence, logistics, healthcare, mining, and surveying.

Indian-Origin NASA Astronaut to ISS

- Indian-origin NASA astronaut Anil Menon has embarked on his first space mission to the International Space Station (ISS) aboard the Roscosmos Soyuz MS-29 spacecraft from the Baikonur Cosmodrome, Kazakhstan.
- The mission is expected to last about eight months, during which Menon will serve as a Flight Engineer as part of Expeditions 74 and 75.
- He is accompanied by Roscosmos cosmonauts Pyotr Dubrov and Anna Kikina. During the mission, the crew will conduct scientific research, technology demonstrations, and medical experiments to support future human missions to the Moon and Mars.

About Anil Menon:

- Nationality: American (of Indian origin).
- Profession: NASA Astronaut, Emergency Medicine Physician, Mechanical Engineer.
- Selected as NASA Astronaut: 2021.
- Former Role: SpaceX's First Flight Surgeon.
- Military Service: Colonel, U.S. Space Force.
- He also worked with NASA's Human Research Program and contributed to the medical support of commercial spaceflight missions. Menon's father is of Indian origin, while his mother is of Ukrainian origin.

About the International Space Station (ISS):

- The International Space Station (ISS) is the world's largest habitable artificial satellite and serves as a permanently crewed space laboratory.
- It orbits Earth at an average altitude of about 400 km and completes one orbit roughly every 90 minutes.

Awikli Launch

- Danish pharmaceutical company Novo Nordisk has launched Awikli (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.

Exam Focus Points:

- Company: Novo Nordisk (Denmark).
- Drug Name: Awiqli.
- Generic Name: Insulin Icodec.
- Significance: World's first once-weekly basal insulin.
- Launch Country: India.
- Disease Targeted: Diabetes Mellitus.
- Eligible Patients: Adults with Type 1 and Type 2 diabetes requiring basal insulin.
- Type of Insulin: Basal (long-acting/background) insulin.
- Dosage Frequency: Once every 7 days (52 injections per year).
- Previous Standard: Once-daily basal insulin (365 injections per year).
- Key Benefit: Improves patient adherence and reduces injection burden.
- Company Headquarters: Bagsværd, Denmark.

Difference Between Type 1 and Type 2 Diabetes

Feature	Type 1 Diabetes	Type 2 Diabetes
Cause	Autoimmune destruction of pancreatic β -cells	Insulin resistance with progressive insulin deficiency
Age of Onset	Usually begins in childhood or adolescence	Usually develops in adults, but increasingly seen in younger people
Treatment	Lifelong insulin therapy is essential	Managed with lifestyle changes, oral medications, and insulin when required

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.

IMAT for Gaganyaan

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) successfully conducted the Integrated Main Parachute Air Drop Test (IMAT) for the Gaganyaan Human Spaceflight Programme at the Aerial Delivery Research and Development Establishment (ADRDE) drop zone, Sheopur, Madhya Pradesh.

What is the Integrated Main Parachute Air Drop Test (IMAT)?

The Integrated Main Parachute Air Drop Test (IMAT) is a critical qualification test conducted to validate the main parachute system of the Gaganyaan Crew Module under realistic flight conditions. During the test, a simulated payload was dropped from an Indian Air Force IL-76 aircraft at an altitude of 2.5 km, and the complete parachute deployment sequence was evaluated to ensure safe deceleration and landing.

Objectives

- Qualify the main parachute for the Gaganyaan G1 mission.
- Validate structural integrity under maximum load conditions.
- Ensure safe deceleration of the Crew Module during re-entry.
- Enhance astronaut safety through reliable recovery systems.
- Reduce mission risks before the first uncrewed and crewed missions.

Gaganyaan Parachute Recovery System:

The Crew Module Parachute Deceleration System (PDS) consists of 10 parachutes of four different types that deploy sequentially to ensure a safe splashdown.

Components

- Apex Cover Separation (ACS) Parachutes – Separate the Crew Module's apex cover.
- Drogue Parachutes – Stabilise and slow the Crew Module during high-speed descent.
- Pilot Parachutes – Deploy the main parachutes.
- Main Parachutes – Reduce the Crew Module's speed to enable a safe splashdown in the sea.

About Gaganyaan Mission:

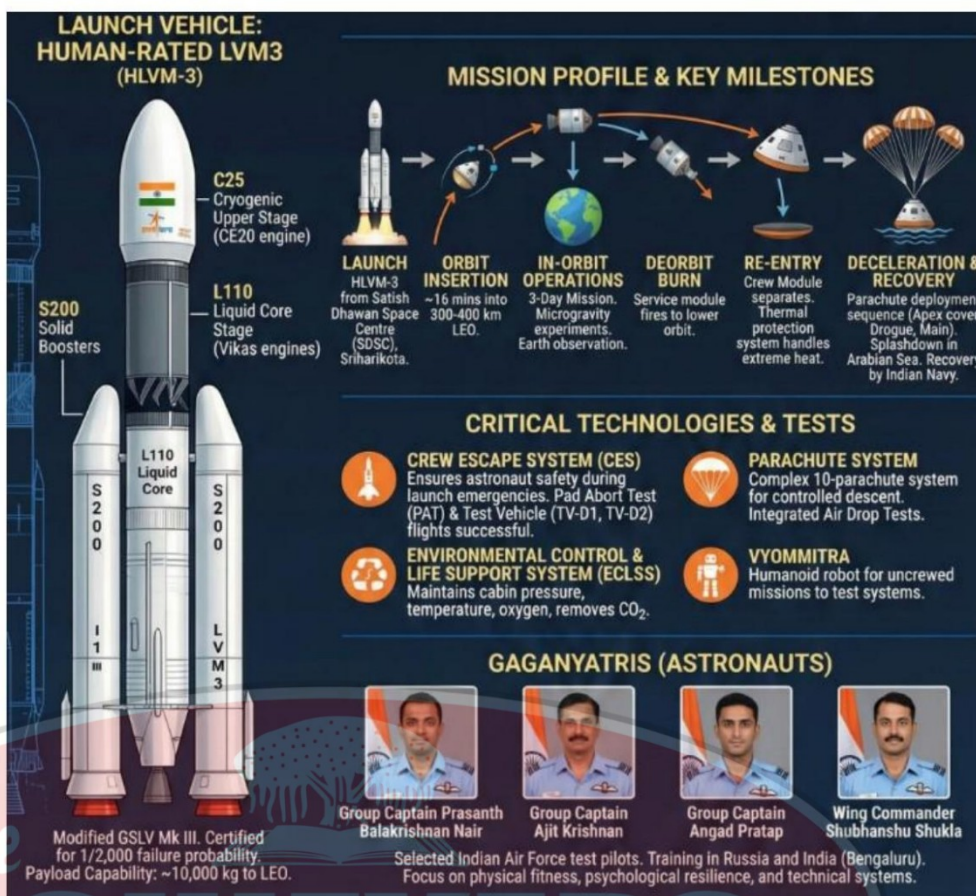
The Gaganyaan Mission is India's first indigenous human spaceflight programme, aimed at sending Indian astronauts (Gaganyatris) into Low Earth Orbit (LEO) and bringing them back safely.

Key Facts

- Implemented By: ISRO.
- Administrative Department: Department of Space.
- Approved: 2018 by the Union Cabinet.
- Launch Vehicle: Human-rated LVM3.
- Mission Objective: Demonstrate India's capability to send humans into space for about three days and ensure safe recovery.
- Mission Sequence: Uncrewed test missions (G1, G2) followed by the first crewed mission.

Related Gaganyaan Tests:

- TV-D1: Test Vehicle Abort Mission successfully demonstrated the Crew Escape System (2023).



- IADT-02: Second Integrated Air Drop Test successfully completed in April 2026 to validate the complete parachute recovery system.
- SOLVE (Sub-Orbital Launch Vehicle for Experiments): Developed to conduct multiple parachute and recovery experiments under different flight conditions.

About ADRDE:

- Aerial Delivery Research and Development Establishment (ADRDE) is a laboratory of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- Location: Agra, Uttar Pradesh.
- Parent Organisation: DRDO.

Role:

- Design and development of parachute systems.
- Aerial delivery platforms.
- Recovery systems for defence and aerospace applications.
- Aerostat and airborne systems.

About ISRO:

- Established: 1969.
- Headquarters: Bengaluru, Karnataka.
- Administrative Department: Department of Space.
- Chairman: Dr. V. Narayanan.
- Founder: Dr. Vikram Sarabhai.

Major Missions:

- Chandrayaan Programme.
- Aditya-L1.
- SpaDeX.
- Gaganyaan.
- NISAR (India–NASA Earth Observation Mission).

Exam Focus Points:

- Organisation: Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).
- Mission: Gaganyaan Human Spaceflight Programme.
- Test: Integrated Main Parachute Air Drop Test (IMAT).
- Test Location: Sheopur, Madhya Pradesh.
- Carrier Aircraft: Indian Air Force IL-76.
- Purpose: Qualification of the Crew Module's main parachute.
- Parachute System: 10 parachutes of four different types.
- Administrative Department: Department of Space.
- Related Organisation: ADRDE (DRDO).

SOLVE Test for Gaganyaan

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has successfully conducted the first ground test of the Sub-Orbital Launch Vehicle for Experiments (SOLVE) solid motor at the Static Test Facility, Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC), Sriharikota.
- The test marks a major milestone in the Gaganyaan Human Spaceflight Programme, as the SOLVE vehicle will serve as a dedicated platform to conduct a variety of experiments, including the validation of the crew module recovery and parachute systems under different mission conditions. According to ISRO, the motor performance matched all expected parameters, confirming the readiness of the system for future test missions.

What is SOLVE?

SOLVE (Sub-Orbital Launch Vehicle for Experiments) is a dedicated solid motor-based sub-orbital test vehicle developed by ISRO to support the Gaganyaan programme. It provides a flexible and cost-effective platform to conduct experiments and validate critical technologies required for India's first human spaceflight mission before actual crewed launches.

Objectives:

- Validate critical systems for the Gaganyaan mission.
- Test crew safety and recovery technologies under simulated flight conditions.
- Verify parachute deployment and crew module recovery systems.
- Reduce mission risks before uncrewed and crewed Gaganyaan flights.

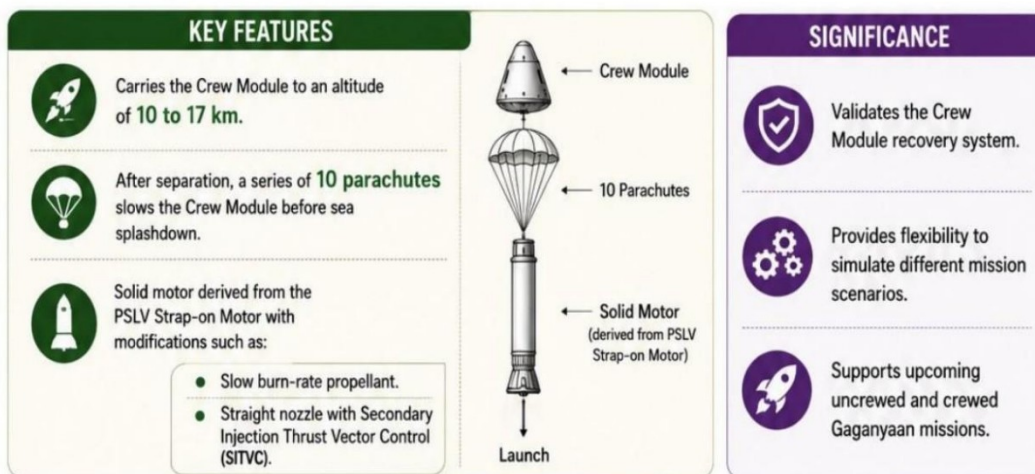
- Improve reliability of India's human spaceflight programme.

