

# News Juice Monthly

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Indian Express and PIB

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Current Affairs

For Prelims and Mains

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### 1. India Plans Major Reforms in Civil Nuclear Sector

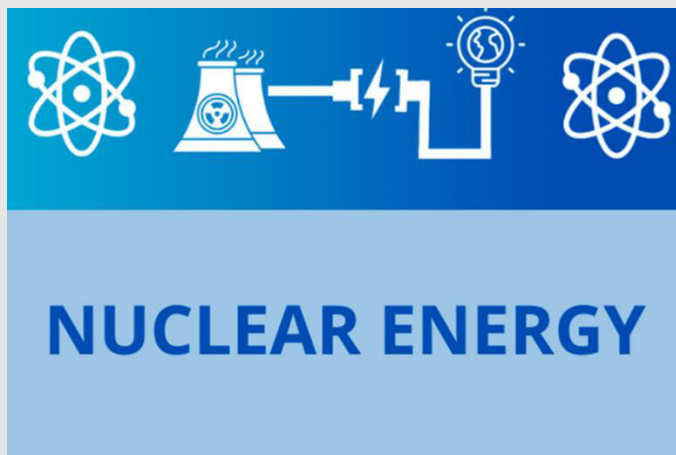
#### Introduction

India is preparing to amend two key laws to open up its civil nuclear sector—a move aimed at attracting foreign investment, easing vendor concerns, and aligning with global nuclear liability norms.

#### Two Key Laws Under Review

1. Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act, 2010 (CLNDA)
2. Atomic Energy Act, 1962

The Union Government has committed to passing both laws, including an assurance made in the 2025 Union Budget.



#### 1. Changes Proposed to Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act (CLNDA)

##### Why CLNDA Is Seen as a Barrier

- Foreign vendors like Westinghouse and Framatome have avoided India due to Section 17(b).
- It gives nuclear plant operators (e.g., NPCIL) the right of recourse against suppliers for any future nuclear accident.
- This clause creates uncertainty and fear of unlimited liability.

##### Key Amendments Proposed

- Dilute Section 17(b) to match global standards and reduce supplier liability concerns.
- Clarify definition of "supplier" to avoid including small sub-contractors and vendors unintentionally.
- Cap supplier liability: Limit monetary exposure and duration of liability post-project.

##### Impact

- Aligns CLNDA with the Convention on Supplementary Compensation (CSC), which India signed in 2010 and ratified in 2016.
- Could unlock foreign and domestic investments in nuclear projects.

#### 2. Opening Up the Atomic Energy Act, 1962

##### Objective

- Allow private companies—Indian and potentially foreign—to operate nuclear power plants, currently limited to PSUs like NPCIL and NTPC.

##### Expected Benefits

- Encourages private sector participation in nuclear power generation.
- Complements Indo-US Civil Nuclear Deal, signed nearly two decades ago.

### **International Context: US Clears Key Hurdle**

In March 2025, the US Department of Energy granted regulatory clearance to Holtec International under its strict 10CFR810 rule. This allows:

- Transfer of Small Modular Reactor (SMR) technology to India
- Partnerships with Holtec Asia, Tata Consulting Engineers, and L&T

This was a major breakthrough because previous US rules barred nuclear design or manufacturing in India.

With the regulatory hurdle removed, the onus is now on India to pass its domestic legal reforms.

### **Conclusion: A Strategic, Economic, and Political Push**

- The amendments are crucial for India's energy goals, as nuclear power is a clean, base-load energy source.
- They are also vital to strengthening India-US strategic ties, especially under the broader trade and investment negotiations.
- However, the biggest challenge will be building political consensus to pass both amendments in Parliament.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: Indian Express

## **2. Bihar Launches India's First Mobile E-Voting System**

### **Aimed at Marginalised Voters**

Bihar has become the first state in India to allow mobile app-based voting during municipal elections. The system is designed to help:

- Senior citizens
- Persons with disabilities
- Pregnant women
- Migrant workers
- Seriously ill voters

These groups often face difficulty reaching polling booths.



### **Pilot Rollout in Municipal Elections**

The pilot e-voting took place on June 28, 2025.

Stats:

- 10,000 voters registered for mobile e-voting
- Up to 50,000 could potentially vote through the app

### How the E-Voting System Works

The system uses advanced technologies to ensure safety, transparency, and accuracy:

- Blockchain for secure and tamper-proof vote storage
- Face recognition for voter identity verification
- OCR (Optical Character Recognition) for accurate vote counting
- Audit trails like VVPAT for vote tracking
- Digital locks on strongrooms for added ballot security

### Fraud Prevention Measures:

- Only two voters can log in per mobile number
- Each vote is cross-verified with voter ID details

### How to Register for Mobile Voting in Bihar

Eligible voters can register using the e-SECBHR app (Android only):

1. Download the e-SECBHR app
2. Link your mobile number (must match electoral roll)
3. Verify your identity
4. Vote on polling day via:
  - The State Election Commission website, or
  - The e-SECBHR app

Officials have assured that the app is user-friendly, even for first-time digital voters.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: The Hindu

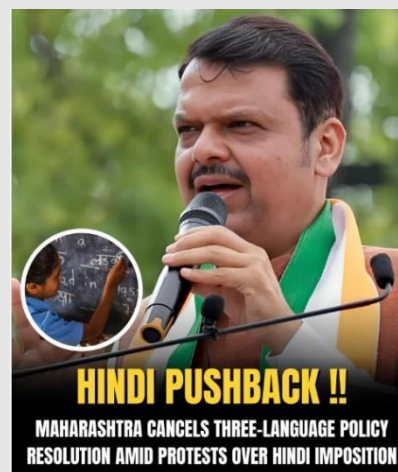
## 3. Maharashtra Scraps Three-Language Policy Amid Political Pushback

### Background: Controversial Policy on Hold

The Maharashtra government has withdrawn its decision to implement a three-language policy for Classes 1 to 5 in State-run schools. This decision came after two months of strong protests from academics, activists, and political parties — including the NCP, a member of the ruling coalition.

The policy aimed to introduce a third language (likely Hindi) in addition to Marathi and English, sparking fears of language imposition and cultural marginalisation.

### Expert Committee Formed to Review Policy



To determine the future of the language policy, the government has formed an expert panel headed by economist and educationist Dr. Narendra Jadhav.

In the meantime, the two Government Resolutions (dated April 16 and June 17) that introduced the three-language policy have been officially cancelled.

### **NEP 2020 and the Larger Debate on Language**

The debate in Maharashtra reflects a broader national controversy surrounding the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which encourages all school students to learn three languages.

Though NEP 2020 gives States flexibility to choose any two Indian languages and one foreign language, many fear Hindi could become the default second language — especially when States like Maharashtra indicate preference for it.

Critics argue that this undermines linguistic diversity and regional autonomy.

For instance, Maharashtra's initial suggestion that Hindi be "generally" taught until Class 5 triggered strong backlash and accusations of cultural imposition by the BJP.

### **Power, Language, and Practical Challenges**

While promoting multilingualism sounds ideal, the real-world challenges are vast:

- Most students prefer learning English, which is seen as a language of opportunity.
- Offering a wide variety of third languages in every school is practically unfeasible.
- In Hindi-speaking States, students rarely study South Indian languages under the current policy.

Maharashtra's Education Minister Ashish Shelar stated that 15 languages are available under the third-language option and will be taught if 20 or more students in a school request it. However, critics say implementation rarely lives up to this promise.

### **Conclusion: A Pause, Not an End**

The Maharashtra government's decision to withdraw the policy — for now — is a clear response to political pressure and public sentiment. But by keeping the door open through a committee, the controversy is far from over.

The BJP must now reflect on the growing pushback to its language policies across India and understand that unity through coercion is not unity at all.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: Indian Express

## **4. Cabinet approves National Sports Policy 2025**

### **Introduction**

The Union Cabinet approved the National Sports Policy (NSP) 2025, a landmark initiative aimed at reshaping the country's sporting landscape and empowering citizens through sports.

The new policy supersedes the existing National Sports Policy, 2001, and lays out a visionary and strategic roadmap to establish India as a global sporting powerhouse and a strong contender for excellence at international sporting events, including the 2036 Olympic Games.

The policy is anchored on five key pillars.

### 1. Excellence on the Global Stage

This pillar aims to:

- Strengthen sports programs from the grassroots to elite levels, including mechanisms for early identification and nurturing of talent.
- Promote the establishment of competitive leagues and competitions, and develop sports infrastructure in both rural and urban areas.
- Build world-class systems for training, coaching, and holistic athlete support.
- Enhance the capacity and governance of National Sports Federations.
- Encourage the adoption of sports science, sports medicine, and technology to boost athletic performance.
- Train and develop sports personnel, including coaches, technical officials, and support staff.

### 2. Sports for Economic Development

NSP 2025 recognizes the economic potential of sports and seeks to:

- Promote sports tourism and attract major international events to India.
- Strengthen the sports manufacturing ecosystem, and promote startups and entrepreneurship in the sector.
- Encourage private sector participation through Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and innovative funding initiatives.

### 3. Sports for Social Development

The policy emphasizes the role of sports in driving social inclusion by:

- Promoting participation among women, economically weaker sections, tribal communities, and persons with disabilities through focused programs.
- Revitalizing and promoting indigenous and traditional games.
- Positioning sports as a viable career option by integrating it into education, encouraging volunteering, and facilitating dual-career pathways.
- Engaging the Indian diaspora through sports.



#### **4. Sports as a People's Movement**

To make sports a national movement, the policy aims to:

- Drive mass participation and a culture of fitness through nationwide campaigns and community-based events.
- Launch fitness indices for schools, colleges, and workplaces etc.
- Enhance universal access to sports facilities.

#### **5. Integration with Education (NEP 2020)**

In alignment with the National Education Policy 2020, the NSP 2025 proposes to:

- Integrate sports into school curricula.
- Equip educators and physical education teachers with specialized training to promote sports education and awareness.

#### **6. Strategic Framework**

To realise its objectives, the NSP 2025 lays down a comprehensive implementation strategy encompassing:

- Governance: Establish a robust regulatory framework for sports governance, including legal framework.
- Private Sector Funding & support: Develop innovative financing mechanisms and engage private sector participation through PPPs and CSR.
- Technology & Innovation: Leverage emerging technologies, including AI and data analytics, for performance tracking, research, and program implementation.
- National Monitoring Framework: Create a national framework with well-defined benchmarks, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and time-bound targets.
- Model Policy for States: The NSP 2025 will serve as a model for States and Union Territories, encouraging them to revise or formulate their own policies in alignment with national objectives.
- Whole-of-Government Approach: The policy calls for integration of sports promotion into the activities, schemes, and programs of all Ministries and Departments to achieve a holistic impact.

With its structured vision and forward-looking strategy, National Sports Policy 2025 sets India on a transformative path toward becoming a leading sporting nation globally, while creating healthier, more engaged, and empowered citizens.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: PIB

#### **5. Cabinet Approves Employment Linked Incentive (ELI) Scheme**

## Goal: Create 3.5 Crore Jobs in Two Years

The Union Cabinet has approved the Employment Linked Incentive (ELI) Scheme to:

- Promote job creation
- Enhance employability and social security
- Focus especially on the manufacturing sector

## Budget and Timeline

- Total outlay: ₹99,446 crore
- Duration: August 1, 2025 – July 31, 2027
- Jobs targeted: Over 3.5 crore, including 1.92 crore first-time employees
- Part of the PM's broader ₹2 lakh crore employment package for youth



The infographic is titled "Union Cabinet Approves Employment Linked Incentive (ELI) Scheme" and "Enhancing Job Creation, Employability & Social Security Across Sectors". It features a portrait of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Below the title, it lists the "COMPONENTS OF SCHEME":

- Part A: Incentive to First Time Employees**  
**Benefit:** First Timers to get one month's wage up to ₹15,000/- in two installments. An illustration shows a woman working on a laptop.
- Part B: Support to Establishments with Focus on Manufacturing Sector**  
**Benefit:** Incentive to employers, up to ₹3000 per month, for two years, for each additional employee and upto 4 years for manufacturing sector. An illustration shows three people (two men and one woman) looking at a computer screen.

## Scheme Components

### Part A: Incentives for First-Time Employees

#### • Who is eligible?

Employees joining formal work for the first time and registered with EPFO (salary up to ₹1 lakh/month)

#### • Incentive:

One month's EPF wage up to ₹15,000, paid in two installments:

- o 1st after 6 months of service
- o 2nd after 12 months of service and completion of a financial literacy course

#### • Savings boost:

Part of the incentive will be saved in a deposit account, withdrawable later.

### Part B: Incentives for Employers

#### • Who is eligible?

Employers hiring additional employees (salary up to ₹1 lakh), especially in manufacturing

#### Incentive per employee per month:

EPF Wage Slab	Benefit to Employer
Up to ₹10,000	Up to ₹1,000
₹10,001 – ₹20,000	₹2,000
₹20,001 – ₹1,00,000	₹3,000

• **Minimum hiring requirement:**

- 2 new employees for employers with < 50 workers
- 5 new employees for those with ≥ 50 workers
- (Must be employed for at least 6 months)

• **Duration:**

- 2 years for all sectors
- 4 years for manufacturing sector

**Payment Mechanism**

- Employees: Paid via Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) using Aadhaar-based system
- Employers: Paid directly into PAN-linked bank accounts

**Expected Impact**

- Support for over 3.5 crore jobs
- Boost to formal employment and social security
- Strong push for manufacturing sector growth
- First-time workers get direct financial support and skill training

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: PIB

## 6. Punjab's Land Pooling Policy: Goals, Benefits, and Controversy

**What Is the Land Pooling Policy?**

The Punjab Land Pooling Policy, 2025 is a government initiative to acquire over 40,000 acres of farmland for planned housing and urban development. Unlike traditional land acquisition where land is bought with compensation, this model is voluntary and aims to include landowners as stakeholders in future development.

**Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann said the policy is designed to:**

- Curb illegal colonies and unplanned urban growth
- Offer landowners a share in developed land, not just cash

### What Do Landowners Get?

- For every 1 acre pooled:
  - 1,000 sq yards residential plot
  - 200 sq yards commercial plot
- For every 9 acres:
  - 3 acres of developed group housing land
- For 50 acres pooled:
  - 30 acres of developed land

### Why Is the Government Doing This?

- To avoid lengthy legal delays tied to forced land acquisition
- To raise an estimated ₹20,000–25,000 crore for the cash-strapped state
- Likely to fund pre-election promises, such as a ₹1,000 monthly payment to all women
- With elections due in March 2027, the government has limited time to show results



### Criticism and Protests

Despite being called "voluntary," the policy has triggered farmer protests and political backlash:

- Experts warn of loss of fertile farmland and 1.5 lakh tons of paddy annually
- Critics argue the policy lacks compensation and resettlement safeguards found in the 2013 Central Land Acquisition Act

### In Summary

While the Punjab government promotes land pooling as a tool for planned development and economic revival, critics fear it will lead to agricultural loss, exploitation of farmers, and private profiteering.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: Indian Express

## 7. New Guidelines: Uber, Ola Can Now Charge Double the Base Fare

## Introduction

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) has allowed app-based cab services like Uber, Ola, and Rapido to charge up to twice the base fare. This is part of the revised Motor Vehicle Aggregator Guidelines, 2025. Earlier, the cap was 1.5 times the base fare.

- Companies can now charge between 50% below and 200% above the base fare set by state governments.
- States have been asked to implement these changes within three months.

## What Is Dynamic Pricing?

Dynamic pricing means adjusting prices based on real-time demand and supply.

- Prices go up when demand is high and supply is low (e.g., during rain or rush hours).
- Prices go down when demand is low or supply is high.

This system is common in industries like retail (Amazon), entertainment (concert tickets), hospitality, and transport.

## How Is It Different from Surge Pricing?

Dynamic pricing is the broad term. Surge pricing is just one form of it.

- Surge pricing happens during peak hours or special events when more people are looking for cabs than the number of drivers available.
  - It's used to encourage more drivers to come online and balance supply with demand.
- For example, Uber uses color-coded maps to show high-demand areas to drivers — from light orange (low surge) to dark red (high surge).

## Examples of Dynamic Pricing in India

- Railways: Adopted dynamic pricing in 2016 through the flexi-fare scheme for Rajdhani, Duronto, and Shatabdi trains. Fares increased by 10% with every 10% of seats sold, capped at 1.5x.
- Concert Tickets: Platforms like Ticketmaster have faced backlash for raising ticket prices dynamically during high-demand events.

## Key Takeaways

- Uber, Ola, and similar platforms can now legally charge up to 2x base fare.
- Dynamic pricing adjusts fares based on real-time conditions.
- Surge pricing is a subset of dynamic pricing and is meant to balance supply and demand.
- While often criticised, research suggests it benefits both drivers and customers in the long run.

**CAB AGGREGATORS CAN NOW  
CHARGE UP TO **TWICE THE**  
**BASE FARE DURING PEAK HOURS**  
UNDER NEW GUIDELINES**



Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

## 8. Why the Election Commission Is Revising Bihar's Electoral Rolls

### Introduction

With Bihar Assembly elections due later this year, the Election Commission of India (ECI) has begun a "special intensive revision" of the state's electoral rolls. This involves fresh verification of all voters and is part of a nationwide exercise.

### What Is a Special Intensive Revision?

- Intensive revision: Entire electoral roll is prepared afresh
- Summary revision: Existing roll is updated with changes
- Under Article 324 of the Constitution and Section 21(3) of the Representation of the People Act, the ECI can order such revisions at any time
- Last intensive revision was in 2003

### Why Bihar First?

- Bihar elections are due before November 2025
- ECI says the revision is necessary due to:
  - Frequent migration and urbanisation
  - Voters being registered in multiple places
  - Need to verify that only genuine citizens are on the rolls

### WHAT WILL SERVE AS PROOF OF CITIZENSHIP

In addition to the enumeration form, electors added to the rolls after 2003 will have to provide the following to prove their citizenship.

■ Those born in India before July 1, 1987 will have to submit any document from the specified list to establish their date of birth and/or place of birth;

■ Those born in India between July 1, 1987 and December 2, 2004, will have to submit an additional document establishing one parent's date and/or

place of birth; and

■ Those born in India after December 2, 2004, will have to submit documents establishing date and/or place of birth of both parents.

These categories are based on the requirements for acquisition of citizenship in the Citizenship Act, 1955

**INDIANS BORN ABROAD** will have to submit proof of birth registration by an Indian Mission abroad; and

**CITIZENS BY NATURALISATION** will have to submit their certificate for the registration of citizenship.

### New Rules for Voters

All voters must:

- Submit an individual enumeration form

Voters added after January 1, 2003 must:

- Provide proof of Indian citizenship
- Valid documents include:
  - Passport
  - Birth certificate
  - SC/ST certificate
  - Parent's name in 2003 voter roll of Bihar

Previously, voters only had to declare their citizenship without documentary proof.

### Political Reactions and Concerns

- Opposition fears large-scale disenfranchisement
- Mamata Banerjee called it "more dangerous than NRC," alleging West Bengal is the real target
- Congress accused the ECI of admitting problems in electoral rolls but called the solution "worse than the disease"

### Big Picture: Nationwide Exercise

Though it begins with Bihar, the ECI says this intensive verification of voter rolls will gradually be extended to all states and Union Territories, aiming to clean up duplications and ensure only citizens can vote.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: Indian Express

## 9. Why Was a Ship 'Arrested' in Kerala?

### Introduction

The Kerala High Court has ordered the conditional arrest of the Liberian ship MSC Akiteta II, currently at Vizhinjam port. This comes after the Kerala government filed a case (admiralty suit) seeking ₹9,531 crore in compensation for environmental damage caused by the sinking of another ship, MSC Elsa III, on May 25.

MSC Elsa III, operated by the same group that runs MSC Akiteta II, capsized off the Kerala coast with over 600 containers, some carrying hazardous substances, plastic pellets, and diesel, allegedly polluting the marine ecosystem.



### **What Is an Admiralty Suit?**

An admiralty suit is a legal case related to maritime disputes. In India, these are governed by the Admiralty (Jurisdiction and Settlement of Maritime Claims) Act, 2017.

Under this law, High Courts can handle claims related to:

- Ship damage or ownership disputes
- Loss of life at sea
- Wages of seafarers
- Environmental damage caused by vessels

### **Which Courts Can Hear Maritime Cases?**

Initially, only the High Courts in Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras could hear such cases.

The 2017 law extended jurisdiction to:

- Kerala
- Karnataka
- Odisha
- Telangana
- Andhra Pradesh

These courts have authority up to 12 nautical miles into the sea, including the seabed, subsoil, and airspace above.

### **How Is Environmental Damage Addressed?**

Section 4 of the Admiralty Act allows courts to decide on claims for environmental damage caused by a ship, including costs of clean-up and compensation.

Other relevant laws include:

- Merchant Shipping Act, 1958 – holds shipowners responsible for oil pollution
- Environment Protection Act, 1986 – enables action against polluters
- National Green Tribunal (NGT) – can impose environmental fines (e.g., ₹100 crore penalty in a 2016 oil spill case)

### **Kerala's Compensation Claims: A Breakdown**

In its suit, Kerala demanded that MSC Akiteta II be detained until the ship owners pay or provide security for ₹9,531 crore. The claim includes:

- ₹8,626 crore – for environmental damage
- ₹378 crore – for clean-up and remediation work
- ₹526 crore – for economic losses of fishermen

The court found enough merit in Kerala's case to order the detention of the vessel.

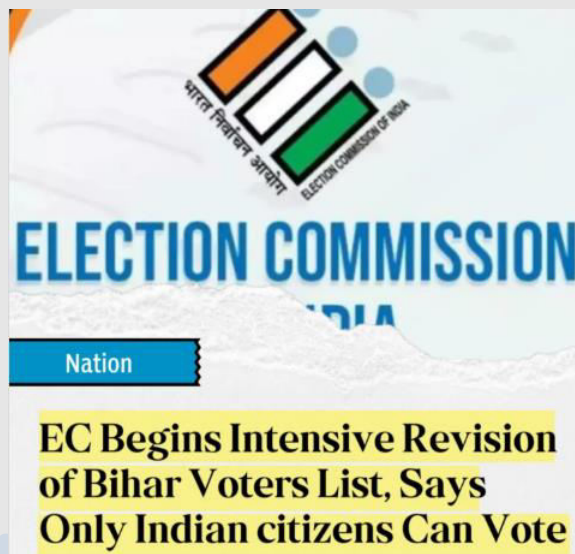
Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: The Hindu

## **10. Why Is the Election Commission Revising Electoral Rolls?**

## Introduction

The Election Commission of India (ECI) is currently carrying out a Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, starting with Bihar, ahead of its Assembly elections. The move has sparked controversy and confusion, particularly because even existing voters (enrolled after 2003) are being asked to provide proof of their date and place of birth — a step never required before.



## What Are Electoral Roll Revisions?

### 1. Intensive Revision

- What it is: A complete, fresh list of voters is prepared through door-to-door visits.
- When it's done: Before major elections or when current rolls are outdated or inaccurate.

### 2. Summary Revision

- What it is: A routine annual update using the existing roll; voters can apply for changes.
- No house visits involved.

### 3. Special Revision

- What it is: Used in exceptional cases, like legal or administrative issues.
- Can use either method above or a mix of both.

## Why Is It Called a "Special Intensive Revision"?

This SIR is a hybrid:

- It uses house-to-house verification (intensive method),
- While also relying on the existing rolls (summary method).

## The new twist?

- People must show documentary proof at the time of verification, which is a first.

## Why Bihar and Why Now?

- Not just Bihar: The ECI plans to revise rolls nationwide — this is the first full verification in over 20 years.
- Why Bihar first? Assembly elections are coming up before November 2025.
- What prompted it?
  - o Massive changes in the voter list due to urbanisation and migration.
  - o Complaints of duplicate or fraudulent entries.
  - o Allegations from political parties — like Rahul Gandhi's claim about roll manipulation in Maharashtra.

## History of Electoral Roll Revisions in India

The ECI has done intensive revisions in many years:

1952-56, 1957, 1961, 1965, 1966, 1983-84, 1987-89, 1992, 1993, 1995, 2002, 2003, and 2004.

### Early Years: Fixing Errors

- First elections (1951-52) had lots of mistakes, especially excluding women who refused to give their names.
- Political parties were inexperienced and unhelpful.
- The ECI adopted a phased approach to revise rolls gradually.

### Mid 20th Century: Reorganisation & Migration

- Reorganisation of states in 1956 and delimitation (changing constituency boundaries) led to more revisions.
- By the 1980s, focus shifted to preventing foreign nationals from being included.
- Complaints from border states, especially in the Northeast, led to new safeguards.

### Key Safeguard Introduced: Due Process

- Names on the roll can't be deleted without due process.
- The burden of proof lies on the person objecting — not on the voter.

### 1990s: Modernisation

- In 1993, Electors Photo Identity Cards (EPIC) were introduced.
- Revisions helped collect photo data, but that wasn't their main purpose.

### From Intensive to Summary Revisions

- As the rolls became more accurate and administration costs rose, the ECI switched to summary revisions as the norm.
- But when issues like demographic shifts or political complaints arise, the ECI still returns to intensive methods, adjusting them to suit the current needs.

### Conclusion: What Makes the Current SIR Controversial?

- For the first time, even existing voters are being asked to show birth-related documents.
- Critics fear this may lead to mass disenfranchisement, especially among the poor who may only have Aadhaar.
- The Supreme Court has not stopped the exercise but advised the ECI to accept multiple IDs like Aadhaar, Voter ID, and ration card for verification.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: The Hindu

## 11. Supreme Court on Bihar Voter List Revision: Consider Aadhaar, EPIC, Ration Card

### What Did the Court Say?



Recently, the Supreme Court asked the Election Commission (EC) to accept Aadhaar, Voter ID (EPIC), and ration card as valid identity documents for voter verification during the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) in Bihar.

The court noted that the EC's current list of 11 documents is not exhaustive and that these three commonly available IDs should also be considered.

### **No Stay on the Process, But Questions Raised**

- The court did not stop the voter revision drive in Bihar.
- It scheduled the next hearing for July 28, before the draft voter list is released in August.
- It questioned the nature of the SIR, noting that it was unclear — not exactly a "summary" or a "special" revision as defined by law.
- Justice Dhulia called the matter crucial for democracy, as it relates directly to the right to vote.

### **Debate Over Aadhaar's Role**

- The EC argued that Aadhaar is not proof of citizenship, and it is even issued to non-citizens living in India.
- However, the judges disagreed, saying Aadhaar is a primary identity document in most government procedures.
- Justice Dhulia pointed out the contradiction: a caste certificate is accepted, but not Aadhaar?
- Justice Bagchi added that none of the EC's 11 accepted documents prove citizenship, yet Aadhaar is more widely used.

### **EC's View: Revision Is Necessary and Tech-Enabled**

- Senior advocate Rakesh Dwivedi, representing the EC, said the last such revision in Bihar was in 2003.
- He shared that over 5.5 crore entries (60%) have already been verified, and half have been uploaded on the EC's new digital platform, ECI Net.
- The system is designed to avoid repeating the process, except for adding new names.

### **Petitioners' Concerns: Citizenship Screening in Disguise**

- Senior lawyers like Kapil Sibal and A.M. Singhvi argued that the SIR is being used for citizenship verification, which is not the EC's role — it lies with the Union Home Ministry.
- They called the process discriminatory, especially for the poor and vulnerable.
- Mr. Sibal cited Bihar data:
  - 87% have Aadhaar,
  - but only 14% have matriculation certificates and just 2% have passports.
- He warned that many may lose their right to vote just because they lack documents beyond Aadhaar.

### **Timing and Intent Questioned**

- Justice Bagchi criticized the tight timelines — citizens are expected to complete formalities within short deadlines.
- He also questioned why the SIR was launched first in Bihar, a state headed for elections, despite being called a nationwide revision.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance  
Source: Indian Express & The Hindu

## 12. Maharashtra Passes 'Urban Maoism' Bill

### Introduction

The Maharashtra Special Public Security (MSPS) Bill, aimed at tackling unlawful activities linked to left-wing extremist organisations, was passed in the Assembly on July 11, 2025, through a voice vote. Introduced last year by then-Deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis, the Bill has gone through three amendments and awaits approval from the Legislative Council and the Governor before becoming law.



### Special Public Security Bill

Maharashtra House clears Bill to tackle 'Left extremist ideology'

### Why Was the Bill Introduced?

The government says Naxalism is spreading into urban areas through "front organisations" that:

- Provide logistical support and shelter to armed Maoist groups
- Evade existing laws, which are considered ineffective against urban extremism

Other states like Chhattisgarh, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, and Odisha have already enacted similar public security laws and banned 48 such organisations.

### What Does the Bill Propose?

#### Key Powers and Offences

The Bill allows the government to declare any organisation as 'unlawful', and penalises individuals for:

1. Being a member of such an organisation
2. Raising funds for it
3. Managing or assisting its operations
4. Carrying out an "unlawful activity"

### Penalties

- Jail terms: 2 to 7 years
- Fines: ₹2 lakh to ₹5 lakh
- Committing an unlawful activity carries the heaviest penalty: 7 years in prison + ₹5 lakh fine

### Legal Nature of Offences

- Cognizable: Police can arrest without a warrant
- Non-bailable: Bail is not a right, but a court's discretion

### Definition of 'Unlawful Activity'

The Bill broadly defines 'unlawful activity' as actions (including speech or signs) that:

- Threaten public order or peace
- Disrupt governance or the legal system
- Use or promote criminal force against public officials
- Encourage violence, vandalism, or public fear
- Support or fund such actions

### Criticism and Concerns

Opposition parties, civil society groups, and organisations like PUCL raised serious concerns:

- Vague definitions of terms like "unlawful activity"
- Potential for misuse against dissenters and activists
- PUCL even demanded the complete withdrawal of the Bill

### What's Next?

The Bill now moves to the Legislative Council, and if passed, will be sent to the Governor for final approval. Once signed, it will become law in Maharashtra.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: Indian Express

## 13. Former CJs Raise Concerns Over Election Commission's Powers in ONOE Bill

### What's the Issue?

Four former Chief Justices of India (CJs) have flagged concerns about the wide powers given to the Election Commission (EC) under the proposed 129th Constitution Amendment Bill, which aims to implement simultaneous elections (One Nation, One Election - ONOE).



### What Does the Bill Propose?

The bill allows the Election Commission to decide:

- Whether simultaneous elections can be held in a state.
- If not, the EC can recommend delaying state elections to the President.

### What Are the Former CJs Saying?

Key Concerns

- Former CJs J S Khehar and D Y Chandrachud questioned whether giving the EC the power to delay elections is constitutionally valid.
- They agreed that simultaneous elections themselves are constitutional, but the EC's powers may be excessive.

### Past Comments

- In March, former CJI and current MP Ranjan Gogoi also warned about giving the EC unrestricted powers to set election schedules.
- In February, former CJI U U Lalit made suggestions on limiting EC's powers.

### Suggested Safeguards

- Some former CJIs recommended adding parliamentary oversight over EC's decisions.
- Justice Chandrachud suggested that delays should be allowed only for reasons like public order or national security, to prevent arbitrary use of power.

### Why This Matters?

- Granting broad powers without checks could be seen as arbitrary.
- Courts may strike down such provisions as a violation of Article 14 (Right to Equality) of the Constitution.

### In Summary

While former CJIs support the idea of One Nation, One Election, they caution that unchecked powers to the EC—especially to delay elections—may not hold up constitutionally. They recommend narrowing the EC's authority and introducing legal safeguards.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: Indian Express

## 14. Mizoram's Refugee Crisis: What's Happening and Why

### Background: Ongoing Influx Since Myanmar Coup

Mizoram has been facing a refugee crisis since the February 2021 military coup in Myanmar. The latest surge occurred in early July 2025, when about 4,000 refugees fled Myanmar's Chin State after fighting between two anti-junta groups — the Chin National Defence Force (CNDF) and Chinland Defence Force-Hualngoram (CDF-H) — for control over strategic border trade routes.

### Latest Influx: Triggered by Rebel Infighting

The two rebel groups, though both aligned with Myanmar's pro-democracy movement, clashed over territory. CNDF reportedly overpowered CDF-H, forcing villagers from Khawmawi to flee across the Tiau river into Zokhawthar, Champhai district in Mizoram.



