

1. Miss Thailand Crowned Miss World 2025 in Hyderabad**Introduction**

Opal Suchata Chuangsri of Thailand was crowned Miss World 2025 at the 72nd edition of the international beauty pageant, held at the HITEX Exhibition Centre in Hyderabad.

**Path to the Crown**

Contestants competed in several fast-track events. From these events, the group was narrowed down to 40 quarter-finalists, then top 10 from each region, followed by the Top 5, Top 2, and finally the winner.

India's Journey

India's representative, Nandini Gupta, made it to the Top 10 in the Asia & Oceania group but did not progress to the final stages.

Cultural Celebrations

The month-long event in Telangana included historical tours, cultural performances, and platforms for global advocacy and empowerment.

Relevance: GS Prelims; Miscellaneous

Source: Indian Express

2. First Batch of Women Graduates from NDA: A Milestone for the Armed Forces**Introduction**

The first 17 women cadets ever admitted to the National Defence Academy (NDA) graduated on Friday from the 148th batch at the tri-services training institute in Khadakwasla. This historic event signals a major step toward gender inclusion and leadership opportunities for women in the Indian armed forces.



First batch of women cadets graduates from NDA in Pune

A Long Road to Equality

- **1888:** Military Nursing Service introduced during British rule.
- **1958:** Regular commissions granted to women doctors in the Army Medical Corps.

- **1992:** Women allowed into select non-combat branches through the Women Special Entry Scheme (WSES).
- **2008:** Permanent Commission (PC) granted to women in two branches.
- **2019:** PC extended to eight more non-combat streams, but command roles still restricted.
- **2020:** Supreme Court ruled women must be given PC and command roles, rejecting gender stereotypes.
- **2021:** Court ordered NDA to admit women cadets; the first batch joined in 2022.

Training and Integration at the NDA

- **Gender-Neutral Training:** NDA maintained the same rigorous curriculum for both male and female cadets.
- **Squadron Integration:** Initially housed separately, women cadets were later integrated into NDA's 18 squadrons, living and training alongside men.
- **Equal Participation:** At the passing out parade, women marched in the same uniforms, indistinguishable from their male counterparts.

Significance of the Graduation

- **Leadership Pathway:** For the first time, women have access to early military training and leadership grooming, paving the way to senior roles like service chief.
- **Combat Role Opportunities:** NDA graduates are better positioned to take on command roles in combat arms — a key requirement for top ranks.
- **Long-Term Careers:** With access to permanent commissions and full career trajectories, women can now build 35–40 year military careers.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: Indian Express

3. Why is the RBI cracking down on gold loan rules? What are the draft proposals?

Introduction

On April 9, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) released draft directions on loans against gold collateral with the objective to harmonise the regulatory framework across regulated entities (banks and Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFC)) and address differences in lending practices.

Why did the RBI want to step in?

The draft directions come in the backdrop of the RBI highlighting irregular practices amid a significant increase in the loan-against-gold jewellery portfolio of some lenders in September 2024. In the last fiscal, the combined loans against gold jewellery portfolio of banks and NBFCs was estimated to have grown by over 50%; for banks alone, the business more than doubled, growing at 104%, which set alarm bells ringing.



The draft directions on loans against gold collateral aim to harmonise the regulatory framework across regulated entities and address the differences in lending practices. The directions aim at protecting the interest of borrowers; to provide clarity on certain credit and operational processes followed by lenders; and to enhance transparency and disclosure.

What are the key changes?

The maximum Loan-To-Value (LTV) ratio remains capped at 75%. For consumption-based bullet loans, accrued interest must also be included in the LTV calculation, which effectively reduces the disbursed loan amount.

The draft proposes that borrowers furnish proof of ownership for the gold that will be used as collateral. Lenders are required to implement uniform procedures for assessing the purity and weight of gold. As per the RBI draft, gold accepted as collateral shall be valued based on the price of 22 carat gold. Concurrent loans for both consumption and income-generating purposes are to be prohibited. Loan renewals or top-ups are to be permitted only if the existing facility is classified as standard and complies with the prescribed LTV ratio. Borrowers must pay the entire outstanding amount, including both principal and interest, on the loan's maturity date to avail a fresh loan. If the lending institution delays returning the collateral to the borrower beyond seven working days after loan repayment, then the lender is liable to pay the borrower a compensation of ₹5,000 per day for each additional day of delay.

How will changes impact regulated entities?

The changes are expected to reduce the flexibility of borrowers and curtail the ability of NBFCs to renew/top-up loans seamlessly. It will lead to increased compliance burden due to documentation, DSCR (debt service coverage ratio) norms, and monitoring. Smaller NBFCs that rely on re-pledging for liquidity will face funding constraints, leading to potential market consolidation. The higher operational costs could be passed on to borrowers through increased interest rates or charges.

Will a one-size-fits-all policy work?

Gold loans serve as a lifeline for many rural and semi-urban households, often being the only accessible source of formal credit. The RBI may consider creating differentiated regulatory norms for micro gold loans versus structured high-value gold loans.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Economics

Source: The Hindu

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