About Gaganyaan Mission

The Gaganyaan Mission is India's first indigenous human spaceflight programme, aimed at demonstrating the capability to send Indian astronauts (Gaganyatris) into Low Earth Orbit (LEO) and safely return them to Earth.

Key Facts

- Implemented By: ISRO.
- Administrative Ministry: Department of Space.
- Approved By: Union Cabinet in 2018.
- Mission Objective: Send a crew of Indian astronauts into Low Earth Orbit for about 3 days and ensure their safe return.



Mission Components:

- Crew Module.
- Service Module.
- Human-rated LVM3 Launch Vehicle.
- Crew Escape System.
- Environmental Control and Life Support System (ECLSS).
- The mission will be preceded by multiple uncrewed test flights and technology demonstration missions.

About Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC):

- Location: Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh.
- Earlier Name: Sriharikota Range (SHAR).
- Role: India's primary spaceport and launch centre.

Launch site for missions such as:

- PSLV
- GSLV
- LVM3
- Chandrayaan
- Aditya-L1
- Gaganyaan missions.

About ISRO:

- Established: 1969.
- Headquarters: Bengaluru, Karnataka.
- Administrative Ministry: Department of Space.
- Chairman: Dr. V. Narayanan.
- Founder: Dr. Vikram Sarabhai.

Major Missions:

- Chandrayaan Programme.

Exam Focus Points:

- Mission: Gaganyaan.
- New Test Vehicle: SOLVE (Sub-Orbital Launch Vehicle for Experiments).
- Organisation: Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).
- Ground Test: First SOLVE solid motor test.
- Date of Test: 3 July 2026.
- Test Location: Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC), Sriharikota.
- Purpose: Validation of crew module, parachute, and recovery systems.
- Administrative Ministry: Department of Space.
- Launch Vehicle for Gaganyaan: Human-rated LVM3.
- Importance: Critical technology validation for India's first human spaceflight mission.

- Aditya-L1.
- SpaDeX.
- Gaganyaan.
- NISAR (India-NASA Mission).

Swift Space Telescope

- NASA has launched a pioneering robotic mission to rescue the Neil Gehrels Swift Observatory (Swift Space Telescope), which is rapidly losing altitude and risks re-entering Earth's atmosphere due to increased atmospheric drag caused by recent solar storms.
- The mission uses a robotic servicing spacecraft named LINK, developed by Katalyst Space Technologies, to rendezvous with Swift, attach to it, and raise its orbit to extend its operational life.
- If successful, it will become the first U.S. mission to robotically rescue and reposition an operational satellite in orbit, paving the way for future satellite servicing and space sustainability initiatives.

What is the Neil Gehrels Swift Observatory?

The Neil Gehrels Swift Observatory is a NASA space telescope designed to detect and study gamma-ray bursts (GRBs)—the most energetic explosions observed in the universe. It also observes supernovae, neutron stars, black holes, and other high-energy astrophysical phenomena.

Rescue mission

Nasa's Swift Observatory is a satellite that studies gamma-ray bursts, the most powerful explosions in the universe, and other cosmic objects and events

Why is Swift sinking?

Launched in 2004, Swift is sinking because of intense solar activity. It needs to get to a higher, more stable orbit to survive

\$30 million salvage operation

Nasa has hired a startup to boost Swift to a higher orbit. A three-armed spacecraft, 'Link', will go after Swift once it takes off on an airplane-launched Pegasus rocket

Hubble Space Telescope also at risk

Like Swift, Hubble is too losing altitude as the sun erupts with one flare after another. Thirty-six-year-old Hubble has received repeat servicing by spacewalking astronauts

Officials stand next to the Link spacecraft at Nasa's Goddard Space Flight Center. AP

Objectives:

- Detect gamma-ray bursts in real time.
- Study black holes, neutron stars, and supernovae.
- Observe high-energy cosmic events across multiple wavelengths.
- Improve understanding of the evolution of the universe.

Neil Gehrels Swift Observatory:

- Launched: 20 November 2004
- Operator: NASA
- Mission Type: Space-based astronomical observatory
- Orbit: Low Earth Orbit (LEO)
- Named After: Neil Gehrels, renowned American astrophysicist and former director of NASA's Astroparticle Physics Division.

Main Instruments:

- Burst Alert Telescope (BAT)
- X-Ray Telescope (XRT)
- Ultraviolet/Optical Telescope (UVOT)

Swift Boost Mission:

- Mission Purpose: Raise the orbit of the Swift Observatory to prevent atmospheric re-entry.
- Servicing Spacecraft: LINK

- Developer: Katalyst Space Technologies
- Mission Cost: Approximately US\$30 million
- Expected Outcome: Extend the operational life of Swift by several years.
- Demonstrates technologies for on-orbit servicing, repair, and satellite life extension.

Katalyst Space Technologies:

- A U.S.-based private aerospace company specialising in in-orbit servicing and satellite logistics.
- Developed the LINK robotic spacecraft for NASA's Swift rescue mission.

Focuses on technologies such as:

- Satellite servicing
- Orbital transportation
- Space logistics
- Life-extension missions for spacecraft.

What are Gamma-Ray Bursts (GRBs)?

- Gamma-ray bursts are the most energetic electromagnetic explosions known in the universe.

Occur during:

- Collapse of massive stars into black holes.
- Mergers of neutron stars.
- Last from a fraction of a second to several minutes.

Help scientists study:

- Formation of black holes.
- Evolution of galaxies.
- Conditions in the early universe.

Why is the Mission Significant?

- Demonstrates on-orbit satellite servicing, an emerging area of space technology.
- Supports space sustainability by extending the life of existing satellites instead of replacing them.
- Reduces space debris by preventing uncontrolled re-entry of valuable spacecraft.
- Could serve as a model for future servicing missions involving scientific, commercial, and defence satellites.

Exam Focus Points:

- Mission: Swift Boost Mission
- Organisation: NASA
- Target Spacecraft: Neil Gehrels Swift Observatory
- Robotic Servicing Vehicle: LINK
- Developer: Katalyst Space Technologies
- Reason for Rescue: Orbital decay due to increased atmospheric drag from solar activity
- Scientific Focus of Swift: Gamma-ray bursts and other high-energy astrophysical phenomena
- Significance: First U.S. robotic mission to

NASA (National Aeronautics and Space Administration):

- Established: 29 July 1958
- Headquarters: Washington, D.C., USA
- Administrator: Janet Petro

Major Programmes:

Artemis Programme

- Hubble Space Telescope
- James Webb Space Telescope (JWST)
- Mars Exploration Programme
- Earth Observation Missions

India's First Private Orbital Rocket Launch

- Skyroot Aerospace is preparing to launch Vikram-1, India's first privately developed orbital-class launch vehicle, during a launch window between 12 July and 4 August 2026 from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC-SHAR), Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh. Named Mission Aagaman, the mission will attempt to place satellites into Low Earth Orbit (LEO), marking a historic milestone for India's private space sector.
- Developed by former ISRO engineers, Vikram-1 is capable of carrying payloads of up to 350 kg to Low Earth Orbit and will validate key technologies such as propulsion, stage separation, guidance, and navigation systems. The launch follows India's space sector reforms that opened the space ecosystem to private participation and is expected to strengthen India's position in the global commercial satellite launch market.

What is Vikram-1?

Vikram-1 is India's first privately developed orbital launch vehicle, designed by Skyroot Aerospace for launching small satellites into orbit.

Objectives:

- Provide cost-effective launches for small satellites.
- Promote private participation in India's space sector.
- Strengthen India's commercial launch capabilities.
- Support the growing global small satellite market.

Vikram-1 Launch Vehicle:

- Developer: Skyroot Aerospace
- Mission Name: Mission Aagaman
- Launch Window: 12 July – 4 August 2026
- Launch Site: Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC-SHAR), Sriharikota, Andhra Pradesh
- Type: Three-stage orbital launch vehicle

Payload Capacity:

- Up to 350 kg to Low Earth Orbit (LEO)
- Around 260 kg to Sun-Synchronous Orbit (SSO)
- Named after Dr. Vikram Sarabhai, the father of India's space programme.

Skyroot Aerospace:

- Founded: 2018
- Headquarters: Hyderabad, Telangana
- Founded by former ISRO scientists Pawan Kumar Chandana and Naga Bharath Daka.
- Became the first Indian private company to launch a rocket (Vikram-S) in 2022 under Mission Prarambh.
- Focuses on developing launch vehicles for small satellite deployment.

Indian National Space Promotion and Authorization Center (IN-SPACe):

- Established: 2020
- Headquarters: Ahmedabad, Gujarat
- Department: Department of Space

Functions:

- Promotes private participation in the Indian space sector.
- Authorises and regulates activities of non-government entities.
- Facilitates access to ISRO infrastructure and expertise.



Indian Space Sector Reforms (2020):

Key reforms introduced by the Government of India:

- Opened the space sector to private companies.
- Established IN-SPACe as the regulatory and promotional agency.
- Encouraged public-private partnerships in satellite manufacturing and launch services.
- Enhanced commercialisation through NewSpace India Limited (NSIL).
- Aims to expand India's share in the global space economy.

Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC-SHAR):

- Location: Sriharikota, Tirupati district, Andhra Pradesh
- India's primary spaceport.
- Operated by ISRO.
- Named after Dr. Satish Dhawan, former Chairman of ISRO.
- Launch site for missions including PSLV, GSLV, LVM3, Chandrayaan, Aditya-L1, and Gaganyaan test missions.

Low Earth Orbit (LEO):

Altitude: Approximately 160 km to 2,000 km above Earth.

Commonly used for:

- Earth observation satellites
- Communication satellites
- Scientific missions
- International Space Station (ISS)

Exam Focus Points:

- Mission: Mission Aagaman
- Rocket: Vikram-1
- Developer: Skyroot Aerospace
- Significance: India's first privately developed orbital launch vehicle
- Launch Window: 12 July – 4 August 2026
- Launch Site: Satish Dhawan Space Centre (SDSC-SHAR), Sriharikota
- Payload Capacity: Up to 350 kg to Low Earth Orbit
- Regulatory Body: IN-SPACe
- Named After: Dr. Vikram Sarabhai
- Earlier Milestone: Vikram-S (Mission Prarambh) became India's first privately launched rocket in 2022.

ICGS Akshay

- The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) commissioned ICGS Akshay, a new-generation Fast Patrol Vessel (FPV), at Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL), Vasco, Goa.
- The vessel is the fourth of eight Adamya-class Fast Patrol Vessels being built by GSL for the Indian Coast Guard under the Atmanirbhar Bharat and Make in India initiatives.
- The commissioning is part of the Coast Guard's fleet modernization programme aimed at strengthening maritime security, coastal surveillance, search and rescue (SAR), anti-smuggling operations, and maritime law enforcement.
- ICGS Akshay is equipped with advanced navigation, communication, and Controllable Pitch Propeller (CPP)-based propulsion systems, enabling high-speed operations and enhanced maneuverability. The vessel has over 65% indigenous content, reflecting India's growing self-reliance in defence manufacturing. It will significantly enhance the Indian Coast Guard's capability to safeguard India's vast coastline and maritime interests.

What is ICGS Akshay?

ICGS Akshay is a new-generation Fast Patrol Vessel (FPV) designed and built by Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL) for the Indian Coast Guard.

