

# CURRENT PULSE

JANUARY 2026



ESSENTIAL, THAT  
WILL BOOST YOUR  
PREPARATION

CHANAKYA IAS ACADEMY  
SECTOR 25 CHANDIGARH

WE HAVE COMPILED THIS MAGZINE FROM ONLINE SITES AND NEWSPAPERS

# Regulation of social media in India



The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has send notice to 'X' over misuse of its AI tool 'Grok' to generate obscene, indecent, sexually explicit synthetic images/videos of women and children.

## Issues flagged by Government

- **Non-compliance with Indian IT laws:** Failure to meet due-diligence obligations under IT Act, 2000 and IT Rules, 2021.
- **Violation of privacy and dignity:** AI-generated content undermining women's privacy, dignity, and safety.

## Regulation of social media in India

- **Information Technology Act, 2000**
  - **Section 66E:** Punishes violation of privacy (**capturing/transmitting private images without consent**).
  - **Section 67:** Punishes **publishing or transmitting obscene material** in electronic form.
    - **Section 67A:** Punishes **sexually explicit content in electronic form**.
    - **Section 67B:** Specifically covers **sexual content involving children**.
- **IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 (under IT Act, 2000)**
  - **Rule 3 (Due diligence by intermediaries):** Platforms must **remove unlawful content, stop hosting obscene/sexual content**.
  - **Rule 4 (Additional rules for Significant Social Media Intermediaries):** They must appoint **Chief Compliance Officer, Grievance Officer, enable traceability of unlawful content etc.**
  - **Non-compliance risks loss of 'safe harbour protection' (which shields from liability for user-generated content).**
- **Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), 2023:** Platforms must inform police when they detect **serious cognisable offences especially involving women or children**.

# Census 2027



House listing operations (first phase of Census) will be conducted between April and September 2026 across all States and Union Territories.

- **Population Enumeration (second phase of Census)** is scheduled for February 2027.
  - For the Union Territory of Ladakh and snow-bound non-synchronous areas of the Union Territory of Jammu & Kashmir and states of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand, the population enumeration will be conducted in September 2026.

## Key Features in the 16th Census (2027):

- **India's First Digital Census:** Enumerators will primarily use mobile apps for data collection.
- **Historic Caste Enumeration:** This Census will include the first nationwide caste enumeration in independent India (last done in 1931) for all communities (beyond just Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes).
- **Digital Features:**
  - **Self-Enumeration Portal:** A secure platform where citizens can independently complete questionnaires;
  - **Census Management and Monitoring System (CMMS):** Digital portal allowing supervisors and district officers to track enumeration progress.
  - **Houselisting Block (HLB) Creator:** A satellite-based web mapping application that enables Charge Officers to create precise digital enumeration blocks.
  - **Census as a Service (CaaS):** Provides ministries with a clean, machine-readable and queryable database to facilitate evidence-based policy planning.

## About Census in India:

- **Conducted by:** Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner, Ministry of Home Affairs (decennially)
- **Legal Backing:** Census Act, 1948 and Census Rules, 1990.
- **Census 2027** will be the 16th Census in the country and 8th after independence.
  - The 1st synchronous Census started in the year 1881 (by W.C. Plowden).

# Gig Worker's Nationwide Strikes



Delivery workers of the platforms like Swiggy, Zomato, Blinkit, and Zepto went on strikes on New Year's Eve, calling for a ban on 10-minute deliveries.

## About Gig Economy in India

- As per Code on Social Security, 2020, it means a person who performs work or participates in a work arrangement and earns from such activities **outside of traditional employer-employee relationship**.
- **Broadly classified into 2 categories:**
  - **Platform based:** Whose work is based on online software apps or digital platforms. E.g., delivery workers of Zomato.
  - **Non-platform based:** Casual wage workers in conventional sectors, working part-time or full-time. E.g., domestic workers.
- **Scale:** India has around **10 million gig and platform workers**, which is expected to rise to **23.5 million by 2029-30**.
- **Drivers of growth:**
  - **Demand-side:** Urban consumption, proliferation of **quick commerce** digital platforms, etc.
  - **Supply-side:** Flexible work models, attractive remunerations.

## Challenges with Gig Economy

- **Income Volatility:** Declining per-order payouts and **low base pay** lead to **reduced income stability**.
- **Occupational Hazards:** Aggressive delivery timelines (e.g., 10 minute delivery) **increase accident risks and stress**.
- **Social Vulnerability:** Absence of assured health insurance, accident cover, and pensions.
- **Coverage Gaps:** Existing social security proposals (like the **90-day rule**) are criticized for being restrictive.
- **Algorithmic Management:** **Algorithmic Opacity** in order allocation, "**de-platforming**" workers, and **limited collective bargain**.

## Steps taken for welfare of Gig Workers

- **Code on Social Security (2020)** provides a **formal safety net**.
  - **Inclusion Criteria (90-day rule):** gig workers engaged for **at least 90 days a year (or 120 days across multiple platforms)** are now **eligible for formal social security benefits** like health and accident insurance via the e-Shram portal and Ayushman Bharat.
- **Pradhan Mantri Suraksha Bima Yojana (PMSBY):** All eligible registered unorganised workers including gig workers are entitled to get benefit of an accidental insurance cover of Rs. 2.0 Lakh for a year.
- **Legal interventions by State Governments:** Rajasthan Platform-Based Gig Workers Act, 2023, etc.

# Duopolies dominating Indian Market



The recent Indigo fiasco in the aviation sector highlighted the issues and concerns faced due to duopoly in delivery of commodities and services.

## What is Duopoly?

- It refers to a scenario in which **two suppliers dominate the market for a commodity or service.**
- In India, markets with just two suppliers in operation are becoming more common. E.g., **Duopoly of Ola and Uber in cab services.**
- **Reason for Rise of Duopoly**
- **High capital requirements:** Makes entry and survival difficult for smaller firms. E.g., **Aviation sector.**
- **Network effects:** Big firms spend early on to acquire customers, squeezing out competitors. E.g., **Telecom sector**
- **Regulatory Gaps:** Allows dominance to deepen.

## Challenges posed by Duopoly

- **Inflated Pricing and Reduced Affordability:** Lack of competitive pressure lets dominant firms raise prices with little resistance, increasing consumer costs. E.g., **Food delivery.**
- **Limited Consumer Choice and Market Options:** Shrinks the presence of smaller players leaving consumers with very few alternatives.
- **Stagnation in Innovation:** Innovation is driven by staying slightly ahead of the lone rival, not by fear of disruptive new entrants. E.g., **Telecom sector.**
- **Excessive Lobbying Power and Regulatory Influence:** Powerful duopolistic firms can use their significant influence to protect their interests and block new technologies. E.g., **e-commerce sector.**
- **Systemic Vulnerability and Capacity Failures:** Failure of one player in a duopoly can lead to economy-wide losses and unsatiated demand. E.g., **Recent Indigo crisis in aviation sector.**

## Conclusion:

India's rising duopolies need preventive regulation rather than delayed action. This requires stronger ex-ante powers for the Competition Commission of India, better coordination with sector regulators, easier market entry for new players, and transparent pricing with data portability to protect consumer choice.

## NOTE

### Existing Regulatory Mechanism

- **The Competition Act, 2002:** Provides the legal framework to prevent market distortion by prohibiting anti-competitive agreements and the abuse of a dominant market position.
  - Competition Commission of India (CCI) acts as the statutory watchdog responsible for enforcing competition laws.
- **Role of Sectoral Regulators:** TRAI (in Telecom sector), DGCA (in aviation sector), among others.

# RBI releases Financial Stability Report



FSR is a biannual publication (June and December) by RBI that incorporates inputs from Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC) subcommittee on current and emerging risks to the stability of Indian financial system.

## Key Highlights of Report:

- **Fiscal Health:** Sovereign debt remains sustainable, supported by an S&P rating upgrade to 'BBB', favorable interest rate-growth differential and low level of foreign currency liabilities.
- **AI Optimism:** While markets are buoyed by Artificial Intelligence prospects, this optimism may mask underlying vulnerabilities and susceptibility to global spillovers.
- **Fintech Risks:** Lending in the fintech sector grew by 36.1%, but the RBI flagged concerns regarding elevated impairment among borrowers who have taken unsecured loans from five or more lenders.
- **Stablecoins:** The report warns that the widespread adoption of foreign-currency-denominated stablecoins could undermine India's monetary sovereignty, weaken policy transmission, and facilitate money laundering.
- **Currency Performance:** The Indian rupee experienced depreciation against the US dollar, influenced by falling terms of trade, higher tariffs compared to trading partners, and a slowdown in capital flows.
- **Banking Health:** Scheduled Commercial Banks (SCBs) maintain robust capital buffers; notably, the GNPA ratio declined to a multi-decadal low of 2.2% as of September 2025.

## About the Financial Stability and Development Council (FSDC):

- **Nature:** Apex, non-statutory council under the Ministry of Finance established in 2010 to strengthen financial stability mechanisms.
- **Composition:** Chaired by the Union Finance Minister with members including the RBI Governor, heads of SEBI, IRDAI, PFRDA, IBBI etc. along with several government secretaries and Chief Economic Adviser.
- **Functions:** Coordinates macro-prudential supervision, promotes inter-regulatory coordination, financial sector development, inclusion and literacy.
- **FSDC Sub-Committee:** Chaired by the RBI Governor; provides inputs to FSR and deliberates on systemic risks.

# Export Promotion Mission



These pilot schemes form part of NIRYAT PRO TSAHAN component of the Export Promotion Mission.

## About New Schemes

- **Interest Subvention for Pre- and Post-Shipment Export Credit:** Provides interest subvention of **2.75%** (as base rate) on rupee export credit.
  - **Additional incentive** for exports to **notified under-represented or emerging markets**.
  - **Annual cap:** ₹50 lakh for FY 2025–26.
  - **Eligibility:** restricted to exports **under a notified positive list of tariff lines** (at HS 6-digit level), covering ~75% of India's tariff lines.
- **Collateral Support for Export Credit:** Implemented in partnership with the **Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE)**.
  - It provides **guarantee coverage**:
    - Up to **85%** for **Micro and Small exporters**.
    - Up to **65%** for **Medium exporters**.
  - **Maximum limit:** ₹10 crore outstanding guaranteed exposure per exporter in a financial year.
  - **Eligibility:** same as above.

## About Export Promotion Mission (EPM)

- **Launched:** In November 2025, for **6 years (FY 2025-26 to 2030-31)** with financial outlay of ₹25,060 crore.
- **Objective:** Providing **affordable trade finance**, specifically for MSMEs, labour-intensive sectors (e.g. Textile), etc.
- **Mission Architecture:** Two distinct but integrated pillars:
  - **Niryat Protsahan (Financial Support):** through instruments like **interest subvention, collateral guarantees, and credit cards** for e-commerce exporters.
  - **Niryat Disha (Non-Financial Support):** support for **export quality, compliance, international branding, and logistics**.

## Significance of EPM

- Enhancing Indian exporters' **global competitiveness** through
  - Lowering the **cost of exporting** and expand **access to finance**,
  - Strengthening **India's export brand** and **diversify export markets** through **compliance, certification, and international branding**.
- Boosting **job creation** by supporting labour intensive industries and first time exporters.