### History of Migration and the Free Movement Regime (FMR)

Cross-border movement is not new. Since 1968, India and Myanmar have allowed residents near the border to travel freely. This FMR was first restricted in 2004 and further tightened in 2016 and 2024. Despite this, refugees have continued to enter due to civil unrest in Myanmar, persecution of Bawm people from Bangladesh, and violence in Manipur. Mizoram now hosts over 40,000 displaced people.

### **Ethnic Ties and Humanitarian Response: Shared Zo Ethnicity**

The Mizos of Mizoram, Chins of Myanmar, Bawms of Bangladesh, and Kuki-Zos of Manipur all belong to the larger Zo ethnic group, which fosters deep cultural and familial ties.

### **Support from Local Communities**

Despite limited state resources, local organizations like the Young Mizo Association (YMA), churches, and individual donors have supported refugees. The Mizoram government also refused to push them back, citing humanitarian concerns.

### **Centre's Limited Support**

Initially, the Centre discouraged refugee entry, but later provided ₹8 crore in assistance. However, the growing refugee numbers are straining local resources, prompting some villages to restrict refugee movement and trade.

### **Rising Tensions Within the State: Local Backlash Emerging**

Few Villages have issued similar restrictions. Some residents have started expressing frustration over the refugee burden, including concerns about national security, resource depletion, and demographic changes.

### **Government and Legal Measures: India's Legal Position**

India is not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention and has no national refugee law. Refugees are handled under general foreigner laws, often in coordination with the United Nations.

### **Mizoram's Policy Shift**

The Mizoram government, once fully welcoming, now acknowledges the strain on the State. Chief Minister Lalduhoma has cited the FMR's misuse for smuggling and repeated illegal crossings. The State is now pushing for presidential assent to the Mizoram (Maintenance of Household Registers) Bill, aimed at identifying foreigners.

### **Conclusion**

Mizoram remains torn between its ethnic solidarity with the Zo people and the growing pressure on its economy, security, and infrastructure. With no national refugee law and minimal central support, the crisis poses both humanitarian and administrative challenges for the State.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: Indian Express

## 15. What is the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB)?

### Background: The Ahmedabad Air Crash

A month after the tragic Air India flight AI 171 crash in Ahmedabad (June 14, 2025), which killed 241 of the 242 people onboard, the AAIB released a preliminary report on July 11.

The report revealed that the engine fuel control switches were moved from 'RUN' to 'CUTOFF' within seconds of take-off. This action shut down both engines. One pilot was recorded asking the other why the fuel was cut — to which the latter replied, "I did not."



### Why This Matters

These switches are not easy to move accidentally and are critical for engine power. The report has raised further questions about pilot actions, switch functioning, and the need to thoroughly examine the Cockpit Voice Recorder (CVR) and Flight Data Recorder (FDR) — the aircraft's black boxes.

### Who Investigates Aircraft Crashes in India?

#### Global Aviation Rules: ICAO & Chicago Convention

Aircraft crash investigations are guided by the Chicago Convention of 1944, overseen by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO), a UN agency with 193 member countries.

Annex 13 of the convention says that the country where the crash occurred (the "State of Occurrence") must lead the investigation.

#### Involvement of Other Countries

Other countries involved — like where the aircraft is registered, operated, designed, or manufactured — also have the right to participate in the investigation.

### AAIB: India's Official Crash Investigation Body

#### What Is AAIB?

The Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) is a government agency under India's Ministry of Civil Aviation.

It was formed in 2012 to independently investigate air crashes, separate from the regulatory body (DGCA).

### Legal Basis

AAIB operates under Section 7 of the Aircraft Act, 1934 and follows the Aircraft (Investigation of Accidents and Incidents) Rules, 2017.

### What Does AAIB Do?

AAIB investigates:

- All accidents and serious incidents involving aircraft over 2,250 kg
- All turbojet aircraft
- Other incidents if necessary

Goal: The AAIB's only objective is safety — to prevent future accidents, not assign blame or legal liability.

### Steps in an AAIB Investigation

1. Immediate Response: Investigators are sent to the crash site to collect evidence and preserve perishable items.
2. Black Box Retrieval: CVR and FDR are secured for analysis.
3. Expert Involvement: Specialists may be brought in for detailed examinations.
4. Lab Support: AAIB collaborates with labs like Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd and DGCA labs.
5. Records Review: Data from airlines, pilots, and regulatory bodies are analysed.
6. Unrestricted Access: AAIB can access all relevant data without court or agency approval.

### After the Investigation

- A draft report is prepared and reviewed internally.
- A final report is published and sent to the ICAO and relevant countries.
- Safety recommendations are issued to authorities like the DGCA or foreign regulators.

### Conclusion

The AAIB plays a vital role in ensuring air safety in India. Its investigation into the AI 171 crash will be key in determining what caused the engines to shut off — whether due to pilot error, technical malfunction, or other factors — and how such tragedies can be prevented in the future.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

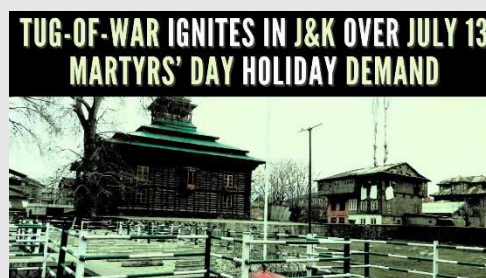
Source: Indian Express

## 16. Kashmir Martyrs' Day Controversy: What's the Issue?

### Leaders Detained on July 13

On July 13, 2025, several political leaders in Jammu and Kashmir were placed under house arrest to prevent them from visiting the Martyrs' Cemetery in Srinagar.

The incident has reignited debate over the official status of 'Martyrs' Day', a holiday that was removed after Article 370 was abrogated in 2019.



## **What is Martyrs' Day and Why July 13?**

Origin of the Day (1931)

- July 13, 1931: 22 Kashmiri Muslims were killed by Dogra police while protesting outside Srinagar Central Jail during the trial of Abdul Qadeer Khan, who had given a speech against the Dogra rulers.
- As people gathered for the noon prayer, police opened fire on the crowd.
- The slain protesters were buried near Khawja Bahaudin Naqashbandi shrine.
- Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah later declared July 13 as "Martyrs' Day."

## **Political Significance Over the Years**

Official Recognition (Before 2019)

- July 13 was an official state holiday in Jammu and Kashmir until 2019.
- Political leaders, including the Chief Minister, would visit the Martyrs' Cemetery to pay tribute.
- The day was seen as a symbol of resistance against autocracy and the first political awakening of Muslims in Kashmir.

## **Controversy With BJP**

- The BJP opposed the holiday, as the events of 1931 involved protests against the Dogra ruler Maharaja Hari Singh.
- In 2015, when the PDP-BJP coalition was in power, CM Mehbooba Mufti visited the cemetery, but BJP ministers boycotted it.
- The BJP instead demanded a holiday for Maharaja Hari Singh's birth anniversary, which was later granted in 2022.

## **Scrapping of the Holiday After 2019**

### **Changes After Article 370 Abrogation**

- In August 2019, after Jammu and Kashmir lost its special status, the Lt Governor's administration:
  - Removed Martyrs' Day as a public holiday
  - Stopped official commemorations
  - Scrapped Sheikh Abdullah's birth anniversary holiday
- Authorities started blocking access to the Martyrs' Cemetery and prevented public events.

## **Current Political Reactions (2025)**

### **Omar Abdullah Government's Dilemma**

- The newly elected government led by Omar Abdullah (National Conference) has avoided taking an official stance on Martyrs' Day.
- While the party sought permission to hold a tribute, the government remained silent.
- The PDP criticized Omar's government for distancing itself from the day.

## **House Arrests and Condemnation**

- On July 13, J&K Police (under the LG) detained leaders across parties.

- Omar Abdullah called it a “blatantly undemocratic move”, comparing the 1931 massacre to Jallianwala Bagh, and said the martyrs are being disrespected “only because they were Muslims.”

### **Why It Matters**

Martyrs’ Day remains a sensitive issue in Kashmir, reflecting the region’s political identity, history of resistance, and the deep divisions between regional parties and the BJP.

With the first elected government in power since 2019, the way this day is observed—or ignored—signals larger tensions over autonomy, memory, and representation in Jammu and Kashmir.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: Indian Express

## **17. Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana (PMDDKY)**

### **What Is PMDDKY?**

The Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana (PMDDKY) is a new central scheme to develop 100 agricultural districts in India. It will use an approach similar to the Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP) launched in 2018.

### **Key Features:**

- Budget: ₹24,000 crore per year
- Duration: 6 years (2025–2031)
- Ministries Involved: 11 ministries and 36 existing schemes
- Focus Areas: Agriculture and allied sectors

### **How Will It Work on the Ground?**

Each selected district will prepare a District Agriculture and Allied Activities Plan, led by a District Dhan Dhaanya Samiti headed by the District Collector, with progressive farmers as members.

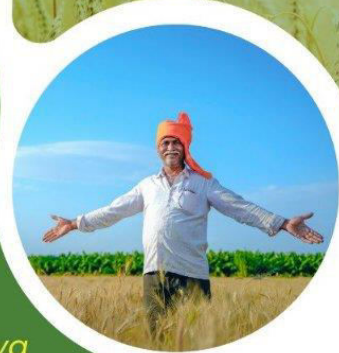


CABINET DECISION 16 - 07 - 2025

# DHAN-DHAANYA KRISHI YOJANA

**Cabinet approves 'Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana'** for a period of 6 years beginning 2025-26 to cover 100 districts

- To be implemented through convergence of 36 existing schemes across 11 Departments, other State schemes and local partnerships with the private sector
- 100 districts to be identified based on 3 key indicators - low productivity, low cropping intensity, and less credit disbursement
- Committees to be formed at District, State and National level for effective planning, implementation and monitoring of Scheme
- Progress of the Scheme in each Dhan-Dhaanya district will be monitored on 117 key Performance Indicators



1/2

## Implementation Details:

- Based on local cropping patterns and agro-climatic conditions
  - Focus on:
    - o Crop diversification
    - o Soil and water conservation
    - o Natural and organic farming
    - o Agricultural self-sufficiency
- Committees will be formed at district, state, and national levels.  
Central Nodal Officers (CNOs) will oversee field visits and monitoring.

Agriculture universities will serve as technical knowledge partners.

### **How Will Progress Be Measured?**

Like the ADP, PMDDKY will track and compare district performance.

Monitoring Mechanism:

- 117 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
- Monthly rankings
- Digital portal/dashboard for real-time updates
- NITI Aayog will provide strategic guidance and capacity building

### **Why Was PMDDKY Launched?**

The scheme was announced in the 2025 Union Budget to improve underperforming agricultural regions.

### **Objectives:**

1. Increase agricultural productivity
2. Promote crop diversification and sustainable practices
3. Improve post-harvest storage at local levels
4. Expand irrigation coverage
5. Ensure access to both short- and long-term credit

### **How Will Districts Be Selected?**

Selection Criteria:

1. Low agricultural productivity
2. Moderate cropping intensity
3. Below-average credit access

Cropping intensity refers to the number of crops grown on the same land in a year. In 2021–22, India's average cropping intensity was 155%, but this varies widely by state.

### **District Allocation:**

- Based on a state's share of net cropped area and operational holdings
- At least one district will be selected from each state/UT

### **What's the Expected Impact?**

As the 100 districts improve:

- Overall agricultural performance of the country will improve
- Higher productivity and value addition
- Increased local employment
- Boost to Atmanirbhar Bharat (self-reliant India)

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: Indian Express

## **18. Safe Spaces Turning Unsafe for Women**

## Introduction

Violence against women is rising across India, with recent cases reported in Odisha, Karnataka, Bengal, and Delhi. What's more disturbing is that schools, colleges, and workplaces—places assumed to be safe—are increasingly becoming sites of sexual harassment and assault.



## Tragic Case in Odisha Highlights Systemic Failure

On July 14, a 20-year-old B.Ed student from Fakir Mohan Autonomous College in Balasore died after suffering 90% burns in an immolation attempt outside the principal's office.

She had repeatedly complained about sexual harassment by a senior teacher, Samir Sahu, but was ignored—even after escalating her complaint to the Chief Minister's office.

### Aftermath:

- Both the teacher and principal were arrested.
- The incident triggered public outrage and state-wide introspection.

## Other Disturbing Incidents Across India

- West Bengal: A law college student was gang-raped on campus in June 2025, less than a year after the brutal murder of a PG student at R.G. Kar Medical College.
- Karnataka (Mangaluru): Two lecturers were arrested for allegedly raping a student.
- Delhi: The rape and murder of a 9-year-old girl sparked political outcry over failing law and order.

## Are Stringent Laws Enough?

Despite stricter laws after the 2012 Nirbhaya case, incidents of sexual violence continue, raising concerns over implementation and accountability.

- Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs) are mandatory under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013.
- After the Odisha case, the state government ordered all colleges to form ICCs within 24 hours.

### Yet, questions remain:

- Why did multiple complaints go unheard?
- Where is the institutional accountability?

## Rising Crimes Against Women: The Numbers

According to the NCRB 2022 report:

- 4,45,256 cases of crimes against women were reported (up 4% from 2021).
- Major categories:
  - o Cruelty by husband/relatives – 31.4%

o Assault to outrage modesty – 18.7%

o Rape – 7.1%

These numbers do not include unreported cases, which are likely substantial.

### **The Way Forward: Early Conversations and Accountability**

- Sexual violence and gender awareness must be discussed early in life, not just after tragedies occur.
- Public pressure must continue beyond initial outrage.
- Systems must ensure grievances are addressed, not silenced.
- Institutions must act swiftly to prevent protectors from becoming predators.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: The Hindu

## **19. ED attaches Robert Vadra's assets**

### **Why Is Robert Vadra in the News?**

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has filed a chargesheet against Robert Vadra—husband of Priyanka Gandhi and brother-in-law of Rahul Gandhi—in a money laundering case related to a land deal.

On July 16, 2025, the ED issued a provisional attachment order, seizing 43 properties worth around ₹37.64 crore linked to Vadra and his company, Sky Light Hospitality Pvt. Ltd.

### **What Does "Attaching Property" Mean?**

"Attaching property" means the government temporarily takes control of properties believed to be bought using illegal money (proceeds of crime). This ensures the assets are not sold, hidden, or transferred during the investigation.

### **How Does the ED Attach Property?**

Under Section 5 of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA):

- The ED Director or a Deputy Director can attach property if they believe it was bought with illegal money.
- The reason must be that the property might be moved, sold, or hidden, making confiscation later difficult.
- This attachment is provisional, valid for 180 days.



If within this period, the Adjudicating Authority (a panel appointed by the ED) confirms the attachment, the ED can take possession. If not confirmed, the property is automatically released.

### **What About Foreign Properties?**

To attach property in other countries, ED must send a Letter Rogatory through a court to that country's authorities. If accepted, the foreign authority carries out the attachment.

### **What Happens After Confirmation?**

- The accused can appeal to the PMLA Appellate Tribunal within 45 days.
- Further appeals can be made in High Court and then Supreme Court.
- Until final court decisions, the property cannot be used by the owner.
- If convicted, the court may confiscate the property, which then goes to the central government.

If it's a residential property, the owner will be asked to vacate, and the ED will take possession.

### **What Happens to Attached Properties?**

Unfortunately, many attached properties rot over the years:

- There's no official body yet to maintain these properties.
- Vehicles are kept in warehouses (ED pays rent), but often deteriorate before trials end.
- In some cases, the rent paid ends up being more than the vehicle's value.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: Indian Express

## **20. Cleanest Big City in India: Ahmedabad Shines Bright**

### **Swachh Survekshan 2024-25 Results**

- Ahmedabad has been named India's cleanest big city in the Centre's annual Swachh Survekshan survey.
- Bhopal and Lucknow followed in second and third place respectively among cities with populations over 10 lakh.

### **Super Swachh League Introduced**

A new category, the "Super Swachh League", was launched to honour cities with a million-plus population for consistent cleanliness. Key entrants include:

- Indore
- Surat
- Navi Mumbai
- Vijayawada



### Top cities in different population categories:

- 10 lakh+ population: Ahmedabad, Bhopal, Lucknow
- 3-10 lakh: Mira-Bhayandar (MH), Bilaspur (MP), Jamshedpur (JH)

### Special Recognitions

- Best Ganga Town: Prayagraj
- Best Cantonment Board: Secunderabad
- Best SaifaiMitra Surakshit Shehar (for sanitation worker safety): Visakhapatnam, Jabalpur, Gorakhpur
- Exceptional Waste Management (Maha Kumbh): UP Government, Prayagraj Mela Authority, Prayagraj Municipal Corporation

### Inclusivity and New Initiatives

- Smaller cities were given a level playing field.

- "One City, One Award" rule introduced to highlight diverse achievers.
- 34 cities recognized as "Promising Swachh Shehars" for making notable progress.

Mass Participation and Awareness

- 14 crore people engaged through surveys and digital platforms.
- President Murmu praised the 3R approach (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle), calling "Waste is best" the new economic mantra.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: Indian Express

## 21. Bengaluru Stampede: A Tragic End to a Moment of Glory

### Celebration Turns to Tragedy

- On June 4, 2025, a stampede at Bengaluru's M. Chinnaswamy Stadium during RCB's IPL victory celebrations resulted in:

- o 11 deaths
- o 71 injuries

- The event was meant to celebrate RCB's long-awaited first IPL trophy win, and Virat Kohli's crowning moment.

- However, poor crowd management turned it into a deadly disaster.



### Commission Report: Who Is to Blame?

- The John Michael D'Cunha Commission investigating the incident found:

- o RCB management and police were largely responsible.

- o Causes included:

- Poor crowd control at entry gates
- Reckless public announcements inviting fans to the stadium.
- The report suggested legal action against several people and recommended ways to prevent such disasters.

### Government's Role Cannot Be Ignored

- The Karnataka government, including the Chief Minister, played a role by:

- o Hosting a felicitation event at Vidhana Soudha earlier that morning.

- o Making announcements that led people to rush to the already-full stadium (capacity: 32,000).

- While police rightly denied permission for an open-bus victory parade, they failed to manage the crowd at the stadium.

### Urban Planning Failure

- The tragedy also highlights a larger urban issue:
  - o In cities, flash crowds driven by social media and public excitement can form quickly.
  - o Authorities are often unprepared for such spontaneous mass gatherings.
- Similar stampedes have occurred at religious, social, and cultural events, exposing the lack of effective crowd management strategies.

### **Conclusion: Shared Responsibility**

- While RCB management and police have been held accountable, the state government and planners must also share the blame.
- Future events must involve:
  - o Proper permissions
  - o Crowd control plans
  - o Emergency medical setups
- Most importantly, urban managers need to adapt to the new reality of mass gatherings in the digital age.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

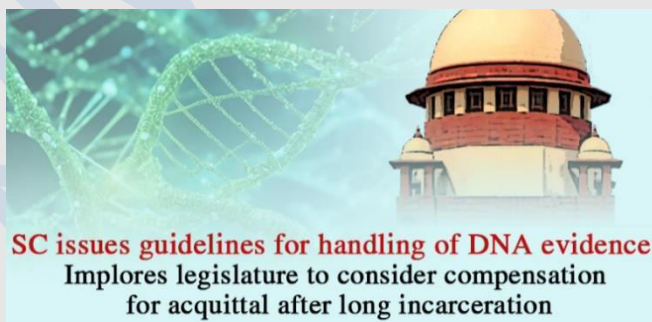
Source: Indian Express

## **22. Why the Supreme Court Issued Guidelines on DNA Evidence**

### **Background: A Case That Prompted Action**

The Supreme Court recently acquitted a man who was on death row for the rape and murder of three individuals in Tamil Nadu (2011). His conviction had been based entirely on DNA evidence.

However, the court found serious procedural lapses—such as the post-mortem being conducted in the open and missing documentation of key samples—making the DNA evidence unreliable.



### **Why DNA Evidence Matters in Criminal Investigations**

DNA evidence is a key tool in criminal investigations. It involves collecting biological materials like blood, saliva, semen, or hair from crime scenes. These are then matched with reference samples from suspects or victims to establish a connection.

Proper handling and processing are crucial to ensure that the evidence is valid and admissible in court.

### **Supreme Court's Guidelines on Handling DNA Evidence**

To address inconsistencies and prevent misuse, the Supreme Court has laid down the following procedural norms:

### 1. Sample Collection

- Must be done by trained personnel using protective gear.
- Samples should be sealed in tamper-proof containers and clearly labelled with details like FIR number, date, investigating officer's name, etc.
- Documentation must include signatures from a medical professional, police officer, and an independent witness.

### 2. Transportation and Storage

- Samples must reach designated forensic labs within 48 hours.
- Must be stored in conditions that prevent degradation.

### 3. Handling Restrictions

- DNA samples cannot be opened, altered, or resealed without the trial court's permission before the proceedings begin.

### 4. Chain of Custody

- A detailed log of every stage of sample handling and transfer must be maintained to ensure transparency and reliability.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: Indian Express

## 23. Chhattisgarh Liquor Scam: Why Chaitanya Baghel Was Arrested

### Who Was Arrested and Why



Chaitanya Baghel, son of former Chhattisgarh CM Bhupesh Baghel, was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) on July 18 for alleged involvement in a ₹2,161 crore liquor scam. He was remanded to five days' ED custody by a special court under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

### What Is the Chhattisgarh Liquor Scam?

The alleged scam took place between 2019 and 2022, during the Congress-led state government's tenure. According to the ED, a group of bureaucrats, politicians, and excise officials formed a parallel system to sell liquor without depositing the revenue into the state treasury, causing a loss of ₹2,161 crore.

### Who Else Has Been Named in the Scam

Prominent accused include:

- Kawasi Lakhma – former Excise Minister

- Anwar Dhebar – alleged mastermind
- Anil Tuteja – retired IAS officer
- Arun Pati Tripathi – former MD of Chhattisgarh State Marketing Corporation
- Laxmi Narayan Bansal (Pappu) – key witness

Neither Bhupesh nor Chaitanya Baghel were originally named in the FIR.

### **ED's Allegations Against Chaitanya**

The ED claims Chaitanya:

- Was named by Pappu Bansal, who alleged that Chaitanya coordinated the movement of over ₹1,000 crore of scam money.
- Allegedly directed payments of ₹80–100 crore to others through cash handlers.
- Used scam funds to build his real estate project, Vitthal Green, through Baghel Developers.
- Received ₹16.7 crore in total from proceeds of the scam.
- Received ₹5 crore from Trilok Singh Dhillon for 19 flats.
- Took ₹4.5 crore as a loan from a jewellery firm that also bought plots from his company.

### **Chaitanya's Defence: No Direct Evidence**

Chaitanya's lawyer argued:

- His name never appeared in the ED's earlier charge sheets.
- No summons or questioning took place before his arrest.
- The arrest was based only on a statement from Pappu Bansal, who himself is absconding.
- No opportunity was given to Chaitanya to respond to the allegations.

### **Political Angle: Bhupesh Baghel's Claims**

Former CM Bhupesh Baghel said:

- The arrest was politically motivated.
- It was linked to his opposition to an Adani coal mining project in Raigarh. "This is happening because I raised the issue of thousands of trees being cut overnight in the presence of forest officials," he alleged.

He also criticized the authorities for letting Bansal roam free despite a non-bailable warrant while arresting his son without proper legal process.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: Indian Express

## **24. Vice-President Resigns: What Happens Next?**

### **Understanding the process, timelines, and impact of a mid-term resignation**

Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar resigned late Monday night, creating a rare mid-term vacancy in India's second-highest constitutional office. He is only the third Vice-President to resign mid-term after V.V. Giri and R. Venkataraman, both of whom left the post to contest presidential elections.



### **Who takes charge in his absence?**

The Constitution does not provide for an acting Vice-President. However:

- Since the Vice-President is also the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, the Deputy Chairman (currently Harivansh Narayan Singh) will take over the duty of presiding over the House.

### **When will a new Vice-President be elected?**

Unlike the President, whose vacancy must be filled within six months, there's no fixed timeline for electing a new Vice-President.

- The only constitutional requirement is that the election be held "as soon as possible."
- The Election Commission will announce the date.
- The poll is conducted under the Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections Act, 1952.
- The Secretary General of either House usually acts as the Returning Officer, in rotation.

### **Term of the new Vice-President**

The newly elected Vice-President will serve a full 5-year term, not just the remainder of Dhankhar's tenure.

### **How is the Vice-President elected?**

- Electoral College: Includes members of both Houses of Parliament — Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha — including nominated MPs.
- State legislatures are not involved.
- Voting Method:
  - o Secret ballot using proportional representation with single transferable vote.
  - o MPs rank candidates by preference.
  - o All MPs' votes carry equal value.

### **Winning Criteria:**

- A candidate needs to get the quota, calculated as:  
(Total valid votes ÷ 2) + 1.
- If no one gets the quota in the first round, the candidate with the least votes is eliminated, and their votes are transferred based on second preferences. This continues until a candidate crosses the quota.

## Who can contest for Vice-President?

A candidate must:

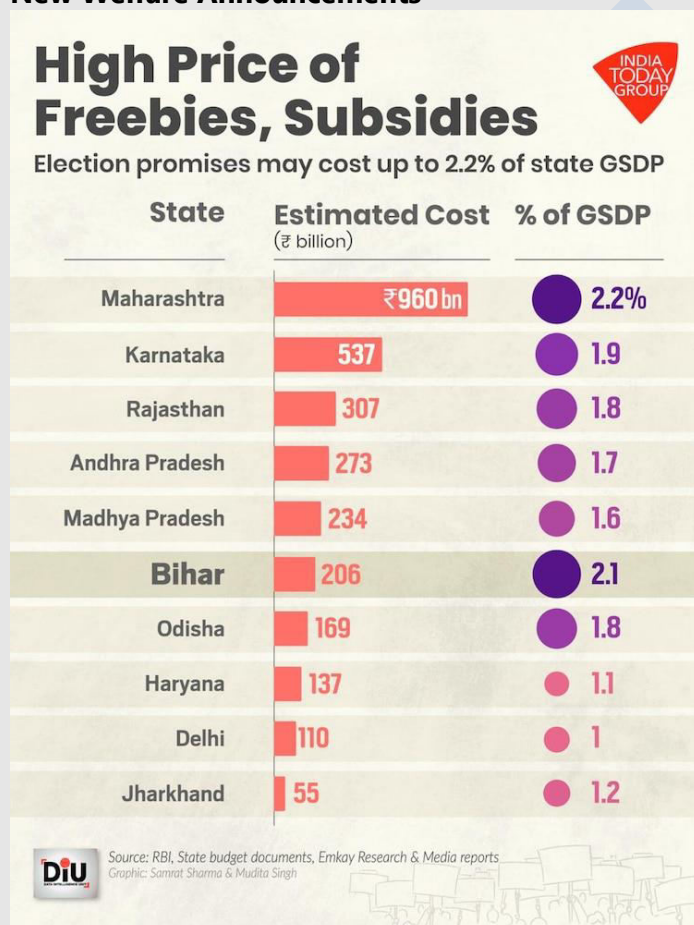
- Be a citizen of India
- Be at least 35 years old
- Be eligible for election to the Rajya Sabha
- Be a registered voter in any parliamentary constituency
- Not hold an office of profit under the government, except for roles like President, Vice – President, Governor, or Minister

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: The Hindu

## 25. Bihar Elections: Raining Promises, Rising Concerns

### New Welfare Announcements



Ahead of the upcoming Assembly elections, the ruling NDA government in Bihar has announced several welfare schemes:

- Free electricity: Up to 125 units/month for 1.67 crore households (starting August 1).
- Free rooftop solar panels: For 58 lakh Below Poverty Line (BPL) families under the Kutir Jyoti Yojana.
- 35% job reservation for women: In all State government jobs.
- Increased pension: From ₹400 to ₹1,100 under social security schemes.
- Bihar Youth Commission: Proposed for youth-related matters.
- Internship support: ₹4,000–₹6,000 per month for youth (aged 18–28), starting with 5,000 in year one, targeting 1 lakh in 5 years.
- Religious tourism boost: ₹882.87 crore redevelopment of Punaura Dham Janki Mandir (birthplace of Sita).

- Festival travel help for migrants: Support for Biharis to return home during festivals.

### Pre-Poll Populism or Planned Vision?

- These schemes appear to be last-minute efforts to influence voters, with little long-term planning.
- Many announcements seem to be reactions to rival promises — especially from the Opposition RJD.

### Pattern Seen Across States

- Maharashtra: A pre-poll cash transfer scheme for women helped the ruling Mahayuti coalition win, but was later trimmed due to misuse.
- Free electricity: Now common in many States, despite criticism.
- PM Modi: Has questioned the logic behind “freebie culture,” yet States continue introducing new handouts.

### Nitish Factor & Political Dynamics

- Nitish Kumar’s age and weakened position within the NDA are key election backdrops.
- JD(U), his party, is now smaller than its ally BJP, and its influence is shrinking.
- This may be the last major election where Nitish plays a central role.
- As a result, all parties are turning to competitive welfarism to win over voters.

### Conclusion: Welfare Without Vision

- Bihar’s election-time giveaways highlight a deeper issue: A lack of coherent development strategy, and the use of welfare as political bait.
- True governance would involve sustainable planning, not just vote-centric promises.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: The Hindu

## 26. 2006 Mumbai Train Blasts Court Proceedings

### Background: 2006 Mumbai Train Blasts

On July 11, 2006, a series of bomb blasts on Mumbai’s suburban trains killed over 180 people. While 12 Indian men were convicted, they were acquitted in 2025 by the Bombay High Court. Attention has now shifted to the Pakistani nationals alleged to have played key roles.

### Who Was the Alleged Mastermind?

According to the prosecution:

- The conspiracy was led by Azam Cheema alias Babaji, a Pakistani national associated with Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT).
- Cheema allegedly conspired with Indian operatives like Faisal Shaikh and Asif Shaikh as early as 1999.
- He is said to have sent funds to train Indian youth to carry out terrorist attacks in India.
- Cheema reportedly died in 2024, though this is not officially confirmed.



### **Alleged Training in Pakistan**

Between 2001 and 2005, seven of the now-acquitted Indian accused allegedly:

- Travelled to Pakistan via Iran.
- Underwent terror training in LeT camps.
- Faisal Shaikh was believed to have gone multiple times and even met Hafiz Saeed.
- A Pakistani Army Havaldar, Tafheem Akmal Hashmi, claimed during trial that he saw Faisal in a training camp near Muzaffarabad in 2004.

### **How the Infiltration Happened**

As per prosecution claims, in May 2006:

- 10 Pakistani nationals infiltrated India:
  - o 6 via Bangladesh (with help from Mohammed Majid in Kolkata)
  - o 2 via Nepal
  - o 2 via Gujarat (Kutch) border
- 2 Indian nationals who had settled in Pakistan also came in via Gujarat.

These infiltrators were allegedly aided by Indian operatives and helped reach Mumbai.

### **Roles of the Pakistani Nationals in the Blasts**

- The infiltrators were housed at various locations in Mumbai.
- Explosives were assembled between July 8–10, 2006.
- Bombs were placed on seven trains, allegedly by teams of one Indian and one Pakistani each.

### **What Happened to the Pakistani Nationals?**

- One Pakistani, Salim, died in the blast.
- Another, Abu Osama (aka Abu Umed), was killed in an encounter with Mumbai ATS in August 2006.
- Six others were allegedly sheltered in Mumbai and then fled the city with help from Indian operatives.
- The whereabouts of the remaining Pakistanis remain unknown.

### **What the High Court Said**

The Bombay High Court pointed out several gaps and inconsistencies in the prosecution's case:

#### **Key Observations:**

- Confession contradictions: One accused said he was accompanied by three Pakistanis, while others claimed pairs of two.
- Lack of details:
  - o No clear info on the Pakistani infiltrators' identities or appearances.
  - o No timeline on their arrival in Mumbai.
  - o No evidence on how 15 kg of RDX was used or if any of it was left.
- No direct evidence:
  - o No call data records proving contact with Azam Cheema or other LeT operatives.
  - o No proof that visits to Pakistan meant involvement in the blasts.

### **Court's Conclusion:**

The prosecution failed to establish any credible link between the accused and the Pakistani nationals. Their theory relied heavily on unsupported confessions and lacked hard evidence like phone records or eyewitness accounts.