Primary Roles

- Coastal surveillance
- Maritime law enforcement
- Search and Rescue (SAR)
- Anti-smuggling operations

- Protection of India's maritime zones
- Marine environmental protection

Key Features of ICGS Akshay:

- Class: Adamya-class Fast Patrol Vessel (FPV)
- Builder: Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL)
- Type: Indigenous Fast Patrol Vessel
- Indigenous Content: More than 65%
- Propulsion: Controllable Pitch Propeller (CPP)-based propulsion system

Mission Capability:

- High-speed interception
- Coastal patrol
- Maritime surveillance
- Disaster response
- Pollution response
- Part of 8 Fast Patrol Vessels being constructed for the Indian Coast Guard.

Additional Key Facts:

- Indian Coast Guard (ICG)
- Established: 1 February 1977
- Statutory Status: Coast Guard Act, 1978
- Administrative Ministry: Ministry of Defence
- Headquarters: New Delhi
- Motto: "Vayam Rakshamah" (We Protect)

Functions of the Indian Coast Guard:

- Maritime law enforcement
- Coastal and offshore security
- Search and Rescue (SAR)
- Anti-smuggling and anti-poaching operations
- Marine environmental protection
- Assistance to fishermen at sea
- Protection of India's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)

Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL):

- Established: 1957
- Headquarters: Vasco da Gama, Goa
- Administrative Ministry: Ministry of Defence
- One of India's premier defence shipbuilding public sector undertakings.

Builds:

- Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPVs)
- Fast Patrol Vessels (FPVs)
- Missile vessels
- Interceptor boats
- Export naval ships

Fast Patrol Vessel (FPV):

- A Fast Patrol Vessel is a high-speed, medium-sized patrol ship used for:

Exam Focus Points (Quick Revision Notes):

- Vessel in News: ICGS Akshay
- Organisation: Indian Coast Guard (ICG)
- Type: Fast Patrol Vessel (FPV)
- Class: Adamya-class
- Builder: Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL)
- Commissioned At: Vasco, Goa
- Series: Fourth of eight FPVs
- Indigenous Content: More than 65%
- Administrative Ministry: Ministry of Defence
- Related Initiative: Atmanirbhar Bharat & Make in India
- Primary Role: Coastal security, surveillance, SAR, maritime law enforcement

- Coastal surveillance
- Maritime policing
- Search and Rescue (SAR)
- Anti-smuggling operations
- Protection of offshore assets
- Disaster response

Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ):

- Extends up to 200 nautical miles from the baseline.
- Defined under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), 1982.
- The coastal state has sovereign rights over exploration, exploitation, conservation, and management of marine resources within the EEZ.

Nuclear Heat-Based Hydrogen Facility

- India has commissioned the world's first hydrogen production facility based on nuclear process heat using the Copper-Chlorine (Cu-Cl) Thermochemical Cycle at the Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research (IGCAR), Kalpakkam, Tamil Nadu.
- It has been developed as a technology demonstrator to validate hydrogen production using nuclear process heat from fast reactors, marking a major breakthrough in clean energy and advanced nuclear technology.
- The indigenous technology has been jointly developed by the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) and IGCAR.
- The integration of nuclear energy with hydrogen production enables the generation of carbon-free hydrogen with higher efficiency and lower greenhouse gas emissions than conventional methods.
- The achievement supports India's National Green Hydrogen Mission, strengthens the country's energy security, and advances its commitment towards Net Zero emissions by 2070.

About the Nuclear Hydrogen Production Facility

Key Highlights

- Technology: Copper-Chlorine (Cu-Cl) Thermochemical Cycle
- Location: Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research (IGCAR), Kalpakkam, Tamil Nadu
- Developed by: BARC and IGCAR
- Inaugurated by: Dr. Ajit Kumar Mohanty
- Purpose: Demonstrate hydrogen production using nuclear process heat from fast reactors.

What is the Copper-Chlorine (Cu-Cl) Thermochemical Cycle?

- The Cu-Cl Thermochemical Cycle is an advanced hydrogen production technology that splits water into hydrogen and oxygen using:
 - Nuclear process heat
 - Electricity
 - Chemical reactions involving copper and chlorine compounds
- Advantages
 - Produces carbon-free hydrogen
 - Requires lower operating temperatures than many other thermochemical cycles
 - Offers higher thermodynamic efficiency
 - Reduces dependence on fossil fuels.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS



First in the world to produce hydrogen using the Cu-Cl thermochemical cycle powered by nuclear heat.



Established at the Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research (IGCAR), Kalpakkam.



Uses process heat from the Fast Breeder Test Reactor (FBTR) instead of fossil fuels.



Technology developed indigenously by the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC).



Serves as a technology demonstrator for future commercial-scale nuclear hydrogen production.

Objectives

- Produce 5 Million Metric Tonnes (MMT) of green hydrogen annually by 2030
- Make India a global hub for green hydrogen
- Reduce fossil fuel imports
- Promote decarbonisation of hard-to-abate sectors

Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC)

- Established: 1954
- Headquarters: Mumbai
- Director: Vivek Bhasin
- Functions under the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE)
- India's premier nuclear research institution

Additional Key Facts

- National Green Hydrogen Mission
- Launched: January 2023
- Nodal Ministry: Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE)
- Financial Outlay: ₹19,744 crore

Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research (IGCAR)

- Established: 1971
- Location: Kalpakkam, Tamil Nadu
- Director: C G Karhadkar
- Functions under the Department of Atomic Energy

WHY USE NUCLEAR HEAT?

Fast reactors generate both:



Carbon-free
electricity



High-temperature
process heat

Using this heat:



Reduces dependence
on natural gas for
hydrogen production.



Improves overall
reactor efficiency.



Enables continuous
hydrogen production
irrespective of weather
conditions.

Specialises in:

- Fast Breeder Reactor technology
- Advanced nuclear systems
- Materials and reactor engineering

Department of Atomic Energy (DAE)

- Established: 1954
- Minister of State in the Department of Atomic Energy: Jitendra Singh-
- Functions directly under the Prime Minister

Responsible for:

- Nuclear power
- Atomic research
- Nuclear fuel cycle
- Strategic nuclear programmes
- Fast Breeder Reactor (FBR)

A Fast Breeder Reactor:

- Produces more fissile fuel than it consumes
- Uses fast neutrons instead of slow (thermal) neutrons
- Is a key component of India's three-stage nuclear power programme
- Can provide both electricity and high-temperature process heat, making it suitable for hydrogen production.

Why Nuclear-Assisted Hydrogen?

- Compared with conventional hydrogen production, nuclear-assisted hydrogen:
- Produces near-zero carbon emissions
- Provides continuous (24×7) hydrogen production
- Is less dependent on weather than solar or wind energy

Exam Focus Points (Quick Revision Notes)

- Achievement in News → World's first nuclear process heat-based hydrogen production facility
- Location → IGCAR, Kalpakkam, Tamil Nadu
- Technology Used → Copper-Chlorine (Cu-Cl) Thermochemical Cycle
- Developed by → BARC & IGCAR
- Inaugurated by → Dr. Ajit Kumar Mohanty
- Administrative Department → Department of Atomic Energy (DAE)
- Related Mission → National Green Hydrogen Mission
- Mission Target → 5 MMT green hydrogen annually by 2030

Culture & History

Temple Economy in Medieval India

The destruction and protection of temples in medieval India have often been viewed solely through the lens of religion. However, historians argue that temples during this period were not merely places of worship; they were also centres of wealth, political authority, administration, education, and culture. Consequently, many temples became targets during wars not only because of their religious significance but also because they symbolised the power and legitimacy of rival kingdoms. Understanding the political economy of temples provides a more nuanced perspective on medieval Indian history.

Temples as Centres of Wealth

Medieval Indian temples accumulated enormous wealth through royal grants, land donations, taxes, offerings from devotees, and endowments by merchants and local elites. Many temples owned vast tracts of agricultural land, employed thousands of people, and generated substantial revenue from farming and trade.

Large temples functioned as economic institutions by:

- Managing agricultural lands and irrigation systems.
- Acting as employers of priests, artisans, dancers, musicians, accountants, and labourers.
- Financing local trade and commercial activities.
- Providing food, charity, and public welfare services.
- Thus, temples were among the wealthiest institutions in medieval India and played a crucial role in regional economies.

Why Were Temples Attacked?

Temple destruction in medieval India occurred for multiple reasons:

- **Economic Motive:** Temples stored immense quantities of gold, silver, jewellery, and other valuables, making them attractive targets during invasions.
- **Political Strategy:** Destroying or looting a royal temple symbolised the conquest of an opposing kingdom and weakened its political legitimacy.
- **Military Objective:** Capturing temple wealth helped finance wars and strengthen victorious kingdoms.
- **Religious Factors:** In some cases, religious differences also influenced temple destruction, but historians increasingly argue that political and economic considerations were often equally, if not more, significant.
- Therefore, temple attacks cannot be explained by a single factor; they reflected a complex interaction of political, economic, military, and religious motives.

Temples that Received Royal Patronage

- While some temples were attacked, many others flourished under successive rulers.
- Several medieval dynasties—including the Cholas, Pallavas, Chalukyas, Rashtrakutas, Hoysalas, and Vijayanagara rulers—constructed magnificent temples that served as centres of administration, learning, and cultural development.

Temples as Symbols of Political Power

- Temples were closely linked with kingship. Medieval rulers built grand temples to demonstrate their authority, military victories, and devotion to their chosen deities. A magnificent temple enhanced a ruler's prestige and reinforced the legitimacy of his rule.
- Many rulers donated land, gold, jewels, and other valuable assets to temples to gain religious merit and public support. Temple inscriptions often recorded royal achievements, making temples important centres of political propaganda and state legitimacy.
- As a result, attacking or controlling a prominent temple often carried a political message—it signified the defeat of a rival ruler rather than merely an attack on a religion.

- Even some Indo-Islamic rulers granted protection or financial support to particular temples when it served political or administrative interests. This demonstrates that state policy towards temples often depended on political circumstances rather than purely religious considerations.
- Beyond Religion: Temples as Social Institutions

Temples performed numerous public functions beyond worship:

- Centres of education and Sanskrit learning.
- Promotion of music, dance, sculpture, and architecture.
- Distribution of food and charitable assistance.
- Record-keeping through inscriptions.
- Settlement of local disputes and village administration.
- Support for artisans and traditional crafts.
- Because of these diverse functions, temples became integral institutions in the social and economic life of medieval India.

Historical Significance

The political economy of temples highlights that medieval Indian kingdoms viewed religious institutions as important instruments of governance. Temple wealth supported state-building, economic development, and cultural patronage, while control over major temples enhanced royal authority. At the same time, competition for these resources often made temples vulnerable during periods of conflict. Modern historians therefore caution against interpreting every instance of temple destruction solely as religious intolerance. Instead, each event must be examined in its specific historical, political, and economic context.

Way Forward

A balanced understanding of medieval Indian history requires moving beyond simplistic narratives and recognising the multiple roles played by temples as religious, economic, political, and cultural institutions. Historical events should be studied using archaeological evidence, inscriptions, and contemporary records rather than present-day political perspectives. Such an evidence-based approach promotes objective historical scholarship and fosters a more informed understanding of India's rich and complex past.

Sebastia & Mount Amel Castles

- Sebastia (State of Palestine) and Mount Amel Castles (Lebanon) were added to the UNESCO World Heritage List.
- Both sites were simultaneously included in the List of World Heritage in Danger.
- The inscriptions were approved during the 48th Session of the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in Busan, South Korea.
- Israel opposed the inscriptions, arguing they ignored the site's Jewish and Christian heritage and security concerns.