# Geo- Economics

India is facing challenges as the traditional boundaries of geopolitics are being redrawn by geo-economics.



- **Geopolitics:** Power through traditional factors like **geography and military**.
- **Geo-economics:** Use of **economic instruments** (trade, sanctions) to promote and defend national interests and produce beneficial geopolitical results.

## How Geo-economics is shaping Geopolitics?

- **Energy and Resource Diplomacy:** E.g. the U.S. recently launched the "**Pax Silica**" initiative to secure supply chains for semiconductors, AI, and critical minerals; **India was excluded** from the nine-member group.
- **Weaponization of Interdependence:** E.g. use of **financial sanctions** by the US like cutting off Russian banks from SWIFT.
- **Trade Policy as Strategic Tool:** E.g. "**Trade War**" between the US and China, involving **technological supremacy** (e.g. semiconductors).
- **Geo-economic Fragmentation:** E.g. EU's **Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)** that shifts the burden of emission reductions onto the Global South.

## India's Key Challenges in the Geo-economic Arena

- **Mineral and Technology Gaps:** Despite a **geology comparable to Australia**, India has only explored **25-30 percent** of its potential, leading to a 100 percent import dependence for critical minerals like lithium.
- **Low R&D & Tech Ecosystem:** India spends **just about 0.6-0.7% of its GDP** on the R&D Sector, significantly lower than the **2.5-3% spent by China and the US**.
- **Policy & Governance Gaps:** such as bureaucratic red-tapism which limits private sector participation and investment in mineral exploration.

## Way Ahead for India

- **Forging More Geo-economic Partnerships:** such as **Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI)** with Japan, Australia, and USA and **Global Biofuels Alliance** to create a geo-economic alternative to traditional fossil fuel blocks like OPEC.
- **Ramping Up Innovation & R&D:** E.g. Research Development and Innovation (RDI) Scheme.
- **Critical Infrastructure & Connectivity:** Fast tracking the **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)** as a geo-economic bridge that secures India's trade routes and energy interests.

# India becomes world's largest rice producer



Union Agriculture Minister also released 184 new high-yielding seed varieties for 25 crops.

## Status of Rice Production and export:

- **Major producers of rice:** India (150 MT), China, Indonesia, Bangladesh, Japan, Sri Lanka and Egypt.
- **State wise Production in India (2024-25):** Uttar Pradesh (13.8%), Telangana (11.6%), West Bengal (10.6%), Punjab (9.5%), Chhatisgarh (7%) etc.
- **Export:** India is the world's **largest rice exporter** (exporting 20.1 million metric tonnes of rice in 2024–25).
- **Major export destinations of India's Rice:** Saudi Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Benin, United Arab Emirates etc.

## About Rice Crop

- **Type:** Major **food crop** of the world and **staple diet** of the tropical and sub-tropical regions.
- **Growth Conditions:**
  - Rice is grown under varying conditions in India from **8°N to 30°N latitude** and from **sea level to about 2,500 metre altitude**.
  - Grown in **variety of soils including silts, loams and gravels** and can tolerate acidic as well as alkaline soils.
  - Abundant rainfall (100-150cm), high humidity and high temperature (**30°C** during day and **20°C** at night).
    - Paddy is a **semi-aquatic plant** that requires standing water (averaging 10–15 cm) for three-quarters of its growing season.
    - It grows best in **impermeable subsoil** with a pH between **5.5 and 6.5**.
- **Cropping Seasons in India:** Rice is grown in three distinct seasons based on the region:
  - **Aman (Winter rice):** Sown in June–July and harvested in November–December.
  - **Aus (Autumn rice):** Sown in May–June and harvested in September–October.
  - **Boro (Summer rice):** Cultivated between November and May, often in areas that remain moist during winter.

# CAG releases 'State Finances 2023-24' Report



It is the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition which presents an overview of the finances of all 28 States in FY 2023-24.

- The first edition of the report, 'State Finances 2022-23' was released in September 2025.

## Key Highlights of Report

- **Public Debt of States:** ₹67.87 lakh crore (~23% of GSDP) as of March 31, 2024.
- **Fiscal Deficit:** 18 states exceeded the 3.0% of GSDP benchmark recommended by the 15<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission for FY 2023-24.
  - **Extreme Fiscal Rigidity:** lack of "fiscal space" for new development as **committed expenditure** (salaries, pensions, interest, etc.) consume ~60% of total revenue expenditure.
- **Reliance on the Union Tax Devolution:** rising from ~21% (2014-15) to ~30% (2023-24) for revenue.
  - This makes State budgets **highly vulnerable to national economic fluctuations**.
- **Low Capital Expenditure:** Revenue expenditure (maintenance and salaries) continues to dominate at ~83%, while Capital Expenditure (Capex) is only ~16%, as states are prioritizing **immediate consumption over long-term investment**.
  - In several states, like Punjab and Andhra Pradesh, **debt is being used to pay for daily expenses** rather than building assets.
- **Transparency Gaps:** The "**Shadow Budgeting**" problem in form of administrative practices, such as **misclassification**, is obscuring the true state of finances.

## CAG's Recommendation

To address persistent lack of uniformity in how states classify spending, the CAG has mandated the **harmonisation of Object Heads** across the Union and States to be adopted by FY 2027-28.

# Delhi Government Signs MoU with RBI to Manage Borrowings and Cash Flows



Memorandum of understanding (MoU) will enable the Reserve Bank of India to function as the banker, debt manager and financial agent of the Delhi government.

- Functions such as the **management of the public debt of the state** are carried out by RBI in terms of the **agreement entered** into with the State Governments.
  - As of now, such agreements exist between RBI and all the State Governments **except Government of Sikkim**.

## Role of RBI as Banker to Government

- **For Central government:** RBI has the obligation to **undertake the receipts and payments** and to carry out the **exchange, remittance and other banking operations**, including the **management of the public debt** of the Union (Under Section 20 of RBI Act, 1934).
- **Issue Securities:** RBI helps raise finances through government securities.
  - The **Central Government** can issue both, **treasury bills and bonds (or dated securities)**.
  - While the **State Governments** can issue **only bonds (or dated securities)**, which are called the **State Development Loans (SDLs)**.
- **RBI also maintains the Principal Accounts** of Central as well as **State Governments** at its Central Accounts Section, Nagpur.

## Other functions of RBI

- **Monetary Authority:** Formulates, implements and monitors the monetary policy.
- **Prescribes broad parameters of banking operations** within which the country's banking and financial system functions.
- Manages the **Foreign Exchange** under FEMA act, 1999.
- **Issues, exchanges and destroys currency notes** as well as puts into circulation coins minted by Government of India.
- Regulator and Supervisor of **Payment and Settlement Systems**.
- **Banker to banks:** maintains banking accounts of all scheduled banks.

# Ministry of Finance creates three-year PPP project pipeline



The pipeline provides early visibility of potential PPP projects to enable investors, developers, and other stakeholders to undertake more informed planning and investment decisions.

- The pipeline comprises 852 projects worth over ₹17 lakh crore to accelerate infrastructure development across sectors.

## About the Public Private Partnership (PPP)

- PPP is a long-term contractual arrangement between a government or public authority and a private sector entity for the provision of public infrastructure or services.
- **Key PPP Models**
  - **Build Operate Transfer (BOT):** Private entity finances, designs, build, and operate a facility for a set period (earning via user fees) before transferring ownership to the public sector.
  - **Design Build Finance Operate (DBFO):** Private party handles the entire lifecycle from design to operation. The government retains ownership throughout, paying the private party via service fees or collected user tolls.
  - **Engineering Procurement and Construction (EPC):** The government funds the project and retains management. The private entity is strictly a contractor responsible for design and construction.
  - **Hybrid Annuity Model (HAM):** A mix of EPC and BOT. The government pays 40% of the cost in milestone-linked installments; the developer raises the remaining 60% and recovers it through annuities.

## Need for PPP

- **Bridging the Infrastructure Financing Gap:** India will require an estimated \$4.5 trillion in infrastructure investment by 2030.
- **Reducing Fiscal Burden on Government:** Frees up public tax revenue for social welfare (healthcare and education) by shifting the burden of physical asset creation to the private sector
- **Access to Advanced Technology and Innovation:** Integrates cutting-edge private-sector expertise and global best practices.
- **Other:** Improving Efficiency and Timely Project Delivery, etc.

## Initiative taken to Promote PPP

- **Viability Gap Funding Scheme (VGF)**
- **India Infrastructure Project Development Fund (IIPDF) and India Infrastructure Finance Company Limited**
- **Foreign Direct Investment (FDI)** (allowed 100% FDI in equity of SPVs in the PPP sector is allowed on the automatic route for most sectors)

# Affordable Housing Report by NITI Ayog

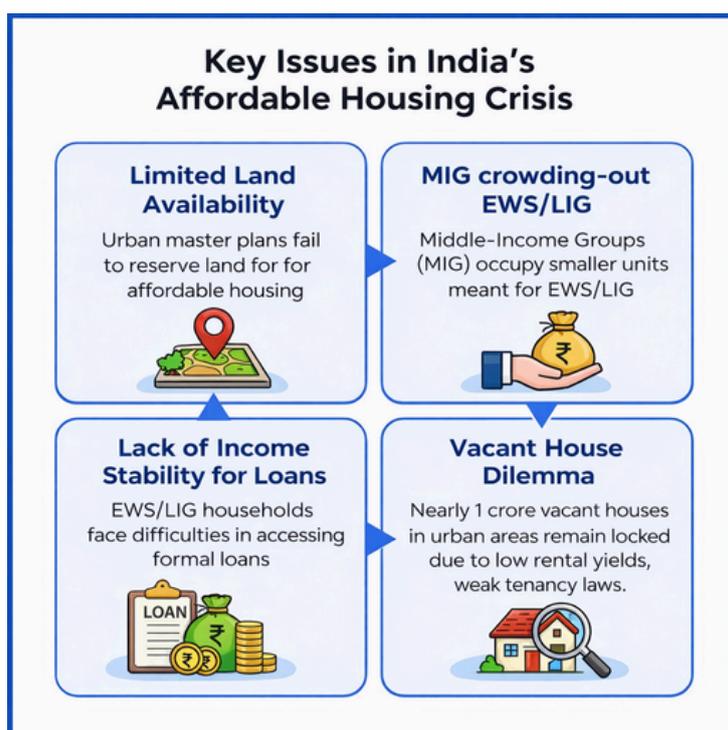


The reports offers a working definition for Affordable House as a dwelling unit with a carpet area and value of up to 60 sq. m. and ₹60 lakh (metropolitan cities) and 90 sq. m. and ₹45 lakh (non-metropolitan areas)

- Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana Urban (PMAY- U) 2.0, 2024 defines affordable housing with the same carpet area as above and value not exceeding ₹45 lakh.