### **Conclusion**

Nearly 20 years after the devastating blasts, none of the Pakistani nationals accused of the attack have been brought to justice. With the acquittal of all Indian accused, the case now stands as a reminder of the deep flaws in both investigation and prosecution, leaving many questions unanswered.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: Indian Express

## **27. Jagdeep Dhankhar Resigns as Vice-President: An Unprecedented Move**

### **Introduction**

Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar's sudden resignation has raised serious questions about the relationship between the executive and Parliament, as well as internal tensions within the ruling BJP. He is the first Vice-President in India's history to resign mid-term without moving on to the Presidency.

### **Jagdeep Dhankhar resigns as Vice President, citing health concerns**



### **Official Reason: Health — But Is That the Full Story?**

While Mr. Dhankhar cited health issues in his resignation letter, recent events suggest other underlying reasons:

- He was active in Parliament on the first day of the monsoon session.
  - His office had already announced public engagements for the week.
  - He had resumed duties after a previous health issue, showing no current signs of incapacity.
- This has led to speculation that his resignation was influenced by political conflict, not health.

### **Flashpoint: Clash Over Removal of a Delhi HC Judge**

The immediate trigger seems to be his disagreement with the government over the

removal of a Delhi High Court judge accused of corruption.

- Dhankhar insisted on following parliamentary rules.
- His stance conflicted with the government's plan, intensifying already strained ties.

### **Tensions with the Executive: A Long Build-up**

Dhankhar's relationship with the executive had reportedly been deteriorating for some time, especially over:

- Judicial accountability
- The role of the Rajya Sabha vs. Lok Sabha in overseeing judges

His position on these matters appears to have reached a breaking point.

### **A Controversial Tenure as Rajya Sabha Chairman**

Mr. Dhankhar's time as Chairman of the Rajya Sabha (a role held by the Vice-President) has been highly contentious:

- Accused of being partisan in his approach.
- Opposition parties even filed a motion to remove him — the first such attempt in India's history.
- Publicly questioned the inclusion of the terms 'secular' and 'socialist' in the Constitution.
- Supported debates aligned with RSS ideology.

### **Clash Over Judicial Independence**

Dhankhar often emphasized Parliament's supremacy over the judiciary, taking strong stances against:

- Judicial overreach
- Corruption in the judiciary

He accepted Opposition motions to impeach judges:

- Justice Shekhar Kumar Yadav of the Allahabad HC for communal remarks.
- A Delhi HC judge for alleged corruption.

These actions, though procedurally correct, brought him into direct conflict with the government.

### **Impact: A Blow to Parliamentary Democracy**

Mr. Dhankhar's resignation reflects deeper institutional tensions and:

- Reduces the independence of the Rajya Sabha Chair from executive pressure.
- Highlights how constitutional roles are being undermined by political power struggles.
- Raises concerns about the future of checks and balances in India's democracy.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: The Hindu

## **28. International Year of Cooperatives 2025: An Overview**

### **Background: 2006 Mumbai Train Blasts**



India is celebrating the United Nations International Year of Cooperatives (IYC) – 2025 under the theme “Cooperatives Build a Better World”. The aim is to highlight the importance of cooperatives in inclusive, sustainable, and participatory development, in line with the UN

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

#### **National Launch and Annual Action Plan**

- The initiative was launched by PM Narendra Modi at the ICA Global Cooperative Conference in 2024.
- A detailed Annual Action Plan was released on 24th January 2025 by the Home and Cooperation Minister in Mumbai.
- Multiple committees were formed for coordinated implementation

#### **Widespread Public Awareness Campaigns**

- The IYC logo has been displayed across:
  - o Indian Railways tickets
  - o Government websites and letters
  - o Packaging of cooperative products (e.g., Amul milk packets)
  - o Women’s Premier League 2025 matches on Star Sports and Jio Hotstar

#### **Major Events and Initiatives Across India**

- Foundation stone of India’s first Cooperative University – Tribhuvan Sahkari University laid in Anand, Gujarat on 5th July 2025.
- 4th Foundation Day of Ministry of Cooperation celebrated on 6th July 2025.

#### **Environmental and Social Campaigns**

- “Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam”: A nationwide tree plantation campaign.
  - o Over 25 States/UTs have submitted action plans.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: PIB

## **29. Justice Yashwant Varma Case: How Impeachment of a Judge Works**

### **Background: Why Justice Varma Faces Removal**

The process to remove former Delhi High Court Judge Yashwant Varma is likely to begin in Parliament. In March, large amounts of unexplained cash were allegedly found at his official residence.

- A notice for his removal was submitted by MPs from BJP and DMK.

- Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla is expected to set up a statutory inquiry committee.

- The Supreme Court is also hearing Justice Varma's plea against an internal judicial inquiry that found him guilty of "misconduct".



### **What is Impeachment of a Judge?**

#### **Constitutional Basis**

- Impeachment is allowed under Article 124(4) for Supreme Court judges, and Article 218 extends it to High Court judges.

- Grounds: Only "proved misbehaviour" or "incapacity".

- Requires a 2/3rd majority of MPs present and voting, and more than 50% of total membership in both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.

### **Step-by-Step Impeachment Process**

#### **1. Notice of Motion**

- o Needs 100 MPs in Lok Sabha or 50 in Rajya Sabha to sign.

#### **2. Admission by Speaker or Chairman**

- o No time limit; may accept or reject the motion.

#### **3. Formation of a 3-Member Inquiry Committee**

- o Headed by CJI or a SC judge

- o A High Court Chief Justice

- o A "distinguished jurist"

#### **4. Committee Investigation**

- o Can call witnesses, collect evidence, and conduct medical tests (if needed).

#### **5. Report Submission**

- o If judge is not guilty, the process ends.

- o If guilty, Parliament votes on removal.

#### **6. Final Step**

- o If both Houses pass the motion, President signs removal order.

## **In-House Judicial Inquiry vs. Impeachment**

### **Why an In-House Mechanism Was Needed**

In 1995, a Bombay HC judge was accused of financial misconduct. But his conduct didn't meet the high bar for impeachment.

So, the Supreme Court created an internal process in 1997 to address such "non-impeachable but improper" behavior.

### **Internal Inquiry Procedure (Simplified)**

1. Complaint Received by CJI or forwarded by High Court Chief Justice/President.
2. Preliminary Inquiry
  - o If serious, a deeper probe is ordered.
3. Formation of Committee
  - o 2 High Court Chief Justices + 1 High Court judge.
4. Inquiry Report to CJI
  - o If serious misconduct, judge may be asked to resign or retire.
  - o If not, the judge may be advised and the case is closed.
5. If Judge Refuses to Resign
  - o No new judicial work is assigned.
  - o CJI informs the President and Prime Minister to begin impeachment.

### **In Justice Varma's Case**

- The in-house panel found "implied responsibility" in the recovery of cash.
- Justice Varma was held responsible for "misconduct."
- Then CJI Sanjiv Khanna directed that Justice Varma be given no new judicial work.

### **Vice President's Resignation Linked**

- VP Jagdeep Dhankhar resigned shortly after accepting the Opposition's notice for Varma's removal.
- Government sources claimed this move pre-empted their plan, leading to political tension.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: Indian Express

## **30. Nitin Gupta Takes Over as NFRA Chairperson**

### **Introduction**



Shri Nitin Gupta, retired IRS officer (1986 batch), took charge as Chairperson of the National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA) on July 23, 2025.

He earlier served as Chairman of the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) from June 2022 to June 2024.

### **National Financial Reporting Authority**

National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA) is the auditing and accounting supervision authority of India. The authority oversees the auditing profession and the Indian Accounting Standards under the Companies Act

2013. It was formed in October 2018.

### **History**

After the Satyam scandal took place in 2009, the Standing Committee on Finance proposed the concept of the National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA) for the first time in its 21st report.

Companies Act 2013, then gave the regulatory framework for its composition and constitution. The Union Cabinet approved the proposal for its establishment on 1 March 2018.

It is hoped that the establishment of NFRA as an independent regulator for the auditing profession will improve the transparency and reliability of financial statements and information presented by listed companies and large unlisted companies in India

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: PIB

## **31. Kerala High Court Issues AI Guidelines for Judiciary**

### **Introduction**

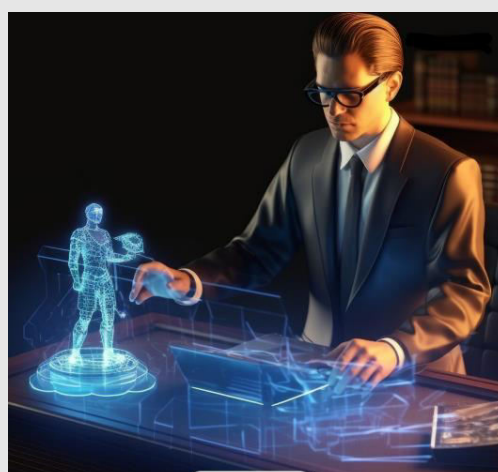
The Kerala High Court has become the first in India to release a formal policy on the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the district judiciary.

The policy, titled 'Policy Regarding the Use of AI Tools in District Judiciary', emphasizes responsible and limited use of AI, mainly for administrative tasks.

### **Key Principles of the AI Policy**

The policy is based on four core values:

- Transparency
- Fairness
- Accountability
- Protection of Confidential Data



**Kerala HC Becomes First To  
Ban AI In Judicial Decisions**

It applies to judges, clerks, interns, and other court staff, regardless of whether the AI tools are used on personal or government devices.

### **What Is Allowed and What Is Not?**

Permitted Uses:

- Administrative tasks, such as scheduling cases or managing court operations, under supervision.
- Legal research, like finding citations or judgments, but only if verified by an appointed person.

Not Allowed:

- Writing or drafting legal judgments, orders, or findings using AI.
- Using AI to translate documents without judge/translator verification.
- Using non-approved AI tools (Only tools approved by the Kerala HC or Supreme Court are allowed).

Additional Guidelines:

- All AI errors must be reported to the Principal District Judge and forwarded to the High Court's IT department.
- Mandatory training sessions will be held to educate staff on safe and ethical AI usage.
- Violation of the rules will result in disciplinary action.

### **Why This Policy Is Important**

The Central Government in February 2025 encouraged AI use in courts to speed up justice delivery and reduce backlog. This sparked debates on AI's risks and ethical concerns.

National Context:

- The Karnataka High Court recently discussed AI tools used in online content moderation, warning about AI hallucinations—false or misleading responses from AI.
- Justice M. Nagaprasanna cautioned against over-reliance on AI: "Dependency on Artificial Intelligence should not make your intelligence artificial."
- In 2023, the Punjab and Haryana High Court used ChatGPT to explore global views on granting bail in violent cases.

However, the judge clarified that the AI response was not binding and only served to provide broader context.

### **Conclusion**

The Kerala HC's AI policy is a landmark move that seeks to balance the benefits of AI with the sensitivity of judicial work. By setting boundaries, it aims to prevent misuse while still allowing innovation in administrative efficiency.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: PIB

## **32. National Sports Governance Bill**

## Introduction

What Is the National Sports Governance Bill?

- Introduced in Lok Sabha on July 23, 2025 by Sports Minister Mansukh Mandaviya.
- Aims to reform sports governance in India.
- Proposes two major changes:
  1. Creation of a National Sports Board to regulate sports bodies.
  2. Establishment of a National Sports Tribunal to resolve disputes.

## Key Features of the Bill

### 1. National Sports Board:

- Will oversee and regulate all National Sports Federations (NSFs) including the BCCI.
- Functions similar to SEBI (Securities and Exchange Board of India).
- Can hire experts in law, audit, and management.
- Will register all affiliated units of sports federations to improve transparency and access.

### 2. National Sports Tribunal:

- Will function like a civil court.
- Handles disputes on:
  - o Athlete selection
  - o Federation elections
  - o Other sports-related issues
- Appeals will go directly to the Supreme Court.
- Modeled after global examples like FIFA's internal tribunals and the Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS).

## Why Was This Bill Needed?

- India lacked a proper legal framework for regulating sports.
- The Sports Code of 2011 was being used as a temporary solution, but lacked legal power.
- Due to poor governance, many sports bodies ended up in long legal battles.
- Judicial intervention became frequent but often led to delays and confusion.

## Concerns Around the Tribunal

- Some fear it might become just another failed tribunal, like others in India.
- However, if made independent and efficient, it can:
  - o Ensure faster resolutions
  - o Involve sports-aware professionals
  - o Keep the system free of external court interference



### **Role and Powers of the National Sports Board**

- The Sports Ministry already had these powers, but the Board gives it formal, statutory status.
- Will improve accountability and public oversight.
- Helps solve practical issues like:
  - o Identifying correct federations
  - o Contacting proper authorities for events, sponsorship, or participation
- The goal is “governance through information” → leading to “standard-setting” → eventually to system-wide alignment.

### **What About Age Limits and Tenures?**

- The age cap for administrators has been raised to 75.
- Tenure limits removed to help Indian officials join international sports bodies.
- Critics warn this could lead to entrenchment and lack of fresh leadership.

### **What About the BCCI?**

- So far, the BCCI was not under government regulation.
- This Bill aims to bring BCCI within its scope.
- If included, changes may occur in:
  - o Tenure rules (currently capped in BCCI)
  - o Its relationship with the Indian Olympic Association (IOA)

### **Will Athletes Lose the Right to Go to Court?**

- No, but they must first use internal dispute resolution mechanisms.
- Then, they can appeal to the National Sports Tribunal.
- This follows global best practices (e.g., FIFA, CAS).
- Aim: Keep dispute resolution fast, affordable, and fair—without lengthy court delays.

### **Conclusion**

The National Sports Governance Bill is a major step toward reforming Indian sports governance.

It aims to:

- Ensure better regulation
- Create a dedicated tribunal for disputes
- Enhance transparency and professionalism
- Improve athlete rights and federation accountability

But its success will depend on implementation, independence, and avoiding bureaucratic control.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: Indian Express

## **33. How do internal complaints committees work?**

### **Introduction**

A young student's self-immolation at a college in Balasore, Odisha has put the spotlight on the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC) which failed to validate her complaints of sexual harassment against her head of the department. The victim's family has claimed the members of the ICC were not trained adequately and that the environment in the college and within the ICC was biased in favour of the accused.

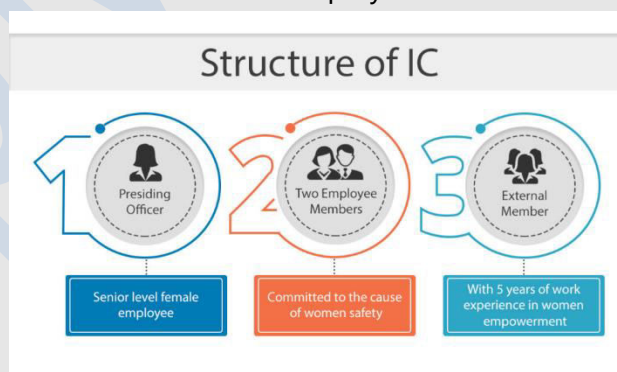
### What is the law behind the ICC?

The Supreme Court first called for complaint committees to be set up in its 1997 judgment in response to a petition filed after Bhanwari Devi, a social worker in Rajasthan, was gang-raped when she tried to stop a child marriage. The Court provided basic definitions of sexual harassment in the workplace, and guidelines to combat it. Known as the Vishaka Guidelines, they called for an appropriate mechanism to be created by employers to ensure time bound treatment of complaints of sexual harassment. It said that the Complaints Committee should be headed by a woman, and include women as at least half its members, as well as a third party to prevent undue pressure from senior levels within the organisation.

It was not until the Nirbhaya killing in Delhi in December 2012 that the provisions were actually written into law. One of the several legislations that were enacted was The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, often called the POSH Act, which superseded the Vishaka Guidelines. It mandated the constitution of ICCs at all workplaces which employed more than 10 people. Women working in smaller enterprises in the informal sector could complain to Local Committees to be set up by district authorities.

### Composition of ICC

Each ICC is to be headed by a Presiding Officer, who is to be a woman employed at a senior level at the workplace. At least two members should be employees preferably committed to the cause of women or who have had experience in social work or have legal knowledge, and another member should be from an NGO devoted to women's rights or a person familiar with sexual harassment issues. At least half of the members should be women. Any aggrieved woman can complain in writing to the ICC or local committee within three months of the date of the harassment incident or series of incidents. The committee can help to settle the matter at the request of the woman or begin an inquiry into the complaint.



The ICC has the same powers as are vested in a civil court under the Code of Civil Procedure. The inquiry is to be completed within 90 days. If the complaint is proved, the ICC must recommend the action to be taken against the accused. The employer is also required to aid the victim if she wishes to file a criminal complaint.

The law mandates confidentiality regarding the contents of the complaint, the identity and addresses of the aggrieved woman, the respondent and witnesses, any information relating to conciliation and inquiry proceedings, and the recommendations of the ICC.

### **What is the status of their implementation?**

In the decade since the law was passed, though ICCs have been set up in some institutions, their coverage is far from universal. In December 2024, the Supreme Court took stock of the "sorry state of affairs", pointing out that it was "disquieting" to note "serious lapses" in the enforcement of the POSH Act. It directed immediate compliance within the government, and a survey of public and private organisations as well.

"This law was designed to be monitored, but who is doing it? District officers are supposed to collect annual reports on compliance and sexual harassment cases from the Local Committees and ICCs, but what is done with that material?" asks Madhu Mehra, a lawyer advocating for women's rights, and the founder of Partners for Law in Development.

Ms. Mehra points out that while the Women and Child Development Ministry is the line Ministry for the POSH Act, it is the Labour Ministry and Industries Ministry that deal with workplaces and employers. "Accountability is falling between the cracks. Where is the evidence-based analysis on how this law is functioning? It's a black hole."

She says the Balasore case shows that even where ICCs are in place, they are merely a "dead letter" if there is insufficient training for members, if the power imbalance in a workplace is not addressed, and if there is no confidentiality being maintained.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Governance

Source: The Hindu

## Bilateral Relations and International Organizations

### 1. Who Will Find the Next Dalai Lama? Role of the Gaden Phodrang Trust Explained

#### Introduction

As the 14th Dalai Lama approaches his 90th birthday, he has reaffirmed that the Gaden Phodrang Trust will be the sole authority to recognize his reincarnation — the future 15th Dalai Lama. This declaration reasserts a 2011 statement and emphasizes that no outside body, including governments, can interfere in the selection process.

#### What is the Gaden Phodrang Trust?

- **Name origin:** "Gaden Phodrang" originally referred to the residence of the Dalai Lamas at Drepung Monastery in Lhasa, Tibet.

#### Key Facts About the Trust

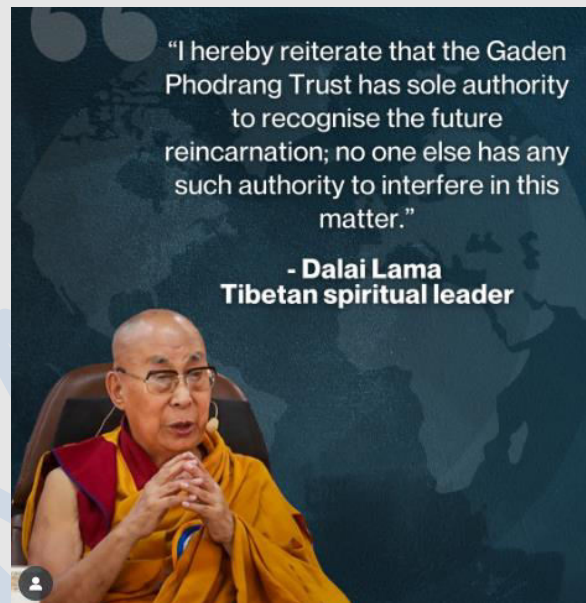
- Established in 2011 in Dharamshala, India.
- It is a registered body and functions from the Dalai Lama's office.
- Headed by the Dalai Lama himself and managed by Prof Samdhong Rinpoche, a former Tibetan Prime Minister in exile and a senior monk.
- Its main mandate is to recognize the next Dalai Lama based on Tibetan Buddhist tradition.

#### Why This Matters

This announcement challenges China's claim that it must approve the Dalai Lama's successor and reinforces that the decision lies solely within the Tibetan Buddhist tradition, through the Gaden Phodrang Trust.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Issues

Source: Indian Express



### 2. A Milestone Moment for Tibetan Buddhism

#### Introduction

On July 6, 2025, the 14th Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, turns 90. This birthday isn't just a celebration—it marks a turning point for Tibetan Buddhism and global geopolitics. As promised years ago, the Dalai Lama is expected to make a significant statement about the future of the Dalai Lama institution and whether it should continue after him.



### **What the Dalai Lama Said So Far**

In a recent event in Dharamshala, the Dalai Lama said that the continuation of the institution would be discussed "within some kind of framework." A statement from him is expected on July 2–4, during a major Buddhist conference, possibly outlining how his reincarnation—if any—will be selected.

This follows his 2011 pledge to re-evaluate the Dalai Lama system at age 90 and decide, in consultation with senior monks and Tibetan communities, whether it should continue.

### **Who Is the Dalai Lama?**

The Dalai Lama is both the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism and a global icon of non-violence and compassion. Born in 1935 in Taktser, northeastern Tibet (now China's Qinghai province), he was identified at age 2 as the reincarnation of the 13th Dalai Lama.

The title "Dalai Lama" means "Ocean of Wisdom" and is believed to be a reincarnation of Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion. Dalai Lamas are part of a centuries-old tradition where revered monks are reborn to continue their spiritual guidance.

### **A Life in Exile**

In 1959, after a failed uprising against Chinese rule in Tibet, the Dalai Lama fled to India with thousands of followers. India gave him asylum and a base in Dharamshala, where the Tibetan government-in-exile, or the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), was established.

In 2011, the Dalai Lama stepped down from his political role, passing leadership to a democratically elected Sikyong (President). This marked the end of the tradition of spiritual-political rule, which had lasted nearly 400 years.

### **Why Succession Matters**

The biggest concern is who controls the process of selecting the next Dalai Lama. Traditionally, reincarnation involves identifying a young child who recalls past life memories, often confirmed through symbolic tests.

However, China wants to control the selection. In 1995, when the Dalai Lama chose a Panchen Lama (second-most important spiritual leader), the Chinese government rejected it, named its own candidate, and reportedly abducted the child chosen by the Dalai Lama. That child, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, has never been seen publicly since.

Tibetans fear China will repeat this by appointing a pro-Beijing "Dalai Lama" to undermine Tibetan identity and consolidate control.

### **China's Tightening Grip on Tibetan Buddhism**

Beijing sees Tibetan Buddhism not only as a religious force but also a potential source of separatist sentiment. President Xi Jinping has promoted the "Sinicisation of religion," pushing all faiths to align with Chinese Communist values. This includes selecting religious leaders through state-sanctioned methods like the "Golden Urn" lottery system.

China officially labels the Dalai Lama a "splittist" and traitor, banning public displays of devotion. Yet millions of Tibetans still revere him.

### **Global Stakes: India, the US, and Geopolitics**

- India hosts the Tibetan exile government and is directly impacted by any shift in Tibetan-Chinese dynamics. The Himalayan border region remains tense.
- The United States passed the Tibet Dispute Act in 2024, urging China to resume dialogue with Tibetan leaders. President Joe Biden reaffirmed U.S. support for the Dalai Lama's autonomy and succession rights.

For China, controlling Tibet isn't just symbolic—it's strategic. Tibet's natural resources, rivers, and location near India make it geopolitically vital. Chinese critics argue that Beijing has systematically eroded Tibetan culture, flooded the region with Han settlers, and restricted religious freedom.

### **What Happens Next?**

Over the coming week, the world will watch closely as the Dalai Lama and the CTA may outline the succession process. Will there be a 15th Dalai Lama? If so, where will he be born? How will he be recognized?

This moment could define the future of Tibetan Buddhism, influence global diplomacy with China, and determine how 8 million Tibetans—inside and outside of Tibet—preserve their cultural identity.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Issues

Source: The Hindu

## **3. Modi Honoured with Ghana's Highest Award**

### **Introduction**

Prime Minister Modi received Ghana's highest national honour — The Officer of the Order of the Star of Ghana — from President John Dramani Mahama.

- Modi called the award a "symbol of enduring friendship" between India and Ghana.
- He dedicated it to India's youth, its cultural heritage, and the India-Ghana bond.

# 24 Global Honours

*Celebrated by 140 Crore Indians*

— India's Unstoppable Global Ascent —



## Ghana



PM Modi conferred with Ghana's  
Highest State Honour  
***The Officer of the Order  
of the Star of Ghana***



-  **Cyprus's** the Grand Cross of the Order of Makarios III
-  **Sri Lanka's** The Mitra Vibhushana
-  **Mauritius'** The Grand Commander of the Order of the Star & Key of the Indian Ocean
-  **Kuwait's** The Order of Mubarak Al Kabeer
-  **Guyana's** The Order Of Excellence
-  **Barbados's** The Order of Freedom
-  **Nigeria's** Grand Commander of the Order
-  **Dominica's** Dominica Award of Honour
-  **Russia's** Order of St. Andrew the Apostle
-  **Greece's** Grand Cross of the Order of Honour
-  **France's** Grand Cross of the Legion
-  **Egypt's** Order of the Nile
-  **Republic of Palau's** honour Ebaki Award
-  **Papua New Guinea's** the Order of Logohu
-  **Fiji's** Companion of the Order of Fiji
-  **Bhutan's** Order of the Druk Gyalpo
-  **US Government's** Legion of Merit
-  **Bahrain's** King Hamad Order of the Renaissance
-  **Maldives'** the Order of the Distinguished Rule of Nishan Izzuddin
-  **United Arab Emirates'** Order of Zayed Award
-  **Palestine's** the Grand Collar of the State of Palestine Award
-  **Afghanistan's** the State Order of Ghazi Amir Amanullah Khan
-  **Saudi Arabia's** Order of King Abdulaziz

### First Indian PM to Address Ghana's Parliament

Modi became the first Indian Prime Minister to address Ghana's Parliament.

- He praised Ghana's democratic traditions.
- Thanked Speaker Alban Bagbin, who visited India in 2023.

- Welcomed the creation of the Ghana-India Parliamentary Friendship Society.

### **Shared History and Unity with Africa**

Modi quoted Ghana's founding father Kwame Nkrumah, highlighting India and Africa's shared history of colonization and decolonization. "The forces that unite us are intrinsic and greater than the superimposed influences that keep us apart." He reiterated India's commitment to stand "shoulder to shoulder" with Ghana in its development journey.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Bilateral Relations

Source: PIB

## **4. Why India Will Host Pakistani Athletes Despite Visa Ban**

### **Background: Visa Ban After Pahalgam Attacks**

On April 24, 2025, India suspended visa services for Pakistani nationals following terror attacks in Pahalgam. This raised concerns about whether Pakistani athletes could participate in tournaments hosted in India.

### **India Makes an Exception for Sports**

A sports ministry official clarified that while India won't hold bilateral matches with Pakistan, it will allow Pakistani athletes to compete in multi-nation tournaments hosted in India.

"This does not apply to bilateral engagements but only to international, multi-team events," the official said.



India is set to host over a dozen international sports events in 2025, in disciplines such as Hockey, Badminton, Weightlifting, Swimming and Athletics (Not including cricket).

### **Pakistani Cricketers Not Included**

- India and Pakistan have agreed to play cricket at neutral venues till 2027.
- Arshad Nadeem, Pakistan's Olympic gold medalist in javelin, won't compete in the Neeraj Chopra Classic because it's an invitational event.

### **What Happened in 2019?**

After the Pulwama attacks, India denied visas to a Pakistani shooting team for a World Cup in Delhi.

### **The International Olympic Committee (IOC):**

- Accused India of violating the Olympic Charter
- Suspended talks with India for future sports events
- Recommended that no global sports event be hosted in India without guarantees of visa access to all countries

**In response, the Indian government in June 2019 assured the IOC that:**

All qualified athletes would be allowed entry, regardless of political issues with their country.

**IOC's Rule 44: No Discrimination**

According to IOC Rule 44, National Olympic Committees must ensure:

"No athlete is excluded for racial, religious, political or other discriminatory reasons."

The IOC has strictly enforced this rule:

- Kuwait (2015): Faced sanctions for denying an Israeli visa
- Malaysia: Lost rights to host a championship for similar reasons
- Indonesia: Stripped of U-20 FIFA World Cup over Israel ban
- Even the USA, despite travel bans, allows athletes from those countries for the 2026 FIFA World Cup and 2028 Olympics

**India's Olympic Ambitions at Risk**

India is bidding to host the 2036 Olympics and 2030 Commonwealth Games.

**Any violation of the Olympic Charter could:**

- Hurt India's chances
- Lead to loss of hosting rights

IOC member Kolinda Grabar-Kitarovic warned that:

Countries politicizing sport will face consequences during host selection processes.

India, aware of the risks, recently sent a high-level team to IOC headquarters in Lausanne to push its 2036 bid.

**Bottom Line**

While India's borders and diplomacy with Pakistan remain tense, the country will honour its international sports commitments to avoid violating the Olympic Charter and to protect its global sporting ambitions.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Issues

Source: Indian Express

**5. India Strengthens Diaspora Ties in Trinidad and Tobago**

**Modi Celebrates Indian Diaspora as "Pride of India"**

During a landmark visit to Trinidad and Tobago, Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed the 35 million-strong Indian diaspora worldwide as India's "pride". At an event in Port of Spain, he said, "Each one of you is a Rashtrdoot — an ambassador of India's values, culture, and heritage."

He announced that sixth-generation Indian-origin citizens in Trinidad and Tobago will now be eligible for Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) cards. This move coincides with the 180th anniversary of the arrival of the first Indian indentured labourers (Girmitiyas) in the Caribbean nation.

### Strengthening Girmitiya Connections

Modi emphasized the deep cultural links between India and the Girmitiya community — descendants of indentured labourers from India who settled in Trinidad, Fiji, Mauritius, and parts of Africa. Many of these migrants came from Bihar and eastern Uttar Pradesh, bringing with them languages like Bhojpuri.



India is building a comprehensive database to map the migration history of these communities. The effort includes identifying ancestral Indian villages, preserving Girmitiya heritage, and organizing World Girmitiya Conferences.

### Financial and Digital Collaborations

Trinidad and Tobago has become the first Caribbean nation to adopt India's UPI (Unified Payments Interface) system, enabling easier financial transactions. India also signed at least six agreements with the country, covering areas such as:

- Financial and pharmaceutical cooperation
- Membership in India-led global initiatives like the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) and the Global Biofuel Alliance (GBA)
- Quick Impact Projects (QIPs): Small developmental projects (under \$50,000 each) funded by Indian grants
- Educational support: 2,000 laptops gifted to local students to aid in digitising education

Additionally, India has donated \$1 million worth of agro-machinery to support agriculture, including millet farming and seaweed-based fertilisers.

### Honouring Indian Heritage in Trinidad

Modi paid tribute to iconic Indian-origin figures in Trinidad and Tobago, including:

- Dr. Rudranath Capildeo, mathematician and politician
- Sundar Popo, known as the "King of Chutney" music
- Daren Ganga, former West Indies cricketer
- Sewdass Sadhu, the builder of the iconic "Temple in the Sea"

Sadhu, an indentured labourer, was imprisoned for building a temple on private land. Undeterred, he spent 25 years building a new temple in the sea, using his bicycle to transport materials. The temple, now known as the Sewdass Sadhu Shiva Mandir, is a prominent Hindu pilgrimage site and symbol of determination.

### The Larger Context

People of Indian origin make up nearly 40% of Trinidad and Tobago's population, with strong Hindu, Muslim, and other Indian-rooted cultural traditions. Their arrival in 1845 laid the foundation for a vibrant Indo-Caribbean heritage.

With these new initiatives, Modi's visit marked a significant step in reconnecting India with its diaspora and reaffirming the shared cultural and historical bonds that span generations.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Relations

Source: Indian Express

## 6. PM Modi Visits Brazil for BRICS 2025 Summit

### Introduction

Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived in Brazil on July 6, 2025, to attend the 17th BRICS Summit in Rio de Janeiro. This is the PM Modi's 4<sup>th</sup> visit to Brazil. He will also meet President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva in Brasília to discuss strengthening ties in trade, defence, technology, space, and more.