About Sebastia:

Sebastia, located near Nablus in the West Bank, is identified with the ancient city of Samaria, the capital of the Kingdom of Israel during the Iron Age. The site preserves remains from several civilizations, including the Assyrian, Babylonian, Persian (Achaemenid), Hellenistic, Roman, Byzantine, Islamic, Crusader, Ayyubid, Mamluk, and Ottoman periods. It is also associated with the traditional burial place of John the Baptist.

About the Mount Amel Castles:

The Mount Amel inscription comprises five historic castles in southern Lebanon:

- Beaufort Castle (Qalaat Al Chakif)
- Toron Castle (Qalaat Tibnin)
- Dubieh Castle (Qalaat Chakra)
- Maron Castle (Qalaat Deir Kifa)
- Chama' Castle (Qalaat Chama')
- These fortifications reflect nearly nine centuries of military architecture, combining Crusader, Ayyubid, Mamluk, Ottoman, and local architectural traditions.

UNESCO World Heritage List:

The UNESCO World Heritage List includes cultural, natural, and mixed sites considered to possess Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) and deserving of protection for present and future generations.

Categories:

- Cultural Heritage.
- Natural Heritage.
- Mixed Heritage.

List of World Heritage in Danger:

The List of World Heritage in Danger identifies World Heritage Sites facing serious threats such as:

- Armed conflict.
- Natural disasters.
- Urbanisation.
- Pollution.
- Illegal construction.
- Climate change.
- Its objective is to mobilise international support for conservation.

Exam Focus Points:

- Organisation: UNESCO.
- Committee Session: 48th World Heritage Committee.
- Venue: Busan, Republic of Korea.
- New World Heritage Sites: Sebastia (State of Palestine) and Mount Amel Castles (Lebanon).
- Also Added To: List of World Heritage in Danger.
- UNESCO Headquarters: Paris, France.
- World Heritage Convention: 1972.
- Palestine UNESCO Membership: 2011.
- Palestine's World Heritage Sites: 6

UNESCO World Heritage Committee:

The World Heritage Committee is responsible for implementing the 1972 World Heritage Convention and deciding on new inscriptions.

Established under	1972 World Heritage Convention
Members	21 States Parties
Elected from	196 States Parties
Meeting Frequency	Once every year
48th Session (2026)	Busan, Republic of Korea

About UNESCO:

Full Form	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
Established	1945
Headquarters	Paris, France
Director-General	Khaled El-Enany
Parent Organisation	United Nations

World Heritage Convention, 1972:

The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage was adopted by UNESCO in 1972 to identify, protect, and preserve sites of outstanding universal value.

India and the Convention:

- Ratified by India: 1977.
- India's World Heritage Sites (2026): 44 (36 Cultural, 7 Natural, 1 Mixed).

Palestine and UNESCO:

- State of Palestine became a UNESCO member in 2011.
- With the inscription of Sebastia, Palestine now has six UNESCO World Heritage Sites.

Additional Facts:

UNESCO Headquarters: Paris, France.

India's Latest UNESCO World Heritage Site:

Ancient Buddhist Site, Sarnath (Varanasi) was inscribed during the 48th Session of the World Heritage Committee (2026).

Mixed World Heritage Site in India:

Khangchendzonga National Park (Sikkim).

Career Pardo Award

- American filmmaker James Gray will be honoured with the prestigious Career Pardo Award (Pardo alla Carriera) at the 79th Locarno Film Festival in Locarno, Switzerland.
- The award recognizes his outstanding contribution to world cinema and his influential career as a filmmaker.

About the Locarno Film Festival:

- Founded: 1946.
- Location: Locarno, Switzerland.
- Edition in 2026: 79th.
- It is one of the oldest and most prestigious international film festivals in the world.
- Held annually in August.

Renowned for promoting:

- Independent cinema.
- International filmmakers.
- Emerging talent.
- Artistic and experimental films.

Major Awards at the Locarno Film Festival:

Award	Purpose
Golden Leopard (Pardo d'Oro)	Best Film
Career Pardo (Pardo alla Carriera)	Lifetime achievement in cinema
Leopard of Honour (Pardo d'Onore)	Outstanding contribution to world cinema
Leopard Club Award	Distinguished achievements in film
Best Performance Award	Outstanding acting performance

About James Gray:

- Nationality: American.
- Profession: Film director, screenwriter, and producer.
- Known for emotionally rich and character-driven films.

Some notable films include:

- The Yards (2000)

- We Own the Night (2007)
- Two Lovers (2008)
- The Immigrant (2013)
- The Lost City of Z (2016)
- Ad Astra (2019)
- Armageddon Time (2022)
- His films have frequently been screened at the Cannes Film Festival.

About Switzerland:

- Capital: Bern.
- Largest City: Zürich.
- Currency: Swiss Franc (CHF).
- Major International City: Geneva (hosts many international organisations).

Exam Focus Points::

- Award: Career Pardo (Pardo alla Carriera).
- Awardee: James Gray.
- Festival: 79th Locarno Film Festival.
- Country: Switzerland.
- Founded: 1946.
- Highest Award: Golden Leopard (Pardo d'Oro).
- Venue: Piazza Grande, Locarno.
- Award Date: 9 August 2026.

Important International Film Festivals (Revision):

Festival	Country	Highest Award
Cannes Film Festival	France	Palme d'Or
Venice Film Festival	Italy	Golden Lion
Berlin International Film Festival	Germany	Golden Bear
Locarno Film Festival	Switzerland	Golden Leopard (Pardo d'Oro)
Toronto International Film Festival	Canada	People's Choice Award

Lokmanya Tilak National Award 2026

- National Security Advisor (NSA) Ajit Doval has been selected for the Lokmanya Tilak National Award 2026 in recognition of his outstanding contribution to India's national security, strategic affairs, and public service.
- The award will be presented by Union Home Minister Amit Shah on 1 August 2026 in Pune, Maharashtra, on the 106th death anniversary of Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak.

About Ajit Doval:

- Current Designation: 5th National Security Advisor of India.
- Appointed as NSA: 30 May 2014.
- Cadre: Kerala IPS (1968 batch).
- Former Position: Director, Intelligence Bureau (IB).
- Current Status: Longest-serving National Security Advisor of India.
- Recipient of the Kirti Chakra, becoming the first police officer to receive this gallantry award.

Played a significant role in:

- Doklam diplomatic negotiations (2017)
- Counter-terrorism operations
- India–China boundary talks
- National security strategy and intelligence coordination.

About the National Security Advisor (NSA):

- Established: 1998 (National Security Council system).
- Appointed By: Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC).
- Reports To: Prime Minister of India.

Functions:

- Principal advisor to the Prime Minister on national security.
- Coordinates intelligence agencies.
- Advises on strategic, defence, and foreign policy issues.
- Oversees the National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS).
- Represents India in high-level strategic dialogues with other countries.

About the Lokmanya Tilak National Award:

- Instituted: 1983.
- Instituted By: Tilak Smarak Mandir Trust, Pune.
- Purpose: To honour individuals who have made exceptional contributions to the nation and society.
- Presentation Date: Every year on 1 August, the death anniversary of Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak.
- Venue: Pune, Maharashtra.

About Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak:

- Birth: 23 July 1856, Ratnagiri (Maharashtra).
- Death: 1 August 1920.
- Popularly known as "Lokmanya".

Famous slogan:

"Swaraj is my birthright and I shall have it."

Founder of newspapers:

- Kesari (Marathi)
- The Mahratta (English)
- Started the Ganesh Utsav and Shivaji Festival as instruments of mass political mobilisation.

Part of the Lal-Bal-Pal trio:

- Lala Lajpat Rai
- Bal Gangadhar Tilak
- Bipin Chandra Pal
- Home Rule League launched in 1916.

Previous Notable Recipients:

- Narendra Modi – 2023
- Nitin Gadkari – 2025
- Atal Bihari Vajpayee
- Dr. Manmohan Singh
- Pranab Mukherjee
- E. Sreedharan
- Several distinguished national leaders and public figures have received this honour over the years.

Additional Facts:

- National Security Council (NSC) was established in 1998 under Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee.
- The National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS) functions under the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

India has three major intelligence agencies:

1. Intelligence Bureau (IB) – Internal intelligence
2. Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW) – External intelligence

Exam Focus Points::

- Award: Lokmanya Tilak National Award 2026.
- Awardee: Ajit Doval.
- Institution: Tilak Smarak Mandir Trust.
- Instituted: 1983.
- Presentation Date: 1 August (Tilak's death anniversary).
- Current NSA: Ajit Doval.
- NSA Appointed By: Appointments Committee of the Cabinet.
- Current NSA Since: 2014.
- Former Position of Ajit Doval: Director, Intelligence Bureau.
- Lokmanya Tilak's famous slogan: "Swaraj is my birthright and I shall have it."

3. Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) – Military intelligence
- The Intelligence Bureau (IB) is India's oldest intelligence organisation, established in 1887 during British rule.
- The National Security Advisor is a key member of the Strategic Policy Group (SPG) and coordinates national security policy across ministries and agencies.

72nd National Film Awards

- The Hindi film Article 370 won the Best Feature Film award at the 72nd National Film Awards.
- Yami Gautam won the Best Actress award for her performance in Article 370.
- Mammooty (Bramayugam) and Kartik Aaryan (Chandu Champion) shared the Best Actor award.
- The awards were announced by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in New Delhi.
- The National Film Awards recognize excellence in Indian cinema across Feature Films, Non-Feature Films, and Writing on Cinema.

Major Award Winners:

- Best Feature Film: Article 370
- Best Actress: Yami Gautam
- Best Actor: Mammooty (Bramayugam) and Kartik Aaryan (Chandu Champion)
- Feature Film Jury Chairman: Jayaraj

About National Film Awards:

- Instituted: 1954
- First Awards Presented: 1954
- Presented By: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India
- Administered By: National Film Development Corporation (NFDC)

Highest Honours:

- Swarna Kamal (Golden Lotus)
- Rajat Kamal (Silver Lotus)

Categories:

- Feature Films
- Non-Feature Films
- Writing on Cinema
- Purpose: To promote excellence, aesthetic quality, and national integration through cinema.

About Article 370 of the Indian Constitution:

- Part of Part XXI – Temporary, Transitional and Special Provisions.
- Granted special autonomous status to the erstwhile State of Jammu & Kashmir.
- Abrogated: 5 August 2019.

Through:

- Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 2019 (C.O. 272).
- Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019.

Jammu & Kashmir was reorganised into:

- Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir
- Union Territory of Ladakh

Exam Focus Points::

- Best Feature Film: Article 370.
- Best Actress: Yami Gautam.
- Best Actor: Mammooty and Kartik Aaryan.
- 72nd National Film Awards announced by: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting.
- National Film Awards instituted in: 1954.
- Administered by: National Film Development Corporation (NFDC).
- Highest Film Honour in India: Dadasaheb Phalke Award.
- Article 370 abolished on: 5 August 2019.
- Jammu & Kashmir Reorganisation Act: 2019.
- Feature Film Jury Chairman: Jayaraj.

Māori Haka

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi received a traditional Māori Haka ceremonial welcome during his visit to Auckland, New Zealand, marking the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to New Zealand in 40 years.
- The Haka performance highlighted the cultural heritage of the Māori, the indigenous people of New Zealand, and symbolised respect, unity, strength, and hospitality.
- The visit also witnessed India and New Zealand agreeing to elevate their ties to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.
- The event has renewed interest in traditional martial and cultural performance traditions, including India's indigenous martial arts.