## Key Recommendations on Affordable Housing

- **Zoning Reforms:** Designate Affordable Housing Zones within city Master Plans and Town Planning Schemes, with at least 10% of all residential land marked for affordable housing E.g. Vienna and South Korea adopts such approach.
- **Transit-oriented development (TOD):** Cities should earmark areas near metro and mass transit stations exclusively for mixed-use development, combining offices, commercial spaces, and affordable housing.
- **Reservation for EWS/LIG housing:** Mandatory reservation of 10-15% of the built-up area for EWS/LIG housing in all housing & commercial projects exceeding 10,000 sqm built-up area or 5,000 sqm plot area.
- **Reforms in rental housing legal framework:** States should adopt dedicated rental housing stock policies through Public-Private Partnership (PPP) models, in line with PMAY-U 2.0 Affordable Rental Housing (ARH) vertical.



# Gross Non-Performing Assets



According to the Report on Trend and Progress of Banking in India 2024-25 of RBI, the NPA of Indian banks has reached a multi-decade low, with the gross NPA ratio dropping to 2.1% by late 2025.

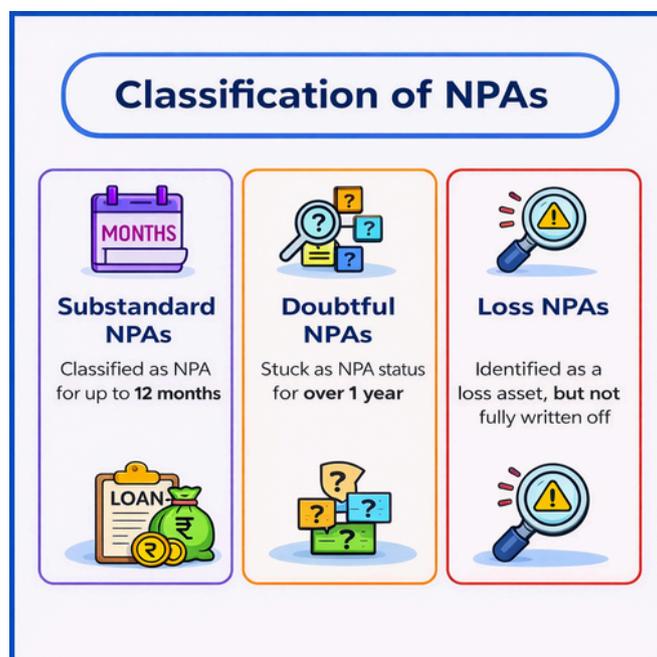
- The **net NPA (NNPA)** ratio also declined to 0.5 % at the end of March 2025
- **GNPA** ratio of banks started reached its peak in 2018 at 11.18%.

## What is Non-Performing Assets (NPAs)?

- **NPAs** are loans or advances for which the principal or interest payment remains overdue for a period of more than 90 days.
  - **Gross NPA** is the total value of loans where interest or principal remains overdue and **Net NPA** is obtained by subtracting provisions (the funds the bank sets aside to cover expected losses) from GNPA.
- **Key Drivers of NPA:** Economic slowdowns, fraudulent borrowers, poor monitoring, etc.
- **Challenges associated with NPAs:** high provisioning, reduced lending capacity, etc.

## Key initiatives that have played a crucial role in reducing NPAs

- **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), 2016:** Created a time-bound and creditor-driven resolution framework for stressed assets
- **Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (SARFAESI Act):** It allows secured creditors to take possession of collateral, against which a loan had been provided, upon a default in repayment.
- **Asset Reconstruction Companies (ARCs):** Banks continued to clean their balance sheets by selling NPAs to ARCs
- **Other:** Indradhanush plan (launched for revamping PSBs, envisaging infusion of capital in PSBs), Debt Recovery Tribunals (DRTs), etc.



# Board of Trade

BoT highlighted slowing exports due to the steep US tariffs of 50 %.



## Board of Trade

- **About:** It is apex advisory body on policy measures related to the Foreign Trade Policy aimed at strengthening India's trade ecosystem.
- **Chairman:** Minister for Commerce & Industry.
- **Members:** Comprise ministers in charge of trade and commerce in state governments and union territories, export promotion councils, industry associations etc.
- It was reconstituted in 2019 through the merger of the Council for Trade Development and Promotion with the BoT.

# Payments Regulatory Board

RBI Governor chaired the first meeting of Payments Regulatory Board.



## About Payments Regulatory Board

- Set up in 2025 by the **Reserve Bank of India** under the **Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007**.
- **Mandate:** Regulation and supervision of **all payment systems** such as electronic/non-electronic, domestic and cross-border.
- **Replaced** Board for Regulation and Supervision of Payment and Settlement Systems (**BPSS**).
- **Composition:** Chaired by the **Reserve Bank of India Governor**, with **two RBI representatives** and **three Central Government nominees** as members.

# Advance Estimates Of GDP

National Statistics Office (NSO) released First Advance Estimates of GDP for the Financial Year (FY) 2025-26.



## Key Highlights:

- **Real GDP:** Estimated to grow by **7.4%** in FY 2025-26 (**6.5%** during 2024-25).
  - Real GDP or GDP at Constant Prices is estimated to attain a level of ₹201 lakh crore in FY 2025-26
- **Nominal GDP:** Estimated to grow at **8.0%** in FY 2025-26.
  - Nominal GDP or GDP at Current Prices is estimated to attain a level of ₹357 lakh crore in the FY 2025-26

# India's RCEP advantage without 'China-risk'



Once the FTA with New Zealand comes into force, India would have trade deals with all RCEP countries except China.

## About Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)

- It is a comprehensive free trade agreement among **15 Asia-Pacific countries**.
- **Members: 10 ASEAN Member States** - Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam along with **five of ASEAN's major trade partners**: Australia, China, Japan, South Korea, and New Zealand.
  - India **withdrew from the RCEP negotiations in 2019**.

## Reason for India to opt out of RCEP

- **The "China Risk" and Trade Imbalances:** RCEP would provide China virtually duty-free access to the Indian market leading to a massive influx of superior and more competitive Chinese manufactured goods
- **Protection of Domestic Industry and Agriculture:** Safeguarding sensitive sectors such as dairy and agriculture.
- **Unaddressed Technical and Legal Demands:** India's concerns on tariff base rates, modification of MFN status and recognition of its federal structure in investment decisions were not addressed.
- **Threat to Self-Reliance:** Joining RCEP was seen as potentially undermining domestic programs like Atmanirbhar Bharat (Independent India), Make in India, and Vocal for Local.

## How India secured RCEP's advantages?

- **The "RCEP minus China" Formula:** By late 2025, India signed FTAs with all RCEP members except China, securing market access while retaining tariff control over Chinese imports.
- **Selective Liberalization and Safeguards:** Bilateral agreements allow India to exclude sensitive sectors such as dairy and agriculture.
- **Preventing indirect entry:** Staying out of RCEP prevented the indirect entry of Chinese goods.

## Conclusion

- India's decision to stay out of RCEP reflects a carefully balanced trade strategy. By choosing selective bilateral FTAs over a China-centric bloc, India protected sensitive sectors, retained tariff autonomy, reduced risks, and pursued openness without weakening economic security.

# US' strikes on Venezuela



The strikes, codenamed 'Operation Absolute Resolve', highlighted issues such as violations of international law, violation of national sovereignty, unilateral armed aggression, and US imperialism, among other.

- **India is unlikely to be impacted** due to weakened bilateral engagement post 2019 US sanctions.

## Probable reasons for the Strikes

- **Resurrection of the Monroe Doctrine:** To re-establish U.S. hegemony in the Americas.
- **Countering China's expansion in Latin America:** China (world's largest crude importer) has been biggest buyer of Venezuelan oil.
- **Controlling Venezuela's resources:** It has the **world's largest oil reserves**, large gas reserves, largest gold reserves in South America, etc.
- **Others:** To counter state-sponsored drug trafficking, spread of socialism, mass immigration, etc.

## Potential consequences of the US Imperialism

- **Historical Parallel:** The 2003 invasion of Iraq, which was launched on "false premises to depose a dictator and 'export' democracy" but instead resulted in the destabilization of West Asia and the rise of groups like ISIS.
- **Violations of International Law and Norms:** The "apprehension and forced exile" of Venezuelan President is condemned as a "flagrant violation of international law" and a direct contravention of **Article 2 of the UN Charter**.
  - **Article 2** of UN charter legally mandated **states to refrain from use of force** with some exception such as self-defence.
- **Bypassing the UN Security Council:** The U.S. has circumvented the UN Security Council, positioning itself as "judge and executioner."
- **Warning to International community:** Failure of the **post-Cold War hope for a "stable liberal order"** is underscored by the actions of both the US and Russia (e.g., the ongoing conflict in Ukraine).

# India-Pakistan Non-attack Agreement



India and Pakistan exchanged lists of nuclear installations under 'Agreement on Prohibition of Attacks against Nuclear Installations and Facilities' (or India-Pakistan Non-attack Agreement).

## About the India-Pakistan Non-attack Agreement

- **Signed:** 31st December 1988, and entered into force on January 27, 1991.
  - It requires both nations to **exchange information on January 1st each year** regarding the location of their nuclear installations.
- **Aim:** Refrains both sides from directly or indirectly causing the destruction of, or damage to, **any nuclear installation or facility in the other country.**
- **Significance:** Considered a key measure for **reducing nuclear risk** between India and Pakistan.

# OPEC+

OPEC+ has agreed in principle to maintain steady oil output despite rising geopolitical tensions.



## About Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) and OPEC+

- OPEC is a **permanent intergovernmental organization of 12 oil-exporting developing nations.**
  - **India is not a member.**
- **Genesis:** Baghdad Conference in 1960, by Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Venezuela.
- **Objective:** To co-ordinate and **unify petroleum policies** among Member Countries, in order to secure **fair and stable prices** for petroleum producers.
- **HQ:** Vienna (Austria)
- **OPEC+:** In response to falling oil prices driven by significant increase in the US shale oil output, **OPEC signed an agreement** with 10 other oil-producing countries in 2016 to create **OPEC+.**

# UN Security Council

Five countries Bahrain, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Latvia, and Liberia; elected to serve as non-permanent members of UNSC for 2 year term.



UN Security Council

## About UN Security Council

- **Genesis:** Established in 1945 through the UN Charter as one of the 6 principal organs of the UN.
- **Purpose:** Maintaining international peace and security.
- **Members:** 5 permanent members (P5) and 10 non-permanent members.
  - P5 includes China, France, Russia, USA and UK.

# OECD Finalises Agreement on Global Minimum Tax



OECD/G20 Inclusive Framework on Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) have agreed on a side by side arrangement package for the co-ordinated operation of global minimum tax arrangements.

- **Global Minimum Tax:** It is based on **Global Anti-Base Erosion (GloBE) Model Rules**. It aims to ensure that **large multinational enterprises pay a minimum level of tax on their income in each jurisdiction where they operate**, thereby reducing the incentive for profit shifting and placing a floor under tax competition, bringing an **end to the race to the bottom** on corporate tax rates.
  - BEPS refers to **tax planning strategies that multinational enterprises use to exploit loopholes in tax rules to artificially shift profits to low or no-tax locations as a way to avoid paying tax**. (E.g. through deductible payments like interest or royalties).