### 1. Historical Ties Since Colonial Times

- India and Brazil have shared connections since the 1500s, both being part of the Portuguese colonial empire.
- Portuguese explorer Pedro Alvares Cabral reached Brazil in 1500, shortly after Vasco da Gama's arrival in India.
- Goa and Brazil had early trade and cultural exchanges:
  - India sent coconuts and mangoes to Brazil.
  - Brazil sent cashew nuts to India.
  - Indian Nellore cattle were exported to Brazil, forming 80% of Brazilian livestock today (called 'Nelore').

### 2. Brazil: India's Largest Trade Partner in South America

- Diplomatic relations began in 1948, but progress was slow after Brazil opposed India's 1961 liberation of Goa.
- Relations improved from the 1990s onward after both nations implemented economic reforms.
- In 2024–25, bilateral trade hit \$12.20 billion:
  - India's exports: \$6.77 billion
  - India's imports: \$5.43 billion
- 4,000 Indians currently live in Brazil.
- Indian companies like TCS, Infosys, Sun Pharma, and Aditya Birla Group have offices in São Paulo and other cities.



### 3. Brazil's Economic Slowdown

- In the 2000s, both India and Brazil were rising economies.
- But Brazil has faced setbacks due to:
  - Slow GDP growth
  - Corruption scandals, especially at state-run oil giant Petrobras
  - President Dilma Rousseff was impeached in 2017 over budget manipulation.
- These issues emerged ahead of the 2016 Rio Olympics, the first Olympics held in South America.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Bilateral Relations

Source: Indian Express

## 7. Xi missed BRICS Summit for 1<sup>st</sup> time in years

### Introduction

Chinese President Xi Jinping did not attend the BRICS summit held in Rio de Janeiro on July 6–7, 2025. His absence, a first in 12 years, led to speculation in global media that he may be losing control over the Chinese government. Some also noted that he hadn't appeared in public for a few days.

### What Is the Official Reason for Skipping the Summit?

Chinese authorities officially cited "scheduling conflicts" as the reason for his absence. A report in the South China Morning Post suggested it might be because Xi had already met Brazilian President Lula da Silva multiple times recently.



### Other Leaders Also Missed the Event

Russian President Vladimir Putin also skipped the summit, reportedly due to the International Criminal Court's arrest warrant against him. Some speculated Xi avoided the summit because Modi was invited for a special state dinner, and China didn't want Xi to appear less important.

### Does Xi's Absence Show Weakening Power?

Unlikely, Say Analysts, there is no strong evidence that Xi's political power is weakening. China's political system is often called a "black box" because it reveals little, and such rumours have surfaced many times before — especially around major events.

### Similar Past Incidents

- In 2012, before becoming President, Xi vanished from public view briefly.
- During the Covid lockdowns, protests broke out, but Xi's position remained secure.
- In recent years, July–September has often seen similar rumours — all of which proved unfounded.

### Xi Still Holds the Top Position

In 2022, Xi was re-elected as general secretary of the Communist Party for a third five-year term — the most powerful role in China. This gives him authority at least until 2027, showing continued centralisation of power.

### Conclusion: No Real Evidence of Weakening Power

Although his absence raised eyebrows, there's no concrete sign that Xi Jinping is losing control. Instead, he continues to hold firm authority over China's political and military systems.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Issues

Source: Indian Express

## 8. UAE Launches Lifetime Golden Visa for Indians and Bangladeshis

### Introduction

The UAE has launched a nomination-based Golden Visa scheme offering lifetime residency to select residents of India and Bangladesh, as part of a pilot programme.

### Key Details:

- Lifetime UAE residency on paying a fee of AED 100,000 (approx ₹23.3 lakh)
- No need to invest in property or start a business (unlike earlier rules)
- Initial phase limited to India and Bangladesh
- Over 5,000 Indians expected to apply in the first 3 months

### What is a Golden Visa?

A Golden Visa offers long-term residency to individuals who invest significant amounts in a country's economy, usually in:

- Real estate
- Business or startups
- Government bonds

Unlike regular immigration routes, it bypasses traditional requirements like educational qualifications or job offers.

Some countries also offer "golden passports", which provide citizenship in exchange for investments.



## How Does UAE's Golden Visa Work?

Current Rules (Before the New Pilot):

- Valid for 5 to 10 years
- No sponsor required
- Allows individuals and their families to live, work, or study in the UAE

### Two Main Categories:

#### 1. Investors and Entrepreneurs

- o Investment of AED 2 million (₹4.67 crore) in real estate or business
- o Or a startup worth at least AED 500,000 (₹1.17 crore)

#### 2. Outstanding Talents

- o Doctors, scientists, artists, athletes, inventors
- o Executives and professionals in key sectors
- o PhD holders in science/engineering
- o Top-performing students

### What's Different in the Nomination-Based Policy?

Key Changes:

- Offers lifetime residency, not just 5–10 years
- No investment in property or business needed
- Based on nomination and background check

### Why India and Bangladesh?

India's inclusion signals its strong trade, cultural, and diplomatic ties with the UAE — especially since the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) came into effect in May 2022. The scheme may later extend to other CEPA partner countries, such as China.

### Why Countries Offer Golden Visas

Such schemes help countries:

- Attract foreign investment
- Boost their economy during financial crises
- Examples:
  - o Portugal after the 2008 recession
  - o Saint Kitts and Nevis to replace lost sugar export revenue

### Concerns Around Golden Visas

Misuse Risks:

- Potential for money laundering, tax evasion, and corruption
- People may use them to evade law enforcement in their home countries

### Notorious Cases:

- Mehul Choksi, accused in ₹13,000 crore bank scam, gained Antiguan citizenship via golden visa
- Nirav Modi, another scam accused, obtained UK residency via investor visa

### **Tighter Rules Worldwide:**

- UK scrapped its investor visa in 2022
- Ireland, Greece, and Malta scaled back schemes to control rising property prices
- EU warned against misuse for illegitimate purposes

### **Conclusion: A Big Opportunity with Some Watchouts**

The UAE's new lifetime visa offers a huge opportunity for Indian and Bangladeshi professionals and entrepreneurs. But, like all such schemes, safeguards are essential to prevent misuse and protect national interests.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Relations

Source: The Hindu

## **9. PM Modi Visits Namibia: A Historic Step**

### **Introduction**

- First visit by an Indian PM in nearly 30 years to Namibia, a key African partner.
- Final stop in Modi's five-country tour of the Global South.
- Aims to boost ties in technology, healthcare, energy, development, infrastructure, and security cooperation.

### **India–Namibia Ties: A Shared Journey**

- India was among the first countries to support Namibia's independence movement.
- 1946: India raised Namibia's case at the United Nations General Assembly.
- 1986: The SWAPO (liberation movement) opened its first embassy in New Delhi.
- India provided military training, material aid, and diplomatic support to SWAPO.
- After independence in 1990, the Indian mission was upgraded to a High Commission.
- SWAPO leader and first Namibian President Sam Nujoma visited India 11 times, praising India's crucial support.



### **India's Last PM Visit & Strategic Engagement**

- Atal Bihari Vajpayee visited in 1998 before the Durban NAM summit.
- His visit was crucial to avoid criticism of India's 1998 nuclear tests in the NAM declaration.
- Pranab Mukherjee's 2016 visit reaffirmed India's commitment to South-South cooperation and development partnership.

### **Why Namibia Matters to India**

- Rich in critical minerals:

- 3rd-largest producer of uranium
- Major reserves of lithium, zinc, and rare earth metals

### **Trade and Investment Highlights**

- India–Namibia trade hit \$654 million (April–Nov 2023), up 178% year-on-year.
- India's exports: \$418 million (pharma, machinery, cereals)
- Imports from Namibia: \$235 million (mainly mineral oil and ores)
- \$800 million in Indian investments, mainly in zinc mining, diamond processing, and minerals.

### **Development, Aid, and Skill Building**

- India Wing at University of Namibia, built with a \$12 million grant.
- India has trained Namibian defence officers, diplomats, doctors, and cricketers under the ITEC program.
- Supplied 30,000 Covishield doses in 2021 and rice aid during droughts in 2017 and 2019.
- Namibia has backed India's bid for permanent UN Security Council membership.

### **Cheetah Diplomacy: A Unique Partnership**

- In 2022, India and Namibia signed an MoU to reintroduce cheetahs into Indian forests.
- 8 cheetahs were flown to India — the world's first intercontinental large carnivore translocation.
- Symbolic of deepening ecological and wildlife cooperation.

### **India's Expanding Role in Africa**

- India–Africa trade: ~\$100 billion in 2023, making India Africa's 4th largest trading partner.
- India is 10th largest FDI source, with \$76 billion invested since 1996.
- Has completed 206 development projects in 43 African countries, with 65 more underway.
- Promotes local ownership, capacity building, and mutual development, avoiding exploitative models.

### **India vs China: Two Models in Africa**

- China's trade with Africa: Over \$200 billion.
- Concerns over Chinese debt traps and foreign control of African resources.
- Two of Namibia's uranium mines are Chinese-owned.
- India's approach is non-exploitative and humanitarian, focused on trust, empowerment, and solidarity.

### **Security & Global Engagement**

- India conducts regular military exercises with African nations:
  - AF-INDEX (Africa-India Field Training Exercise)
  - India-Africa Defence Dialogue (2022)
- Promotes maritime security via SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region).
- Under India's G20 presidency, the African Union became a permanent G20 member.
- India leverages NAM legacy, ITEC programs, and defence diplomacy to strengthen Africa ties.

**Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Relations**

## 10. What Is the EU's Carbon Border Tax (CBAM)?

### Introduction

The Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) is an import tax imposed by the European Union (EU) on goods produced in countries with less strict carbon emission rules than the EU.

Its stated goal is to prevent "carbon leakage"—where companies move production to countries with weaker environmental regulations—and to encourage cleaner industrial practices globally.



### Why Has BRICS Rejected CBAM?

#### Seen as Unfair by Developing Nations

At the recent BRICS summit in Rio de Janeiro, member countries including India, China, and Brazil condemned and rejected CBAM. They called it a unilateral, protectionist measure that violates international trade and climate agreements and hurts developing economies trying to transition to greener practices.

### How Does CBAM Work?

- Implemented by the EU in 2023, full rollout in 2026.
- Taxes imports (e.g., steel, cement, aluminium) based on how much carbon was emitted during their production.
- EU importers must buy carbon certificates equal to what they would have paid if the product were made in Europe under EU carbon pricing rules.
- If a foreign producer has already paid for carbon emissions in their home country, the EU allows a deduction.

### Why Is CBAM a Problem for Developing Countries?

#### 1. Hurts Competitiveness

Goods like steel or cement from India become costlier and less competitive in the EU market.

#### 2. Violates Global Agreements

- Goes against the Paris Agreement, which protects developing nations from harsh economic impacts.
- Undermines the principle of "differentiated responsibilities", which gives developing countries flexibility in their climate actions.

#### 3. Benefits Developed Countries

Industries in wealthier countries with EU-level carbon standards are not taxed, giving them a market advantage.

## How Have Countries Like India Responded?

### Diplomatic Opposition

- India, China, and others raised the issue at UN climate summits (e.g., COP27 in Egypt, COP28 in Dubai, and upcoming COP29 in Baku).
- At COP29, they delayed the opening session demanding a discussion on trade-related climate policies.

### Joint Declarations

- The BASIC group (Brazil, South Africa, India, China) issued multiple joint statements opposing CBAM and calling for solidarity among developing nations.

### What Other Trade Measures Are Tied to Climate Action?

- More CBAM-like rules are expected from the UK and Canada.
- Non-tariff climate measures:
  - EU bans goods linked to illegally harvested forests.
  - The U.S. Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) gives clean-tech subsidies that impact global trade.
- Climate-linked policies are also driving new forms of protectionism, often targeting Chinese dominance in green technology supply chains.

### Why This Matters

#### **CBAM is not just a climate measure—it's a powerful trade tool.**

It reflects how climate change is reshaping global economics, often at the cost of developing nations. The resistance from BRICS and others shows growing concern over fairness, equity, and shared responsibility in the global fight against climate change.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Relations

Source: Indian Express

## 11. PM Modi Receives Brazil's Highest Civilian Honour

### Awarded the Grand Collar of the National Order of the Southern Cross



On July 9, 2025, Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva conferred the "Grand Collar of the National Order of the Southern Cross" on Prime Minister Narendra Modi—the highest national honour of Brazil.

#### **A Tribute to India-Brazil Friendship**

PM Modi expressed deep gratitude to the President, Government, and people of Brazil. He said the award was a tribute to India's 1.4 billion people and symbolised the strong friendship between the two nations.

PM Modi said the award would further inspire the people of both countries to deepen their warm and friendly relationship.

## 12. BRICS Summit in Rio: Unity Amid Global and Internal Tensions

### Expanded BRICS in the Global Spotlight

The 17th BRICS Summit, held in Rio, was the first to include all newly inducted members — Egypt, Ethiopia, the UAE, Iran, and Indonesia (Saudi Arabia has not yet joined). The meeting occurred during global tensions: U.S.-Israel attacks on Iran's nuclear facilities, heavy bombing in Gaza, the recent India-Pakistan conflict, and just after the G-7 summit in Canada.



### Challenges to Unity: U.S. Pressure and Internal Differences

- BRICS is increasingly seen as a challenger to the Western-led financial order, especially the dominance of the U.S. dollar.
- U.S. President Donald Trump criticized BRICS for promoting de-dollarisation, threatening 10% extra tariffs on its members.
- Internally, BRICS has faced friction: a recent Foreign Ministers' meeting failed to release a joint statement due to disagreements on UN Security Council reforms.

### Mixed Signals on De-dollarisation

While India has clarified it is not pursuing de-dollarisation or a unified BRICS stance on it, Brazil's President Lula took a strong anti-U.S. tone, stating the world doesn't "need an emperor."

### Rio Declaration: Signs of Cohesion and Progress

Despite tensions, the Rio Declaration reflected unity on several fronts:

- Strong condemnation of attacks on Gaza and Iran, especially due to nuclear safety concerns.
- India secured support for condemning the Pahalgam terror attack and for addressing cross-border terrorism.
- India and Brazil gained endorsement for greater roles at the UN, including the Security Council.

### New Voices, New Vision

With China and Russia's leaders absent, the non-Permanent Security Council (P5) countries had more space to push a common Global South agenda. This included:

- Resolutions on energy security
- Commitments to climate change action
- Proposals to reform the World Trade Organization (WTO)

### Looking Ahead: India's Leadership Next Year

As India prepares to lead BRICS next year, the grouping now:

- Represents nearly 50% of the global population
- Accounts for 40% of global GDP
- Handles about 25% of world trade

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Organisations

Source: The Hindu

## 13. Namibia Confers Highest Civilian Award on PM Modi

### Introduction

During his state visit to Namibia, Prime Minister Narendra Modi was conferred with the Order of the Most Ancient Welwitschia Mirabilis, the country's highest civilian award. He became the first Indian leader to receive this honour.

PM Modi dedicated the award to the 1.4 billion people of India and the enduring India-Namibia friendship. He thanked Namibian President Netumbo Nandi-Ndaitwah and the people of Namibia, calling the award a milestone in bilateral relations.

### PM Modi's Speech in Namibian Parliament: A Vision for Africa

Addressing a joint session of the Namibian Parliament, PM Modi emphasized India's long-standing support for Namibia's freedom struggle — "not just in words, but in action."

He drew a symbolic comparison between the two nations' friendship and Namibia's national plant, Welwitschia mirabilis — resilient and enduring with time.

### India's Role in Namibia's Independence

India was one of the first countries to raise the issue of Namibia's independence at the United Nations in 1946. It supported the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO) by hosting its first diplomatic mission and providing material assistance. PM Modi also paid tribute to Sam Nujoma, Namibia's freedom hero, and remembered his strong ties with India.



### **Cooperation, Not Competition: India's Africa Policy**

PM Modi made it clear that India sees Africa as a partner, not a competitor.

"With Africa, we seek not to compete, but to cooperate. Our goal is to build together. Not to take, but to grow together," he said.

He stressed that Africa should not just be a source of raw materials, but a leader in value creation and sustainable growth.

### **Key Agreements and Partnerships Signed**

Several agreements and initiatives were announced during the visit:

- Entrepreneurship Development Centre to be set up in Namibia.
- MoU in health and medicine for greater cooperation.
- Namibia joined India-led Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure and the Global Biofuel Alliance.

### **Digital Collaboration: UPI in Namibia**

PM Modi congratulated Namibia for adopting India's UPI digital payment system.

A technology licensing agreement between the National Payments Corporation of India and the Bank of Namibia (signed in April 2024) will lead to the official launch of digital payments in Namibia later this year.

UPI, or Unified Payments Interface, is already accepted in several countries, including

1. Singapore
2. Bhutan
3. Malaysia
4. United Arab Emirates
5. Nepal
6. France
7. United Kingdom
8. Russia
9. Oman
10. Qatar
11. Sri Lanka
12. Mauritius

UPI is expected to be introduced in many more nations.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Relations

Source: Indian Express

## **14. US Sanctions on a UN Expert**

### **Background: US Sanctions on a UN Expert**

## US sanctions UN expert Francesca Albanese over Israel criticism



In July 2025, the United States imposed sanctions on Francesca Albanese, the United Nations Special Rapporteur for human rights in the Palestinian territories. The US accused her of "unabashed antisemitism," "support for terrorism," and showing "open contempt" for the US, Israel, and Western nations.

### Who Is Francesca Albanese?

- Profession: International lawyer and affiliate scholar at Georgetown University's Institute for the Study of International Migration.
- UN Role: Appointed in May 2022 as the UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in the territories occupied since 1967.
- Publications: Co author of *Palestinian Refugees in International Law* (2020) and numerous articles on Palestine and UNRWA.

### Albanese's Criticism of Israel

- Genocide Allegations: In a July 3, 2025 UN Human Rights Council address, she called Israel's conduct in Gaza "one of the cruellest genocides in modern history" and described conditions there as "apocalyptic."
- Support for ICC Warrants: She publicly backed International Criminal Court arrest warrants against Israeli leaders Benjamin Netanyahu and Yoav Gallant for alleged war crimes in Gaza.

### Role of a UN Special Rapporteur

- Mandate: An independent expert appointed by the UN Human Rights Council under its 1993 resolution to monitor and report on human rights violations in specific situations.
- Duties: Conduct site visits, engage with governments and civil society, and submit annual public reports to the Human Rights Council.

### What Is the International Criminal Court (ICC)?

- Established: By the Rome Statute, effective July 1, 2002.
- Purpose: Prosecuting genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and aggression.
- Jurisdiction: Only court that can try individuals for these international crimes; it has charged Israeli officials for alleged denial of essentials to Gaza's population.

### US Objections and Legal Basis for Sanctions

- Sovereignty Concerns: The US and Israel are not parties to the Rome Statute. Secretary of State Marco Rubio said Albanese's work with the ICC infringed on their sovereignty.
- Allegations: Rubio accused her of antisemitism, supporting terrorism, and sending "threatening letters" to American companies.

- Executive Order 14203: Signed February 6, 2025 by President Trump, it allows sanctions against anyone aiding ICC efforts to investigate or prosecute “protected persons” without their nation’s consent.

### Controversy and Reactions

- Previous Sanctions: Last month, the Trump administration targeted four ICC judges under the same executive order.
- UN and Human Rights Community: Many see the US move as an attack on independent human rights monitoring and on the ICC’s authority.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Issues

Source: Indian Express

## 15. Why Has the World Court Issued Arrest Warrants for Taliban Leaders?

### Introduction



On July 8, 2025, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued arrest warrants for Haibatullah Akhundzada (Taliban Supreme Leader) and Abdul Hakim Haqqani (Chief Justice of Taliban’s Islamic Emirate).

They are accused of crimes against humanity — specifically, persecuting women, girls, and others who do not follow the Taliban’s gender rules.

### What Are the Charges Against the Taliban

#### Leaders?

According to the ICC:

- The Taliban leaders either ordered, encouraged, or supported persecution based on gender and political views.
- Victims include:
  - o Girls and women
  - o LGBTQIA+ individuals
  - o People who supported women’s rights

The ICC says they were “severely deprived” of:

- Education
- Privacy
- Family life
- Freedom of movement
- Freedom of expression, thought, and religion

### What Has the Taliban Done?

Since taking control in August 2021, the Taliban has:

- Banned girls from secondary schools and universities
- Restricted women's movement and speech
- Punished people for not conforming to strict gender rules

In August 2024, the Taliban issued a 144-page "morality law" which:

- Requires women to cover their entire bodies
- Bans women from singing or speaking publicly
- Forbids men and women from looking at each other in public
- Criminalises LGBTQIA+ identity

The United Nations has called this "gender apartheid".

### **What Is the ICC and What Does It Do?**

- The International Criminal Court (ICC) is based in The Hague, Netherlands.
- It was created by the Rome Statute (1998) and started working in 2002.
- It investigates and tries individuals (not governments) for:
  - o Genocide
  - o Crimes against humanity
  - o War crimes
  - o Aggression

Note: This is different from the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which handles disputes between countries, not individuals.

### **What Is a 'Crime Against Humanity' Under ICC Law?**

Under Article 7 of the Rome Statute:

- Crimes against humanity include large-scale or systematic attacks on civilians.
- These include persecution based on gender, religion, race, political beliefs, etc.
- The ICC has jurisdiction over Afghanistan since the country joined the Rome Statute in 2003.

### **What Happened So Far in This Case?**

- On January 23, 2025, the ICC Prosecutor Karim Khan applied for arrest warrants.
- His office gathered evidence like:
  - o Witness testimonies
  - o Official Taliban decrees
  - o Statements by Taliban leaders
  - o Audio-visual material
- The ICC found enough proof that persecution began after August 15, 2021 (Taliban takeover).
- The Pre-Trial Chamber approved the request and issued arrest warrants on July 8, 2025.

### **How Have the Taliban Responded?**

Taliban spokesperson Zabihullah Mujahid responded on X (Twitter):

"We do not recognise any organisation called the International Court, nor are we committed to it in any way."

- The arrest is unlikely to happen soon.
- Haibatullah Akhundzada remains extremely reclusive, rarely appearing in public.

In September 2024, countries like Canada, Australia, Germany, and the Netherlands tried to take the Taliban to the ICJ over gender discrimination — but that case has seen little progress.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Issues

Source: Indian Express

## 16. Kailash-Mansarovar Yatra Resumes After 5 Years

### Introduction

The Kailash-Mansarovar Yatra, a sacred pilgrimage for Hindus, Buddhists, Jains, and Bon followers, has resumed in 2025 after a five-year pause due to Covid-19 and India-China tensions.

- 750 pilgrims have been selected by the Ministry of External Affairs.
- Two routes:
  - o Lipulekh Pass (Uttarakhand) – 5 batches of 50 pilgrims
  - o Nathu La Pass (Sikkim) – 10 batches of 50 pilgrims
- The first batches are currently en route.

### Sacred Geography: Mount Kailash and the Holy Lakes

- Mount Kailash (6,638 m) lies in Tibet, near the tri-junction of India, Nepal, and Tibet.
- Below it lie two lakes:
  - o Mansarovar (freshwater)
  - o Rakshastal (saltwater)



### Religious Significance

- Hindus: Abode of Lord Shiva
- Jains: Site of first Tirthankara's enlightenment

- Buddhists: Centre of the universe
- Bon: Home of sky goddess Sipaimen

### **Origin of Major Rivers**

Mount Kailash is the source of:

- Indus
- Sutlej
- Karnali (Ghaghra)
- Yarlung Tsangpo (Brahmaputra)

### **Pilgrimage History: From Seclusion to Mainstream**

- Before 1900s: Only renunciates visited Kailash. It was believed only spiritually advanced practitioners could reach it.
- 1905: British officer Charles Sherring visited the site, proposed development, and popularised it with his book *Western Tibet and the British Borderlands*.
- 1930: Around 730 Indian pilgrims made the journey.
- 1950–59: Access stopped after China annexed Tibet.
- 1981: Pilgrimage reopened thanks to Subramanian Swamy, who negotiated with China. The first batch of 60 Indians included him.

### **The Pilgrimage Journey: Then and Now**

- New Roads Reduce Trekking:
  - o Lipulekh Route: Trekking distance on Indian side has dropped from 27 km (2019) to just 1 km (2025). However, around 200 km trekking is involved in Tibet.
  - o Nathu La Route (opened 2015): Entire journey (~1,500 km) done by vehicle

### **Conclusion**

The resumption of the Kailash-Mansarovar Yatra not only revives a deeply spiritual tradition, but also reflects improved infrastructure and India-China cooperation. While the route has become more accessible, the spiritual significance and the physical demands of the pilgrimage continue to draw devoted pilgrims year after year.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Issues

Source: Indian Express

## **17. Why India Should Support the Global Green Revolution Institutions**

### **USAID's Shutdown Impacts Global Agriculture Research**

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID), a major funder of global agricultural institutions, was shut down on July 1, 2025, by the Trump administration.

This has impacted key institutions like CIMMYT (International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center), based in Mexico, which helped kick-start India's Green Revolution.

### **CIMMYT's Legacy and Contribution to India**

CIMMYT, along with the Philippines-based IRRI (International Rice Research Institute), developed high-yielding wheat and rice varieties in the 1960s that helped India overcome food shortages.

These institutions were funded by the US as part of Cold War-era efforts to prevent food insecurity and political instability in developing nations.

- Wheat: Varieties like Sonora 64 and Lerma Rojo came from CIMMYT.
- Rice: Varieties like IR 8, IR 36, and IR 64 came from IRRI.
- These new seeds dramatically boosted crop yields, required less fertilizer, and matured faster than traditional ones.

### **India's Green Revolution: A Quick Recap**

- In 1967-68, Indian scientists released Kalyan Sona and Sonalika wheat varieties, developed from CIMMYT germplasm.
- Over time, Indian breeders built on this foundation, developing varieties like HD 2285, HD 2329, and HD 2967, which further improved yields.
- In rice, mega varieties like Swarna and Samba Mahsuri were bred in India, as were high-yielding basmati varieties (e.g., Pusa Basmati 1121 and 1509).
- Borlaug, the father of the Green Revolution, credited India's success to its strong institutions like IARI and scientists such as MS Swaminathan.

### **India's Deep Connections to CIMMYT and IRRI**

- Indian scientists played major roles in both institutions:
  - Gurdev Singh Khush (IRRI) developed globally adopted rice varieties.
  - Sanjaya Rajaram (CIMMYT) led wheat breeding and developed popular varieties like PBW 343.
- Even today, 6 of the top 10 wheat varieties in India come directly from CIMMYT research.

### **Why Continued Support Matters for India**

- India still relies heavily on CIMMYT material for wheat breeding.
- IRRI and CIMMYT are involved in cutting-edge research on:
  - Heat and drought tolerance
  - Nitrogen use efficiency
  - Gene editing
  - AI in agriculture

### **Current Funding Gap**

- In 2024, the US contributed \$83 million to CIMMYT's \$211 million budget.
- India gave just \$0.8 million to CIMMYT and \$18.3 million to IRRI — far below its stake and benefits.

### **Why India Should Step Up**

India has both the capacity and the interest to support these institutions:

- They directly benefit Indian agriculture and food security.

- With the US stepping back, India can increase its influence and guide global agricultural R&D.
- More funding should be strategic and collaborative, not a substitute for investing in Indian institutions like the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR).

"We should fund basic and strategic research, especially in new genetics and AI tools — but not at the cost of our national research system," said Rajendra Singh Paroda, former ICAR Director-General.

### **Conclusion: A Strategic Opportunity for India**

With USAID dismantled, India has a unique chance to repay its Green Revolution debt by supporting CIMMYT and IRRI.

Doing so is not just about gratitude — it is a strategic investment in food security, climate-resilient crops, and global agricultural leadership.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Organisations

Source: Indian Express

## **18. Reprieve for Indian Nurse on Death Row in Yemen**

### **Execution Postponed Amid Settlement Talks**

The scheduled execution of Indian nurse Nimisha Priya in Yemen has been postponed, according to official sources. Priya, who hails from Kerala, has been on death row since 2018, after being convicted for the 2017 murder of her former Yemeni business partner.

### **Possibility of 'Blood Money' Settlement**

Negotiations are ongoing with the victim's family to reach a settlement through the Islamic legal provision of "blood money". However, specific details of the talks are not yet public.

### **India Providing Diplomatic Support**

The Indian government is actively involved in the case and is offering "all possible assistance" to Priya. Officials are in touch with local Yemeni authorities, including jail and prosecution offices, and are working towards a "mutually agreeable solution" with all stakeholders, including the Houthi administration in Sana'a.

### **Background of the Case**



Priya had been working in Yemen since 2008 and later started a clinic in Sana'a in partnership with a local businessman, Talal Abdo Mahdi. Their relationship soured over financial disputes, eventually leading to the crime and her conviction.

### Political Complexity in Yemen

The case is further complicated by Yemen's political situation. While Sana'a is controlled by the Houthi group, the Internationally Recognised Government of Yemen operates from Aden. The Yemeni embassy in India had earlier clarified that the sentence was not issued by the internationally recognised government.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Issues

Source: The Hindu

## 19. Why Was Thailand's PM Suspended?

### Introduction

Thailand's Prime Minister Paetongtarn Shinawatra was suspended by the Constitutional Court on July 1 after a leaked phone call with Cambodia's former PM Hun Sen. In the call, she appeared too friendly and even deferential, calling him "uncle" and referring to a Thai military general as an "opponent," sparking outrage in a country where the military is powerful and sensitive to criticism.

### What Was the Call About?

The call, made on June 15, was meant to ease tensions after a Cambodian soldier was killed in a border clash on May 28. However, PM Paetongtarn's comments were seen as insulting to the Thai military. Hun Sen leaked the full 17-minute conversation, making the situation worse.

### How Did Thailand React?

- PM Paetongtarn said her comments were just negotiation tactics and that she didn't expect the call to be leaked.
- Despite her apology and support for the military, her biggest coalition partner (Bhumjaithai Party) left the government.
- The opposition demanded fresh elections.
- The Army denied coup rumours but emphasized loyalty to the monarchy.
- The PM even visited the general she had criticised to make peace.



### **Why Did Cambodia's Hun Sen Leak the Call?**

- Hun Sen said he recorded the call to avoid misunderstandings.
- He claimed someone among 80 recipients leaked it.
- He accused PM Paetongtarn of insulting the monarchy, saying disrespecting a general is the same as disrespecting the King, who appointed him.
- Hun Sen also brought up past issues with Paetongtarn's father, Thaksin Shinawatra, who faces trial for alleged royal insults.

### **What Is the Thailand-Cambodia Relationship Like?**

- The two countries share an 800-km border, with many disputed areas, especially near temples like Preah Vihear.
- These areas are often used by leaders to distract from domestic problems.
- Cambodia recently blamed Thailand for scam call centres.
- Despite past tensions, Hun Sen and Thaksin used to be close allies, with Hun Sen even appointing Thaksin as an adviser during his exile.

### **Why Does This Go Beyond Just a Phone Call?**

- The border clash in May that led to the soldier's death happened near Preah Vihear temple, a historically disputed site.
- The deeper issue stems from ancient Khmer empire claims, shifting borders, and unresolved land disputes.
- Historically, both countries have supported dissidents from each other, reflecting their unstable diplomatic ties.

### **What's Next for Paetongtarn Shinawatra?**

- Her suspension comes just 10 months after taking office, already replacing another PM who was suspended.
- She's facing a crumbling coalition, military tensions, a leaked scandal, and economic troubles—all at once.
- Whether she can return to power or not may depend on how well she can manage both domestic unrest and diplomatic damage.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Issues

Source: The Hindu

## **20. India Hits Back at U.S. Over Russian Oil Sanctions Threat**

### **Introduction**

India has criticized the “double standards” of Western countries, especially the U.S., after American lawmakers proposed a Bill that could impose massive duties on countries buying oil and other products from Russia.

The Bill — called the Russian Sanctions Act, 2025 — is being supported by former U.S. President Donald Trump and is aimed at pressuring countries like India, China, and Brazil to stop trading with Russia.



### **What Does the Bill Propose?**

- Section 17 of the Bill proposes 500% ad valorem duties on nations that buy, sell, or transfer Russian oil, gas, petroleum, or uranium.
- It also includes the possibility of secondary sanctions, such as 100% tariffs on Russian trade partners.

### **NATO Issues Warning**

NATO Secretary-General Mark Rutte joined the chorus, warning countries like India, China, and Brazil to pressure Russian President Vladimir Putin to end the war in Ukraine or face tariffs. He singled out “Beijing and Delhi” in particular.