About the Māori Haka:

The Haka is a traditional ceremonial performance of the Māori, the indigenous Polynesian people of New Zealand.

Originally performed before battles to display courage and unity, it is now used to:

- Welcome distinguished guests.
- Celebrate important occasions.
- Honour achievements and ancestors.
- Express collective identity, respect, grief, or celebration.

The Haka combines:

- Rhythmic chanting.
- Forceful body movements.
- Foot stamping.
- Hand gestures.
- Intense facial expressions and eye movements.

Significance:

- Promotes and preserves Māori cultural heritage.
- Represents courage, unity, identity, and community spirit.
- Serves as an important symbol of New Zealand's indigenous traditions.
- Widely recognised through New Zealand's All Blacks rugby team, which performs the Haka before international matches.

Major Traditional Martial Arts of India:

Kalaripayattu (Kerala):

- One of the world's oldest martial arts.
- Combines armed and unarmed combat, flexibility, yoga, and Ayurveda.
- Traditionally attributed to Parasurama.

Silambam (Tamil Nadu):

- Ancient staff-based martial art.
- Mentioned in Sangam literature.
- Uses bamboo staff (Silambam) as the primary weapon.

Thang-Ta (Manipur):

- Traditional Manipuri martial art.
- Involves sword (Thang) and spear (Ta) techniques.



- Closely associated with Manipuri culture and rituals.

Gatka (Punjab):

- Traditional Sikh martial art.
- Developed during the Sikh Gurus' period.
- Demonstrates swordsmanship, stick fighting, and self-defence.

Mardani Khel (Maharashtra):

- Traditional Maratha martial art.
- Focuses on swordsmanship, horse riding, and battlefield combat.

Paika Akhada (Odisha):

- Traditional martial art of the Paika warrior community.
- Combines weapon training with acrobatic movements and dance.

Musti Yuddha (Uttar Pradesh):

- Ancient Indian unarmed combat system.
- Emphasises punches, kicks, grappling, and physical conditioning.

About the Māori:

- The Māori are the indigenous Polynesian people of New Zealand (Aotearoa).
- They arrived in New Zealand between the 13th and 14th centuries CE.
- Their culture is based on strong community values, oral traditions, language (Te Reo Māori), carving, weaving, and ceremonial performances such as the Haka.

About New Zealand:

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

Additional Key Facts:

- The Treaty of Waitangi (1840) is regarded as the founding document of modern New Zealand, signed between the British Crown and Māori chiefs.
- Te Reo Māori is one of New Zealand's three official languages.
- The All Blacks, New Zealand's national rugby team, have performed the Haka before international matches for over a century.
- Traditional Indian martial arts evolved for warfare, self-defence, physical fitness, and spiritual discipline, and many incorporate elements of Yoga and Ayurveda.
- Martial arts such as Kalaripayattu, Silambam, and Thang-Ta are included in the Ministry of Culture's Scheme for Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage of India.

Exam Focus Points:

- Traditional Performance: Māori Haka.
- Country: New Zealand.
- Performed By: Māori (indigenous people of New Zealand).
- Occasion: Welcome ceremony for Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- First PM Visit: First Indian Prime Minister to visit New Zealand in 40 years.
- Purpose of Haka: Welcome, celebration, remembrance, and expression of unity and strength.
- Related Treaty: Treaty of Waitangi (1840).
- Major Indian Martial Arts: Kalaripayattu, Silambam, Thang-Ta, Gatka, Mardani Khel, Paika Akhada, Musti Yuddha.
- Capital of New Zealand: Wellington.
- Official Indigenous Language: Te Reo Māori.

60th Jnanpith Award (2025)

- Renowned Tamil poet and lyricist R. Vairamuthu has been conferred the 60th Jnanpith Award (2025), India's highest literary honour.
- The award was presented by Dr. Karan Singh at the Chinmaya Mission Auditorium, New Delhi.
- Literary Contributions
- Vairamuthu is a renowned Tamil poet, novelist, and lyricist.
- His novel Kallikkattu Ithikasam received the Sahitya Akademi Award (2003).
- He has won the National Film Award for Best Lyrics seven times.

His notable works include:

- Karuvachi Kaaviyam
- Moondram Ulaga Por
- Thanneer Desam
- Sigaramgalai Nokki
- His literary works have been translated into several international languages.

Background

- R. Vairamuthu was born into a farming family in Tamil Nadu.
- His childhood was marked by poverty and displacement, which became major themes in his writings.
- He has been writing poetry, novels, and film lyrics for over five decades.

About Jnanpith Award

- Instituted: 1961
- First Award: 1965
- Presented By: Bharatiya Jnanpith
- Purpose: India's highest literary honour for outstanding contribution to literature.

Award Components:

- Cash prize of ₹11 lakh
- Citation plaque
- Bronze replica of Goddess Vagdevi (Saraswati)

About Bharatiya Jnanpith

- Established: 1944
- Founder: Sahu Shanti Prasad Jain and Rama Jain
- Headquarters: New Delhi
- Objective: Promotion of Indian literature and languages through awards and publications.

About the Award

- India's Highest Literary Honour
- Instituted: 1961 by Bharatiya Jnanpith
- For Lifetime Contribution (since 1982)
- 22 Eighth Schedule Languages + English

Key Facts

- First Awardee (1965): G. Sankara Kurup
- 1st Woman: Ashapura Devi
- 1st in English: Amitav Ghosh

Prize

- ₹11 Lakh
- Citation
- Vagdevi Statuette

Exam Focus Points

- Award: 60th Jnanpith Award (2025)
- Recipient: R. Vairamuthu
- Language: Tamil
- Presented By: Dr. Karan Singh
- Purpose: India's highest literary honour
- Instituted: 1961
- First Award: 1965
- Prize Money: ₹11 lakh

Unjha Cumin & Fennel GI Tag

Unjha Cumin (Jeera) and Unjha Fennel (Saunf) from Gujarat have been granted the Geographical Indication (GI) tag. The recognition identifies the spices as products originating from Unjha, North Gujarat.

Background:

- India is the world's largest producer and exporter of cumin.
- Gujarat contributes the largest share of India's cumin production and exports.
- Major cumin- and fennel-producing districts include Mehsana, Patan, Banaskantha, and Gandhinagar.

Institutions Involved:

The GI registration was secured through the joint efforts of:

- Unjha Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC)
- Department of Horticulture & Farmers' Welfare, Government of Gujarat
- Sardarkrushinagar Dantiwada Agricultural University (SDAU)
- Entrepreneurship Development Institute of India (EDII)

Benefits of GI Recognition:

- Provides legal protection against misuse of the geographical identity.
- Ensures product authenticity and quality.
- Enhances domestic and international market credibility.
- GI-tagged products can fetch 20–30% higher prices than non-GI products.
- Expected to increase farmers' income and promote exports.

Importance of Unjha:

- Unjha is one of Asia's largest spice trading centres.
- It is the principal market for cumin and fennel produced in Gujarat and Rajasthan.
- Gujarat is India's largest producer of cumin and among the leading producers of fennel.
- Objective of GI Recognition
- Protect the unique identity of regional agricultural products.
- Prevent unauthorized use of the product's geographical name.
- Promote exports of value-added agricultural products.
- Increase farmers' income through premium pricing.
- Preserve traditional agricultural practices and regional heritage.

Exam Focus Points:

- GI Tag Awarded To: Unjha Cumin (Jeera) and Unjha Fennel (Saunf)
- State: Gujarat
- Region: Unjha, North Gujarat
- Purpose: To provide legal protection, preserve geographical identity, improve farmers' income, and promote exports.
- Major Institution: Unjha APMC
- India's Position: World's largest producer and exporter of cumin.
- GI Act: Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999.
- GI Registry: Chennai.
- Validity of GI Tag: 10 years (renewable)

Significance:

- Strengthens Gujarat's position as India's leading spice-producing state.
- Enhances global recognition of Indian spice products.
- Supports the Government of India's One District One Product (ODOP) and Vocal for Local initiatives.
- Promotes rural livelihoods and agricultural branding.

About Geographical Indication (GI) Tag:

- Legal Framework: Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, 1999.
- Implemented Since: 15 September 2003.
- Registry: Geographical Indications Registry, Chennai.
- Administered By: Office of the Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trade Marks (CGPDTM), Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), Ministry of Commerce & Industry.
- Validity: 10 years (renewable).
- Purpose: Protect products whose quality or reputation is linked to a specific geographical region.

Other GI Products of Gujarat:

- Gir Kesar Mango
- Bhalia Wheat
- Kachchhi Kharek
- Amalsadi Chikoo

Manas & Mahabharata Centre

- India and Kyrgyzstan have jointly inaugurated the International Centre for Civilizational Studies "Manas and Mahabharata" in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, to strengthen academic, cultural, and civilizational cooperation between the two countries.
- The Centre has been established through a collaboration between the Centre for Studies of International Relations (CSIR), New Delhi, and the Manas National Academy, Kyrgyzstan.
- The initiative aims to promote comparative research on the Indian epic Mahabharata and the Kyrgyz national epic Manas, while deepening people-to-people ties and cultural diplomacy. During the inauguration, the first Hindi translation of the Kyrgyz epic "Manas" was also released.

About the International Centre for Civilizational Studies:

- Location: Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.
- Collaborating Institutions: Centre for Studies of International Relations (CSIR), New Delhi, and Manas National Academy, Kyrgyzstan.

Focus Areas:

- Comparative study of the Mahabharata and Manas epics.
- Civilizational history and cultural heritage.
- Intercultural dialogue and humanitarian diplomacy.
- Academic collaboration and researcher training.

About the Epic "Manas":

- National epic of Kyrgyzstan and one of the world's longest oral epics.
- Narrates the life and heroic deeds of Manas, the legendary founder and unifier of the Kyrgyz people.
- Recognized by UNESCO as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.
- Traditionally preserved through oral recitation by Manaschis (traditional epic narrators).

About the Mahabharata:

- One of the two great Sanskrit epics of India, the other being the Ramayana.
- Traditionally attributed to Maharishi Ved Vyasa.
- Contains over 100,000 verses, making it one of the world's longest epic poems.
- Includes the Bhagavad Gita, a key philosophical and spiritual text of Hinduism.

About Kyrgyzstan:

- Capital: Bishkek.
- Currency: Kyrgyzstani Som (KGS).
- President: Sadyr Japarov.
- Region: Central Asia.
- Borders: Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and China.
- India-Kyrgyzstan Relations: Both countries are members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) and cooperate in areas such as culture, education, defence, and connectivity.

Exam Focus Points:

- Countries Involved: India and Kyrgyzstan.
- Centre Launched: International Centre for Civilizational Studies "Manas and Mahabharata".
- Location: Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.
- Indian Partner: Centre for Studies of International Relations (CSIR), New Delhi.
- Kyrgyz Partner: Manas National Academy.
- Major Objective: Promote comparative civilizational studies and strengthen cultural diplomacy.
- Additional Achievement: First Hindi translation of the Kyrgyz epic Manas released.
- UNESCO Link: Manas Epic is inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar

Acharya Shri Ranchhodlalji Goswami, the 16th Acharya of the historic Goswami Haveli in Kalupur, Ahmedabad, has been selected for the Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar (2024–25) by the Sangeet Natak Akademi, under the Ministry of Culture, for his outstanding contribution to the preservation and promotion of Haveli Sangeet, a centuries-old devotional music tradition associated with the Pushtimarg sect. The honour recognises his efforts in reviving and popularising one of India's important intangible cultural traditions.