## Global Min Tax Package

- **The package includes five key components**
  - **Simplification measures:** Reduces compliance burdens for multinational enterprises (MNEs) and tax authorities.
    - MNEs are groups of companies and generally operate worldwide through locally incorporated subsidiaries or permanent establishments.
  - **Tax incentive alignment:** Introduces a targeted **substance-based tax incentive safe harbour** to align global treatment of tax incentives.
  - **Safe harbours for qualifying MNEs:** Available to MNE Groups with ultimate parent entities in eligible jurisdictions meeting minimum taxation requirements.
  - **Level playing field:** Includes **evidence-based stocktake process** to ensure fair treatment for all Inclusive Framework Members.
  - **Domestic minimum tax protection:** Reinforces qualified domestic minimum top-up tax regimes as the primary mechanism for protecting local tax bases, particularly in developing countries.

## OECD/G20 Inclusive Framework on BEPS

- **Launched: 2016**
- **Led by: OECD and G20**
- **Objective:** To tackle **Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS)** by multinational enterprises.
- **Membership: 147 countries and jurisdictions.** (India is a member).
- **Key Pillars:**
  - **Pillar One:** Reallocates **taxing rights** to market jurisdictions where profits are generated.
  - **Pillar Two:** Introduces a **global minimum corporate tax (15%)** to curb tax competition.

# IRAN

India has issued an advisory urging its nationals to avoid any non-essential travel to Iran until further notice amid the ongoing protests.

Iran (Capital: Tehran)

## Political Features

- **Member of:** BRICS, SCO, OPEC.
- **Land Boundaries:** Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Turkmenistan (North); Afghanistan and Pakistan (East); Iraq and Turkey (West).
- **Maritime Boundaries:** Caspian Sea (North), Persian Gulf and Gulf of Oman (South).

## Geographical Features

- **Lake Urmia**, an endorheic salt lake, is the largest lake in the Middle East.
- **Resource Potential**
  - Natural Gas (2nd position in the world)
  - Proven Crude Oil Reserves (4th)



# e-Business Visa

- India has introduced an **e-Production Investment Business Visa** called **e-B-4 Visa** for Chinese businessmen which will be issued in about 45 to 50 days, with permission to stay in India for up to six months.
- Chinese businessmen can apply for specific business activities such as:-
  - installation and commissioning of equipment.
  - quality check and essential maintenance
  - supply chain development for empanelling vendors

# Rangelands and Pastoralists

United Nations has declared 2026 as 'International Year for Rangelands and Pastoralists'.



INTERNATIONAL YEAR OF  
**RANGELANDS AND  
PASTORALISTS**  
2026

## About Rangelands and Pastoralists

- **Rangelands:** Cover around half of Earth's land surface like grasslands, savannas and shrublands, deserts, wetlands or mountain areas.
  - **Key Examples:** The steppes of Central Asia, African savanna, Alps and the Pyrenees in Europe, Andes in South America and the Great Plains of the United States.
  - **Significance:** Preserve unique fauna and flora and provide essential services including carbon storage and water regulation.
- **Pastoralists:** Raise animals, contribute to food security, hold diverse cultural heritage and local and indigenous knowledge.

# Strategic Importance of Greenland

Danish PM rejected the claims of US President over Greenland.



## Strategic Importance of Greenland

- **Military and Security Infrastructure:** Greenland is a cornerstone of North American and NATO defense due to its geographical position. E.g. crucial for the U.S. ballistic missile early-warning system.
  - It is also ideal for ground stations that track polar-orbiting satellites used for intelligence, navigation, etc.
- **Critical Minerals and Natural Resources:** contains massive, largely untapped deposits of rare earth minerals.
- **Emerging Arctic Shipping Routes:** Melting ice is opening the Transpolar Sea Route.
  - These routes could significantly shorten travel times between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, bypassing traditional chokepoints like the Panama and Suez canals.

# Venezuela

UN chief deeply concerned over 'possible intensification of instability' in Venezuela.



## Venezuela (Capital -Caracas)

UN chief deeply concerned over 'possible intensification of instability' in Venezuela.

### Political features

- **Location:** Located at the northern South America.
- **Boundary:**
  - Guyana to the east, Brazil to the south, and Colombia to the southwest and west.
    - The boundaries of Brazil, Venezuela, and Guyana meet at Mount Roraima
  - It is bounded by the Caribbean Sea and the Atlantic Ocean to the north.

### Geographical Features

- **Physical features:** Andes Mountains, Maracaibo Lowlands and Guiana Highlands.
- **Major river:** Orinoco river (empties in Atlantic ocean), Rio Negro, Lake Maracaibo etc.
- **Highest waterfall in the world:** Angel fall on Churún River.
- **Grassland Plain:** llanos
- **Resources:** It has the world's largest oil reserves
  - Most of Venezuela's heavy oil reserves are found in the Faja Petrolifera del Orinoco (also known as the Faja, or Orinoco Oil Belt).

# Liechtenstein

Union Minister of Commerce and Industry of India visited Liechtenstein to accelerate implementation of India–EFTA Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA).

## Liechtenstein (Capital: Vaduz)

Union Minister of Commerce and Industry of India visited Liechtenstein to accelerate implementation of India–EFTA Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement (TEPA).

- TEPA is India's first free trade agreement with a developed group of EFTA countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland).

## Political Features:

- It is the **only doubly-landlocked country in Europe**.
- It is **not a member** of European Union.
- **Bordering Countries:** Austria (North and East) and Switzerland (West and South).

## Geographical Features:

- **Mountain Range:** Alps with Grauspitz as highest point.
- **Major Rivers:** Rhine, Samina.



# India assumes BRICS chairmanship

Brazil has formally handed over the BRICS presidency to India for 2026. India's chairmanship is structured around four pillars - Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Environmental Stability / Sustainability.



## Significance of India's BRICS Presidency:

- **Reform of Global Governance:** India's call to reform and not replace International Institutions to avoid Western dominance.
- **Global South Leadership and support for multipolar world order:** India as a bridge between Global South and West, to represent the concerns of Global South.
- **Promotion of Digital public infrastructure:** As a scalable development model for the Global South.
- **Strategic Autonomy & Multi-alignment:** India to balance engagement with Western-led groupings and China while preserving strategic autonomy.

## About BRICS

- **Genesis:** British economist **Jim O' Neill** in 2001 coined the acronym '**BRIC**' representing the emerging economies of **Brazil, Russia, India, and China**.
  - BRIC started functioning as a formal grouping on the margins of the G8 Outreach Summit in 2006. The 1st BRIC Summit was held in **Russia in 2009**.
  - BRIC became **BRICS with the inclusion of South Africa in 2010**.
- **Aim:** To reform global governance and provide alternatives to Western-dominated institutions (IMF, World Bank, UNSC).
- **Chairmanship:** Rotates annually among member countries.
- **Three pillars of Cooperation of BRICS:** Political and security; Economic and financial; and Cultural and people-to-people cooperation.
- **Represents:** Approximately 49.5 % of the global population, around 40% of the global GDP and around 26% of global trade.
- **Members:**
  - **Initial members (BRICS):** Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa.
  - **New members (BRICS+):** Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

# Withdrawal of US from international organisations



## US presidential memorandum directs withdrawal of US from 66 international organisations

The order instructs US agencies and departments to **cease participation in and funding for 35 non-UN organisations and 31 UN entities.**

- As per US, these entities operate contrary to U.S. national interests, security, economic prosperity, or sovereignty.
- US earlier withdrew from Paris Climate Agreement, WHO, and UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC).

### Important Organizations from which the United States is withdrawing:

- **United Nations (UN) Organizations:** UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, UN Conference on Trade and Development, Peacebuilding Commission, Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, UN Register of Conventional Arms etc.
- **Non-UN organizations:** International Energy Forum, International Solar Alliance, International Union for Conservation of Nature, 24/7 Carbon-Free Energy Compact etc.

### Potential Impact of US withdrawal

- **Climate change:** Hinder global efforts to curb greenhouse gases because it gives other nations the excuse to delay their own actions and commitments.
- **Fragmenting Multilateralism:** US withdrawal will further weaken international governance, enhance power rivalries, leading to shift towards protectionism and smaller ad-hoc regional blocs.
- **Halting Development:** U.S. has historically played a dominant role in global institutions, and funding cuts subsequent to US withdrawal will deteriorate already diminishing international humanitarian and development aid.
- **Global Peace:** Absence of US contribution for Peacebuilding Commission, will hamper peace efforts in conflict-ridden areas (e.g. in Africa or the Caribbean).

# Wolf Supermoon

A Wolf Supermoon occurred recently.

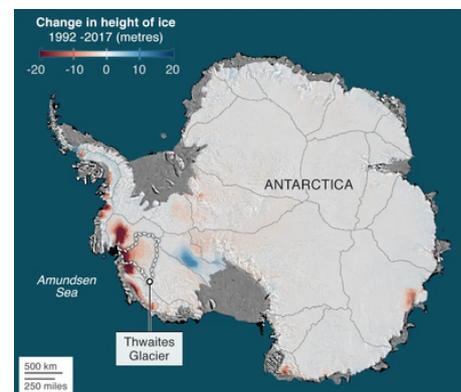


## About the Wolf Supermoon:

- The **Wolf Moon** is the traditional name for the first full moon of January.
- A **Supermoon** is a full moon that occurs when the Moon is closest to Earth (at **perigee**), making it appear slightly larger and brighter than usual.
- Therefore, a **Wolf Supermoon** is the January full moon that coincides with the Moon's perigee.

# Doomsday glacier

A study shows growing cracks in the Doomsday Glacier's ice, indicating a possible collapse of the Antarctic ice shelf.



## Doomsday glacier

- The Thwaites Glacier, commonly known as the 'Doomsday Glacier'.
- It is called so because its potential to significantly add to worldwide sea levels, is one of the fastest changing ice-ocean systems on the planet.
- The complete melting of the glacier could add 65 cm to global sea levels.

# Silver

Global Trade Research Initiative (GTRI) highlighted that India must enhance silver processing and diversify imports to reduce reliance on finished silver.

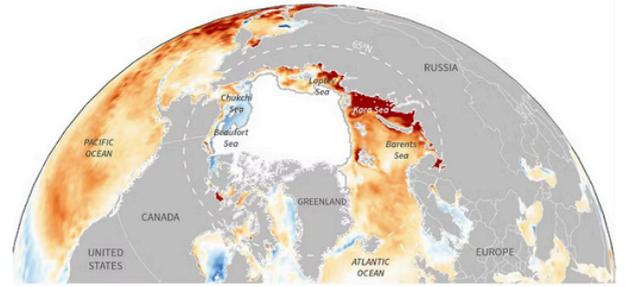


- India imported about 21.4% of global silver trade in 2024, making it the world's largest consumer of finished silver.

## About Silver

- It is a relatively soft, shiny metal.
- **Applications:** Highest electrical and thermal conductivity makes it indispensable for electronics, circuit boards, connectors, batteries, and automotive systems.
  - Silver's antibacterial properties are used in wound dressings, medical-device coatings, catheters, surgical instruments, water purification systems, and pharmaceutical compounds.
- **Natural Abundance:** Silver occurs in ores such as argentite and chlorargyrite (horn silver).