### **India’s Response: National Interest Comes First**

Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said:

“Our priority is to secure the energy needs of our people. We are guided by market availability and global realities... and we caution against double standards.”

### **Petroleum Minister: India Will Handle Sanctions**

Union Petroleum Minister Hardeep Singh Puri said India would “deal with sanctions when they are passed,” emphasizing that India had diversified its oil imports, now buying from 40 countries, compared to 27 earlier.

Despite this diversification, Russia still supplies 38% of India’s oil (as of Feb 2025), while China receives about 50% of Russian exports. In contrast, only 6% of Russian oil goes to EU countries. India has not resumed oil imports from Iran, which were halted in 2017 under pressure from the earlier Trump administration.

### **Diplomatic Engagements and Energy Concerns**

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar had already raised India's energy security concerns with Senator Lindsey Graham, one of the Bill’s key sponsors.

India is also involved in ongoing negotiations with the U.S. over:

- Tariffs
- Market access for agricultural and dairy products
- Genetically modified produce

### **Rising Deportations of Indians from U.S.**

Alongside trade talks, India is also coordinating with the U.S. on the deportation of illegal Indian immigrants.

- 1,563 Indians were deported between January 20 and July 15, 2025, during Trump's second term.
- This is higher than the 1,529 deportations in all of 2024.
- After backlash over deportees being shackled and handcuffed on military flights, the U.S. agreed to use chartered civilian flights for deportations.

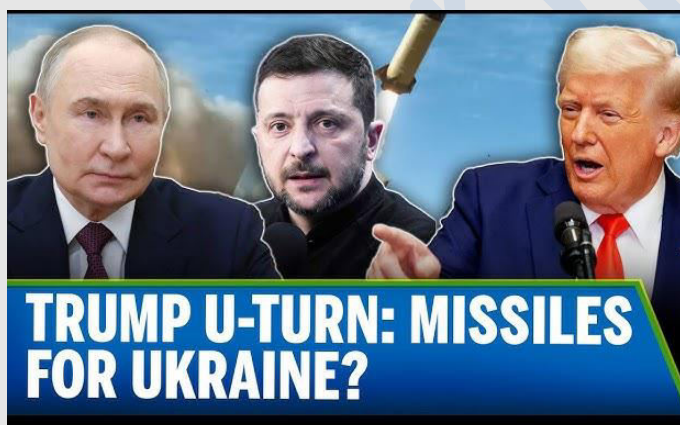
Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Relations

Source: Indian Express

## **21. Trump's U-Turn on Ukraine**

### **Shift from Peace Promise to Military Support**

- Donald Trump had promised to end the Ukraine war in 24 hours during his campaign.
- Now, he plans to send more weapons to Ukraine and threatens "severe tariffs" on Russia and its trade partners if peace isn't achieved in 50 days.
- The shift reflects the complex geopolitical realities and Russia's resistance to compromise.



### **Initial Progress, Then Setbacks**

#### **Temporary Ceasefire and Talks**

- Under U.S. pressure, Ukraine agreed to a ceasefire along current frontlines.
- Russia responded positively at first:
  - Agreed to a Black Sea naval ceasefire.
  - Halted attacks on Ukrainian energy sites for 30 days.
  - Sent negotiators to peace talks in Istanbul.

### **Escalation After U.S.-Iran Conflict**

- Russia resumed attacks after the U.S. joined Israel in bombing Iran, even though Iran was engaged in nuclear talks with Washington.
- Russia launched drone strikes and ground offensives, especially in the Dnipropetrovsk region.
- Putin refused to compromise, telling Trump he wouldn't retreat from his goals.

### **New U.S. Strategy: Limited Military Aid**

#### **What the U.S. Will and Won't Send**

- Trump refuses to send long-range offensive weapons to Ukraine.

- Instead, he will supply defensive arms like Patriot missile systems and ammunition, mostly through NATO allies.
- Patriots can protect Ukraine from air strikes but won't shift battlefield dynamics.

### **Tariffs and Their Limited Impact**

#### **Can Tariffs Hurt Russia?**

- U.S.-Russia trade was just \$3 billion in 2024, limiting the impact of direct tariffs.
- Trump threatens secondary tariffs on Russia's trade partners — countries like India, China, and Brazil.
- This approach may harm energy security in partner nations, especially India.

### **The Way Forward: Diplomacy, Not Threats**

#### **Why Ultimatums Don't Work**

- Decade-long sanctions have failed to change Russia's war policy.
- Threatening neutral countries is a repeat of a failed approach.
- Trump must realise that lasting peace needs diplomacy, not ultimatums.

#### **Call for Balanced Negotiation**

- Russia must reduce its maximalist demands.
- Ukraine's security needs must be addressed.
- A middle ground between both positions is essential for a durable and realistic peace.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Relations

Source: The Hindu

## **22. UK Government Plans to Lower Voting Age to 16**

### **Biggest Reform Since 1969**

The UK's Labour government has announced plans to lower the voting age from 18 to 16 — the most significant voting reform since 1969, when the age was reduced from 21 to 18. This move was part of Labour's campaign promise.

### **Bringing UK in Line with Wales and Scotland**

This change would align the national voting age with those already in place for the Welsh and Scottish parliaments, as well as local elections in those regions.

### **Curbing Foreign Interference in Elections**

The government's policy paper also proposes stricter rules to prevent foreign interference:

- Ban on 'Shell Companies': Companies must have significant income generated in the UK or Ireland to be eligible to donate to political parties.



**UK is planning to lower the  
voting age to 16 from 18  
by the next election**

- Ireland Exception: Eligible Irish firms may contribute to elections in Northern Ireland.

### **Impact on Elon Musk and Reform UK**

Last year, Elon Musk stirred controversy after reports of a potential large donation to the far-right Reform UK party. It remains unclear how the new rules would affect such funding from Musk's UK-based companies.

### **Boosting Voter Registration**

According to the Electoral Commission, 7–8 million eligible voters in the UK are currently unregistered. The proposed changes include:

- Registration from Age 14
- Move Toward Automatic Registration, similar to systems in other countries

### **Political Impact: Likely Advantage for Labour**

Lowering the voting age could benefit Labour, as younger voters tend to lean left:

- 41% of 18–24-year-olds voted Labour in 2024
- Only 20% of voters aged 70+ did the same

### **PM Keir Starmer's Justification**

Prime Minister Keir Starmer defended the change:

"I think it's really important that 16- and 17-year-olds have the vote, because they are old enough to go out to work, they are old enough to pay taxes..."

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Issues

Source: Indian Express

## **23. Trump's U-Turn on Russia: What's Behind the Shift?**

### **From Praise to Pressure**

US President Donald Trump, once known for praising Vladimir Putin and criticizing NATO and Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, has now changed course:

- He expressed "disappointment" with Putin in a recent BBC interview.
- Announced plans to send weapons to Ukraine.
- Warned of tariffs on Russia if there's no ceasefire within 50 days.
- Endorsed NATO, which he once called "obsolete."



### **Trump's Past Position: Friendly to Russia**

Just two months ago:

- Trump called Putin a "nice gentleman."

- He called Zelenskyy a “dictator” and accused him of risking World War III.
- Cut military and intelligence support to Ukraine.

Now, he appears to be taking a much tougher stance on Russia.

### **What’s Driving Trump’s Shift?**

#### **Putin’s Rising Demands**

Putin’s conditions for ending the war have become more aggressive:

- Retaining occupied Ukrainian territories
- Banning Ukraine from joining NATO
- Removing Zelenskyy from power

Trump, eager to claim credit for ending the war — possibly eyeing a Nobel Peace Prize — may be frustrated that Putin hasn’t given him a diplomatic win.

#### **Avoiding the “Weak” Label**

Trump does not want to be seen as someone played by Putin. The shift may be driven by his desire to appear strong and decisive in global affairs.

#### **Impact on NATO and Ukraine**

- Trump’s new stance has revived hope within NATO.
  - He has approved US-made artillery and may send Patriot missiles to Ukraine.
  - Zelenskyy reportedly gave Trump a detailed weapons request list, which is being considered.
- This comes as NATO Secretary General Mark Rutte warned India, China, and Brazil of economic penalties if they continue trading with Russia.

#### **Is This Shift Permanent?**

Probably not. Trump is known for unpredictability. His criticism of Putin could be temporary — he may flip back to praising him or attacking Zelenskyy depending on circumstances.

### **What Should India Take Away?**

#### **1. Focus on National Interests**

India should:

- Maintain strategic autonomy in trade and foreign policy.
- Evaluate US trade demands not to please Washington, but as part of India’s own economic reforms.

#### **2. Use Both Official and Informal Channels**

- Trump’s inner circle — family and close advisors — play an outsized role.
- Countries like Pakistan and some European leaders have built influence through informal access.
- India should continue using diaspora networks and trusted backchannels, especially with an upcoming Quad summit possibly bringing Trump to India.

### **Final Lesson: Learn from Zelenskyy**

Zelenskyy has effectively navigated a complex relationship with Trump by being proactive, persistent, and strategic. India too must stay the course — and prepare to deal with both official positions and personal dynamics in Trump's foreign policy.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Relations

Source: Indian Express

## 24. TRF Designated as Foreign Terrorist Organization by US After Pahalgam Attack

### Background of the Attack

The Resistance Front (TRF), a terror group active in Jammu and Kashmir, claimed responsibility for the April 22 Pahalgam attack that killed 26 people in South Kashmir's Baisaran meadow. On July 18, 2025, the US officially designated TRF as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) and Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT).



External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar welcomed the decision, calling it a "strong affirmation of India-US counter-terrorism cooperation."

### What is The Resistance Front (TRF)?

#### Origins and Links to Lashkar-e-Taiba

- TRF is considered an offshoot of Pakistan-based terror group Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT).
- It first gained attention in 2020 after attacks in Keran, Handwara, and Sopore that killed several Indian soldiers.

### Declared a Terrorist Group by India

- In January 2023, India's Ministry of Home Affairs designated TRF a terrorist organisation under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.
- The government accused it of terror recruitment, cross-border infiltration, and weapon smuggling.

### How Did TRF Emerge?

#### Collapse of LeT Leadership

- Between late 2018 and 2019, top LeT commanders in Kashmir were neutralized by Indian forces.
- The death of key figures like Naveed Jatt (Abu Hanzulla) and others reduced LeT's operational strength in the Valley.

### Post-Article 370 Strategy Shift

- After the revocation of Article 370 in August 2019, Pakistan was under pressure not to act overtly due to its FATF grey-listing.
- To avoid global scrutiny, Pakistan reportedly supported a group with a “secular and indigenous” image—hence the creation of TRF.

### TRF's Tactics and Composition

- TRF mixes local and foreign militants, trained extensively—often in Pakistan.
- Aims to portray militancy as an indigenous resistance rather than a religious jihad.
- Active on social media platforms like Telegram, Facebook, and WhatsApp to spread propaganda and claim attacks.

### What the US Designation Means

#### Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) Tag

- Under Section 219 of the US Immigration and Nationality Act:
  - It is illegal for US persons to offer support or resources to TRF.
  - US financial institutions must block TRF-related transactions and assets.

#### Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT)

- The Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC) also adds TRF to the SDGT list.
  - All US persons are barred from dealing with TRF assets.
  - Can trigger secondary sanctions on entities doing business with TRF.

### Current FTO List

- The US currently designates around 79 organisations as FTOs, including Hezbollah, al-Qaeda, and now TRF.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Relations

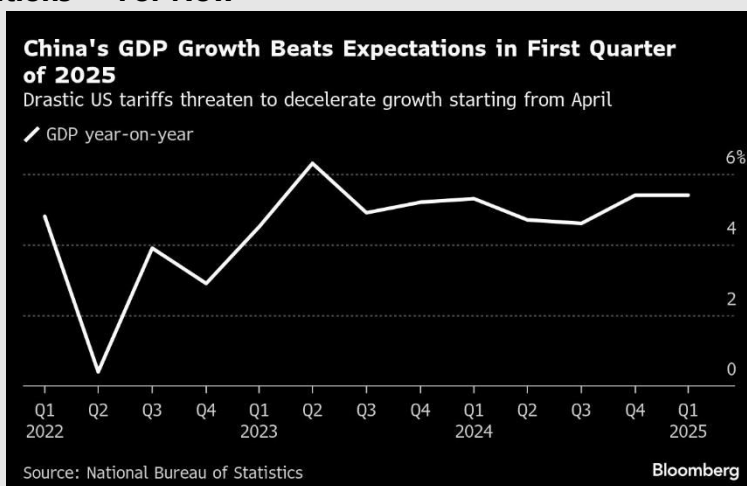
Source: Indian Express

## 25. Has China Beaten Trump's Tariffs? New GDP Data Offers Clues

### China's Growth Defies Expectations — For Now

China's GDP grew by 5.4% in Q1 and 5.2% in Q2 of 2025, according to data released on July 15. This performance, despite ongoing US tariffs, surprised many global analysts.

However, experts caution that much of this strength is temporary — driven by stockpiling, supply chain adjustments, and a 90-day US-



China tariff truce set to expire on August 12.

### **Tariffs Hurt, But Not Immediately**

According to economist Lizzi C. Lee, China hasn't escaped the impact of tariffs — but it has delayed the worst:

- Exporters shipped goods early to beat tariffs.
- Supply chains adapted, and
- Government support helped maintain momentum.

But this is a temporary cushion, not a long-term solution. When inventories run out and the truce ends, the real impact may surface.

### **Domestic Demand: China's Weak Spot**

While exports remain strong, domestic demand is sluggish:

- Imports and retail sales are weak.
- Consumer confidence is low due to job insecurity and deflationary pressures.
- A housing crisis and falling property values further erode household spending.

These are not new problems. For decades, China prioritized infrastructure investment over boosting household income and consumption, creating long-term imbalances.

### **Structural Imbalances Are to Blame**

China's model of high savings, low wages, and investment-led growth worked when investment was productive. But now:

- Production outpaces demand
- Business profits are shrinking
- Household income and confidence are lagging

Even before the pandemic, the economy was heading into what economists call a "growth recession"—growth that is positive but too weak to feel healthy.

### **Why China Must Rethink Its Growth Model**

#### **Export Dependence Creates Risk**

China's export-driven success has brought vulnerabilities:

- Geopolitical risks like US tariffs
- Rising global resistance to cheap Chinese goods
- Growing pressure from trading partners like the EU and ASEAN

The US market is still unmatched in scale. Even though exports to ASEAN and Europe are growing, they can't fully replace US demand.

#### **Fierce Competition Inside China**

There's also intense internal pressure. A trend known as "involution" — extreme competition among firms — has led to:

- Price wars
- Shrinking margins
- Limited wage growth

This, in turn, keeps domestic demand weak and prevents economic rebalancing.

### **Why Reforming the Model is Difficult**

China wants to move toward:

- Higher-value production
- Innovation over cheap pricing

But this shift will be painful. It could lead to:

- Short-term job losses
- Higher prices
- Firm closures in low-margin sectors

Long-term reform is necessary — but not without short-term economic and political costs.

### **Will China Launch a Big Stimulus?**

So far, China's response has been cautious:

- Limited fiscal spending
- Targeted subsidies
- Some credit easing

### **Why the restraint?**

- Growth is above target, so there's no urgency yet.
  - The government wants to avoid debt risks and another housing bubble.
  - Leaders are saving options in case the economic situation worsens later.
- Expect stronger stimulus measures only if future data shows a clear slowdown.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Relations

Source: Indian Express

## **26. Why Did Israel Bomb Syria?**

### **Introduction**

Israel recently bombed Syria, claiming it wanted to protect the Druze minority in Syria. The strikes came after sectarian clashes in the Druze-majority city of Suweida, where Syrian troops were reportedly attacking Druze fighters instead of protecting them.

### **Who Are the Druze?**

- The Druze, or Banu Ma'ruf ("the righteous people"), are an Arabic-speaking ethno-religious minority from the Levant region.
- Their beliefs are rooted in Ismaili Shi'ism, but they do not identify as Muslims.
- Key theological differences from Islam:
  - o Believe in reincarnation
  - o Worship al-Hakim, a Fatimid ruler
  - o Elevated status of women
- The Druze are highly secretive; only a religious elite (called uqqal) knows their teachings.
- No conversion is allowed into or out of the Druze faith.

### **Where Do the Druze Live?**

- Syria: ~500,000 (mainly in Jabal al-Duruz near Damascus)
- Lebanon: ~250,000
- Israel (incl. Golan Heights): ~152,000

Most Druze live near the Syria-Lebanon-Israel border, a politically sensitive area.



### A History of Persecution

- The Druze have been targeted by Muslim rulers since their formation in the 11th century.
- During Syria's civil war, Druze militias mainly fought defensively against Sunni extremist groups like al-Nusra Front.
- Despite varying opinions on former President Bashar al-Assad, the Druze and Assad often had a common enemy: Sunni militants.

### Rising Threats After Assad

- Assad was ousted in December 2024.
- The new regime under Ahmed al-Sharaa, a former al-Nusra leader, is seen as hostile to minorities.
- Al-Nusra previously massacred Druze villagers in 2015.
- Clashes have erupted between pro-government Sunni militias and Druze fighters, especially in Suweida.
- Sharaa has demanded Druze militias disarm and join his army — they have refused.

### Why Israel Is Getting Involved

#### 1. To Protect Its Druze Community

- Israel has a strong Druze population that serves in the military and bureaucracy.
- The Druze in Israel have requested intervention to protect their Syrian kin.
- Some see this as repayment for the Druze's loyalty to the Israeli state.

#### 2. To Prevent Militarisation Near Its Border

- Israel wants southern Syria demilitarised, fearing hostile Islamist forces could gather.
- Southern Syria, including the Golan Heights, has historically been a launchpad for threats like Hezbollah.
- By striking Syrian troops, Israel is enforcing a buffer zone to secure its northern frontier.

### The Golan Heights Context

- Israel first captured parts of the Golan Heights in 1967 and expanded control in 2024.
- Its claim is not internationally recognized.

- Syria rejects Israel's declaration of a demilitarised zone in its territory.

### What Happens Next?

#### Strained Peace Talks

- The strike comes just as Israel and Syria were exploring diplomatic talks, possibly with US encouragement.
- This strike may now delay or derail those efforts.

#### Al-Sharaa's Response

- Syria's President blamed Israel for "sowing discord."
- He called on Syrians to unite behind the state to rebuild the country post-war.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Relations

Source: The Hindu

## 27. EU Sanctions Gujarat Refinery for Buying Russian Oil

### What Happened?

- The European Union (EU) has imposed sanctions on a Gujarat-based refinery owned by Nayara Energy Ltd.
- It is part of the EU's 18th sanctions package targeting Russia's energy sector.

### Why the Sanctions?

- Nayara's refinery is part-owned (49.13%) by Russia's Rosneft.
- The refinery is India's second-largest, producing 4,00,000 barrels per day.
- EU claims the sanctions are a response to continued support for Russia's war in Ukraine.

### What the Sanctions Include

- Full sanctions on Nayara's refinery: Travel bans, asset freezes, and restrictions on funding.
- Import ban: On petroleum products made from Russian crude.

### Impact Beyond India

- o The EU is cracking down on Russia's "shadow fleet" — ships that secretly transport sanctioned oil. 105 more ships banned from EU ports and maritime services (total now 444 vessels).

### Global Context

## DENT IN EXPORTS?

➤ Rosneft has 49.1% stake in the refinery it & its partners bought from Essar Oil for \$13bn

➤ EU curbs may jeopardise its exports to Europe and Africa, thus **impacting ops**

➤ Russian co's **attempt to exit the venture** — it started talks with RIL — now also **in doubt**

- The EU's move comes as the U.S. debates its own sanctions, with India, China, and Brazil under scrutiny for buying Russian oil.
- EU diplomat Kaja Kallas said:  
"Each sanction weakens Russia's ability to wage war... Europe will not back down."

### Conclusion

The EU's latest sanctions aim to further isolate Russia's energy and military sectors, and now directly impact an Indian refinery, marking a shift in how countries dealing with Russian oil could face international pressure.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Relations

Source: The Hindu

## 28. India's Millet Standards Recognised at Global Codex Meet in Rome

### Key Recognition at Codex Executive Committee

India's efforts in developing international standards for whole millets were appreciated during the 88th Session of the Codex Executive Committee (CCEXEC88), held from 14–18 July 2025 at FAO Headquarters, Rome.



**India's Millet Standard Gains Recognition at 88th Codex Executive Committee Meet in Rome**

India is leading this initiative, supported by Mali, Nigeria, and Senegal as co-chairs. The groundwork for this was finalized during the Codex Committee on Cereals, Pulses and Legumes (CCCPL11) in April 2025.

### New Standards for Fresh Produce

The Committee also reviewed India's work on:

- Dates standards (from Codex Committee on Fresh Fruits and Vegetables, CCFFV23)
- These standards were endorsed for approval at CAC48 in November 2025.

India will also co-chair new standards development for:

- Turmeric
- Broccoli

### Strategic Input into Codex Plan 2026–2031

India played a major role in shaping the monitoring framework for the upcoming Codex Strategic Plan (2026–2031):

- Helped finalize SMART Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)
- Emphasized the need for measurable, outcome-based indicators

### Longstanding Leadership in Codex Work

India has chaired the Codex Committee on Spices and Culinary Herbs (CCSCH) since 2014, reflecting its global leadership in food standards.

## **Conclusion: India's Influence Strengthened**

Through its strong presence and technical contributions at CCEXEC88, India continues to shape global food safety and standard-setting, especially in promoting traditional and regional crops like millets on the international stage.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Organisations

Source: PIB

## **29. What Is the EU's Age Verification Plan for access to online data?**

### **Introduction**

The European Commission is creating an age verification app under the Digital Services Act (DSA).

- Purpose: To protect children from harmful online content, especially pornography and cyberbullying.
- It also promises to protect adult users' privacy during the verification process.



### **Why Is It Needed?**

The EU says children face multiple online threats:

- Addictive platforms
- Cyberbullying
- Unwanted contact from strangers
- Exposure to adult content

Platforms may adjust features based on user age, like giving children more privacy and safety settings.

### **How Will the Age Verification App Work?**

- The app will verify if users are 18+ before giving access to adult content.
- It's based on the same tech as the upcoming European Digital Identity Wallet (eID).
- It uses "zero-knowledge proof" — a method that confirms age without revealing personal data like name or exact age.
- Countries piloting it first: Denmark, Greece, Spain, France, and Italy.

### **Will It Affect Privacy?**

Some privacy advocates and critics are worried:

- Age checks could lead to tracking or data misuse.
- Users may be forced to share sensitive personal data repeatedly.

### **But the European Commission claims:**

- The app is open-source and privacy-focused.
- Users will be in full control of their data.
- No one can track what content a person is viewing.

### **France's Strong Push**

- French President Emmanuel Macron supports strict rules.
- He even proposed banning social media for under-15s.
- France is one of the first to test the new app.

### **What Do Adult Content Platforms Say?**

Some companies, like Pornhub-owner Aylo, strongly oppose the age check plan:

- They believe Apple, Google, or Microsoft should handle age checks at the device level, not at websites.
- Aylo warns that users might turn to unregulated and illegal platforms if blocked.
- In June, it briefly blocked its sites in France as a protest.

### **Is There a Better Way?**

Pornhub and others suggest:

- All devices (phones, tablets, laptops) should start as kid-safe by default.
- Only verified adults should be able to unlock access to adult content.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Issues

Source: Indian Express

## **30. Syria's New President Faces Turmoil After Civil War**

### **Introduction**

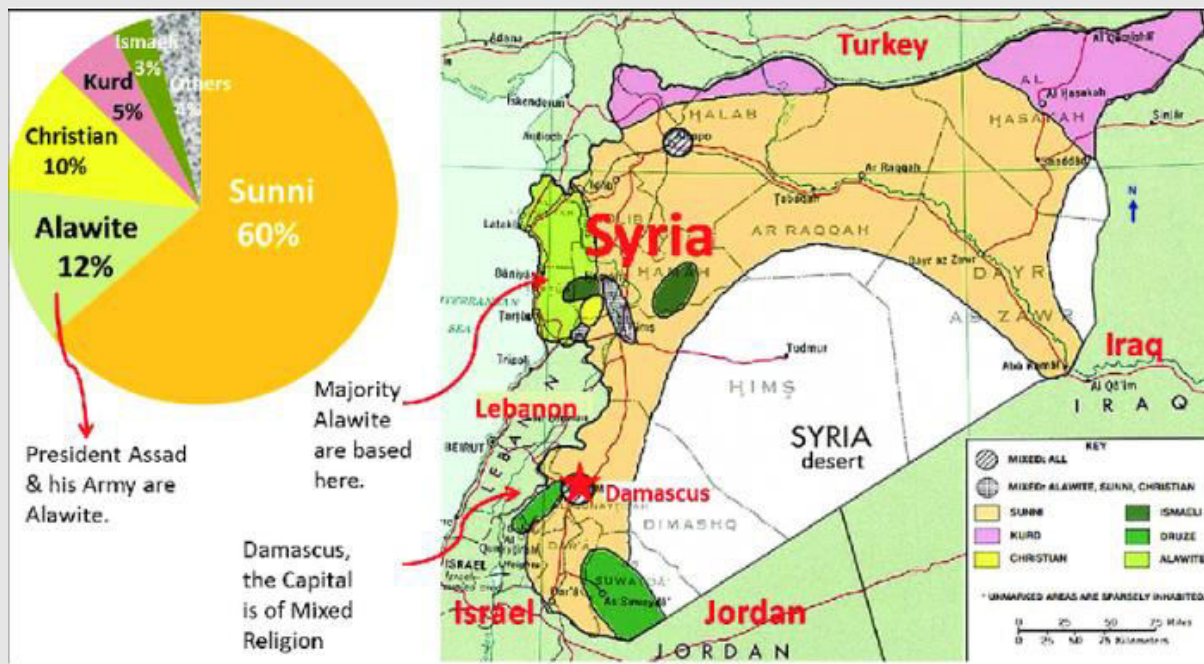
Ahmed al-Sharaa, Syria's new President and former jihadist, is trying to reunite the country after 14 years of brutal civil war. However, internal sectarian divisions and external interventions—especially from Israel—are complicating his efforts.

### **Recent Violence in Southern Syria Sparks Israeli Airstrike**

Clashes between Sunni Bedouin militias and the minority Druze in Suweida have killed over 1,000 people. In response, Israel bombed Syria's Ministry of Defense, claiming to protect the Druze community. This event highlights the complex web of ethnic tensions and foreign involvement in Syria's post-war reality.

### **Sharaa's Goal: National Unity Amid Deep Divisions**

President Sharaa has publicly emphasized national integration and rebuilding Syria. But his controversial past and sectarian legacy have made various minority groups—Alawites, Kurds, and Druze—deeply distrustful.



### Alawites: Assad's Former Base Turns Hostile

- Alawites, mostly along the Mediterranean coast, supported ex-President Assad.
- In March, over 1,500 Alawites were killed during clashes with Syrian forces.
- Sharaa blames pro-Assad elements but promises an investigation.

### Kurds: Frustrated With Broken Promises

- Kurds in the northeast had a semi-autonomous region (Rojava).
- Clashes continued until March, when Kurds agreed to integrate with Syrian forces in exchange for protections.
- However, the interim constitution lacks Kurdish rights, causing backlash. Kurds now demand international oversight.

### Israel and the Druze: A Complex Relationship

#### Druze Rejection of the Constitution

- Around 500,000 Druze live in Suweida. They oppose Sharaa's plan to disarm militias and impose central rule.

#### Israel's Role

- Israel has 150,000 Druze citizens, some of whom push for intervention in Syria.
- Israel claims to protect Druze and uses it as justification for bombing Syria and expanding in the Golan Heights.
- Between December and July, Israel repeatedly attacked Syria, claiming self-defense.

### Negotiations with Israel

- Despite Israeli aggression, Sharaa avoids confrontation and revealed indirect negotiations with Israel in May.
- He is cautious due to Syria's weak military and prioritizes domestic unity over retaliation.

### **Israel's Interference Undermines Sharaa's Authority**

- During Syria's National Dialogue Conference in February, Israeli PM Netanyahu declared Israel would prevent Syrian forces from entering areas south of Damascus.
- Netanyahu also vowed to protect the Druze indefinitely—challenging Syria's sovereignty.

### **Arab and Turkish Support for Sharaa**

- Arab nations and Turkey back Sharaa to stabilize Syria and counter Iran's influence.
- Gulf countries repaid Syria's \$15.5 million World Bank debt and helped lift US sanctions.
- They have pledged billions for Syria's reconstruction.

### **What Lies Ahead for Syria**

- While Arab support strengthens Sharaa's rebuilding efforts, Israel's actions increase instability, especially in southern Syria.
- The "broken windows" effect—violence in one region sparking unrest in others—is a real threat.
- Sharaa must balance diplomacy with Israel and domestic reconciliation to avoid further chaos.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Issues

Source: The Hindu

## **31. Indians Killed, 1 Missing in Niger: What's Happening?**

### **The Incident: Indian Workers Attacked**

- On July 15, 2025, two Indian migrant workers were killed and one was kidnapped in Niger during a terror attack at their worksite.

### **Indian Government Response**

- Indian Embassy in Niamey is coordinating with local authorities.
- Efforts are underway to repatriate the bodies and ensure safe release of the kidnapped worker.
- All Indians in Niger have been advised to remain vigilant.

### **How Many Indians Are in Niger?**

- Currently, about 150 Indians live in Niger (mainly in hospitality, service, and business sectors).
- This is a drop from 250 Indians in 2023.
- Foreigners in general are increasingly becoming targets for kidnappings and attacks.

### **Niger's Political Situation: Military Rule & Instability**

#### **Recent Coup & Governance**

- Niger gained independence from France in 1960, but has faced multiple military coups.
- In 2021, Bazoum Mohamed was elected in the country's first democratic transition.
- In 2023, a military coup led by General Abdourahmane Tchiani ousted the civilian government. He is now serving a 5-year transitional presidency.

## **Terrorism and Violence**

- The Sahel region, where Niger lies, suffers from:
  - o Terrorism
  - o Climate change
  - o Widespread poverty
- In June 2025, Islamic State-backed militants killed over 100 civilians in the Dosso and Tillabéri regions (where the Indian workers were attacked).

## **Global Involvement & Worsening Crisis**

### **Role of Foreign Powers**

- According to experts, international powers (France, US, Russia, China) have worsened the Sahel's instability by focusing more on geopolitical competition than local development.
- Example: Wagner Group (Russian paramilitary) has been active in the region. In one operation with Mali's army, 300+ civilians were killed.

### **ECOWAS & Regional Fallout**

- After the 2023 coup, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) imposed sanctions: border closures and a no-fly zone.
- In January 2025, Niger, Mali, and Burkina Faso exited ECOWAS, weakening regional diplomacy.



## **India–Niger Relations**

### **Growing Trade Ties**

- Trade rose from \$95 million (2018-19) to \$203 million (2022-23).
- Earlier, India exported more to Niger. Now, Niger has the trade surplus.

### **Infrastructure Help**

- India has extended Lines of Credit for building community and infrastructure projects.

- In 2020, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar visited Niger, showing rising bilateral engagement.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Issues

Source: Indian Express

## 32. India Resumes Tourist Visas for Chinese Nationals After 5 Years

### Tourist Visas Restart After Long Suspension

India has resumed issuing tourist visas to Chinese citizens, ending a five-year halt. The Indian Embassy in Beijing announced that applications can be submitted online.

#### Background: COVID-19 and Border Tensions

Visa and flight services between India and China were suspended following the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2020 Galwan Valley clashes. China resumed visas for Indian students in 2022 and later extended it to business and tourism. India, until now, had not resumed tourist visas for Chinese nationals.

#### Tourism Numbers Before the Pandemic

In 2019, over 3 lakh Chinese tourists visited India, while nearly 8.7 lakh Indian tourists travelled to China. This shows the significant potential for tourism recovery.



#### High-Level Diplomatic Engagements

Recent efforts to restore ties include a meeting between PM Modi and President Xi Jinping in October 2024, followed by talks to restart the Kailash Manasarovar Yatra. This month, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar visited China and met Chinese leaders, including President Xi Jinping and Foreign Minister Wang Yi.