What is Haveli Sangeet?

Haveli Sangeet is a traditional form of Hindustani devotional classical music performed in Krishna temples (Havelis) of the Pushtimarg (Vallabh Sampradaya) tradition. It originated in the Braj region (Mathura–Govardhan) and later flourished in Rajasthan and Gujarat, particularly at the Shrinathji Temple, Nathdwara, and Vaishnav havelis.

About Ranchhodlalji Goswami:

- Awardee: Acharya Shri Ranchhodlalji Goswami.
- Position: 16th Acharya, Goswami Haveli, Kalupur, Ahmedabad.
- State: Gujarat.
- Award: Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar (2024–25).
- Recognised For: Preservation and promotion of Haveli Sangeet.
- Instrumental in documenting, teaching and reviving traditional compositions of the Pushtimarg musical heritage.

About the Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar:

The Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar is a prestigious national award instituted by the Sangeet Natak Akademi to encourage young practitioners of India's performing arts.

Key Facts

- Instituted: 2006.
- Awarding Body: Sangeet Natak Akademi.
- Administrative Ministry: Ministry of Culture.
- Eligibility: Outstanding artists below 40 years of age.

Fields Covered:

- Music
- Dance
- Theatre
- Traditional and Folk Arts
- Puppetry

Award Components:

- ₹25,000 cash prize
- Tamrapatra (citation plaque)
- Angavastram (ceremonial shawl).

About Sangeet Natak Akademi:

- Established: 1953.
- Headquarters: New Delhi.
- Administrative Ministry: Ministry of Culture.
- Nature: India's National Academy for Music, Dance and Drama.

About Pushtimarg:

- Founder: Vallabhacharya (1479–1531).
- Philosophy: Shuddhadvaita (Pure Non-dualism).

Exam Focus Points:

- Award: Ustad Bismillah Khan Yuva Puraskar (2024–25).
- Awardee: Acharya Shri Ranchhodlalji Goswami.
- Recognised For: Haveli Sangeet.
- State: Gujarat.
- Awarding Body: Sangeet Natak Akademi.
- Administrative Ministry: Ministry of Culture.
- Award Instituted: 2006.
- Eligibility: Artists below 40 years of age.
- Musical Tradition: Haveli Sangeet (Pushtimarg devotional music).
- Associated Classical Style: Dhrupad.

- Principal Deity: Lord Krishna (especially Shrinathji).
- Major Centre: Nathdwara, Rajasthan.
- The tradition places great emphasis on music, devotional singing, and temple rituals as forms of worship.

Jestha Varna Mahavihar

Why is it in News?

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

Key Highlights

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

About Jestha Varna Mahavihar

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

About the UNESCO Asia-Pacific Awards for Cultural Heritage Conservation

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

Significance

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

Exam Focus Points

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

India–Indonesia Cultural Cooperation

Why is it in News?

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Indonesia, where both countries announced 20 major outcomes, including a US\$600 million defence agreement, expanded cooperation in trade, technology, maritime security, and the launch of an India-supported restoration project for the Prambanan Temple in Yogyakarta.

Key Highlights

- India and Indonesia announced 20 major outcomes, including 14 MoUs/agreements and 6 key initiatives, covering defence, trade, technology, health, agriculture, critical minerals, and culture.
- Indonesia agreed to procure BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles and Astra air-to-air missiles from India under a defence deal worth over US\$600 million.
- Both countries agreed to strengthen cooperation in maritime security, coast guard coordination, critical minerals, steel, space, artificial intelligence, Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), healthcare, and agriculture.
- India announced assistance for the conservation and restoration of the UNESCO World Heritage-listed Prambanan Temple Complex in Yogyakarta, highlighting the shared civilisational heritage of both nations.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto jointly inaugurated the restoration project at the Prambanan Temple Complex.
- The two countries also announced that 2026–27 will be celebrated as the "Tagore–Dewantara Year of Cultural and Educational Diplomacy."
- India and Indonesia also agreed to work towards integrating India's UPI with Indonesia's digital payment system, promoting easier travel and business transactions.

Exam Focus Points

- Country: Indonesia
- Indian Prime Minister: Narendra Modi
- Indonesian President: Prabowo Subianto
- Defence Deal Value: Over US\$600 million
- Key Defence Systems: BrahMos Cruise Missile, Astra Air-to-Air Missile
- Temple Restored: Prambanan Temple Complex
- UNESCO World Heritage Status: 1991
- Main Deity: Lord Shiva
- Related Theme: Shared Cultural Heritage
- Special Cultural Initiative: Tagore–Dewantara Year of Cultural and Educational Diplomacy (2026–27)
- Digital Cooperation: Integration of India's UPI with Indonesia's payment system

About Prambanan Temple

- Prambanan Temple is the largest Hindu temple complex in Indonesia.
- It is located in Yogyakarta.
- The temple is primarily dedicated to Lord Shiva, with shrines dedicated to Lord Vishnu and Lord Brahma.
- It was built during the 9th century by the Sanjaya Dynasty.
- The temple complex was designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1991.

Significance

- Strengthens the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between India and Indonesia.
- Boosts India's defence exports through the BrahMos missile agreement.
- Enhances cooperation in maritime security and the Indo-Pacific region.
- Deepens collaboration in critical minerals, digital technology, and space.
- Reinforces the shared cultural and civilisational ties between the two countries through the restoration of the Prambanan Temple.

Bintang Adipurna

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi was conferred Indonesia's highest civilian honour, the Bintang Adipurna (Star of the Republic of Indonesia – Adipurna Class), by President Prabowo Subianto during his official visit to Jakarta. The honour was bestowed in recognition of Prime Minister Modi's contribution to strengthening India–

Indonesia bilateral relations, promoting regional cooperation, and enhancing the strategic partnership between the two countries.

- PM Modi became the second Indian Prime Minister, after Jawaharlal Nehru, to receive Indonesia's highest civilian honour.

What is the Bintang Adipurna?

The Bintang Adipurna is the highest class of the Star of the Republic of Indonesia (Bintang Republik Indonesia), the country's highest national honour. It is conferred by the President of Indonesia upon individuals who have rendered extraordinary service to the unity, integrity, continuity, and prosperity of the Republic of Indonesia. The award may be conferred on both Indonesian citizens and distinguished foreign leaders.

About the Star of the Republic of Indonesia (Bintang Republik Indonesia):

- Established: 1959.
- Awarded By: President of Indonesia.
- Highest Honour: Indonesia's highest order of merit.
- Eligibility: Indonesian citizens and foreign dignitaries.

Classes:

- Adipurna (Highest)
- Adipradana
- Utama
- Pratama
- Nararya
- Objective: To honour exceptional contributions towards the integrity, prosperity, and greatness of Indonesia.

India-Indonesia Relations:

- Diplomatic Relations Established: 1950.
- Comprehensive Strategic Partnership: Since 2018.
- Shared Maritime Boundary: Along the Andaman Sea.

Key Areas of Cooperation:

- Defence and Maritime Security
- Indo-Pacific Cooperation
- Trade and Investment
- Digital Economy
- Renewable Energy
- Space Cooperation
- Counter-Terrorism
- Blue Economy
- Both countries are important partners in India's Act East Policy and MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions) Vision.

About Indonesia:

- Official Name: Republic of Indonesia.
- Capital: Jakarta.
- Currency: Indonesian Rupiah (IDR).
- President: Prabowo Subianto.
- Legislature: People's Consultative Assembly (MPR).
- Largest Archipelagic Nation: More than 17,000 islands.

Member of:

Exam Focus Points

- Award: Bintang Adipurna (Star of the Republic of Indonesia – Adipurna Class).
- Recipient: Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- Conferred By: President Prabowo Subianto.
- Country: Indonesia.
- Established: 1959.
- Nature: Highest civilian/national honour of Indonesia.
- India-Indonesia Diplomatic Relations: 1950.
- Strategic Partnership: Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (2018).
- Regional Policy Link: Act East Policy and MAHASAGAR Vision.
- Second Indian PM to Receive the Honour: After Jawaharlal Nehru.

- ASEAN
- G20
- East Asia Summit (EAS)
- Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)
- United Nations (UN)

Bukhman International Booker Prize

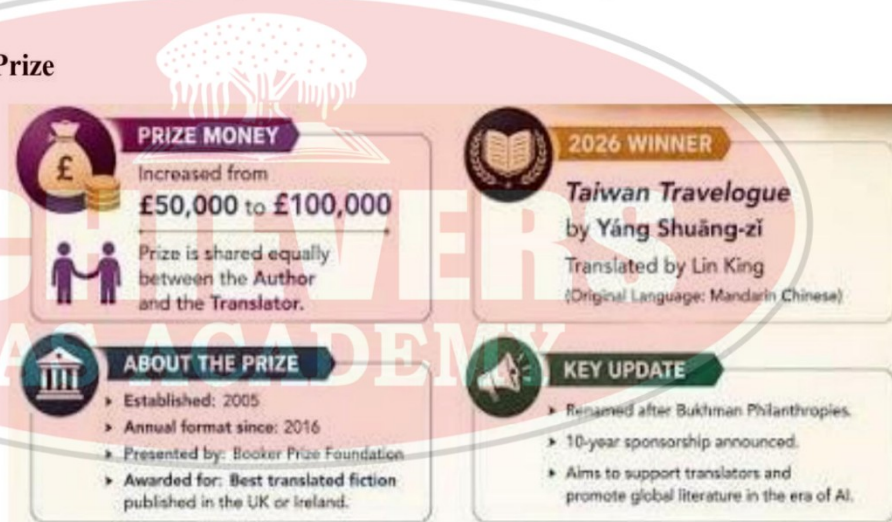
- The International Booker Prize, one of the world's most prestigious literary awards for translated fiction, will be renamed the Bukhman International Booker Prize from 2027 following a 10-year funding partnership with Bukhman Philanthropies.
- As part of the agreement, the winner's prize money has been doubled from £50,000 to £100,000 (approximately ₹1.28 crore), with the amount continuing to be shared equally between the author and translator.
- Each shortlisted title will continue to receive £5,000, also shared equally. The initiative aims to strengthen support for translated literature and recognise the crucial role of translators in global literary exchange.

What is the International Booker Prize?

The International Booker Prize is an annual international literary award that honours the best work of fiction translated into English and published in the United Kingdom or Ireland. It equally recognises both the author and the translator.

Bukhman International Booker Prize

- New Name Effective From: 2027
- Former Name: International Booker Prize
- New Sponsor: Bukhman Philanthropies
- Funding Commitment: 10 years
- Winner's Prize: £100,000 (approximately ₹1.28 crore)
- Prize Distribution: Shared equally between the author and translator.
- Shortlisted Books: £5,000 per title, shared equally between the author and translator.



International Booker Prize:

- Current Format Introduced: 2016
- Frequency: Annual
- Administered By: Booker Prize Foundation

Eligibility:

- Fiction or short-story collections.
- Originally written in any language.
- Translated into English.
- Published in the UK or Ireland.
- Recognises both literary excellence and the art of translation.

Booker Prize Foundation:

A UK-based charitable organisation.

Administers:

- The Booker Prize (for English-language fiction).
- The Bukhman International Booker Prize (translated fiction).
- Works to promote outstanding literature and reading worldwide.

Bukhman Philanthropies

Established by Daria Bukhman and Dmitri Bukhman, founders of the gaming company Playrix.