# Arctic Report Card (ARC) 2025



Released by National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, it clearly highlights that the region is warming far faster than the rest of the planet.

## Key Highlights

- **Arctic Surface Air Temperatures:** It was **highest on record** during the past year (October 2024-September 2025) since 1900.
  - The last 10 years are the 10 warmest on record in the Arctic.
- **Atlantification:** An influx of **anomalous water properties and biota** from lower latitudes to central Arctic Ocean.
  - It weakens the **Arctic Ocean stratification** enhancing heat transfer, melting sea ice, and threatening ocean circulation patterns.
- **Rusting of Rivers:** In Arctic Alaska, surface waters have changed from **clear to orange** in over 200 watersheds due to **iron release** from thawing permafrost soils, impacting both fishes and water supplies to local communities.
- **Greening of the Arctic:** First detected in the late 1990s, it is a **long-term increase in the productivity and abundance of tundra vegetation**.
- It has far-reaching impacts to **Arctic landscapes, wildlife habitats, biodiversity, permafrost conditions, and the livelihood of Arctic people**.

## Key Geopolitical Implications of the Arctic Melting

- **New Shipping Routes:** Previously impassable regions like **Northern Sea Route (NSR)**, along Russia's Arctic coast from the Kara Sea to the Bering Strait, has become **increasingly viable**.
- **Role of Arctic Council:** As a leading intergovernmental forum to **enhance cooperation and protection for indigenous communities**.
  - Established in **1996**, it **comprises eight member states** including Canada, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, Russia, Sweden, USA.
- **Importance for India:** With its **Research Station, Himadri and Arctic Policy**, India could enhance engagement and research in the region.

# Secondary Pollutants

A recent analysis by Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA) found that at least one-third of the Delhi's annual PM2.5 pollution can be attributed to Secondary pollutants, mostly Ammonium Sulphate.



## About Secondary Pollutants

- These pollutants are **not emitted directly from a source** (like vehicles or power plants).
- Instead, they form as a result of the **pollutants emitted from these sources reacting with molecules in the atmosphere to form a new pollutant**. E.g., Ammonium Sulphate, Ozone, NO<sub>x</sub>, etc.
  - Pollutants that are emitted into the environment from a source are called **primary pollutants**.
- **Formation of Ammonium Sulfate:** Sulphur Dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) gas gets oxidised in the atmosphere to form sulfate. This sulfate then reacts with ammonia to form ammonium sulfate.

# Carbon border adjustment mechanism

The EU implemented the world's first carbon tax (CBAM) from January 1, 2026, imposing a carbon-related levy on imports of carbon-intensive goods.



## About Carbon border adjustment mechanism (CBAM)

- It is the European Union's (EU) policy to impose a **carbon tax** on imports of certain products from countries with less stringent climate policies. E.g. Steel.
- CBAM, **implemented in 2023**, moves from transitional phase to full enforcement by **2026**.
- **Objective:** Prevent Carbon Leakage by stopping firms from shifting production to countries with weaker climate rules.
- **Sectors Covered:** Cement, aluminium, fertilisers, iron and steel, hydrogen and electricity.
- **Trade Impact:** Indian exports of steel, aluminium, cement may face higher costs.

# Stingless Bees

Amazon's stingless bees become the first insect to be granted legal rights.



## About Stingless Bee

- **Ancient origin:** The world's oldest bee lineage, existing for nearly 80 million years.
- **Anatomy:** They possess stingers, but these are **highly reduced** and functionally useless for defense.
- **Diversity:** Nearly **500 species** exist globally, with over **170 found specifically within Peru**.
- **Healing:** Their "liquid gold" honey is prized for its potent antibacterial and anti-inflammatory properties.
- **Significance:** These ancient pollinators **sustain 80% of Amazonian flora**, including cacao and coffee.

# Galaxy Frog

According to a recent study, a group of seven galaxy frogs vanished from the Western Ghats due to rise in photo tourism.



## About Galaxy frog

- **Location:** The only known species of its genus (*Melanobatrachus indicus*), it is endemic to the **Western Ghats** of south-western Ghats.
  - It is mostly found in **high-altitude evergreen forest** and **shola forest**.
- **Characteristics:**
  - It is a rare frog with a **slender, elongated body** of uniform width.
  - This species is **terrestrial** and **associated** with leaf-litter, rocks and another ground cover of moist evergreen tropical forests.
- **IUCN status:** Vulnerable

# Access and Benefit Sharing

National Biodiversity Authority disbursed ₹45 lakh to red sanders farmers from Andhra Pradesh under Access and Benefit Sharing.

## About Red Sanders

- It is an **Indian endemic tree species**, with a restricted geographic range in the Eastern Ghats specifically to the forest in the state of **Andhra Pradesh**.
- **IUCN: Endangered**

## About Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS)

- A framework under the **Convention on Biological Diversity (1992)** and **Nagoya Protocol (2010)** for fair benefit sharing from genetic resources and traditional knowledge.
- **In India:** governed by the **Biological Diversity Act, 2002** and **2025 Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS) Regulations**.

# White-bellied heron



Union Environment Ministry panel has recommended environmental clearance for Kalai-II hydroelectric project on Lohit River in Arunachal Pradesh despite protest to conserve white-bellied heron bird.

## About White-bellied heron

- **Other names:** Imperial Heron, Great White-bellied Heron
- **Features:** Second-largest living heron species with distinct white belly,
  - Non-migratory but shows local/post-breeding dispersal.
- **Habitat:** Undisturbed rivers and wetlands in the foothills of the Eastern Himalayas
- **Distribution:** Indian subcontinent to Southeast Asia (India (Arunachal Pradesh, Assam), Bhutan, Bangladesh etc.)
- **Conservation Status**
  - IUCN Red List: Critically Endangered
  - India: Placed in Schedule I under Wildlife Protection Act, 1972

# Bannerghatta National Park

Central Empowered Committee (CEC) on Bannerghatta National Park (BNP) has recommended withdrawal of 2020 government notification that diluted the Eco Sensitive Zone (ESZ) and restoration of wider ESZ as provided in 2016 draft notification.



- **ESZ** are areas notified by the MoEFCC around Protected Areas, National Parks and Wildlife Sanctuaries to create some kind of “shock absorbers” to the protected areas by regulating and managing the activities around such areas.

## About Bannerghatta National Park

- **Location:** Bengaluru (Karnataka).
- **Four ranges:** Anekal, Bannerghatta, Harohalli and Kodihalli wildlife ranges.
- **Flora:** Medri bamboo.
- **Fauna:** Panther, elephant, sloth bear, spotted deer, grey langur, bonnet macaque, wild boar, jackal etc.

# Urban Wastewater Management in India



Mixing of sewage with drinking water highlights the concern related to urban wastewater management in India and its potential to turn into a health crisis.

## Urban Wastewater Management (UWM) in India

- **Status:** The estimated wastewater generation is approx. **72,368 Million Litres per Day (MLD) in urban areas** for the year 2020-21 (NITI Ayog).
  - **72% of this wastewater remains untreated** and is disposed of in rivers / lakes / groundwater.
- **Potential Health Impacts:** Cholera, diarrhoea, dysentery, hepatitis A, typhoid and polio etc.
- **Treatment Systems:**
  - **On-site systems:** It retains wastewater in the vicinity of the toilet in a pit or tank, and the produced sludge is removed periodically.
  - **Off-site systems:** It comprises a sewerage network to transport sewage to a sewage treatment plant (STP).

## Challenges faced by UWM in India

- **Institutional:** Government departments operate in silos, often duplicating efforts and Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) primarily responsible for wastewater management lack capacity.
- **Archaic Infrastructure:** Lack of periodic maintenance and rehabilitation, limited land availability for setting up new treatment plants etc.
- **Economic:** Most urban water service providers face financial challenges due to high non-revenue water, unrealistic tariffs, low tariff collection rate, and inadequate cost recovery.
- **Technological:** Absence of new affordable and efficient technologies, and lack of mapping of connectivity of sewage drainage systems.

## Solutions for Sustainable UWM

- **Decentralized Treatment Systems:** From an ecological perspective, treating wastewater as close as possible to its source is beneficial.
- **Urban and Industrial Waste Reforms:** Mandate Zero Liquid Discharge (ZLD), regulate landfills, and enforce penalties for illegal discharges.
- **Modernize Monitoring:** Integrate water quality data with health surveillance systems like Health Management Information System (HMIS) for early detection.
- **Nature Based Solutions:** Include constructed wetlands, green roofs, living walls, waste stabilization ponds, vermifiltration etc.

# NGT issued notice on environmental violations around Taj Mahal



The National Green Tribunal (NGT) notice to centre and UP government highlighted concerns over non-compliance with environmental norms in the protected Taj Trapezium Zone.

- Rampant construction and felling of trees have resulted in the **destruction of green cover and disturbance to the habitat of birds and butterflies** in the region.
- Over the years, air and water pollution caused the **Taj Mahal's white marble to turn yellow and darken** due to airborne particulates, a phenomenon known as “**stone cancer.**”

## About Taj Trapezium Zone (TTZ)

- TTZ is a **protected Eco-sensitive zone** of 10,400 sq. km around the Taj Mahal. It was established under **MC Mehta Case, 1996** that also **includes Agra Fort and Fatehpur Sikri**.
  - **Taj Trapezium Zone Pollution (Prevention and Control) Authority** was also created under the judgement of 1996 (under the Environment Protection Act, 1986) to **regulate industries, construction, and emissions** around the Taj Mahal.
- Further, under **MC Mehta Case (2015)**, **SC banned felling of trees within a 5 km aerial distance from the Taj Mahal** without its prior permission of the Supreme Court.

## About NGT

- NGT is a **statutory body** set up under the **National Green Tribunal Act in 2010** to ensure **speedy disposal of environmental protection**.
- **Enforcement:** Strengthens compliance with environmental laws such as the **Environment (Protection) Act 1986, Water Act 1974, and Air Act 1981, etc.** through effective judicial oversight.
  - **Exceptions:** **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972, the Indian Forest Act, 1927, and the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006.**

## Key Judgements of NGT

- **Vardhaman Kaushik Case (2014-15):** 10-year diesel vehicle ban and 15-year petrol vehicle ban in Delhi NCR to curb air pollution.
- **M.C. Mehta (Ganga pollution) Case (1988):** Environmental compensation on States for failure to treat sewage and control industrial effluents.

# Pesticides Management Bill, 2025



The draft Bill seeks to modernize India's pesticide regulatory framework by replacing the Insecticides Act, 1968 and the Insecticides Rules, 1971.

## Key provisions of Draft Pesticide Management Bill, 2025:

- **Central Pesticides Board:** A multi-sectorial body to advise the government on safety standards, disposal criteria, and the inclusion of new molecules in the official Schedule.
- **Registration Committee:** A technical committee tasked with scrutinizing pesticide applications in a mandatory digital mode before granting a certificate of registration.
- **Digital Transparency:** Provisions for a National Register of Pesticides and online tracking of manufacture, stock, and sales records to curb the distribution of falsified products.
- **Deemed Registration:** To prevent bureaucratic delays, if committee fails to decide on a complete application for a "generic pesticide" within 18 months, certificate is deemed to have been granted.
- **Surveillance and Protection:** A defined framework for reporting and analyzing poisoning occurrences and a dedicated plan for medical facilities to handle such exigencies.
- **Quality of pesticide:** Provides for mandatory accreditation of testing laboratories, ensuring that only quality pesticides are available to farmers.
- **Worker Welfare:** It mandates standards for training and working conditions for workers involved in handling toxic pesticides, addressing a critical gap in occupational health.