#### China's Dam Project on Brahmaputra River Raises Concerns

Amid warming ties, China dismissed concerns raised by India and Bangladesh over its new dam project on the Brahmaputra (Yarlung Sangpo) River in Tibet, stating it had already communicated with both countries.

#### Resumption of Kailash Manasarovar Yatra Seen as Key Initiative

Chinese Ambassador Xu Feihong, in an interview with The Hindu, described the resumption of the Kailash pilgrimage as a significant step toward improving bilateral relations.

#### China Defends Brahmaputra Dam Project Amid India, Bangladesh Concerns

When questioned about the new dam on the Yarlung Sangpo (Brahmaputra) River, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Guo Jiakun asserted that the project is "fully within China's sovereignty."

He added that:

- China is cooperating with downstream countries like India and Bangladesh by sharing hydrological data and assisting in flood control and disaster management.
- "Necessary communication" has already taken place with both India and Bangladesh.

### **World's Largest Hydropower Project Begins Construction**

- The Medog Hydropower Station, with a planned capacity of 60,000 MW, began construction last week.
- It is set to become the world's largest hydropower project.
- The project was officially launched by Chinese Premier Li Qiang.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Bilateral Relations

Source: The Hindu

## **33. Deadly Clashes Erupt Between Cambodia and Thailand**

### **Air Strikes and Escalation at the Border**

On July 24, 2025, Thailand launched air strikes on Cambodian military sites along their disputed border, claiming to have destroyed two Cambodian units.

- Fighting broke out in six locations along the border.
- 11 Thai civilians were reportedly killed.
- Thai citizens near the border were evacuated.
- Diplomatic ties were downgraded by both countries.

### **Why Are the Two Countries Fighting?**

#### **Landmines and Border Patrols**

- Thailand accused Cambodia of laying landmines in its territory, injuring 5 Thai soldiers.
- Cambodia dismissed this claim, blaming old unexploded mines from past conflicts.
- Thailand also alleged Cambodia fired artillery at a Thai base and hospital.
- In response, Thailand closed its border, while Cambodia accused Thailand of using excessive force.

### **Hindu Temples at the Heart of the Conflict**

#### **Clashes at Prasat Ta Muen Thom Temple**

- Thailand claims Cambodia sent drones near a military base close to the Prasat Ta Muen Thom temple.
- Cambodia insists its actions were in self-defence after an unprovoked Thai attack.

### About the Temple:

- Built by Khmer King Jayavarman VII, located on the Thailand-Cambodia border.
- Includes three religious structures:
  - o Prasat Ta Muen Thom (main temple with shivalinga)
  - o Prasat Ta Muen (Buddhist rest stop for travellers)
  - o Prasat Ta Muen Tot (hospital shrine)
- Both countries claim ownership of the temple complex.

### Deterioration of Thailand-Cambodia Relations

#### Trigger Event in May 2025

- A border skirmish killed a soldier, triggering tit-for-tat responses.
- Tensions escalated with nationalist rhetoric and rising public anger.



### Leaked Phone Call Scandal

- Thailand's PM Paetongtarn Shinawatra was suspended after her leaked phone call with former Cambodian PM Hun Sen.
- She was heard criticizing her own army, sparking mass protests and loss of political support.

### Economic and Cultural Retaliation

- Border crossings restricted, except for students and medical cases.
- Cambodia banned Thai films, cut internet links, and stopped imports of Thai fruits, vegetables, fuel, and gas.

### Longstanding Dispute Over Preah Vihear Temple

#### The Larger Territorial Conflict

- The Preah Vihear Temple, an 11th-century Shiva temple, lies between Cambodia's Preah Vihear province and Thailand's Sisaket province.

### Key Facts:

- Cambodia uses a 1907 French colonial map to claim the land.
- Thailand rejects this map as vague.

### Legal Rulings and Rejection

- In 1962, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) awarded sovereignty of the temple to Cambodia.
- In 2013, the ICJ upheld the decision and created a demilitarised zone — but it was never enforced.
- Thailand does not accept the ICJ's jurisdiction anymore.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Bilateral Relations

Source: Indian Express

### 34. India–UK Free Trade Deal: Major Gains for Both Sides

#### India Secures Big Gains in Job-Generating Sectors

India has successfully negotiated zero tariffs on key exports to the UK:

- Textiles, footwear, gems & jewellery
- Marine and animal products like seafood, dairy, and meat
- In the food sector, tariffs (up to 70%) are eliminated on 99.7% of items

These sectors support millions of jobs in India.



#### India Opens Up Auto, Alcohol, and Procurement Sectors

In return, India will:

- Reduce tariffs on British cars (down from 110% to 10%)
- Allow phased tariff cuts on UK alcohol (from 150% to 75% over 10 years)

Only premium imports (above \$5/litre or \$6/750ml bottle) qualify

- Let UK firms participate in Indian government tenders (Class Two status under Make in India)

#### UK Gets Market Access in Key Manufacturing Areas

UK manufacturers benefit from reduced Indian tariffs on:

- Aerospace equipment (down from 11% to 0%)
- Automobiles
- Electrical machinery

#### Strategic Shift in Public Procurement Policy

India's offer to the UK is its most generous yet in any Free Trade Agreement:

- UK firms can use up to 80% imported inputs and still qualify for local tenders
- Experts say this dilutes Make in India & Atmanirbhar Bharat goals
- Could set a precedent for future deals with the EU or US

#### Intellectual Property Concessions Raise Concerns

India has:

- Allowed voluntary licensing of UK patents (preferred over compulsory licensing)
- Accepted provisions allowing patent holders to withhold working info for up to 3 years

Experts warn this may reduce access to affordable medicines

#### From Stalled Talks to Signed Deal: A Brief Timeline

- Talks started in 2007 but were stalled due to EU demands on auto & agri access
- Deal revived after Brexit and finalized after UK's Labour Party victory in 2025
- Missed deadlines (like Diwali 2022) due to UK political instability

- Also influenced by Trump's return in 2024, pushing countries to secure trade pacts

### **Economic Impact and Trade Data**

- India's exports to UK: \$14.5 billion (↑12.6% in 2024–25)
- Imports from UK: \$8.6 billion (↑2.3%)
- Total trade: \$21.34 billion (↑from \$20.36 billion in 2022–23)

### **Deal Covers a Broad Range of Areas**

Key chapters in the agreement include:

- Goods and Services
- Innovation
- Government Procurement
- Intellectual Property Rights
- Social Security Pact to avoid double social security contributions by Indian professionals working in the UK

Note: Talks on the Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) are still ongoing.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Bilateral Relations

Source: Indian Express

## **35. India-China Relations Show Signs of Improvement**

### **Introduction**

India has resumed tourist visa services for Chinese nationals, a major step towards reviving ties damaged by the 2020 Galwan clash and the military standoff at the Line of Actual Control (LAC).



### **Recent Positive Developments**

- PM Modi and President Xi met in Kazan (October 2024), leading to a series of high-level meetings.
- Three rounds of talks held under the Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination (WMCC).
- China recently reopened the Kailash Manasarovar Yatra for Indian pilgrims.
- Talks to resume direct flights and possibly issue visas to journalists are underway.
- Both sides agreed to start economic and trade dialogues to address:
  - o India's curbs on Chinese investments.
  - o China's export restrictions on fertilizers and critical minerals, affecting India's tech and auto industries.

### **Upcoming Engagements**

- India and China are preparing for PM Modi's likely visit to China for the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit in August 2025.

- The latest WMCC meeting in Delhi discussed the next Special Representatives-level talks on the border dispute.
- India also raised concerns about China's mega-dam on the Brahmaputra (Yarlung Tsangpo) in Tibet.

### **Missing Trust and Unresolved Core Issues**

Despite diplomatic progress, core concerns remain unresolved:

- No clear explanation from China on why its troops crossed the LAC in 2020.
- India had earlier linked normal ties to peace at the border, but now seems willing to move ahead without full de-escalation.
- Issues like troop pullback, dismantling new infrastructure, and restoring pre-2020 patrolling are still pending.

### **Trust Cannot Be Rebuilt Without Transparency**

India's decision to move ahead with other aspects of the relationship while ignoring key issues, such as:

- PLA's coordination with Pakistan during Operation Sindoor,
  - and lack of border resolution clarity,
- ...may lead to a fragile revival.

### **Conclusion**

Diplomatic talks and people-to-people exchanges are welcome, but unless mutual trust is rebuilt transparently, the process of restoring full India-China ties will remain unstable and vulnerable to setbacks.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Bilateral Relations

Source: Indian Express

## **36. Man Arrested for Running Fake 'Embassy of Westarctica'**

### **Introduction**

A 45-year-old man, Harsh Vardhan Jain, was arrested by the Uttar Pradesh Police's Special Task Force on July 22 for posing as an "Ambassador of Westarctica" and running a fake embassy from a bungalow in Ghaziabad.

Jain claimed to be a globe-trotting diplomat, used doctored photos with world leaders, and allegedly ran a money-laundering operation under the guise of diplomacy. Authorities say he tricked businessmen by promising access to international markets and operated a hawala network through shell companies.

### **What Are Micronations?**

Micronations are self-declared entities that claim to be independent countries but are not recognized by any real government or international body.

They often have their own symbols of statehood—flags, constitutions, passports—but do not meet all criteria of statehood under the Montevideo Convention (1933), especially recognition and diplomatic relations.

### Why Do People Create Micronations?

People establish micronations for reasons like:

- Personal identity or ego
- Political protest or satire
- Artistic or social experiments
- Creating alternative communities

Famous examples:

- Principality of Sealand (on a sea fort)
- Republic of Molossia (a satire-based nation in Nevada)

Most exist symbolically or online, with “citizenship” granted digitally.

### Legal Status of Micronations

Micronations exist in a grey legal area:

- They are not recognized under domestic or international law.
- They are not the same as microstates (like Liechtenstein or Vatican City), which are sovereign and recognized.
- Their actions are symbolic unless they cross into illegal activities (e.g., fraud, tax evasion).
- Courts treat micronationalists as regular citizens of their home countries.



### The Story of Westarctica

Westarctica was founded in 2001 by former U.S. Navy officer Travis McHenry. It claims Marie Byrd Land in Antarctica, an area unclaimed by any country. Westarctica operates as a nonprofit and is involved in climate advocacy.

- It has thousands of online "citizens"
- Issues honorary titles
- Registered as a tax-exempt nonprofit since 2018

Westarctica distanced itself from Jain's fraud, stating he was only an "Honorary Consul to India" and had now been suspended for unauthorized actions.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; International Issues

Source: Indian Express

### 37. India-Maldives reset: As PM Modi reiterates support, Muizzu calls India a crucial partner

#### Introduction

Marking the reset in bilateral ties between India and the Maldives, Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended the Independence Day celebrations of the island nation as the guest of honour. Earlier in the day, Modi was welcomed by Muizzu at the iconic Republic Square, the venue of the ceremony at the heart of the Maldivian capital. Modi sat next to Muizzu and watched the event marking the 60th anniversary of the independence of the Maldives.

This is the first time that an Indian Prime Minister is attending the Independence Day celebrations in Maldives. Prime Minister Modi is also the first foreign leader at the level of head of state or government to be hosted by President Muizzu.

India-Maldives reset: As PM Modi reiterates support, Muizzu calls India a crucial partner



#### Also Part of Delegation

Besides the top political and military brass of the Maldives, several members of the Prime Minister's delegation including External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, National Security Advisor Ajit Doval and Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri also attended the event.

#### Present Stance of Muizzu

Speaking to reporters after the conclusion of the Independence Day celebrations, Muizzu said: "India is one of the major countries that helps the Maldives with tourism. With PM Modi's visit, it is going to increase a lot. I am sure that this visit will boost people-to-people exchange between the two countries."

Asked about plans to visit India this year, Muizzu said: "I hope so. I don't know whether this year or not, but maybe in the near future." Emphasising India's role in the development journey of the island nation, he said: "We all have seen how India has helped the Maldives in the past, and nobody will doubt how India will be a very crucial partner going forward".

### **Reason behind changed relations**

Modi's visit to the Maldives is seen as a major turnaround in bilateral ties after a spell of strain and tension. It assumes significance as Muizzu, known to be close to China, came to power in the island nation in November 2023 on the back of an "India Out" campaign. Muizzu's policies in the first few months of his presidency resulted in severe strain in ties. Within hours of taking oath, he had demanded the withdrawal of Indian military personnel from his country. Arguably, New Delhi's sustained efforts, including its assistance to the island nation to deal with economic woes, helped bring the relations back on track.

### **Recent announcements**

Recently, Modi held wide-ranging talks with Muizzu and announced a Rs 4,850 crore line of credit to the island nation, saying that India is proud to be the "most trusted" friend of the Maldives. India also announced the reduction of Maldives' annual debt repayment obligations by 40 per cent (from \$51 million to \$29 million) and the launch of talks on a Free Trade Agreement.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper II; Bilateral Relations

Source: Indian Express

## **38. PM Modi's Argentina Visit: Strengthening Ties After 57 Years**

### **Historic Bilateral Visit**

Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived in Buenos Aires on July 4, 2025 — the first visit by an Indian Prime Minister to Argentina in 57 years, since Indira Gandhi in 1968. He was warmly welcomed by President Javier Milei at Casa Rosada, Argentina's presidential palace.



Modi paid tribute at the statue of General José de San Martín, a national hero of Argentina, Peru, and Chile. The visit is part of his five-nation "Global South" tour and aims to deepen cooperation across several sectors.

### **Key Areas of India-Argentina Cooperation**

India and Argentina celebrated 75 years of diplomatic relations in 2024. Both countries are now expanding partnerships in:

- Defence and security
- Agriculture and food processing
- Mining (especially lithium)

- Oil and gas
- Renewable energy
- Trade and investment

Argentina's lithium reserves are especially important for India's green energy transition. In 2024, India was Argentina's fifth-largest trading partner.

### **Three Lesser-Known Facts About India-Argentina Relations**

#### **1. Indira Gandhi's 1968 South America Tour**

Indira Gandhi was the last Indian Prime Minister to visit Argentina in 1968. During her visit, she met writer Victoria Ocampo and conferred on her an honorary degree from Visva Bharati University, founded by Rabindranath Tagore.

Her month-long tour included visits to Brazil, Uruguay, Chile, Colombia, Venezuela, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago, reflecting India's early outreach to Latin America.

#### **2. First Argentine Visit to India in 1848**

In 1848, Lucio V. Mansilla, a 17-year-old Argentine traveler, visited India. His writings, published in *Diario de viaje a Oriente*, offer early impressions of India — though shaped by colonial stereotypes. His travel account is one of the earliest cultural links between the two nations.

#### **3. Tagore's Life-Changing Visit to Argentina**

In 1924, Rabindranath Tagore visited Argentina while en route to Peru. Falling ill upon arrival, he stayed at the home of Victoria Ocampo, a renowned Argentine writer and publisher.

- During his stay, Tagore wrote the poetry collection *Purabi*, dedicated to Ocampo (whom he called Bijoya).
- Their bond helped popularise Indian philosophy, art, and culture in South America.
- Ocampo later promoted Tagore's work, translated his writings, and modeled her magazine *Sur* after Tagore's *Vishva Quarterly* to promote global cultural exchange.

### **Conclusion**

PM Modi's visit marks a renewed chapter in India-Argentina relations, building upon a rich, though lesser-known, history of cultural, intellectual, and diplomatic ties. With growing cooperation in trade, green energy, and people-to-people connections, the relationship is set to deepen in the coming years.

Relevance: GS Prelims; International Relations

Source: Indian Express

### 1. India Ranked 4th Most Equal Country by World Bank

#### Inequality in India Has Declined



A new World Bank report says that inequality in India has significantly reduced between 2011-12 and 2022-23, making India the 4th most equal country globally.

#### India's Gini Index: A Key Indicator

- India's Gini Index now stands at 25.5
- This places India just behind:

- Slovak Republic
- Slovenia
- Belarus

#### What is the Gini Index?

- It measures how equally income, wealth, or consumption is distributed.
- Score range:
  - 0 = perfect equality
  - 100 = complete inequality
- The lower the score, the more equal the country.

#### Comparison with Other Countries

- India: 25.5 (Moderately low inequality)
- China: 35.7
- United States: 41.8

India is very close to entering the "low inequality" category, which includes countries with Gini scores below 25.

#### Drop in Extreme Poverty

- Extreme poverty in India fell from 16.2% in 2011-12 to 2.3% in 2022-23
- This drop is linked to various government welfare schemes implemented over the past decade.

#### Conclusion

India's economic landscape has improved in terms of both reduced inequality and poverty, placing it among the top four most equal nations globally as per the latest World Bank data covering 167 countries.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Economics  
Source: The Hindu

## 2. Nehal Modi Arrested in U.S. in PNB Scam Case

### Introduction

Nehal Modi, brother of fugitive businessman Nirav Modi and co-accused in the ₹13,578 crore Punjab National Bank (PNB) scam, has been arrested in the United States. The arrest was made based on a joint extradition request by India's Enforcement Directorate (ED) and Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI).

### Charges Against Nehal Modi

The U.S. extradition proceedings are based on:

- Money laundering under India's Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA)
- Criminal conspiracy and destruction of evidence under Sections 120-B and 201 of the Indian Penal Code

Indian agencies allege that Nehal helped launder the scam money, destroy digital evidence, and intimidate witnesses.



### Key Allegations and Evidence

- Helped conceal and transfer illegal funds through shell companies and overseas transactions
- Managed two companies that received \$50 million from fake firms
- Took away assets worth millions from Hong Kong and Dubai, including:
  - \$6 million worth of diamonds
  - 150 boxes of pearls
  - 50 kg of gold
  - AED 3.5 million (UAE currency)

### Witness Intimidation and Obstruction

#### Nehal allegedly:

- Supervised destruction of records and accounts
- Intimidated witnesses and sent them to Cairo, where their passports were seized
- Offered ₹20 lakh to a witness to give false testimony in Europe

### Next Steps in the Case

- The next court hearing in the U.S. is scheduled for July 17
- Nehal Modi may apply for bail, which the U.S. prosecution plans to oppose
- Nirav Modi, the main accused, is already in a U.K. jail awaiting extradition

### Other Related Case

Nehal is also accused in a related case involving his uncle Mehul Choksi, where his companies — Samuels Jewellers Inc. and Diamlink Inc. — allegedly received \$19 million from Choksi's Dubai-based shell firms.

Relevance: GS Prelims; Economics

Source: Indian Express

## 3. India's Foreign Trade: The Rise of Invisibles

### Introduction

India's foreign trade is no longer driven mainly by physical goods. Instead, "invisible" exports — services and remittances — now contribute more than goods exports, and have shown strong growth with stability over time.

### What Are Invisibles in Trade?

Invisibles refer to:

- Exports of services (IT, finance, consultancy, etc.)
- Private remittances (money sent by Indians abroad)

These are called "invisible" because they don't involve physical movement of goods.

### Invisibles Outpace Merchandise Exports

Year	Goods Exports	Invisible Receipts
2003-04	\$66.3 billion	\$53.5 billion
2013-14	\$318.6 billion	\$233.6 billion
2024-25	\$441.8 billion	\$576.5 billion

- In 2013-14, goods exports were \$85 billion more than invisibles
- In 2024-25, invisibles are \$135 billion higher than goods exports

### Break-up of Invisible Receipts (2024–25)

Total: \$576.5 billion, made up of:

- Services exports: \$387.5 billion
  - Software services: \$180.6 billion
  - Business/Financial/Communication services: \$118 billion
- Private transfers (remittances): \$135.4 billion

### Steady Growth and Global Resilience

- Invisibles grew consistently, even during:

- Financial crises
- Covid pandemic
- Geopolitical tensions or tariff wars
- They grew without major government schemes or trade deals

This makes India an "office of the world", in contrast to:

- China, the "factory of the world", with huge goods trade surpluses

### India's Trade Balance: Goods vs Invisibles

- Goods trade deficit (2024-25): \$287.2 billion
- Net invisible surplus: \$263.8 billion
- Overall current account deficit: Only \$23.4 billion

Despite importing more than it exports in goods, India balances this with a strong invisible surplus.

### China vs India: A Trade Contrast

Metric (2024)	China	India
Goods exports	\$3,409 billion	\$441.8 billion
Services exports	\$384 billion	\$387.5 billion
Net invisibles	- \$344.1 billion	+ \$263.8 billion
Current account balance	\$423.9 billion surplus	\$23.4 billion deficit

### Conclusion: The Power of Invisibles

India's trade success is being quietly shaped by the "invisible hand" — services and remittances. These intangibles have:

- Surpassed traditional goods exports
- Remained resilient against global disruptions
- Become a key pillar in India's external economy

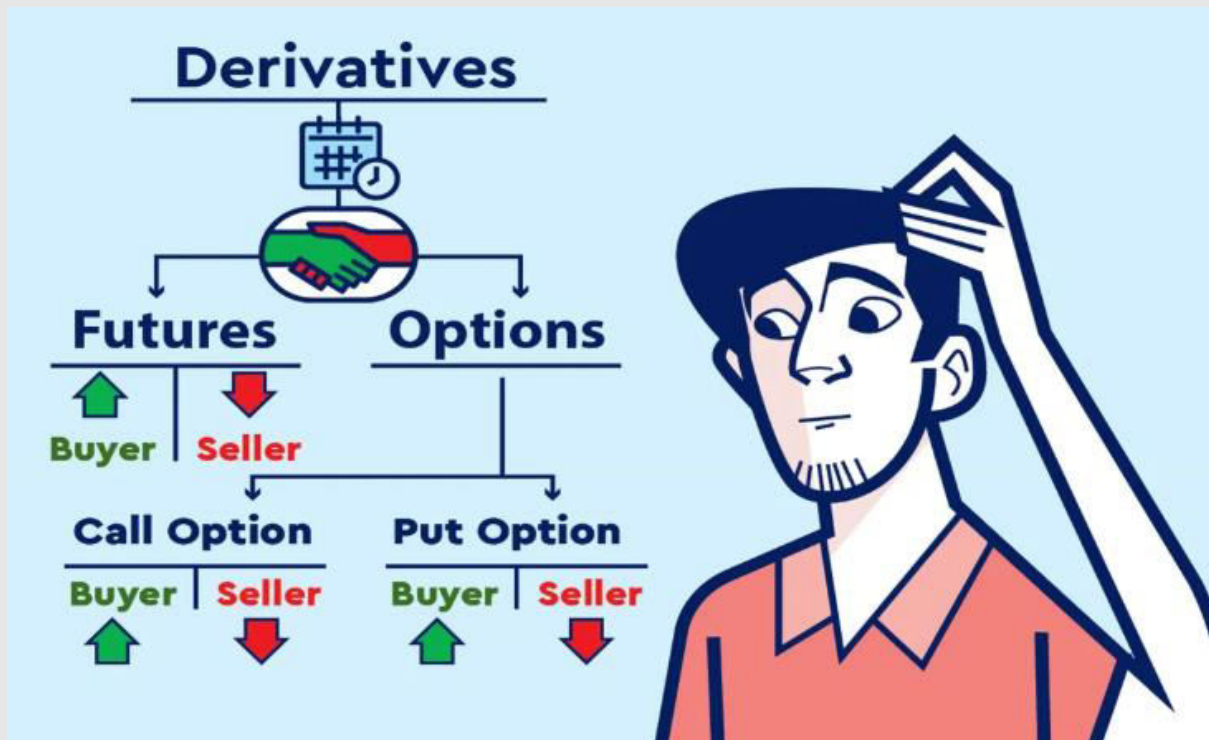
While trade talks still focus on tariffs and physical goods, India's real trade strength lies in its invisible exports.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Economics

Source: Indian Express

## 4. Futures and Options (F&O): The High-Risk Game in Stock Markets

### What Is F&O Trading?



Futures and Options (F&O) are derivative financial instruments — meaning their value depends on the price of another asset like a stock, index, currency, or commodity.

Unlike normal stock trading where you buy shares, F&O is about betting on price movements — whether they'll rise or fall in the future.

### Why F&O Feels Like a Casino

The Appeal: Leverage

Leverage means you can take large positions in the market by paying only a small margin (deposit).

- Profits can be high
- But losses can be much larger — especially if markets move against you.

### What Is a Futures Contract?

A futures contract is a deal to buy or sell something at a fixed price on a future date. You must complete the deal unless you exit earlier.

#### Example:

Buy Reliance Futures at ₹2,800 (lot size: 300 shares)

- If price goes up to ₹2,875 → Profit: ₹22,500 (75 X 300)
- If price drops to ₹2,700 → Loss: ₹30,000 (100 X 300)

### What Is an Options Contract?

An option gives the right but not obligation to buy or sell at a fixed price.

- Call Option: Right to buy
- Put Option: Right to sell

The buyer can choose to use the option; the seller must obey if the buyer chooses.

**Example:**

Buy Nifty 23,000 Call Option for ₹100

- If Nifty hits 23,200 → Gain: ₹100 per unit
- If it doesn't → Loss limited to ₹100 paid

Why safer? Options limit your maximum loss to the premium (fee) paid.

**What Makes F&O Risky?**

- Prices depend on the underlying asset
  - Small mistakes → Huge losses
  - Volatile markets or global events can wipe out portfolios
  - F&O demands strong understanding of market trends, macroeconomics, and geopolitics
- Beginner investors often underestimate the risk.

**Jane Street Case: A Wake-Up Call**

What Happened?

SEBI, India's market regulator, banned Jane Street, a US firm, and seized ₹4,843 crore over manipulative trades in Nifty Futures.

What It Shows

- Big players can exploit the system
- Most retail (small) traders don't stand a chance without proper tools and knowledge

**Retail Investors: Big Losses, Small Gains**

- In FY25, retail investors lost ₹1.06 lakh crore in F&O trading (41% increase from the previous year)
- SEBI study: 91% of retail traders lost money
- Retail participation dropped after stricter rules in Nov 2024

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Economics

Source: Indian Express

**5. Government Claims India Is Among the Most Equal Countries**

**Introduction**

- The government cited a World Bank report stating India has a Gini Index of 25.5, placing it as the fourth most equal country, after Slovakia, Slovenia, and Belarus.
- It claimed this shows the benefits of economic growth are being evenly distributed.
- But this claim has been challenged by experts who say the full context and limitations of the data were not considered.

**What Is the Gini Index?**

- The Gini Index (or coefficient) measures inequality on a scale of 0 (perfect equality) to 1 (complete inequality).

- A lower score means more equality.
- It's widely used, but has serious limitations, especially when used alone or without context.

### **What the Government Missed**

- The World Bank report itself included a warning:  
"Inequality may be underestimated due to data limitations."
- The World Inequality Database, which uses income tax data, showed India's income Gini Index rose from 52 (2004) to 62 (2023).
- It also found the top 10% earned 13 times more than the bottom 10% in 2023–24.
- These facts were left out of the government's release.

### **Why Consumption-Based Gini Underestimates Inequality**

- India's Gini Index is based on consumption data, not income.
- Most countries use income-based Gini, making direct comparisons misleading.
- Why this matters:
  - Richer people save more, so their consumption doesn't fully reflect their income.
  - This leads to lower inequality estimates in consumption-based measures.

### **Survey Limitations: The Rich Are Often Missing**

- Surveys often miss the top 1% of earners — the ones driving most inequality.
- Two key reasons:
  1. Rich people avoid surveys (called differential non-response).
  2. Sampling methods rarely include the ultra-rich.
- As a result, surveys understate inequality, even if everyone else is improving.

### **A Better Approach: Combine Surveys With Tax Data**

- Studies in countries like the US and UK found that income tax data helps fix the gaps in survey data.
- The World Inequality Lab uses this method to estimate India's Gini more accurately.
- Their findings suggest inequality is much worse than what consumption-based measures show.

### **Limitations of the Gini Index**

- Even the Gini Index itself is imperfect.
- It's more sensitive to changes in the middle of the population than at the extremes.
- This means it can miss the growing gap between the top 1% and bottom 50%.

### **Inequality Today: Worse Than Colonial Times**

- Studies using income tax data show that:
  - Inequality today is worse than during British rule.
  - The top 1% earn more than the bottom 50% combined.

### **Why Measuring Inequality Accurately Matters**

- Knowing the real extent of inequality helps shape better public policies.
- Misleading numbers can lead to poor or harmful decisions that widen inequality.

- If ignored, inequality can lead to social unrest and slow down long-term economic growth.

### The Takeaway

Relying only on a consumption-based Gini Index, especially without full context, gives a distorted picture of India's inequality.

For accurate assessment, India needs to use income-based data, including tax records, and adopt more sensitive inequality measures.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Economics

Source: Indian Express

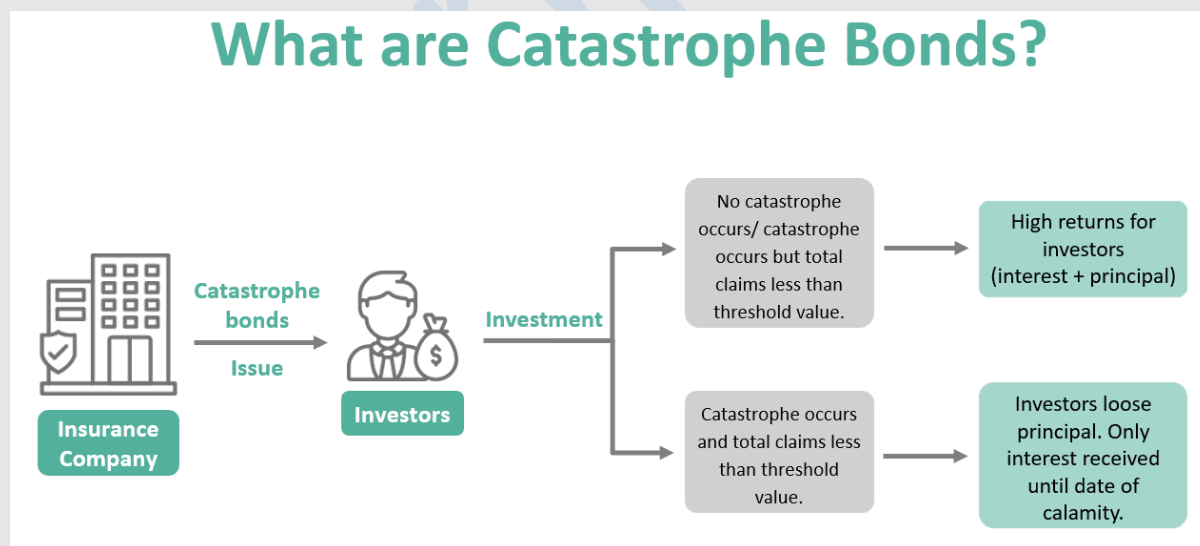
## 6. Catastrophe Bonds: A Financial Shield Against Disasters

### Meaning

A Catastrophe Bond (CAT Bond) is a high-yield investment instrument that allows insurance companies to raise money in case of natural disasters like earthquakes, hurricanes, or floods. These bonds transfer the risk of catastrophic losses to investors, who receive higher returns but risk losing their money if a defined disaster occurs.

### Why They Matter

With climate change making natural disasters more frequent and severe, CAT bonds help insurance companies stay financially stable during massive claim events.



### How Do CAT Bonds Work?

Step-by-step Breakdown:

#### 1. Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV):

A legal entity is created to manage the CAT bond. This SPV acts as a middleman between the insurer (the sponsor) and the investors.

**2. Investor Contribution:** Investors buy the bond, putting their money into the SPV. The SPV invests this money in safe assets like U.S. Treasury bonds.

**3. Insurance Premiums:** The insurer pays premiums to the SPV (similar to how you pay premiums for insurance). The insurer in case of CAT bonds is the government.

### **Outcome Scenarios**

**No disaster:** Investors get their original investment back plus interest (higher than normal bond returns).

**Disaster occurs:** The insurer takes the money to cover claims, and investors lose some or all of their investment.

### **Why Investors Buy Cat Bonds**

Investors, especially pension funds and hedge funds, value cat bonds because:

- They provide diversification: disaster risks aren't linked to financial market risks.
- They de-risk portfolios by adding climate-related, non-market correlated assets.
- Since 1990s, over \$180 billion worth of cat bonds have been issued globally; about \$50 billion are currently active.

### **Why India Should Consider Cat Bonds**

India is increasingly exposed to extreme weather events due to climate change. Insurers and reinsurers are struggling to keep up, making government-backed cat bonds a viable option.