Supports initiatives in:

- Literature
- Education
- Maternal and neonatal health
- Children's and youth mental health
- Became the principal funding partner of the International Booker Prize from 2026 and committed to a decade-long partnership.

2026 International Booker Prize Winner:

- Winning Book: Taiwan Travelogue
- Author: Yáng Shuāng-zǐ
- Translator: Lin King
- Significance:
- First book translated from Taiwanese Mandarin to win the International Booker Prize.
- Explores history, colonialism, identity, and culture through fiction.

Exam Focus Points:

- New Name: Bukhman International Booker Prize
- Effective From: 2027
- Former Name: International Booker Prize
- Funding Partner: Bukhman Philanthropies
- Funding Period: 10 years
- Winner's Prize: £100,000 (approximately ₹1.28 crore)
- Prize Sharing: Equally between author and translator
- Administered By: Booker Prize Foundation
- 2026 Winner: Taiwan Travelogue
- Author: Yáng Shuāng-zǐ
- Translator: Lin King

Difference Between Booker Prize and International Booker Prize

Booker Prize	Bukhman International Booker Prize
Awards fiction originally written in English.	Awards fiction translated into English.
Recognises only the author.	Recognises both the author and translator equally.
Open to novels published in the UK/Ireland.	Open to translated fiction published in the UK/Ireland.

Guardian of the Blue Horizon

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi was conferred "Guardian of the Blue Horizon", the highest civilian honour of Seychelles, during his State Visit to the island nation.
- The honour was presented by President Dr. Patrick Herminie in recognition of PM Modi's leadership in environmental conservation, sustainable development, climate action, promotion of the Blue Economy, and support for Small Island Developing States (SIDS).
- Notably, this is the first time this prestigious distinction has been conferred by Seychelles.
- PM Modi dedicated the honour to all nations striving to combat climate change and protect the environment for future generations. The visit also marked the 50th anniversary of diplomatic relations between India and Seychelles.

What is the "Guardian of the Blue Horizon" Honour?

- The Guardian of the Blue Horizon is the highest civilian honour of Seychelles, instituted to recognize exceptional contributions towards:
- Environmental conservation

- Sustainable development
- Climate action
- Blue Economy
- Sustainable management of ocean resources
- Advancement of the interests of Small Island Developing States (SIDS)

What is the Blue Economy?

The Blue Economy refers to the sustainable use of ocean and marine resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods, and employment while preserving the health of marine ecosystems.

Key Sectors:

- Fisheries and aquaculture
- Maritime transport and shipping
- Coastal tourism
- Offshore renewable energy
- Marine biotechnology
- Ocean-based research and innovation

Importance:

- Promotes sustainable economic development.
- Ensures conservation of marine biodiversity.
- Strengthens climate resilience.
- Enhances maritime security and regional cooperation.
- Supports livelihoods of coastal communities.

Seychelles:

- Capital: Victoria
- Location: Western Indian Ocean, east of mainland Africa.
- Government: Presidential Republic.
- Currency: Seychellois Rupee (SCR).
- President: Patrick Herminie
- A member of the African Union (AU), Commonwealth of Nations, and Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA).
- Classified as a Small Island Developing State (SIDS).

Exam Focus Points (Quick Revision Notes):

- Country in News: Seychelles
- Highest Civilian Honour: Guardian of the Blue Horizon
- Recipient: Prime Minister Narendra Modi
- Presented by: President Dr. Patrick Herminie
- Recognises: Environmental conservation, Blue Economy, climate action and sustainable development
- India-Seychelles Diplomatic Relations: Since 1976 (50 years in 2026)
- Capital of Seychelles: Victoria
- Strategic Region: Indian Ocean
- Related Concepts: Blue Economy, SIDS, Mission LiFE, SAGAR, MAHASAGAR



Person in News

Appointments

Sr. No.	Person Name	Appointed For / Post	Department / Organisation	Brief Description
1	Volker Türk	UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (Reappointed)	United Nations (UN)	Reappointed for a second four-year term as UN Human Rights Chief.
2	Viswanathan Anand	Interim President	FIDE	Assumed charge as FIDE Interim President after Arkady Dvorkovich suspended duties.
3	Ashiss Kumar Dash	CEO & MD Designate	Infosys	Appointed CEO & MD Designate; to assume office from 1 April 2027.
4	Naresh Pal Gangwar	Secretary, Department of Higher Education	Ministry of Education	Appointed Secretary, Department of Higher Education.
5	T. K. Anil Kumar	Secretary, Department of School Education & Literacy	Ministry of Education	Appointed Secretary, Department of School Education & Literacy.
6	Vineet Joshi	Secretary	Ministry of Panchayati Raj	Transferred as Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj.
7	Anurag Jain	Chief Executive Officer (CEO)	NITI Aayog	Appointed CEO of NITI Aayog for a two-year term.
8	Mykhailo Drapaty	Commander-in-Chief	Armed Forces of Ukraine	Appointed Commander-in-Chief of Ukraine's Armed Forces.
9	Bassirou Diomaye Faye	Chairman	ECOWAS	Elected Chairman of ECOWAS.
10	Andy Burnham	Prime Minister	United Kingdom	Assumed office as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.
11	Alok Kumar Mittal	Director General	BPR&D	Appointed Director General of BPR&D.
12	Amit Garg	Director	NCRB	Appointed Director of NCRB.
13	Sujeet Pandey	Director	SVPNPA	Appointed Director of SVPNPA.
14	Dilip Asbe	Member, Supervisory Board	SWIFT	Appointed to the SWIFT Supervisory Board.

15	Sanjeev Jain	Ambassador to South Korea	Ministry of External Affairs	Appointed India's next Ambassador to South Korea.
16	Anupam Misra	Chairman & Managing Director	Hindustan Copper Ltd	Appointed CMD of Hindustan Copper Ltd.
17	Dr. Bijay Kumar Mohanty	CMD (Additional Charge)	IREDA	Given additional charge as CMD of IREDA.
18	Ravi Shankar	Executive Director	Reserve Bank of India	Appointed Executive Director of RBI.
19	Somnath Ghosh	High Commissioner to Malaysia	Ministry of External Affairs	Appointed India's next High Commissioner to Malaysia.
20	Lt Gen Sandeep Jain	Vice Chief of the Army Staff	Indian Army	Assumed charge as Vice Chief of the Army Staff.
21	Air Marshal Tejinder Singh	Chief of Integrated Defence Staff (CISC)	Headquarters IDS	Assumed charge as Chief of Integrated Defence Staff.
22	Vikram Misri	Foreign Secretary (Tenure Extended)	Ministry of External Affairs	Tenure extended by one year till 14 July 2027.
23	Air Marshal Ashutosh Dixit	Vice Chief of the Air Staff	Indian Air Force	Assumed charge as Vice Chief of the Air Staff.
24	Rajiv Kumar	Part-Time Chairman	HDFC Bank	Appointed Part-Time (Non-Executive) Chairman.
25	General Dhiraj Seth	Chief of the Army Staff	Indian Army	Assumed charge as the 31st Chief of the Army Staff.
26	Mahesh Dixit	Director	Intelligence Bureau (IB)	Appointed Director of the Intelligence Bureau for a two-year term.
27	Nikol Pashinyan	Prime Minister (Re-elected)	Government of Armenia	Secured victory in parliamentary elections and continues as Prime Minister.
28	Serhii Korotshuk	Prime Minister	Ukraine	Approved as the new Prime Minister of Ukraine.
29	Pankaj Pawar	Chief Executive Officer	Jio Platforms	Appointed CEO ahead of the company's proposed IPO.
30	Mahesh Muralidhar Pai	MD & CEO	South Indian Bank	RBI approved his appointment as MD & CEO.

31	Ashok Vaswani	MD & CEO	Kotak Mahindra Bank	Announced decision to step down after completing his term.
32	Prabhjeet Singh	President	Uber India & South Asia	Resigned after serving for over a decade.
33	Mohammed Shahabuddin	President	Bangladesh	Resigned from the office of President on health grounds.
34	Dharmendra Pradhan	Union Minister Education	Ministry of Education, Government of India	Resigned as Union Education Minister amid nationwide student protests
35	Pralhad Joshi	Union Minister Education	Ministry of Education, Government of India	Appointed as Education Minister after the resignation of Dharmendra Pradhan.

Obituaries

Sr. No.	Person Name	Field Related	Description
1	Kevin Keegan	Football	Former England captain, manager and two-time Ballon d'Or winner; passed away at the age of 75.
2	Girish Bharadwaj	Rural Infrastructure / Social Engineering	Padma Shri awardee, popularly known as the "Bridge Man of India"; passed away at 76.
3	Teejan Bai	Folk Art (Pandavani)	Renowned Pandavani exponent and Padma Vibhushan awardee; passed away at the age of 70.
4	Vijaya Mehta	Theatre & Cinema	Veteran theatre director, actor and filmmaker; passed away at the age of 92.
5	Sir Garfield Sobers	Cricket	Legendary West Indies cricketer and one of the greatest all-rounders; passed away at 89.
6	John L. Esposito	Islamic Studies	Renowned American Islamic scholar and author; passed away at the age of 86.
7	R. Vairamuthu	Literature	Tamil poet and lyricist honoured with the 60th Jnanpith Award (2025).
8	Poomani	Literature	Renowned Tamil novelist and Sahitya Akademi Award winner; passed away at 79.
9	Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani	Politics / International Affairs	Former Emir of Qatar; passed away at the age of 74.

Sports

International Chess Championship 2026

Why is it in News?

Indian Grandmaster Rohith Krishna won the Menuires International Chess Championship held in France, defeating compatriot Raja Rithvik on the tie-break after both finished unbeaten with identical points.

Background & Significance:

The championship featured 86 players from several countries, including France, India, China, Germany, Poland, the Netherlands, and Italy.

Key Highlights:

- Event: Menuires International Chess Championship 2026.
- Venue: France.
- Champion: Rohith Krishna (India).
- Final Standings
- Gold Medal: Rohith Krishna (India) – 7/9 points (Tie-break: 43).
- Silver Medal: Raja Rithvik (India) – 7/9 points (Tie-break: 41.5).
- Bronze Medal: GM Omelja Artem (France) – 6.5 points.
- Raja Rithvik's Performance

About Menuires International Chess Championship

- An international open chess tournament held annually in Les Menuires, France.
- Attracts Grandmasters and strong international players from multiple countries.
- Conducted under FIDE (International Chess Federation) rules.

58th International Chemistry Olympiad (ICHO) 2026

- India achieved its best-ever performance at the 58th International Chemistry Olympiad (ICHO) 2026 by winning four gold medals.
- All four members of the Indian team secured gold medals, helping India finish joint Rank 1 along with China, Vietnam, and the Individual Participant (Russia).
- Kabeer Chhillar, JEE (Advanced) 2026 AIR-1, was among the four gold medal winners.
- The Olympiad was held in Tashkent, Uzbekistan, with participation from 363 students representing 93 countries.

Indian Gold Medal Winners:

- Kabeer Chhillar (JEE Advanced 2026 AIR-1)
- Debadatta Priyadarshi
- Harshit Singla
- Madhav Kishore

About International Chemistry Olympiad (ICHO):

- Established: 1968
- First Edition: Prague, Czechoslovakia
- Frequency: Annual
- Participants: Pre-university (school-level) students
- Objective: Promote excellence in chemistry education and foster international scientific cooperation.