## Pesticides and its Usage in India

- Pesticides are used to kill, prevent, reduce, destroy or repel a pest. It broadly constitutes **insecticides, fungicides, herbicides, bio-pesticides etc.**
- Herbicides (kill/control the growth of weeds) have the largest market share at 44% (as of 2023)
- India's pesticide consumption is 0.5 kg/hectare (compared to 17 kg/hectare in some countries) (2023)
- **States with highest Consumption:** Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, and Telangana

# Union Government eased rules for private afforestation work on leased forest land

The change was enacted by amending the consolidated guidelines of the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980 (formerly the Forest Conservation Act).

## Key Amendments

- It allows **assisted natural regeneration including afforestation/plantation**, carried out by Government or non-Government entities to be treated as “forestry activities”.
- Consequently, on such activities, the requirements of **Compensatory Afforestation and payment of Net Present Value (NPV) shall not be applicable** to such activities.
  - **Compensatory Afforestation (CA):** CA means afforestation done in lieu of diversion of forest land for non-forest purposes.
    - It compensates the loss of 'land by land' and loss of 'trees by trees' and is done on non-forest land.
  - **Net Present Value (NPV):** NPV is a mandatory fee intended to compensate for the loss of ecosystem services like carbon sequestration, water recharge, and biodiversity.
  - **Funds collected** towards CA and NPV are deposited in **State Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA)**, established under the Compensatory Afforestation Fund (CAF) Act, 2016.
- State government can devise a framework for **utilization of such plantations** and for **revenue sharing**.

## Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam 1980

The Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act, 2023, renames the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980. Other key amendments include:

- **Applicability:** Limits the Act to the land that has been declared or notified as a forest in accordance with the provisions of the Indian Forest Act, 1927.
- **Strategic Exemptions:** Removes restrictions on forest land within 100 km of international borders for national security projects.
- **Permitted Activities:** Reclassifies eco-tourism, zoos, and silvicultural operations as "forestry activities," exempting them from certain non-forest use restrictions.

# Dhruv-NG Helicopters

Dhruv-NG (New Generation) recently completed its inaugural flight in Bengaluru.



## About Dhruv-NG Helicopters

- **Platform:** Hindustan Aeronautics Limited's ALH Dhruv is an indigenously developed, **twin-engine multi-role helicopter**.
- **Variant:** Dhruv-NG is the new-generation **civilian version** with **modern avionics and systems**.
- **Roles:** Designed for transport, air ambulance, disaster relief, tourism, and utility missions.

# Pralay Missiles

DRDO conducts launch of two Pralay missiles from the Odisha coast.

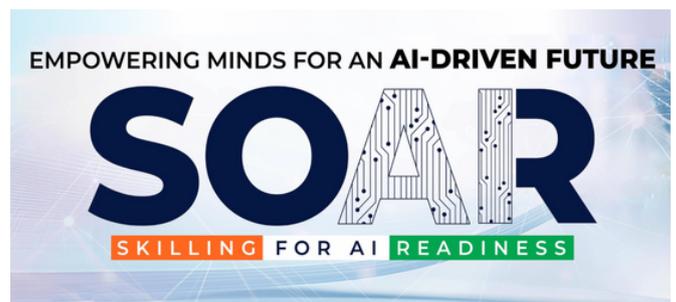


## About Pralay Missile

- It is an indigenous, short-range, surface-to-surface quasi ballistic missile designed to carry various types of warheads and engage multiple target profiles.
- **Developed by:** Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) for the Indian Armed Forces.
- **Range:** 150 to 500 km

# Skilling for AI Readiness

President of India to Grace SOAR Programme and Confer AI Certificates.

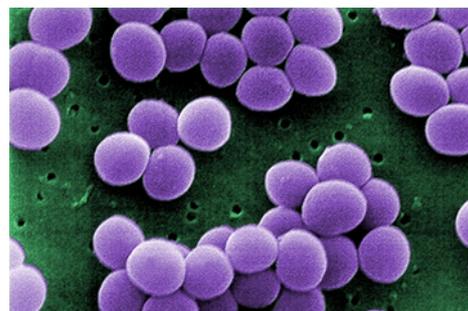


## About Skilling for AI Readiness (SOAR)

- It is a national skilling initiative **launched in July 2025** under skill India Mission.
- **Ministry:** Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE).
- **Objective:** Integrate **Artificial Intelligence competencies** into India's education and skilling ecosystem.
- **Target Groups:** **School Students** from classes 6 to 12 and **educators** from government and private schools.

# Staphylococci

Researchers found high levels of antibiotic-resistant staphylococci in both the indoor and outdoor environment in parts of Delhi.



## About Staphylococcus

- They are gram positive cocci (spherical-shaped bacterium) that occur in groups in clusters.
- It was first observed in humans by Von Recklinghausen.
- They showed tolerance to penicillin and resistances to all clinical useful antibiotics like erythromycin, tetracycline, aminoglycosides
- **Types:** Staphylococcus aureus and Staphylococcus epidermidis.

# World Health Organization's Pharmacovigilance Database

India has moved to 8th position (in 2025) from 123rd (in 2014) in contributions to the World Health Organization's pharmacovigilance database under the WHO Programme for International Drug Monitoring (WHO PIDM).



## World Health Organization

- The improvement in rankings has been attributed to the **Pharmacovigilance Programme of India (PvPI)**.
- Launched in 2010, **PvPI** is Government of India's **flagship drug safety monitoring programme**, which analyses drug-related adverse events and sends recommendations to CDSCO for taking appropriate regulatory actions.

## About WHO Programme for International Drug Monitoring (WHO PIDM)

- **Established:** in 1968
- **Aim:** to put medicines and vaccine safety at the heart of global healthcare.
- **VigiBase:** WHO global database of adverse event reports for medicines and vaccines.

# Suryastra

Indian Army has signed a ₹293 crore contract with private defence manufacturer NIBE Limited, in collaboration with Israel, for the supply of an advanced long-range rocket launcher system Suryastra.



## About Suryastra

- It is India's first Made in India universal multi-calibre rocket launcher,
- Capable of executing precision surface-to-surface strikes at ranges extending up to 300 km.
- Capabilities
  - Can engage multiple targets simultaneously at varying ranges.
  - Can integrate multiple rocket types.
  - Accuracy of less than 5 meters.
  - Can fire loitering munitions up to 100 km.

# OSIRIS-REx and Asteroid Bennu

Analysis of samples returned by NASA's OSIRIS-REx mission from asteroid Bennu shows the presence of Sugars, Amino acids, all five nucleobases of DNA & RNA, etc., signalling complete molecular inventory needed for life.



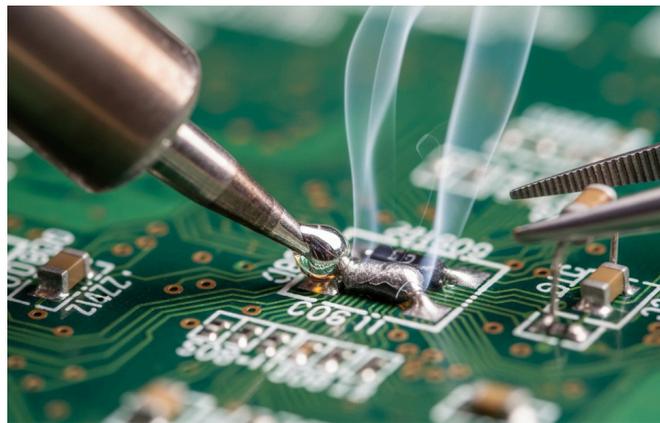
## About OSIRIS-REx (Origins, Spectral Interpretation, Resource Identification and Security-Regolith Explorer)

- It is the first US mission to collect a sample from an asteroid.
- **Returned:** Sep 24, 2023, to drop off a capsule with material from asteroid Bennu.
- **New Mission:** Spacecraft was renamed OSIRIS-APEX and sent to explore asteroid Apophis in 2029.

## About Asteroid Bennu

- **Origin:** The rocks composing Bennu formed ~4.6 billion years ago, during the early formation of the Solar System; part of a primeval parent body that was later destroyed by a massive collision.
- **Formation zone:** Likely formed in the main asteroid belt between Mars and Jupiter and later drifted towards earth.
- **Orbital proximity:** Bennu makes its closest approach to Earth every 6 years.

# Electronics Component Manufacturing Scheme



These approvals include manufacturing of segment products with cross sectoral applications such as mobile manufacturing, telecom, consumer electronics, strategic electronics, automotive and IT hardware products.

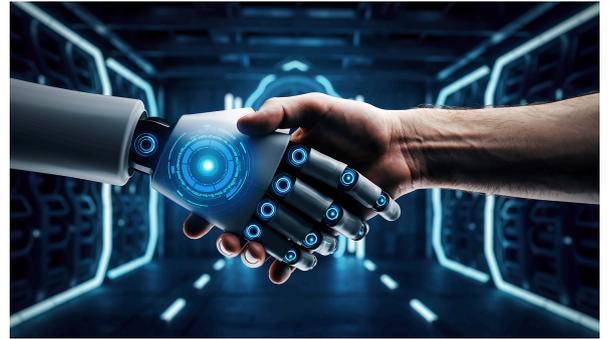
## About ECMS

- **Genesis:** Notified in April 2025 with a total outlay of ₹22,919 crore.
- **Tenure:** Six years with an optional one-year gestation period.
- **Objective:** To develop robust **electronics component manufacturing ecosystem** by attracting investments (global/domestic) across the value chain by integrating its domestic electronic industry with the Global Value Chains (GVCs).
- **Target Segments:**
  - A - Sub-Assemblies (Display Module and Camera Module),
  - B - Bare Components (Electro-mechanicals, PCBs, Li-ion Cells etc.)
  - C - Selected Bare Components (HDI/Flexible PCB),
  - D - Supply Chain Ecosystem and Capital Equipment, and
  - E - Sub-Assembly – Telecom.
- **Types of Incentives:** Provides differentiated fiscal incentive on target segment products in terms of turnover:
  - **Turnover Linked Incentive:** On incremental turnover/sales for segment A, B and E.
    - Tenure of 6 years with an optional one-year gestation period.
  - **Capex Incentive:** On eligible capital investment for segment D.
    - Tenure of 5 years.
  - **Hybrid Incentive:** Both incentives based on industry needs for segment C.

## India's Electronics Industry

- **Production:** India's electronics production has grown from ₹1.9 lakh crore in 2014–15 to ₹11.3 lakh crore in 2024–25, marking a six-fold increase.
  - India is now the world's second largest mobile phone manufacturer.
- **Export:** Electronics have emerged as **India's third largest and fastest growing export category** in 2024–25, with exports rising from ₹38,000 crore in 2014-15 to ₹3.27 lakh crore in 2024–25.
- **Vision:** Building a \$500 billion domestic electronics manufacturing ecosystem by 2030–31.