Such a bond could address:

- Earthquakes in the Himalayas
- Cyclones in the Bay of Bengal
- Tsunamis in the Indian Ocean

A regional cat bond would pool risk, reduce premiums, and make South Asia more financially resilient to disasters.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Economics

Source: The Hindu

## **7. India's Poor Turning to Informal Credit Despite Bank Access**

### **Widespread Access to Bank Accounts**

# RISING INFORMAL BORROWING AMONG INDIA'S POOR



- As of 2021, 96% of Indian households had at least one member with a bank account, thanks to the Centre's financial inclusion programme.
- This shows good progress in helping the poor open bank accounts and deposit money.

## **Credit Access Still a Major Problem**

- Despite having bank accounts, many poor households struggle to get loans from formal sources like banks or NBFCs.
- According to expert, financial inclusion has mostly helped the poor on the deposit side, but not much on the credit side. Credit is granted mainly to rich and middle class. Access to credit remains poor for low-income groups, pushing them toward informal sources.

## **Formal Lending to Poor Households Is Shrinking**

- A study of Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) data shows that from 2018-19 to 2022-23:
  - o Formal borrowing (from banks/NBFCs) by poor households fell by 4.2%
  - o This shows a drop in formal lending to those earning ₹1–2 lakh per year.

## **Informal Lending on the Rise**

- During the same period, borrowing from informal sources (moneylenders, chit funds, friends) rose by 5.8%.
- This shift suggests that poor families are increasingly depending on costly and unregulated loans.

## **Conclusion**

Although bank account coverage is high, access to affordable formal credit remains weak for the poor. As a result, many are turning to expensive and risky informal lending options, highlighting a serious gap in true financial inclusion.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Economics

Source: Indian Express

## 8. PM Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana: One Umbrella Scheme for Agriculture

### What Is the PMDDKY Scheme?

- The Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana (PMDDKY) is a new scheme approved by the Union Cabinet.
- It will combine 36 existing schemes from 11 central departments into one umbrella programme.
- Major schemes like PM-KISAN and PM Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) will be included, along with selected State schemes.



### Purpose and Launch

- Aims to reduce productivity gaps between States and districts.
- To start in October, during the rabi crop season.
- Annual funding: ₹24,000 crore for six years.
- Private sector partnerships will be encouraged.

### Targeted Districts and Focus Areas

- Modelled on NITI Aayog's Aspirational Districts Programme.
- 100 districts with low productivity, low credit flow, and poor cropping intensity will be prioritised.
- Goals include:
  - o Increased productivity
  - o Value addition in agriculture
  - o Local job creation
  - o Self-reliance in food production

### Concerns Over Declining Public Investment

- Despite the new scheme, public spending on agriculture is shrinking:
  - o From 3.53% of Central Plan outlay in 2021–22 to 2.51% in 2025–26.
- The Parliamentary Standing Committee has raised concerns about this continued drop.

### Centralisation vs Local Needs

- Government aims to create uniformity in scheme implementation across the country.

- However, uniformity may ignore local challenges.
- The success of the scheme will depend on how it balances central goals with local realities.

### Encouraging Signs in District Planning

- The scheme will be based on district-level plans, aligned with national goals:
  - o Crop diversification
  - o Water and soil conservation
  - o Self-sufficiency in foodgrains, oilseeds, and pulses

### Need for Broader Participation

- Monitoring will be done through 117 key indicators, tracked monthly.
- For effective implementation, States, local bodies, cooperatives, agricultural universities, farmers' and traders' organisations must be actively involved.

### Conclusion

PMDDKY is an ambitious move to streamline agricultural schemes and boost productivity. But its success hinges on increased public investment, genuine local participation, and balancing central vision with ground realities.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Economics

Source: The Hindu

## 9. Why Food Inflation in India May Stay Low

### Inflation Has Dropped Sharply



India's consumer inflation in June was 2.1%, lower than the US (2.7%) and UK (3.6%).

Food inflation in India was -1.1%, meaning food prices actually fell — a big relief for the Reserve Bank of India, which had earlier struggled to control inflation due to high food prices in 2023–2024.

### Good Monsoon = Bumper Crops

The 2024 monsoon was 7.6% above normal, leading to excellent crops. This helped bring down food prices.

With strong kharif (monsoon season) and rabi (winter season) harvests, market arrivals increased and prices eased.

### Wheat and Rice Stocks Are Up

- Wheat stocks in government godowns rose to 358.78 lakh tonnes, a 4-year high.

- Wheat procurement increased to 300.35 lt in 2025 from 266.05 lt last year.
- Public rice stocks are also at record levels.

This gives the government enough to distribute through PDS and sell in the open market, keeping cereal prices under control.

### **Strong Monsoon in 2025 So Far**

- Monsoon started early on May 24, with rainfall 7.1% above normal (as of July 20).
- Most parts of India received above-average rains. This led to more sowing under most kharif crops.

### **Why Some Crops Saw Lower Sowing**

- Arhar, soyabean, and cotton acreage fell due to low market prices, not poor rainfall.
  - o Arhar and soyabean are selling below MSP in key markets.
  - o Cotton acreage dropped due to pest issues (pink bollworm).
- Maize gained area due to higher demand for ethanol and animal feed.

### **Imports Help Curb Inflation**

India has kept import duties low or zero on key food items:

- Pulses: Arhar, urad, yellow peas allowed at zero duty till March 2026.
- Edible oils: Duty cut from 27.5% to 16.5% on crude palm, soyabean, and sunflower oil.

These measures help control prices despite lower domestic output of some crops.

### **Potential Risk: Fertiliser Shortage**

- Strong monsoon increased fertiliser demand, but stocks are low:
  - o Urea: 61.22 lt (down from 103 lt last year)
  - o DAP: 12.98 lt (down from 19.18 lt)
- Drop in imports, especially from China, has tightened global supply and raised prices (DAP up from \$525 to \$810/tonne).
- If this shortage continues, it could impact crop yields.

### **Final Outlook**

- A second consecutive good monsoon and low import duties on essentials will likely keep food inflation low.
- But risks remain, especially from fertiliser shortages and possible monsoon breaks in coming weeks.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Economics

Source: The Hindu

## **10. What does the new U.K.-India trade deal entail?**

### **Introduction**

India and the U.K. signed a Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA). With negotiations starting in January 2022, the deal marks a more than three-year effort to enhance bilateral trade between the two countries.



### **What has broadly been agreed to?**

Under the deal, the U.K. has removed tariffs on 99% of its product lines. However, not all of these product lines are exported by India to the U.K. According to an analysis by the Global Trade Research Initiative, about \$6.5 billion or 45% of what India currently exports to the U.K. — such as textiles, footwear, carpets, automobiles, seafood, and fresh fruits such as grapes and mangoes — will now enter the U.K. duty-free. The remaining \$8 billion worth of goods that India exports to the U.K. — petroleum, pharmaceuticals, diamonds, and aircraft components — already enjoy zero duty access.

India has agreed to either eliminate or reduce duties on 90% of its tariff lines, which comprises about 92% of what the U.K. exports to us, according to data with the U.K. government. Alcohol from the U.K., especially whiskey, is set to become cheaper in India, as are British cars, and engineering products.

The U.K. is a relatively small trading partner for India. About 3.3% of India's exports in 2024-25 went to the U.K., and the U.K. made up 1.2% of India's imports that year.

### **Is the deal restricted to the goods trade?**

No, the CETA incorporates a significant section on services, which is especially of interest to India since services exports are a vital engine of growth. Under the 'economic' component of the deal, India has agreed to open up some key sectors of its service economy to U.K. firms, such as accounting, auditing, financial services, telecom, and environmental services.

What this means is that U.K. companies operating in these sectors can offer their services to Indian customers without first having to establish a local presence here. Despite this, they will be treated at par with Indian firms. India has also agreed to recognise U.K. professional qualifications in law and accounting, but not in legal services.

The U.K. has agreed to grant commercial presence rights to Indian companies in sectors such as computer services, consultancy, and environmental services. This means Indian companies operating in these sectors can set up branches, subsidiaries, or representative offices in the U.K.

One major positive for India arises out of the Double Contribution Convention (DCC), which is a parallel agreement between the two countries that was negotiated simultaneously, and that will come into force when the CETA does. Under the DCC, the U.K. will allow 75,000 Indian workers on short U.K. assignments to continue paying into India's social security system without also having to pay the same in the U.K. This is highly beneficial for Indian workers in

the U.K. since many of them work there for so short a stint that they do not get to avail of the benefits of social security there while having to contribute to it.

### **Is the deal a standard one or does it include unusual aspects?**

While the broad contours of the deal are pretty standard, dealing with tariff and non-tariff barriers, there are some aspects that are unusual. The first is to do with auto tariffs. India has, for the first time, included cuts in its tariffs on imported cars in a trade deal.

Large-engine luxury petrol cars imported into India from the U.K. will see their import duty cut to 10% over 15 years from the current maximum of 110%. However, this is subject to a quota starting at 10,000 units and rising to 19,000 in the fifth year of the deal. For mid-sized cars, the tariff has been cut to 50% subject to a quota, which will fall to 10% by year five.

Small cars will enjoy a similar tariff reduction and growing quota.

The idea behind the quota, according to government sources, is to allow the domestic industry enough time to prepare to compete with U.K. imports. Further, nascent industries such as electric vehicles have been further protected with no duty concessions being given for electric, hybrid, and hydrogen-powered vehicles for the first five years.

The other unusual aspect of the deal is that U.K. firms will now be allowed to participate in Indian central government procurement bids. India will open about 40,000 high-value contracts from central ministries and departments in sectors such as transport, green energy, and infrastructure.

### **So what next?**

The deal does not come into effect immediately. It needs to be ratified by the Cabinets of both countries, a process that could take as long as six months to a year. For India, the deal also serves as a template for future deals with other economies, such as the U.S. and the EU, both of which are in various stages of negotiation.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Economics

Source: The Hindu

## **11. Jane Street vs SEBI: Alleged Market Manipulation Explained**

### **What Is Jane Street Accused Of?**

Jane Street Capital, a New York-based trading firm, has been banned by SEBI (Securities and Exchange Board of India) for allegedly manipulating India's stock market using advanced trading algorithms to make illegal profits.

- SEBI claims Jane Street made over ₹36,500 crore between Jan 2023 and Mar 2025.
- On Jan 17, 2025, it allegedly made ₹735 crore in one day.

- Jane Street has denied wrongdoing but deposited over ₹4,800 crore in an escrow account as per SEBI's July 3 order.

### **SEBI's Investigation and Crackdown**

- SEBI began investigating Jane Street in April 2024 after a legal dispute in the US revealed details about confidential algorithms.
- On July 3, 2025, SEBI:
  - o Banned Jane Street from trading in Indian markets.
  - o Ordered banks to freeze ₹4,800 crore of its assets.
  - o Issued a 105-page interim order detailing alleged manipulation tactics.



### **How Did Jane Street Allegedly Bypass Rules?**

- SEBI rules (2019) ban intraday trading by foreign firms.
- Jane Street allegedly used Indian subsidiaries to circumvent these rules.
  - o These local subsidiaries engaged in intraday trades.
  - o Meanwhile, foreign units placed options trades to benefit from market movements.

### **Alleged Strategy: How the Manipulation Worked**

#### **Stage 1: Morning Index Manipulation**

- Jane Street's algorithm bought large amounts of banking stocks, causing the Bank NIFTY index to rise.
- Retail investors, noticing the rise, bought call options and sold put options, expecting further growth.

#### **Stage 2: Expiry Day Dump**

- On contract expiry days, Jane Street dumped stocks, causing a sharp fall.
  - Retail investors lost money as their call options became worthless.
  - Jane Street profited from its put options, which increased in value due to the fall.
- This manipulation depended on ultra-fast algorithmic trades, made within milliseconds.

### **What Is F&O Trading and Why Is It Risky?**

#### **Futures**

- Contracts to buy/sell assets at a fixed future price.
- Profitable if price moves in your favor.

#### **Options**

- Give the right (not obligation) to buy/sell in future.
- Require buyers to pay a premium.
- Two types:
  - o Call Option – Right to buy.
  - o Put Option – Right to sell.

**Risks for Retail Investors**

- F&O trading is highly complex and risky.
- SEBI data (FY25): Over 90% of retail investors lost money in F&O trades.

**What Can Retail Investors Learn?**

- F&O trading requires deep market understanding and risk management.
- Most retail investors lack tools and speed available to institutional players like Jane Street.
- Caution, education, and limiting capital exposure are key to avoiding major losses.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Economics

Source: Indian Express

### 1. Delhi's Fuel Ban on Old Vehicles: What You Need to Know

#### What Is the Fuel Ban?

Starting July 1, 2025, Delhi has stopped supplying fuel to:

- Diesel vehicles older than 10 years
- Petrol vehicles older than 15 years

This is part of a plan to remove end-of-life vehicles (ELVs) — major contributors to air pollution — from the roads.



#### How Is It Being Enforced?

- Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras installed at 498 fuel stations and 3 ISBTs scan number plates and check them against the VAHAN database.
- If an ELV is detected, an alert is triggered, and the vehicle is denied fuel.
- Joint teams from the Transport Department, Traffic Police, and civic bodies are tasked with enforcement.

#### Is Enforcement Effective?

- On Day 1, 80 vehicles were impounded.
- By Day 3, no vehicles were seized, pointing to weak enforcement.

#### Why Is the Delhi Government Hesitant?

Delhi's Environment Minister has asked for a pause, citing:

- Technical glitches in cameras and sensors
- Inability to detect vehicles with faulty or missing High-Security Registration Plates (HSRPs)
- Lack of data integration with NCR states, allowing vehicles to refuel nearby
- Rising public frustration due to inconsistent implementation

#### How Many Vehicles Are Affected?

According to VAHAN:

- Delhi: 62 lakh ELVs (41 lakh 2-wheelers, 18 lakh 4-wheelers, others commercial)
- Haryana NCR districts: 27.5 lakh
- Uttar Pradesh NCR: 12.4 lakh
- Rajasthan NCR: 6.1 lakh

#### Why Target Old Vehicles?

- Older vehicles, especially pre-BS-VI models, emit significantly more pollutants.
- For example, BS-IV vehicles emit 4.5 to 5.5 times more particulate matter than BS-VI vehicles.
- Transport sector contributes:
  - 28% of PM<sub>2.5</sub>
  - 41% of SO<sub>2</sub>
  - 78% of NO<sub>x</sub> emissions in the NCR

### What Are the Legal Grounds?

- NGT (2015): Banned 10+ year old diesel and 15+ year old petrol vehicles in NCR
- Supreme Court (2018): Upheld the NGT ban; allowed impounding of violators
- 2025 Rules: Scrapping must happen within 180 days of registration expiry

### Can This Solve Delhi's Air Pollution?

Experts say:

- No single measure is enough.
- Need a multi-pronged approach:
  - Better emission and fuel standards
  - Stronger pollution checks
  - Major public transport improvements
- Age limits alone may not address all pollution sources; even newer vehicles can pollute due to poor maintenance.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Environment

Source: Indian Express

## 2. Melting Glaciers Could Trigger More Volcanic Eruptions

### Introduction



As glaciers and ice caps melt due to global warming, they could increase the frequency and intensity of volcanic eruptions, according to a new study presented at the 2025 Goldschmidt Geochemistry Conference in Prague.

### Why This Happens: Less Ice, More Pressure on Volcanoes

- Ice adds pressure on underground magma chambers, keeping volcanic activity suppressed.
- When glaciers melt, this pressure drops, allowing magma and gases to expand, which can lead to explosive eruptions.
- This effect is not new: volcanic activity in Iceland increased 30 to 50 times after major deglaciation around 15,000 years ago.

### **Climate Change Also Affects Precipitation & Eruption Triggers**

- Rainfall patterns (also changing due to climate change) can penetrate deep underground and react with magma, triggering eruptions.

### **Volcanic Eruptions: Cooling or Warming?**

- Short-term cooling: Ash and sulfur dioxide block sunlight and reduce temperatures.
  - Sulfur dioxide forms sulfuric acid aerosols, which reflect sunlight.
  - These aerosols can remain in the stratosphere for up to 3 years, causing global cooling.
- Long-term warming: Prolonged volcanic activity can emit greenhouse gases like CO<sub>2</sub> and methane, contributing to global warming.

### **A Dangerous Climate Feedback Loop**

- Melting glaciers → More eruptions → More CO<sub>2</sub> and methane → More warming → More ice loss
- This vicious cycle could worsen climate change unless global emissions are curbed.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Environment

Source: The Hindu

## **3. Centre Eases Pollution Norms for Coal Plants**

### **Major Exemption for Sulphur-Cutting Equipment**

The Environment Ministry has exempted most coal-fired power plants in India from installing Flue Gas Desulphurisation (FGD) systems, which are used to reduce sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>) emissions.

This reverses a 2015 mandate that required all coal plants to install these systems by 2017.

### **Very Low Implementation So Far**

- India has about 180 coal plants with 600 units.
- As of now, only 8% have installed FGD systems.
- Most of these are operated by NTPC, a public-sector company.

### **Why Is SO<sub>2</sub> a Problem?**

- SO<sub>2</sub> is harmful when inhaled and contributes to the formation of sulphates, a key component of particulate matter (PM<sub>2.5</sub>) air pollution.
- Although SO<sub>2</sub> levels in India are mostly below legal limits, they still add to air pollution, especially in industrial zones.

### **Reasons for Rollback**

The government cited the following factors for not enforcing FGD rules:

- Few vendors to supply FGDs
- High cost of installation
- Potential rise in electricity bills
- Delays due to COVID-19

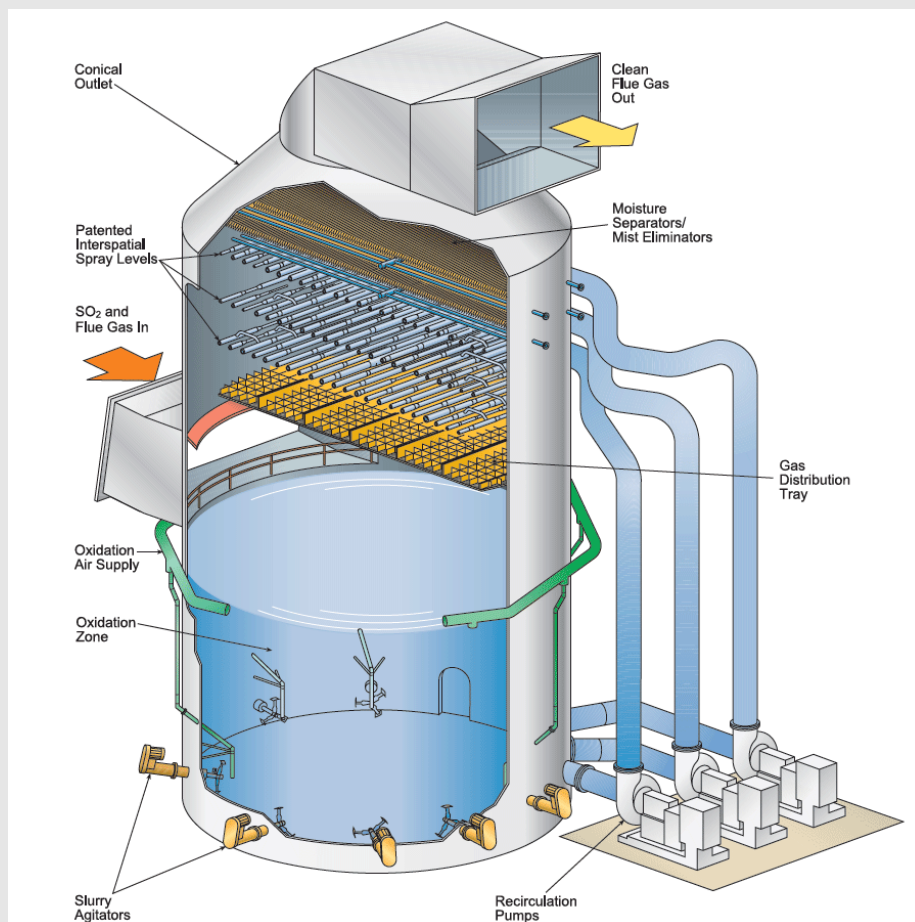
- New studies suggesting Indian coal has low sulphur content

### Questionable Justification Based on New Studies

A government-appointed expert committee claimed:

- SO<sub>2</sub> levels are low even without FGD.
- Sulfates may help by reducing global warming slightly, by blocking sunlight.
- Thus, reducing sulfates (via FGD) could increase warming, affecting climate targets.

However, global scientific bodies like the IPCC acknowledge this cooling effect, but do not recommend keeping sulphates for this reason.



### Double Standards in Environmental Rules

- Only a minority of plants must still install FGDs by 2028:
  - o Those within 10 km of NCR
  - o In cities with over 1 million people
  - o In pollution hotspots

This means location, not pollution risk, determines whether FGDs are required — a rare case of unequal environmental standards within India.

### Why This Matters

- Changing environmental rules without public debate risks damaging India's credibility on public health and climate commitments.
- Scientific revisions are valid, but must be transparent and evidence-based, not made quietly behind closed doors.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Environment

Source: Indian Express

#### 4. Why Has the Government Exempted Thermal Plants from Anti-Pollution Devices?

##### Background: What Are FGD Devices and Why Are They Important?

- Flue Gas Desulphurisation (FGD) devices remove sulphur dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>), a major pollutant released by coal-based thermal power plants.
- SO<sub>2</sub> contributes to PM2.5 pollution, acid rain, and serious health issues such as asthma, heart problems, and premature death.
- Thermal power plants are the largest SO<sub>2</sub> emitters in India.

Why govt has exempted 78% of coal-based thermal plants from installing anti-pollution devices

##### Initial Rules and Delays

- In 2015, the Environment Ministry set new emission norms for SO<sub>2</sub>.
- All plants were required to install FGD systems by December 2017.
- Plants repeatedly requested extensions, citing high costs, power disruptions, and potential rise in electricity tariffs.

##### Categorisation in 2021

Plants were grouped into three categories:

- Category A: Near NCR or cities with over 1 million people – deadline: 2022
- Category B: Near polluted or non-attainment cities (Non-attainment cities are urban areas that fail to meet the National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) for a specific pollutant, typically for five consecutive years) – deadline: 2023
- Category C: All other plants – deadline: 2024 (comprising 78% of units)

##### 2025 Rule Change: What Has Changed Now?

- On July 11, 2025, the government exempted Category C plants from installing FGD devices.
- Category A plants must comply by 2027.
- Category B plants will be considered case-by-case.
- Plants retiring before December 2030 can also be exempted if they give a written undertaking.

##### Government's Justification

The decision is based on three studies commissioned by government agencies (IIT-Delhi, NEERI, NIAS). These studies claim:

- SO<sub>2</sub> levels near plants are within safe limits.
- FGD devices may increase CO<sub>2</sub> and PM emissions.
- The focus should shift to overall particulate matter, not just SO<sub>2</sub>.

##### Why Experts Disagree

- Experts argue that the studies are misleading and don't consider the full impact of emissions.
- According to the Centre for Research on Energy and Clean Air (CREA):

o Air monitoring stations do not track the spread or chemical transformation of SO<sub>2</sub> into PM2.5.

• The Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) found in 2021:

o SO<sub>2</sub> emissions travel up to 300 km, becoming more dangerous as they turn into secondary pollutants.

o SO<sub>2</sub> stays in the atmosphere for up to 10 days, posing long-term risks.

## Conclusion

Despite the health and environmental risks, the government has relaxed SO<sub>2</sub> emission rules for most coal plants. While it cites research to support its decision, independent experts and environmentalists warn that the move could worsen India's air pollution crisis in the long run.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Environment

Source: Indian Express

## 5. What Are Biostimulants? Why they are in News?

### Background: A Case That Prompted Action

Biostimulants are substances or microbes that, when applied to plants or seeds, help improve:

- Growth
- Yield
- Nutrient absorption
- Stress tolerance

They are not fertilisers or pesticides, and often include:

- Seaweed extracts
- Plant-based materials

As per the 1985 Fertiliser Control Order (FCO), biostimulants do not include pesticides or plant growth regulators.

### Why Are Biostimulants in the News?

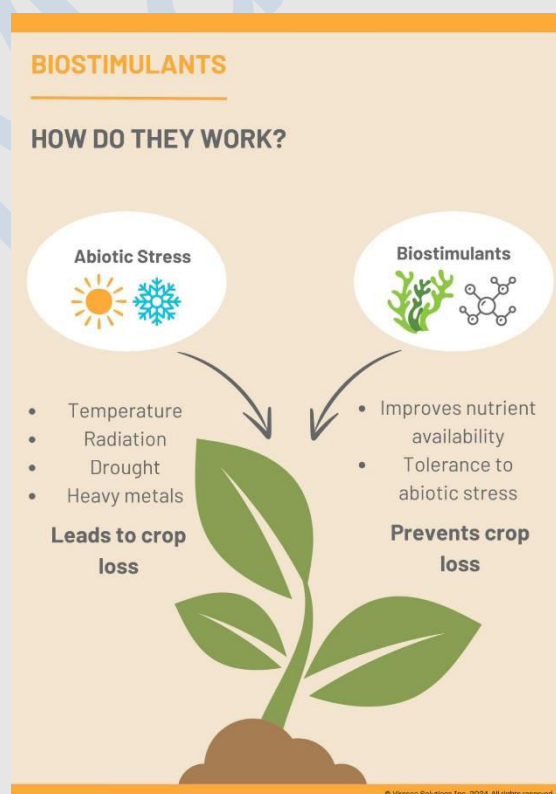
• Agriculture Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan has asked states to stop forcing farmers to buy biostimulants with subsidised fertilisers like urea or DAP.

• Farmers complained:

o Biostimulants are being pushed by retailers unfairly.

o Many are not effective.

He said the government would review their benefits and might cancel permissions if found ineffective.



### How Big is India's Biostimulant Market?

- 2024: Valued at \$355.53 million
- 2025: Estimated at \$410.78 million
- 2032 projection: \$1.13 billion, growing at 15.64% annually

### **Why Did the Govt Start Regulating Them?**

- Earlier, biostimulants were sold without any approval, since they didn't fall under fertiliser or pesticide laws.
- In 2011, Punjab & Haryana High Court ruled that bio-products with fertiliser/pesticide-like claims must be regulated.
- This led to:
  - o States testing products before sale
  - o Centre working on a regulatory framework
- In 2021, the Fertiliser Control Order (FCO) was amended to include biostimulants, allowing regulation of their manufacture, sale, and import.

### **What Are the FCO Rules for Biostimulants?**

Biostimulants under FCO must meet strict standards:

#### **1. Registration Requirements:**

Manufacturers must provide:

- Chemistry and source (plant/microbe/animal/synthetic)
- Shelf life
- Efficacy reports
- Toxicity data

#### **2. Mandatory Tests:**

Toxicity on animals:

- Oral, dermal, inhalation (rats)
- Skin & eye irritation (rabbits)

Eco-toxicity:

- Fish, birds, bees, earthworms

#### **3. Strict Limits:**

- No pesticides above 0.01 ppm
- Trials must be done by:
  - o ICAR (Indian Council of Agricultural Research)
  - o State agricultural universities

### **Central Biostimulant Committee**

Formed in April 2021 for 5 years.

Roles:

- Approve new biostimulants
- Set specifications
- Advise govt on testing and regulation
- Supervised by the Agriculture Commissioner

### **Latest Government Actions**

Provisional Registration Expired

- In 2021, manufacturers were allowed 2 years of provisional sale while applying for full registration.
- This deadline was extended multiple times.
- Last extension ended June 16, 2025.
- Now, companies with only provisional approval can't sell biostimulants.

### **New Crop-Specific Rules (May 2025)**

The govt notified standards for biostimulants for crops like:

- Tomato, chilli, paddy, maize, brinjal, cucumber, potato, soybean, green gram, grapes, onion, etc.

### **Conclusion**

- Biostimulants have huge growth potential, but also concerns about:
  - o Forced sales
  - o Lack of effectiveness
- The government is now moving towards tight regulation to ensure only safe and effective products reach farmers.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Environment

Source: Indian Express

## **6. Renewable Energy is Growing Fast — But Fossil Fuels Are Still Dominant**

### **Introduction**

In 2024, the world added 582 GW of renewable energy capacity — the largest ever increase in a single year. Global renewable capacity now stands at 4,442 GW, producing about 30% of electricity.

This growth aligns with the global goal of tripling renewables by 2030, set at the COP28 climate summit.

### **Why This Growth Isn't Solving the Climate Crisis**

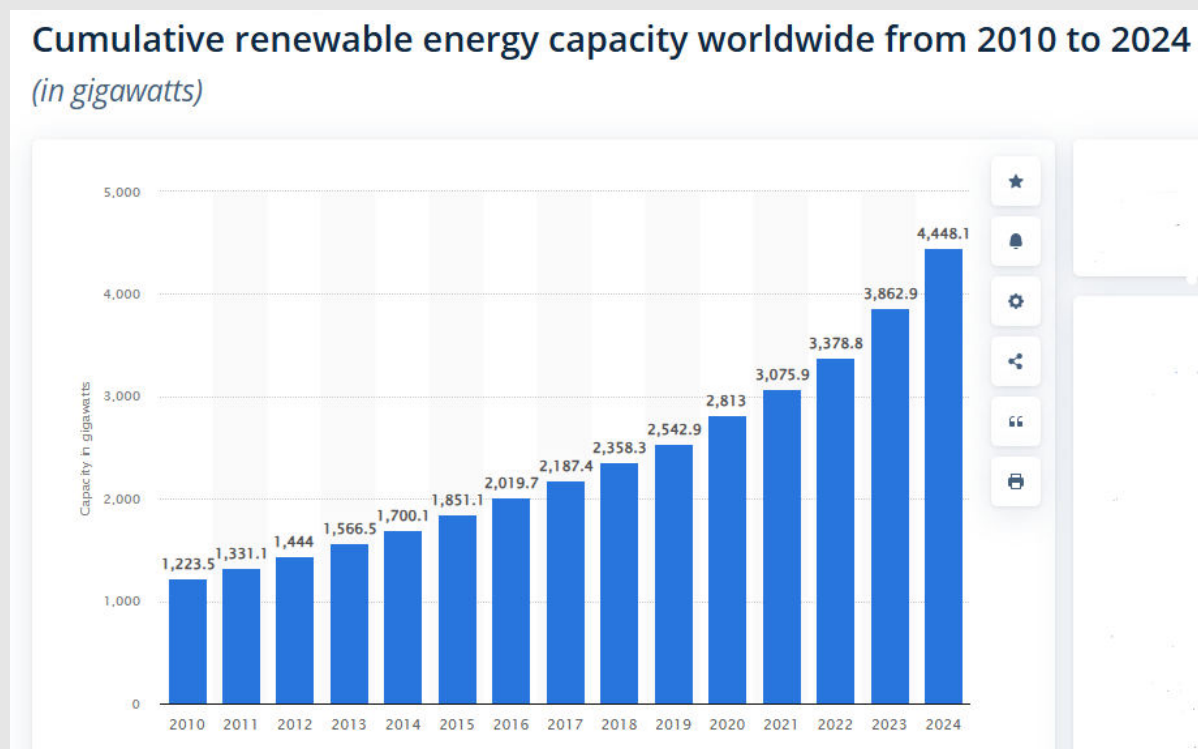
Despite impressive growth, renewables are not replacing fossil fuels — they're mostly meeting rising electricity demand.

- Global electricity generation has grown by 2.5% per year (2012–2023).
- Renewable energy grew by 6% per year but fossil fuels still generate over 70% of electricity.
- In fact, more fossil fuels are burned today than 10 years ago.

### **Most Energy Still Comes from Fossil Fuels**

- Electricity makes up only 20–22% of global energy use.
- With just 30% of electricity from renewables, this means only ~6% of total energy is clean.
- So, over 90% of the world's energy still comes from fossil fuels.

Even by 2050, projections suggest clean energy may account for only 40–45% of global consumption.



### Carbon Removal is Now Essential

Since renewable energy alone cannot eliminate fossil fuel use, carbon removal technologies will be critical in controlling global warming. However, these technologies are not yet viable or scalable.

### Uneven Growth of Renewables Across Regions

The growth in renewables is highly concentrated in a few countries:

- Asia accounted for 71% of 2024's new capacity — but China alone contributed 62%.
- Africa saw only a 7% increase, starting from a very low base.
- Many countries, especially developing ones, are being left behind.