Events Include:

- Practical Laboratory Examination
- Theoretical Examination

Japan Open Title

- P. V. Sindhu scripted history by winning her maiden Japan Open 2026 women's singles title.
- She became the first Indian shuttler to win the prestigious Japan Open.
- In the final, Sindhu defeated Japan's Akane Yamaguchi in straight games 21–17, 21–17.
- The victory ended Sindhu's nearly two-year title drought and earned her first BWF Super 750 title.
- The triumph comes ahead of the 2026 BWF World Championships, boosting India's medal prospects.

About Japan Open 2026 Champions:

- Men's singles: Christo Popov (France)
- Women's singles: P. V. Sindhu (India)
- Men's doubles: Fajar Alfian (Indonesia), Muhammad Shohibul Fikri (Indonesia)
- Women's doubles: Kim Hye-jeong (South Korea), Kong Hee-yong (South Korea)
- Mixed doubles: Feng Yanzhe (China), Huang Dongping (China)

About Badminton World Federation (BWF):

- Founded: 1934 (as the International Badminton Federation)
- Renamed as BWF: 2006
- Headquarters: Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- President: Khunying Patama Leeswadtrakul (Thailand)
- Members: 200+ national badminton associations.

37th International Biology Olympiad (IBO) 2026

India achieved an outstanding performance at the 37th International Biology Olympiad (IBO) 2026, held in Vilnius, Lithuania, by winning one gold and three silver medals.

Indian Medal Winners:

- Gold: Bhavyaa Gunwal (Haryana)
- Silver: Soumil Maity (West Bengal)
- Silver: Nishit Kalani (Rajasthan)
- Silver: Anmol Kumar (Punjab)

About the International Biology Olympiad (IBO)

- An annual international competition for pre-university students in Biology.
- First held: 1990.
- Tests both theoretical knowledge and practical laboratory skills.
- Each participating country sends a team of four students selected through national-level Olympiads.
- One of the International Science Olympiads conducted for school students.

Selection of Indian Team:

- Students are selected through the National Standard Examination (NSE) and subsequent Olympiad stages.
- The programme is coordinated by the Homi Bhabha Centre for Science Education (HBCSE).
- HBCSE functions as the National Centre for Olympiad Programmes in India.
- HBCSE is a constituent institution of the Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR).

Spain Wins FIFA World Cup 2026 Title

- Spain won the 2026 FIFA World Cup, defeating Argentina 1–0 in the final.
- Ferran Torres scored the match-winning goal in extra time.
- Spain lifted its second FIFA World Cup trophy, the first since 2010.
- It became the first European team since Italy (1938) to win a World Cup hosted in the Americas.
- Spain completed a remarkable run after also winning UEFA Euro 2024, highlighting its dominance in international football.

Key Highlights::

- Edition: 23rd FIFA World Cup
- Final Venue: New York New Jersey Stadium (MetLife Stadium), East Rutherford, New Jersey, USA
- Hosts: United States, Canada and Mexico

Full list of FIFA World Cup 2026 award winners:

- Golden Ball: Rodri (Spain)
- Silver Ball: Lionel Messi (Argentina)
- Bronze Ball: Kylian Mbappe (France)
- Golden Boot: Kylian Mbappe (France)
- Silver Boot: Lionel Messi (Argentina)
- Bronze Boot: Jude Bellingham (England)
- Golden Glove: Unai Simon (Spain)
- FIFA Young Player Award: Pau Cubarsi (Spain)
- FIFA Fair Play Trophy: The Netherlands

About FIFA World Cup:

- Organised by: Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA).
- First Edition: 1930 (Uruguay).
- Frequency: Every four years.

About FIFA:

- Full Form: Fédération Internationale de Football Association.
- Founded: 1904.
- Headquarters: Zurich, Switzerland.
- President: Gianni Infantino.
- Members: 211 National Football Associations.

Wimbledon Championships

- 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.

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.

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.

Australia Clinches Record 7th ICC Women's T20 World Cup Title

- Australia defeated hosts England by 7 wickets in the final at Lord's, London, to win a record-extending seventh ICC Women's T20 World Cup title.
- Beth Mooney was named both Player of the Match and Player of the Tournament, while Australia's victory capped an unbeaten campaign in the tournament.

About the ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2026

- Edition: 10th ICC Women's T20 World Cup.
- Host: England and Wales.
- Organised By: International Cricket Council (ICC).
- Final Venue: Lord's Cricket Ground, London.
- Participating Teams: 12 (first edition expanded from 10 teams).

Final Match Highlights:

- Winner: Australia.
- Runner-up: England.
- Result: Australia won by 7 wickets.
- England's Score: 150/4 in 20 overs.
- Australia's Score: 153/3 in 17.1 overs.
- Player of the Match: Beth Mooney.
- Player of the Tournament: Beth Mooney.
- Australia Captain: Sophie Molineux.
- England Captain: Nat Sciver-Brunt.
- Australia's Women's T20 World Cup Record
- Championship Titles: 7 (2010, 2012, 2014, 2018, 2020, 2023, 2026).
- Most successful team in ICC Women's T20 World Cup history.
- Completed the 2026 tournament undefeated.

About the ICC Women's T20 World Cup:

- Organiser: International Cricket Council (ICC).
- First Edition: 2009.
- Format: Twenty20 International (T20I).
- Frequency: Biennial.
- Objective: Determine the world champion in women's T20 international cricket.
- 2026 Edition: First tournament featuring 12 teams.

About the International Cricket Council (ICC):

- Established: 1909 (as the Imperial Cricket Conference).
- Current Name: International Cricket Council (since 1989).
- Headquarters: Dubai, United Arab Emirates.
- Chairman: Jay Shah.
- Role: Global governing body for cricket, responsible for regulating international cricket and organising ICC tournaments.

Exam Focus Points

- Tournament: ICC Women's T20 World Cup 2026.
- Champion: Australia.
- Runner-up: England.
- Final Venue: Lord's Cricket Ground, London.
- Winning Margin: 7 wickets.
- Player of the Match: Beth Mooney.
- Player of the Tournament: Beth Mooney.
- Australia's Total Titles: 7 (record).
- Organiser: International Cricket Council (ICC).
- ICC Headquarters: Dubai, United Arab Emirates.
- ICC Chairman: Jay Shah.
- Special Feature: First Women's T20 World Cup with 12 teams.

Charles Leclerc Wins Formula One British Grand Prix 2026

Why is it in News?

- Charles Leclerc of Ferrari won the 2026 Formula One British Grand Prix, held at Silverstone Circuit, United Kingdom. The race concluded behind the Safety Car after challenging weather conditions.

Key Highlights

- Charles Leclerc secured victory at the 2026 British Grand Prix.
- He drives for the Ferrari Formula One Team.
- The race was held at the Silverstone Circuit in Silverstone, England (United Kingdom).
- The race finished behind the Safety Car due to adverse weather and track conditions.
- The victory strengthened Leclerc's position in the 2026 Formula One World Championship standings.
- The British Grand Prix is one of the oldest and most prestigious races in the Formula One World Championship.

What is a Safety Car?

A Safety Car is deployed during a Formula One race when there is an accident, debris, or dangerous track conditions. It leads the cars at a reduced speed to ensure the safety of drivers and race officials until normal racing can resume.

Important Days of the Month

Day	Observed/Celebrated As	Motto/Importance
1 August	Yorkshire Day	To mark the anniversary of the Battle of Minden and the emancipation of slaves.
6 August	Hiroshima Day	To mark the anniversary of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki by the United States in 1945.
8 August	Quit India Movement Day	To mark the inception of the Quit India Movement on August 8, 1942.
9 August	Nagasaki Day	To pay tribute to the victims of the people who died when US dropped atomic bomb on the Nagasaki city of Japan in 1945 during World War II.
12 August	International Youth Day	Youth Localizing the SDGs
13 August	World Organ Donation Day	This day strives to motivate people to donate their healthy and precious organs after death to save lives.
15 August	Independence Day in India	To mark the end of British rule in 1947 and the establishment of a free and independent India.
19 August	World Photography Day	To mark the purchase of patent of Daguerreotype process by French government and make it free to the world as a gift in 1839.
20 August	World Mosquito Day	This day commemorates Sir Ronald Ross' 1897 discovery of the link between mosquitoes and malaria transmission
20 August	Sadbhavna Diwas	To mark the birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi.
21 August	World Senior Citizen Day	It's a day to remember and celebrate the older persons and thank them for their contributions.
23 August	International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition	To honour men and women who revolted and paved the way for the end of slavery and dehumanization.
26 August	Women's Equality Day	This act stopped the federal government and states from preventing people the right to vote based on their sex.
29 August	National Sports Day	To commemorate the birth anniversary of hockey legend Major Dhyan Chand.
30 August	Small Industry Day	To provide balanced growth to existing small, medium, and large scale enterprises to support and promote small industries.

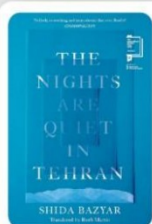
Books & Authors



Book: Taiwan Travelogue

Author: Yang Shuang-zi (Translated by Lin King)

About: Historical novel set in Japanese-ruled Taiwan, exploring colonialism, identity, culture, food, and friendship through two women's journey.



Book: The Nights Are Quiet in Tehran

Author: Shida Bazayr (Translated by Ruth Martin)

About: A multigenerational novel following an Iranian family through revolution, exile, identity, political upheaval, and life in Germany.



Book: She Who Remains

Author: Rene Karabash (Translated by Izidora Angel)

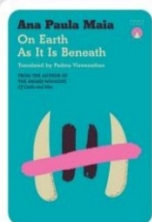
About: Literary novel exploring grief, memory, family secrets, resilience, identity, and the enduring impact of generational trauma.



Book: The Director

Author: Daniel Kehlmann (Translated by Ross Benjamin)

About: Historical novel inspired by filmmaker G. W. Pabst, examining cinema, propaganda, morality, and artistic compromise during Nazi Germany.

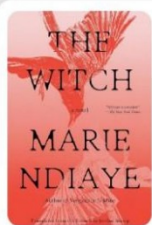


Book: On Earth As It Is Beneath

Author: Ana Paula Maia (Translated by Padma Viswanathan)

About: Set in a Brazilian penal colony, exploring violence, justice, survival, morality, and the human cost of punishment.

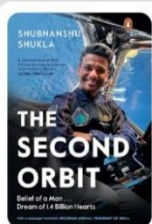
Books & Authors



Book: The Witch

Author: Marie NDiaye (Translated by Jordan Stump)

About: Magical realist novel exploring motherhood, female inheritance, identity, power, and generational trauma through a family of witches.



Book: The Second Orbit: Belief of a Man... Dreams of 1.4 Billion Hearts

Author: Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla

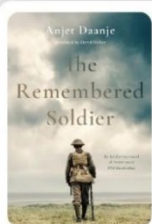
About: Memoir tracing his journey from fighter pilot to astronaut, highlighting the Axiom-4 Mission, perseverance, and India's space aspirations.



Book: We Are Green and Trembling

Author: Gabriela Cabezón Cámara (Translated into English by Robin Myers)

About: A historical novel reimagining Antonio de Erauso's life, exploring colonialism, identity, gender, indigenous resistance, transformation, and freedom.



Book: The Remembered Soldier

Author: Anjet Daanje (Translated into English by David McKay)

About: A post-World War I novel exploring memory, identity, love, trauma, and the search for truth through an amnesiac soldier.



Book: The Wax Child

Author: Olga Ravn (Translated into English by Martin Aitken)

About: A gothic historical novel exploring motherhood, mental illness, superstition, institutionalization, and women's lives in nineteenth-century Denmark.



DAILY CURRENT AFFAIRS SUPPLEMENT

(with special focus on BIHAR)



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