# Centre relaxes norms for deep-tech



Government has removed condition of 3-year existence for deep-tech startups to qualify for recognition and avail financial aid under Department of Scientific and Industrial Research (DSIR)'s Industrial R&D Promotion Program (IRDPP)

- **IRDPP objectives** are to strengthen R&D infrastructure in industry and Scientific and Industrial Research Organizations (SIROs).
  - Entities recognized under the IRDPP scheme are eligible for several fiscal incentives and support measures.

## What is DeepTech?

- It refers to the **cutting-edge** and often **disruptive technologies** that are built on profound scientific discoveries, engineering innovations, or advancements in research areas.
- **E.g.** AI, quantum computing, nano-tech, blockchain, robotics, advanced material sciences etc.
- **DeepTech startups** utilize existing advanced technologies to create novel-to-market solutions for complex and often unresolved problems or to invent even more advanced technologies.

## Deep Tech Startup Ecosystem in India

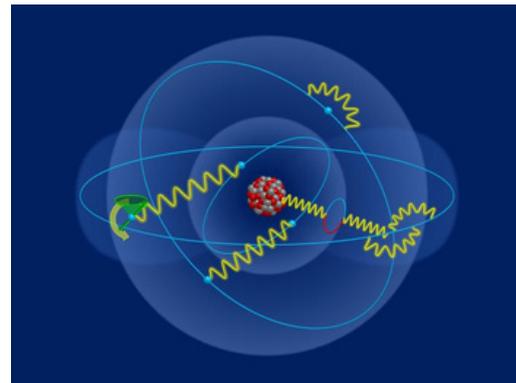
- **India** is home to over **3,600 startups (2024)** and is expected to reach **10,000** by 2030 in the deeptech space, ranking **sixth** in the global deeptech ecosystem.
- **Challenges:** India's venture capital (VC) landscape prioritises quick returns over patient capital, Long Gestation Period, Limited Academia-Industry Collaboration etc.

## Initiatives taken for DeepTech Startup in india

- **Draft National Deep Tech Startup Policy (NDTSP),2023:**To address the challenges confronting deep tech startups through definitive policy interventions to create a conducive ecosystem.
- **NECTAR:** Autonomous society under DST aims to harness and leverage niche frontier technologies.
- **Research Development and Innovation (RDI) Scheme:** It enables acquisition of strategically important technologies, and promotes the creation of a Deep-Tech Fund of Funds.
- **Indo-Israel Deep Tech & Life Sciences Mission:** This mission was launched in 2021 to promote collaboration between India and Israel in deep tech and life sciences.

# Quantum electrodynamics

Researchers from National Institute for Fusion Science provided a first-principles formulation explaining how classical electromagnetic fields emerge directly from QED.



## About Quantum electrodynamics (QED)

- **Quantum electrodynamics (QED)** is the relativistic quantum theory of electrically charged particles, mutually interacting by exchange of photons.
  - At the quantum level, the electromagnetic force is explained by Quantum Electrodynamics (QED).
- **The Nobel Prize in Physics 1965** was awarded jointly to **Sin-Itiro Tomonaga, Julian Schwinger and Richard P. Feynman** "for their fundamental work in quantum electrodynamics".
- **Applications:** Particle physics, Quantum optics, Semiconductor and laser technologies etc.

# Mpemba Effect

Indian scientists developed first supercomputer-powered simulation to capture Mpemba effect.

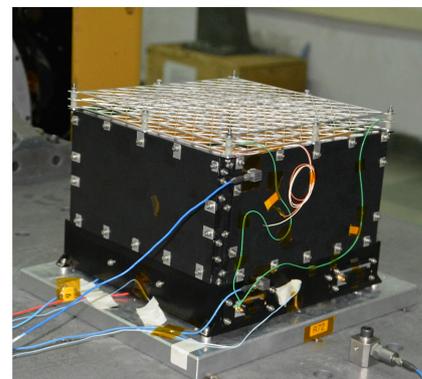


## About Mpemba effect

- It is a **long-existing paradox** suggesting that **hotter substances can freeze faster than colder substances** under certain conditions.
- Most famously, observed with water, but the **effect is not limited to water** and shows up in other materials and physical systems, too.
- **Significance:** Heat engines and refrigeration systems, Quantum computing, Materials science etc.

# Dust EXperiment

ISRO's maiden home-made dust detector detects interplanetary dust particles striking Earth every 1,000 seconds



## About Dust EXperiment (DEX)

- It is the **first Indian-made instrument** designed to detect and study high-speed interplanetary dust particles.
  - **Interplanetary Dust Particles (IDPs)** are microscopic fragments originating from **comets and asteroids**.
- **Mission Deployment:** Flown on the **POEM (PSLV Orbital Experimental Module)** of PSLV-C58
- **Developed by:** Physical Research Laboratory (PRL), Ahmedabad

# Bio-bitumen

India has become the first country in the world to commercially produce bio-bitumen in road construction.



## About Bio-bitumen

- It is an alternative form of bitumen **manufactured from organic elements**. E.g. agricultural waste, lignin, Bio-char, bio-oil, etc.
  - **Bitumen is black substance produced through distillation of crude oil**, known for its adhesive properties.
- **Benefits:** Reduced crude oil imports, address the issue of stubble burning, boosting Bio-economy etc.
  - It can be used as an addition to bitumen or to reduce the quantity of bitumen in the binder mixture.
- **Applications:** Paving roads, water proofing etc.

# Bio-Materials

Biomaterials provide sustainable alternatives to traditional, petroleum based products.



## About Biomaterials:

- Biomaterials are materials **derived entirely or partially from biological sources** or created through biological processes.
- **Applications:** Bioengineering/Biomedicine, Packaging, Agriculture, Healthcare, Textiles etc.
- **Classification of Biomaterials:**
  - **Drop-in Biomaterials:** These are chemically identical to petroleum-based materials, allowing them to be used in existing manufacturing systems, such as bio-PET.
  - **Drop-out Biomaterials:** These are chemically different from traditional materials and require updated processing or disposal systems; an example is polylactic acid (PLA).
  - **Novel Biomaterials:** These offer unique properties not found in conventional materials, including self-healing capabilities and bioactive implants.

# Prime Minister highlighted the ethical and social standards for AI Model in India

Recently, in a meeting with India's AI Start-ups, PM emphasised upon the importance of Indian AI models in transforming the society by being

- **Ethical:** to ensure fair competition and respecting data privacy of users.
  - E.g. AI systems collecting information from copyright content (books, art, etc.), harming the revenue of small creators, violates the Kantian duty to treat creators as ends in themselves.
- **Unbiased:** to prevent the reinforcement of stereotypes.
  - E.g. Credit card algorithms giving higher loans to men than women based on historically biased data.
- **Transparent:** to ensure trust and accountability and to counter the black-box problem.
  - E.g. Chitrlekha, an open-source video transcreation platform by Indian non-profit AI4Bhārat, encourages community participation.

What role can AI play in transforming society?

- **Public Service Delivery:** AI enhances targeting, monitoring, and efficiency of welfare schemes, reducing leakages.
  - E.g. MCA 3.0 portal: by ministry of corporate affairs for ease of regulatory filing for companies with the help of AI/ML.
- **Access to Justice:** E.g. SUVAS, an AI-based translation platform, is used by the Supreme Court to translate judgments and orders into regional languages.
- **Sustainable Transformation :** E.g. AI-enabled smart grids balance real-time supply–demand and detect faults, optimising energy efficiency.
- **Other:** Healthcare access (AI-based diagnostics), education (AI-powered personalised learning platforms), disaster management (AI-based early warning systems), etc.

Initiatives taken for AI development in India

- **BharatGen:** Government-funded initiative for developing multimodal Large Language Models (LLMs) tailored to India's specific needs.
- **India AI Governance Guidelines** (by MeitY) outlines principles to guide India's AI governance framework e.g. data Privacy, transparency etc.
- **Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF) MISSION AI for Science and Engineering:** to boost research while also ensuring the real-life stamina of AI applications.

# Design Linked Incentive Scheme

Projects supported under DLI scheme are scaling rapidly, with 16 tape-outs, 6 ASIC chips, 10 patents and over 3x private investment leveraged.



## About DLI Scheme

- **Launched in:** 2021 by MeitY under the Semicon India Programme.
- **Nodal Agency for implementation:** C-DAC (Centre for Development of Advanced Computing).
- **Objective:** To catalyze a strong, self-reliant chip design ecosystem by providing financial incentives and access to advanced design infrastructure for domestic startups and MSMEs.
- **Benefits of the scheme:**
  - **Provides financial incentives in 2 categories:** Product Design Linked Incentive and Deployment Linked Incentive.
  - **Provides Design Infrastructure Support:** through the ChipIN Centre to approved companies.
    - This includes remote access to a National EDA Tool Grid, a repository of IP Cores, and fiscal support for prototyping (MPW) and post-silicon validation.
- **Eligibility under the DLI Scheme:**
  - **Start-ups and MSMEs** are eligible for **financial incentives** and **design infrastructure support** for semiconductor product design & deployment.
  - And **other domestic companies** are **eligible for financial incentives** for deploying semiconductor designs.

# Rani Velu Nachiyar

Prime Minister Pays Tribute to Rani Velu Nachiyar on Her Birth Anniversary.



## About Rani Velu Nachiyar (1730-96)

- **Born:** In 1730 as the princess of Ramnad (Ramanathapuram), Tamil Nadu.
- **Skills:** Trained extensively in warfare, including horse riding, archery, and martial arts like Silambam and Valari.
- **Key Contributions:**
  - Forged an alliance with **Hyder Ali** of Mysore.
- **Established the "Udaiyaal" battalion:** one of the first all-women army units in world history.
- **Pioneer of Suicide Tactics:** Her loyal commander, Kuyili, is credited with the first recorded suicide attack in Indian history by setting herself on fire to destroy a British ammunition depot in 1780.
- In 1780, she successfully **recaptured Sivaganga, defeating the British** nearly 77 years before the 1857 Revolt.

# Savitribai Phule

Recently PM Paid Tribute to Savitribai Phule on Her Birth Anniversary

## About Savitribai Phule (1831 - 1897)

- Born in Satara district (**Maharashtra**).
- **First headmistress** of the country's first school for girls in Pune.

### Key Contributions

- **Women's Right-**
  - Started **Mahila Seva Mandal** to advocated women's right
  - Set up **Balhatya Pratibandhak Griha** for refuge to pregnant women at risk
  - Established education trust called **Native Female School, pune.**
  - **Promoted Satyashodhak marriage** (marriage without dowry)
- **Social inclusion:** By promoting education among communities such as Mahars, Mangs etc.
- **Publications** - Authored influential poetry collections i.e. Kavyaphule

And Bavan Kashi Subodh Ratnakar.

**Values:** Equality, justice, compassion, Courage of Conviction, etc.



# Piprahwa Relics

While inaugurating the Grand International Exposition titled “The Light & the Lotus: Relics of the Awakened One”, the Prime Minister also highlighted that the wisdom and path shown by Bhagwan Buddha belong to all of humanity.



- This historic event marks the **reunification** of the Piprahwa gem relics of Lord Buddha, repatriated after 127 years.

## About Piprahwa Relics

- **Discovery:** Unearthed in 1898 by British Civil Engineer **William Claxton Peppé**.
- **Location:** An ancient Buddhist stupa at **Piprahwa (Uttar Pradesh)**, near the **India-Nepal border**.
- **Significance:** Archaeological evidence **associates the Piprahwa site with ancient Kapilavastu**, widely identified as the place where Bhagwan Buddha spent his early life prior to renunciation.
  - The relics are believed to be **associated with the mortal remains of Gautama Buddha**.

## Contemporary relevance of Buddha’s teachings

- **Governance and political integrity:** By applying the concepts of **Right Speech, conduct, and livelihood to public administration** Buddhist principles can promote citizen-centric governance.
- **Social equity and justice:** Gautama Buddha opened the institution of the Sangha to all individuals regardless of status, which provides a modern basis for **eliminating discrimination against vulnerable groups**, including women, transgender individuals, and sex workers.
- **Environmental sustainability and Consumerism:** The teaching of middle-path advocates for a life of moderation between extreme luxury and austerity, offering a solution to **over-exploitation of resources** and climate change.
- **Ethics in Technology and Science:** By applying principles of **simplicity and reverence for all life**, society can ensure **technological progress does not come at the cost of moral values**.
  - Additionally, the emphasis on **mindfulness and right understanding** fosters a **scientific temper and a spirit of inquiry**.

# Somnath Temple

**Prime Minister paid tribute to Somnath Temple marking the historic milestone of 1000 years since the first attack on Somnath in 1026 AD.**



## About Somnath Temple

- **Location:** Along the coastline in **Prabhas Patan, Veraval, Saurashtra region of Gujarat**.
- **Religious significance:** **One of the 12 holy Jyotirlingas of Lord Shiva** is here in Somnath.
- **History:** It was reconstructed several times in the past after repeated destruction starting with an attack by Mahmud Ghazni in the 11th century (also recorded by **Al Biruni**).
- **Reconstruction:** The then **Deputy Prime Minister Vallabhbhai Patel** ordered the reconstruction of the Somnath temple on November 12, 1947.
  - On May 11, 1951, **Dr. Rajendra Prasad**, the President of India **performed the installation ceremony for the temple**.

# Kushanas

Archaeologists discovered rare Kushana-era coins and decorative stones, including lapis lazuli, from a UNESCO-listed site near Takshashila, Pakistan.



## About Kushanas (1st century BCE–3rd century CE)

- **Origin:** Central Asian **Yueh-chi tribe**; established a vast transregional empire.
  - **Kanishka I:** Greatest Kushana ruler, promoted **Buddhism**, convened the **Fourth Buddhist Council**, and strengthened **Silk Route trade**.
- **Administration:** Empire divided into **satrapies** governed by satraps, indicating decentralised control.
- Controlled **north-west India** (Gandhara, Kashmir), **Mathura region**, and extended influence into the **Ganga–Yamuna Doab** up to parts of **eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar**.
- Kushanas issued **extensive gold coins**, reflecting a monetised economy and strong long-distance trade links.

# Battery Pack Aadhaar Number

Government releases draft guidelines for Battery Pack Aadhaar System.



## About Battery Pack Aadhaar System

- It is an indigenous **digital identification and data storage system** developed to ensure **end-to-end traceability of batteries throughout their entire lifecycle**.
- It includes a **unique identification number for each battery pack, capturing and storing vital information from extraction to final disposal**.
- Battery categories that are required to maintain a Battery Pack Aadhaar as an electronic record include Electric Vehicle Batteries and Industrial Batteries with capacity greater than 2kWh.
- **Significance: Enabling second-life usage, regulatory compliance, and efficient recycling.**

# PRAGATI

Launched in 2015, PRAGATI (Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation) integrates accountability, transparency and timely decision-making into the administrative process.



## Key Features of PRAGATI

- **About:** Multi-purpose and multi-modal platform offering comprehensive, **technology-enabled governance mechanism** spanning all tiers of government.
- **Team India Spirit:** PRAGATI review meetings are Chaired by **Prime Minister** having direct engagement with state and central ministries.
- **Hosts Key Governance Tools:** Like PM Gati Shakti, PARIVESH and PM Reference Portal.
- **Global Recognition:** An external study by Oxford University's Saïd Business School, termed PRAGATI a **global benchmark and a "single source of truth"** for real-time project monitoring.

## Key Transformative Role Played by PRAGATI

- **Exemplified Cooperative Federalism:** It offered **Centre and States to work as a team** with ministries and departments **looking beyond silos to solve problems**.
  - Since its inception, around **500 Secretaries of Government of India and Chief Secretaries of States** have participated in PRAGATI meetings.
- **High Project Resolution Rate:** Around 94% issues identified across various projects been resolved resulting in **reducing time delays, cost overruns and coordination failures**.
- **Unlocking Long-Pending Projects:** Notable Examples include **Jammu–Udhampur–Srinagar–Baramulla rail link** (approved in 1994 was commissioned in 2025); **Navi Mumbai International Airport** and **Bogibeel rail-cum-road bridge** over the Brahmaputra, etc.

# Task Force Report on Capacity Building of Sports Administrators

Task Force chaired by Olympic medalist Abhinav Bindra has submitted its report that provides a roadmap to transform India's sports governance into a professional, accountable, and athlete-centric ecosystem.

## Problems in India's Sports Administration

- Lack of Professional Knowledge
  - Many sports bodies are run by general government officers or temporary staff who do not have proper training in sports management. Because of this, decisions are often random and not well planned.
- Poor and Irregular Training
  - Training programs for sports administrators are rare, old-fashioned, and not continuous. There is no system for regular skill upgradation.
- Difficulty for Athletes to Shift to Administration
  - There is no clear system to help sportspersons move from playing careers to administrative or leadership roles. As a result, their experience is wasted.
- Weak Governance in Sports Bodies
  - Most National Sports Federations do not clearly separate policy-making and day-to-day work. Too much power is concentrated in a few hands, reducing transparency and accountability.

## Suggested Reform Framework

- Include Sports Governance in IAS Training
  - Basic knowledge of sports administration should be added to the training of IAS officers at LBSNAA, so future officers understand the importance of sports in nation-building.
- Performance-Based Evaluation
  - A national system should be created to measure the work of sports administrators. Their performance should affect promotions and postings.
- Create a National Apex Body
  - A National Council for Sports Education and Capacity Building (NCSECB) should be set up to approve, regulate, and certify sports administration courses in India.
- Set Up an Implementation Unit
  - A National Training and Development Cell should work under the NCSECB to conduct training programs, coordinate institutions, and check results.
- India-Focused Training Content
  - Training courses should be designed according to India's needs, sports culture, and administrative challenges instead of copying foreign models.

## NOTE

## Steps taken for reforming sports governance in India

- National Sports Governance Act, 2025: Establishes independent oversight bodies, dispute resolution mechanisms, and transparent election systems for sports federations.
- Khelo Bharat Niti, 2025: Focuses on rural and tribal talent scouting and upgrading local-level sports infrastructure.
- Khelo India Programme: Promotes grassroots sports participation and early athlete development nationwide.

# Partial implementation of “National Sports Governance Act” begins

With effect from January 1, 2026, institutional mechanisms of the act such as establishment of National Sports Bodies including National Olympic Committee, National Paralympic Committee, National Sports Federations and Regional Sports Federations have come into effect.

## Key Provisions of the National Sports Governance Act

- **Institutional Architecture**
  - **Establishment of National Sports Board (NSB):** It has been designed as an **apex regulatory body** empowered to grant, renew, suspend, or cancel recognition of National Sports Bodies. Its other functions includes:-
    - Maintenance of a **register of National Sports Bodies**.
    - Collaboration with International Sports Bodies and National Sports Bodies
  - **Establishment of the National Sports Bodies (NSBs)** for their respective recognised sports organisations:
    - **National Olympic Committee (NOC):** Sole governing body for Olympic sports in India.
    - **National Paralympic Committee (NPC):** Sole governing body for Paralympic sports.
    - **Other Bodies:** National Sports Federation (NSF) & Regional Sports Federation (RSF)
  - **Establishment of National Sports Tribunal (NST):** for the independent, speedy, effective and cost-efficient disposal of sports related disputes. However, its jurisdiction **does not includes:-**
    - any dispute, or conflict arising during the Olympic Games, Paralympic Games, Commonwealth Games, Asian Games etc.
    - **doping related disputes**, where National Anti-Doping Act, 2022 have exclusive jurisdiction
  - **National Sports Election Panel:** A central roster of experienced former election officials to oversee fair and transparent elections in sports federations.
- **Ethical and Safe Sports Framework:** It calls for adoption of **Code of Ethics** and promotion of **Safe Sports Policy** (protect athletes, especially women and minors from harassment, abuse, and discrimination)
- **Accountability and Transparency**
  - **Public Authority (RTI):** Recognized sports bodies to be treated as public authorities under the RTI Act, 2005.
  - **Financial Oversight:** accounts of the Board shall be audited by the **Comptroller and Auditor-General of India**

# Swadesh Darshan Scheme



## 75 Projects Completed Under Swadesh Darshan Scheme

### About Swadesh Darshan Scheme

- **Genesis:** Launched in 2015, it is a **flagship** scheme of **Ministry of Tourism**.
- **Objective:** Development of theme-based tourist circuits like Buddhist Circuit, Eco Circuit, Heritage Circuit, Himalayan Circuit, etc.
- **About Swadesh Darshan 2.0:** Revamped version of **Swadesh Darshan Scheme** to develop **sustainable and responsible destinations** following a **tourist & destination-centric approach**.
- **Sub Schemes Under SD 2.0**
  - **Challenge Based Destination Development (CBDD):** It has **36 projects** sanctioned under four thematic categories viz **Spiritual Tourism, Culture & Heritage, Vibrant Village Program, Ecotourism and Amrit Dharohar Sites**.
    - It has **identified 5 destinations** in **Vibrant Village** category including Arunachal Pradesh (Kibitho), Himachal Pradesh (Rakchham-Chhitkul), Sikkim (Grathang) and Uttarakhand (Jadung & Mana).
  - **Guidelines for Tribal Homestay development:** To develop **1,000 Tribal Homestays** under the **Pradhan Mantri Janjatiya Unnat Gram Abhiyan (PM-JUGA) Scheme**.
  - **Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI) – Development of Iconic Tourist Centres to Global Scale:** To infuse **long term interest free loans for 50 years** to States

### Other Initiatives taken to Enhance Tourism In India

- **Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive (PRASHAD) Scheme:** To enhance infrastructure at major pilgrimage sites and heritage cities.
- **Medical Tourism: India's Medical Value Travel (MVT) sector** is projected to reach **\$13.42 billion by 2026**.
- **MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions) Tourism:** A National Strategy and Roadmap formulated by Tourism Ministry.
- **Facilitating Employment-Led Growth:** Skill development programme in hospitality management; MUDRA loans for Homestays, etc.