This regional imbalance may deepen energy inequality.

### China's Dominance in Renewable Supply Chains

- China leads in production and consumption of key renewable technologies, like solar panels.
- It controls much of the global supply chain, similar to how OPEC controls oil.
- Manufacturing in other countries struggles to compete with China's low costs and subsidies.
- This creates a renewable energy monopoly, reducing global energy security.

### Conclusion: Transition is Complex and Unequal

The shift to clean energy is not simple. It faces challenges like:

- Continued reliance on fossil fuels.
- Slow and unequal adoption across regions.

- Overdependence on a few countries for clean technology.
- Lack of viable carbon removal solutions.

Real climate action needs more than just renewables — it demands a comprehensive, global, and equitable energy strategy.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Environment

Source: Indian Express

### 1. GPS Interference Threatens Aircraft and Ships

#### Recent Incidents Linked to GPS Disruption

- Delhi-Jammu flight turned back mid-air
- Tanker collision at Strait of Hormuz
- Container ship ran aground near Jeddah

All these were caused by GPS interference, which is now a growing threat to global transport systems.

#### What Is GPS Interference?

Two Main Types:

1. Jamming – Blocks or overpowers GPS signals using strong radio frequencies.
2. Spoofing – Sends fake GPS signals to mislead devices into showing incorrect positions.

#### Impact:

- Affects planes, ships, and even road transport.
- Can lead to accidents, delays, and loss of navigation control.

#### Why Is It Dangerous?

- Pilots may misjudge position, risking collisions or crashes.
- Ships may run aground or collide due to loss of situational awareness.
- In 2024, there were up to 700 GPS spoofing incidents per day worldwide.

#### Where Is It Happening Most?

- Conflict zones and regions with advanced electronic warfare.
- Major hotspots:
  - Red Sea – 350% rise in spoofing (Q1 2025 vs 2024)
  - Eastern Europe – Linked to Russia-Ukraine conflict
  - Persian Gulf – Near-strategic shipping routes

#### India's GPS Spoofing Case

- 2017, Russia: 20 ships near Novorossiysk showed GPS errors, all appearing inland at an airport — confirmed spoofing.
- June 2025: Air India Express flight to Jammu returned to Delhi due to suspected GPS spoofing.

#### How Are Aircraft and Ships Handling the Threat?

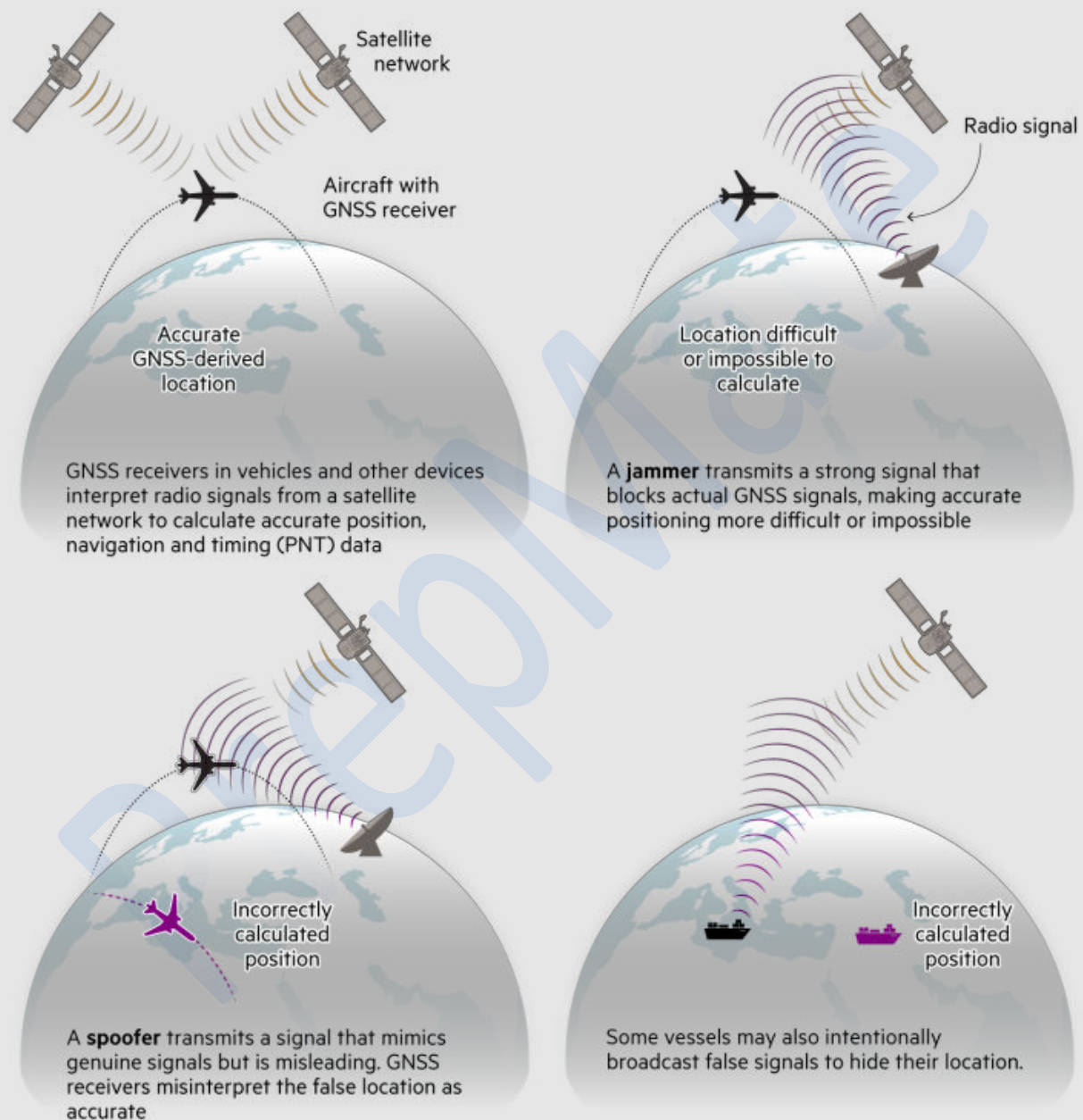
India's Own Navigation System: NavIC

- Developed by ISRO after denial of US GPS during key events like:
  - Kargil War (1999)
  - BrahMos missile tests (2009, 2012)
- NavIC provides secure, reliable navigation across India and nearby regions.

- Successfully used during Operation Sindhoor.

## How GNSS interference works

Global navigation satellite systems (GNSS) include the US-owned GPS, the EU's Galileo and Russia's Glonass



Source: FT research  
© FT

## Conclusion: A Growing Cyber Threat

GPS spoofing and jamming are now powerful tools in electronic warfare and cyber disruption. To stay safe, both civilian and military sectors must:

- Invest in alternative navigation systems
- Develop homegrown tech like NavIC
- Enhance global cooperation on navigation security

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Science & Technology

Source: Indian Express

## 2. INS Tamal Commissioned: India's Last Imported Warship and a Milestone in Naval Self-Reliance

### What Is INS Tamal?

INS Tamal is a Talwar-class multirole frigate built in Kaliningrad, Russia, and commissioned into the Indian Navy on July 1, 2025. It is likely to be the last foreign-built warship inducted by India, as the Navy shifts fully to indigenous shipbuilding.

### Why INS Tamal Is Significant



- Marks the end of India's dependence on imported warships
- Contains 26% Indian-made components, showing partial localisation
- Predecessor INS Tushil was also built in Russia
- The final two ships in this series (Triput and Tavasya) are being built in Goa Shipyard Limited, using Russian designs with Indian manufacturing

### The Current Picture

- Most current warships have 75% or more Indian components
- Between 2011–21:
  - 40 warships added, 33 built in India
- As of 2021:
  - 37 of 39 ships on order were Indian-made
- INS Tamal and Tushil are the only recent imports

## Conclusion

INS Tamal symbolizes both an end and a new beginning: the last of imported warships, and a bold step into an era where India builds its own navy — in design, parts, and production.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Science & Technology

Source: The Hindu

## 3. Are Generative AI Models Using Stolen Work?

### Introduction

The first two U.S. court rulings on whether generative AI models are built on stolen creative work have sided with tech companies — Anthropic and Meta. However, the broader legal and ethical debate around AI and copyright is far from over.

### What's the Core Issue?

Writers, artists, music labels, and publishers argue that tech companies are training AI models using copyrighted content without permission, amounting to theft. Over 21 lawsuits have been filed in the U.S., raising concerns about creative rights and fair compensation.



### What Do Tech Companies Say?

Tech companies argue that their use of such content is “transformative”, and falls under fair use — a legal concept that allows limited use of copyrighted material for public interest (e.g. research, commentary).

### Case 1: Writers vs Anthropic (Claude AI)

- Plaintiffs: Three journalist-authors
- Accusation: Anthropic downloaded pirated books (like those from Books3) and used them to train Claude AI without permission or payment.
- Anthropic's defence: Claimed fair use due to the AI's transformative nature — it creates something new, not a copy.
- Court ruling (June 23): Judge sided with Anthropic, calling the AI's use transformative and allowed under fair use.
- However: A separate trial will decide if Anthropic must pay damages for using pirated books.

### Case 2: Writers vs Meta (Llama AI)

- Plaintiffs: 13 authors, including Sarah Silverman

- Accusation: Meta trained its LLMs using Books3, Anna's Archive, and Libgen — all shadow libraries containing pirated content.
- Meta's defence: Claimed to have "post-trained" models to avoid reproducing copyrighted content.
- Court ruling (June 25): Judge said authors failed to prove their market was harmed. But he acknowledged AI companies should consider compensating creators.

### **Why These Rulings Matter**

- Tech wins — for now: Both Meta and Anthropic got favourable rulings, but courts did not entirely dismiss the concerns.
- Pirated content still under scrutiny: Both companies may still be held liable for using pirated databases.
- Upcoming trials: Anthropic's case will go to trial in December over copyright damages.

### **More Lawsuits Coming**

The legal battle over AI and copyright is growing:

- OpenAI & Microsoft: Facing 12 combined lawsuits, including from The New York Times and Ziff Davis.
- Visual artists vs Stability AI & Midjourney: For using artwork without consent.
- Getty Images vs Stability AI: For using 12+ million copyrighted photos.
- India's ANI & DNPA vs OpenAI: For unauthorized use of Indian news content.

### **What's the Bigger Concern?**

These cases highlight a deeper question:

As AI gets more advanced, what happens to the livelihoods of creators — and to creativity itself?

While the courts may decide the legality, the ethical and societal impact of AI using human-created work without consent or compensation remains unresolved.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Science & Technology

Source: Indian Express

## **4. Shubhanshu Shukla Talked to Students from Space Using Ham Radio**

### **What Is Happening?**

On July 4, 2025, Indian astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla interacted with Indian students using ham radio from the International Space Station (ISS).

### **What Is Ham Radio?**

- Also called amateur radio, it is a licensed service that uses radio waves for communication.

- Used for:

- Education
- Emergency/SOS communication
- Connecting across local, global, and even space networks

- Requires:

- A transceiver, antenna, and license

- In India, anyone above 12 years can apply for a license from the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.



## INDIAN ASTRONAUT CONNECTS WITH ISRO AND STUDENTS FROM SPACE

### Ham Radio in Space: A Brief History

- First used from a space shuttle in 1983 to talk to Earth.
- The ISS has its own system: ARISS (Amateur Radio on the International Space Station).
- ARISS is often used to connect astronauts with students, aiming to inspire young minds.
- Supported by space agencies from the US, Russia, Canada, Japan, and Europe.
- During space operations like docking, the ham system is temporarily shut off to prevent interference.

### How Will Shukla Use Ham Radio on the ISS?

- As part of the Axiom-4 mission, astronauts from India, Poland, and Hungary will use ham radio to talk to people back home.
- Communication attempts are made when the ISS passes over the region — the window lasts 5 to 8 minutes.

### Why Use Ham Radio in the Digital Age?

- Despite modern tech, radio is stable, simple, and dependable.
- Often works when mobile networks and internet fail.
- Successfully used in emergencies like:
  - 2001 Bhuj earthquake
  - 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami
  - 2013 Uttarakhand floods

Relevance: GS Prelims; Science & Technology

Source: Indian Express

## 5. How Astronauts Eat and Use the Toilet in Space

### Meals in Space: Not Just Paste in Tubes Anymore

Astronauts aboard the International Space Station (ISS) enjoy nutritious and often tasty meals, though eating in space needs careful planning due to zero gravity.



### **What Do They Eat?**

- Packaged and dehydrated food: Meals are sealed in special pouches. Hot water is injected into them before eating.
- Indian astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla shared Indian sweets like gajar ka halwa, moong dal halwa, and aamras with fellow astronauts — all pre-packed by ISRO and DRDO.
- Drinks like tea, coffee, and juice come in powder form and are mixed with water onboard.

### **How Do They Eat?**

#### **Zero gravity makes food float, so:**

- Food trays and cutlery are fastened with Velcro.
- Astronauts secure themselves using footholds.
- Packages are only slightly opened; spoons are dipped in to avoid food floating away.
- Salt and pepper are in liquid form and added with droppers.

### **Food Hygiene and Cleaning**

- Utensils are wiped clean with cloths — no running water is used.
- Waste food packets go into sealed waste containers.

### **Menu Selection**

- Astronauts pick their meals months in advance.
- Nutritionists ensure balanced meals: more calcium, less sodium, and enough vitamin D to keep bones healthy.

### **Why Scientists Want to Grow Food in Space**

As space missions become longer, it's not practical to carry all the food from Earth. That's why scientists are trying to grow food in space.

### **Current Research**

- Studying how plants grow in microgravity.
- Using LED lights for photosynthesis.
- Exploring soilless farming methods like hydroponics.

### **Crops Being Studied**

- Potatoes, soybeans, wheat, spinach, tomatoes, carrots
- Microalgae is being tested — it can be used as food, fuel, or even for oxygen generation.

ISRO is conducting multiple such experiments during Shukla's ISS stay, testing six crop varieties and microalgae.

## How Astronauts Use the Toilet in Space

### Peeing in Space

- Urination is done using a suction hose, designed for both men and women.
- The urine is purified and recycled into drinking water — saving space and weight during space travel.

### Pooping in Space

- Special suction-based toilets are used.
- Astronauts strap themselves to the seat to stay in place.
- Waste is collected in containers:
  - Most of it is burnt when returning spacecraft enter Earth's atmosphere.
  - Some samples are returned to Earth for health monitoring.

### In Summary

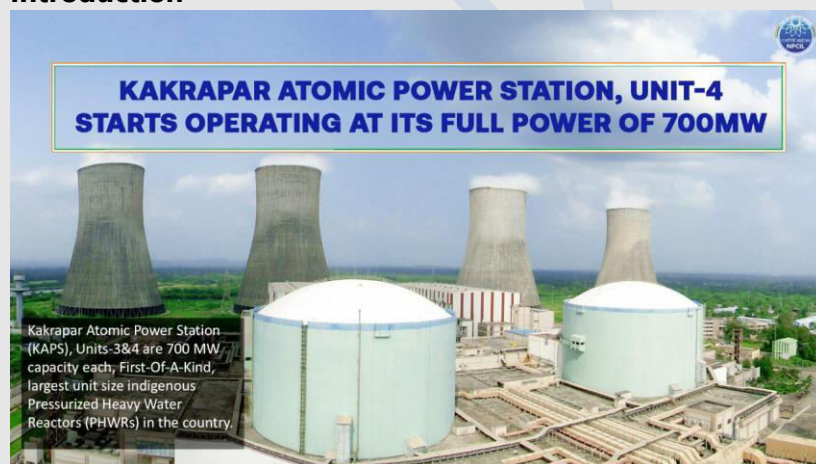
Life in space isn't just about floating in zero gravity — even simple things like eating or using the toilet involve clever technology and careful planning. As missions grow longer, especially with future Moon or Mars exploration in mind, growing food in space and managing waste efficiently will be crucial for human survival beyond Earth.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Science & Technology

Source: Indian Express

## 6. India's Indigenous Nuclear Reactors Get Operational Licence

### Introduction



The Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) has granted permission to the Nuclear Power Corporation of India Ltd. (NPCIL) to operate two indigenously developed 700 MWe nuclear reactors at the Kakrapar Atomic Power Station (KAPS) in Gujarat.

### Details of the Approval

- The licence covers Units 3 and 4 at Kakrapar.
- It is valid for five years, issued on July 3, 2025.
- KAPS-3 was allowed full-power operation in August 2023.
- KAPS-4 received similar clearance in August 2024, during final commissioning.

### First-of-its-Kind Reactor Design

These 700 MWe Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs) are the first of their kind developed in India.

Because of this, the licensing process required detailed safety assessments across multiple stages — from site selection and construction to full-power operation.

### **Extensive Safety Reviews**

- The AERB conducted multi-tiered reviews over nearly 15 years.
- Experts from technical support organisations also contributed to the safety evaluations of the reactor design and performance during commissioning.

### **Boost for India's Nuclear Programme**

This licence is a major milestone for NPCIL, which is planning to build 10 more reactors of the same 700 MWe capacity under a fleet mode project aimed at expanding India's nuclear power capacity.

Relevance: GS Prelims; Science & Technology

Source: Indian Express

## **7. Rubin Observatory: A New Era in Space Exploration Begins**

### **Introduction**



The Vera C. Rubin Observatory in Chile has released its first test images and is set to revolutionize how we observe the universe. The observatory is named after Vera Rubin, the American astronomer who first provided evidence for dark matter in the 1970s.

### **Location and Mission**

- Located 8,684 feet above sea level on Cerro Pachón in the Chilean Andes
- Will scan the entire southern sky over 10 years

### **Core Instrument: The Simonyi Survey Telescope**

#### **1. Wide Field of View**

- Covers an area 40 times the size of the full Moon in a single shot
- Far exceeds Hubble and James Webb in how much sky it can see at once

#### **2. Advanced Mirror System**

- Uses three curved mirrors (8.4m, 3.5m, and 5m diameters) to gather and reflect light
- Creates detailed, wide-angle images of the sky

### **The World's Largest Digital Camera**

- Camera size: As big as a small car
- Weight: 2,800 kg
- Resolution: 3,200 megapixels
- Detail: Can detect objects 100 million times dimmer than the naked eye can see
- Has 6 filters to detect different types of light (from ultraviolet to infrared)

### **Fastest Telescope of Its Kind**

- Can move and settle on a new target in just 5 seconds
- Traditional telescopes take around 10 minutes
- Can take up to 1,000 images a night, scanning the whole sky in 3 days
- Controlled by a smart script instead of pre-set targets

### **Automated Sky Monitoring and Alerts**

- Will generate about 10 million alerts per night, flagging any changes in the sky
- Software compares new images to past ones to detect new objects or movements

### **Unraveling Dark Energy and Dark Matter**

- Universe is made up of:
  - 5% visible matter (stars, planets, galaxies)
  - 27% dark matter
  - 68% dark energy

Rubin Observatory will help map the structure of the universe in ultra-high detail, offering new insights into these mysterious forces.

### **What Experts Are Saying**

It took 225 years to find the first 1.5 million asteroids. Rubin will double that in under a year. Also, Rubin will create the best possible map to understand dark matter and dark energy.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Science & Technology

Source: Indian Express

## **8. What is the 'Dark Web' – And Is It All Bad?**

### **Why It's in the News**

A 35-year-old engineer from Kerala, Mulayamkottil Edison, was arrested for selling drugs on the dark web. Police say he was a "level-four darknet vendor" and had LSD, ketamine, and cryptocurrency worth ₹1 crore.

### **What is the Dark Web?**

The dark web is a hidden part of the internet that search engines like Google or Yahoo can't find. It requires special tools like the Tor browser to access and is designed to hide users' identities.

### **Origins of the Dark Web**

- Created in the 1990s by the US Naval Research Laboratory to protect government communications.
- Developed into the Tor Project by Roger Dingledine and others in the early 2000s.



### How Do People Access It?

- Users must install Tor, which hides their identity by routing data through several encrypted servers worldwide.
- Websites on the dark web have “.onion” domains that don’t show up in regular search engines.
- Users need to know specific addresses to access these sites.

### What Happens on the Dark Web?

#### Illegal Activities

- Drug trade
- Weapons and counterfeit goods
- Stolen data and hacking services
- Black markets like the now-banned Silk Road

#### Legal and Ethical Uses

- Whistleblowers, journalists, and activists use it to stay safe under repressive governments.
- Platforms like SecureDrop allow anonymous document leaks.
- Used by hospitals and institutions to protect sensitive data.

### Why is it Called “Dark”?

The term refers to hidden or private rather than evil. While criminal activity exists, many use it for privacy and safety, especially in places with strict censorship.

### What is a Level-Four Vendor?

According to the Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB):

- Vendors are ranked based on the potency of the drugs and the quality of customer service.
- Edison was the level-four vendor in India, making him a high-level seller in the darknet drug trade.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Science & Technology

Source: Indian Express

## 9. Indian Astronaut Shukla Grows Crops in Space

### Fenugreek (Methi) and Green Gram (Moong) Sprouted on ISS



In the final days of his space mission, Indian astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla turned space farmer by growing fenugreek and green gram seeds aboard the International Space Station (ISS). The experiment aims to study how microgravity affects seed germination and early plant growth.

### ISRO's Collaboration with Indian Scientists

Shukla praised ISRO's efforts in partnering with Indian institutions for space research. The plant experiment is led by:

- Ravikumar Hosamani (University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad)
- Sudheer Siddapureddy (IIT Dharwad)

Once the seeds return to Earth, they will be cultivated over generations to examine changes in genetics, microbes, and nutrition.

### Microalgae for Future Space Missions

In another experiment, Shukla worked with microalgae, which could help produce food, oxygen, and biofuel in space. Their resilience makes them promising for long-term space missions.

### Studying Crop Seeds and Genetics

Shukla also took images of six types of crop seeds, which will be grown after his return. The goal is to find plants with the best traits for genetic research and sustainable farming in space.

### Excited About Stem Cell Research

Shukla shared his excitement about another project: stem cell research. Scientists are testing if supplements can boost stem cell abilities to heal or repair injuries faster in space conditions.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Science & Technology

## 10. How Tamil Nadu Brought Down TB Deaths: A Model for India

### What Is TN-KET?

#### Saving lives by cutting down delay, beginning treatment

The TN-KET (Tamil Nadu-Kasanoi Erappila Thittam) initiative began in April 2022 in 2,500-odd public healthcare facilities that diagnosed tuberculosis in 30 districts

- The heart of the initiative is the 'Differentiated TB Care' aimed at assessing whether people with TB need ambulatory care or admission in a health facility to manage severe illness at the time of diagnosis

- Nearly 70% of all TB deaths among notified TB patients take place in the first two months after diagnosis

- Preliminary assessment of patients based on just three conditions was sufficient for quick identification at diagnosis and referral for admission in a hospital

- This resulted in admission of people with severe TB illness in a hospital on the same day of diagnosis, thus increasing the chances of saving lives



**Lacking:** Most PHCs, many taluk and block-level healthcare facilities lack clinical and diagnostic capacity

- Around 150 nodal inpatient care facilities have been identified, and nearly 900 beds earmarked for people with TB who are severely ill

- In December 2022, the State achieved 90% triaging of patients, 90% referral and confirmation of severe illness, and 90% admission among confirmed

Tamil Nadu launched the Tamil Nadu Kasanoi Erappila Thittam (TN-KET) — which translates to the TB Death-Free Initiative — in 2022. This program combines a quick screening tool with differentiated, patient-focused care to reduce tuberculosis (TB) deaths.

### Impact of TN-KET

According to a recent study:

- Dharmapuri: TB death rate dropped from 12.5% to 7.8%
- Karur: Reduced from 7.1% to 5.3%
- Villupuram: Fell from 6.1% to 5.2%

Across the state:

- Early TB deaths dropped by 20% within six months
- Two-thirds of districts saw a 20-30% reduction in total TB deaths in 2024

### Key Features Behind TN-KET's Success

#### 1. Simple Paper-Based Triage Tool

Used by frontline health workers to quickly assess the severity of a TB patient without requiring lab tests. Key parameters recorded:

- BMI (using height and weight) to check for undernutrition
- Leg swelling (press test)
- Respiratory rate
- Oxygen saturation (with a pulse oximeter)
- Ability to stand without support

Patients flagged as "severely ill" are referred for immediate hospital care.

## **2. Differentiated Care Model**

Unlike a one-size-fits-all approach, this model:

- Adapts care to individual patient needs
- Factors in age, weight, history, and disease severity
- Ensures priority inpatient treatment for those most at risk

### **Fast and Effective Diagnosis**

- Traditional systems use 16 parameters and take a week
- TN-KET's tool allows same-day evaluation
- 98% of TB patients are assessed using this tool
- Of those found severely ill, 98% are hospitalized within 7 days

### **Digital Support: Severe TB Web Application**

A digital platform allows health workers to:

- Input patient data
- Estimate death risk
- Take immediate action based on probability

### **Why This Matters**

- India has the highest TB burden globally
  - 28 lakh cases in 2023 (26% of global cases)
  - 3.15 lakh deaths (29% of global deaths)
- Half of all TB deaths occur within two months of diagnosis

### **Scientific Insight**

"Immediate hospital care can cut early death risk by 1% to 4%, especially when severely ill patients have up to 50% risk of dying," — Hemant Shewade, National Institute of Epidemiology.

### **Conclusion: A Model for Other States**

The TN-KET initiative proves that early detection and patient-focused care can save lives. Other states in India can adopt this model to reduce TB deaths nationwide.

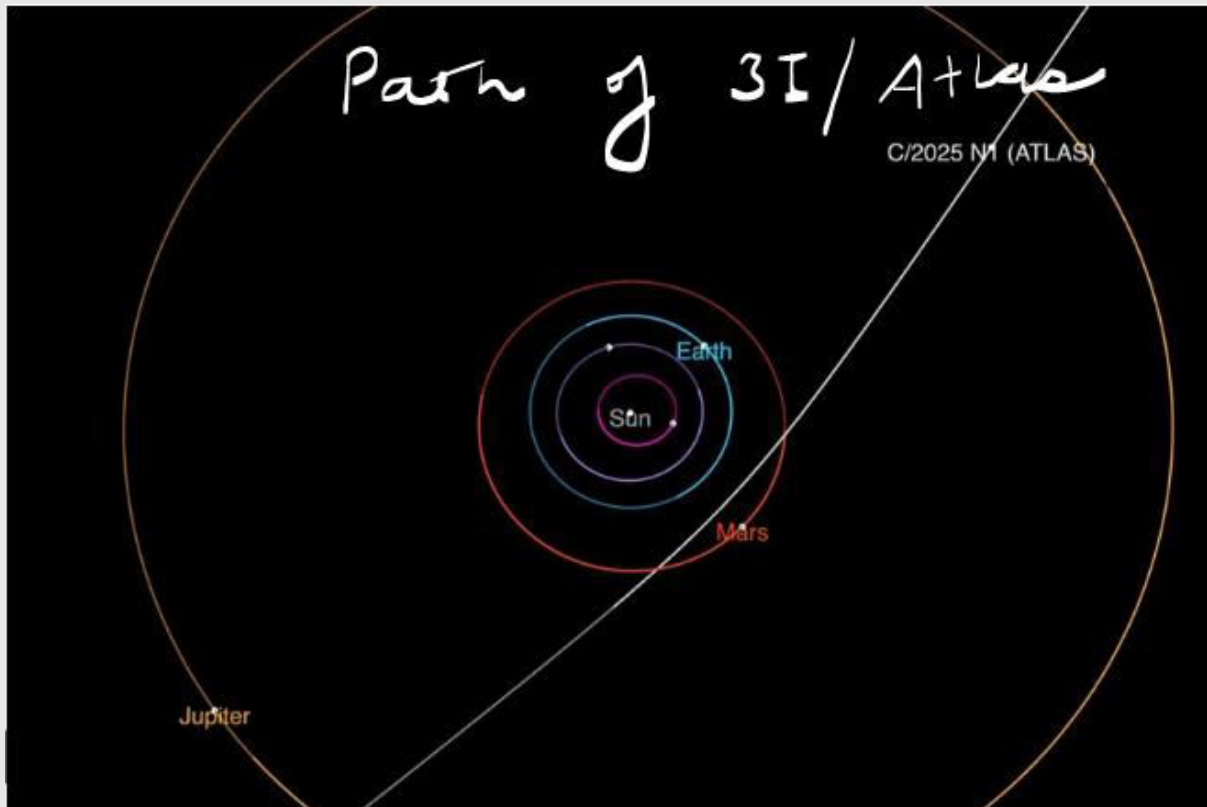
Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Science & Technology

Source: Indian Express

## 11. How Scientists Identify Interstellar Objects: The Case of 3I/Atlas

### Discovery of 3I/Atlas

- Spotted on July 1, 2025 by the ATLAS telescope in Chile.
- Found at 670 million km from the Sun, currently about 917 million km away (near Jupiter's distance).
- It is only the third interstellar object ever discovered — after 1I/Oumuamua (2017) and 2I/Borisov (2019).



### Why 3I/Atlas Is Special

- May be the oldest comet ever seen, estimated to be over 7 billion years old — about 3 billion years older than our Solar System.
- Announced by Oxford University scientists at the UK's Royal Astronomical Society meeting.

### What Are Interstellar Objects?

- These are celestial bodies that originate outside our Solar System.
- Unlike planets or comets in our system, they are not bound by the Sun's gravity.
- They may enter our system due to gravitational slingshots or collisions in their home systems.

### How Do Scientists Confirm It's Interstellar?

#### 1. Orbit Type

- Most Solar System objects move in closed elliptical orbits (looping around the Sun).
- Interstellar objects follow a hyperbolic orbit — they pass through once and don't return.

## 2. Speed and Distance

- At great distances, objects should slow down due to the Sun's weak gravitational pull.
- 3I/Atlas was moving at 60 km/h at 670 million km — too fast to be from our system.
- This high speed suggests it had a significant initial velocity and is thus interstellar.

## Why Studying Interstellar Objects Matters

- They offer clues about other solar systems and how planets form elsewhere.
  - Chemical analysis reveals:
    - Whether the object formed far from a star (icy composition).
    - The type of planet or event that may have ejected it.
- "These wanderers offer a rare, tangible connection to the broader galaxy," — European Space Agency

## In Summary

3I/Atlas could be the oldest known interstellar object, giving us a glimpse into distant star systems. Its trajectory and speed confirm its interstellar origin, and studying such objects may be the closest we come to touching material from other worlds.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Science & Technology

Source: Indian Express

## 12. How Space Travel Affects Shubhanshu Shukla's Health

### Return After 18 Days in Space

Indian astronaut Group Captain Shubhanshu Shukla has returned to Earth after 18 days aboard the International Space Station (ISS), where he orbited Earth 288 times. His spacecraft, SpaceX Dragon (Grace), splashed down off the California coast.



### Initial Challenges in Space: Adapting to Microgravity

Shukla experienced space motion sickness in the first few days in space as he adjusted to microgravity.

He shared:

"I didn't feel like myself in the beginning. I hope I don't feel the same when returning — unless I get unlucky both ways."

Commander Peggy Whitson, who has been to space multiple times, said she adapts more easily to space than to Earth's gravity after returning.

### What Happens After Splashdown?

After landing:

1. The crew was removed from the spacecraft by a SpaceX recovery team.
2. They got their first medical checks onboard a support ship.
3. They were then flown to land by helicopter.

### **Why Astronauts Need 'Reconditioning'**

Returning astronauts often face:

- Balance issues
- Difficulty standing or walking
- Muscle weakness
- Spinal problems
- Reduced mobility and flexibility

This is because, in space, the brain stops relying on the inner ear (which helps maintain balance on Earth). Once back, the body struggles to readjust.

### **What is Reconditioning?**

Astronauts go through a personalised rehabilitation program to help:

- Improve mobility, balance, strength, and flexibility
- Relearn how to process balance signals
- Restore endurance and motion control
- Manage skilled movements

### **Injuries Are Common After Space Missions**

According to NASA:

- 92% of astronauts experience post-flight injuries
- 50% occur within the first year of return
- Common injuries:

- o Muscle sprains

- o Tendon issues

- o Fractures

- o Spinal disc herniation

Shukla said everyday activities like drinking water, walking, and sleeping were hard at first in space due to the absence of gravity, but he adapted in a few days.

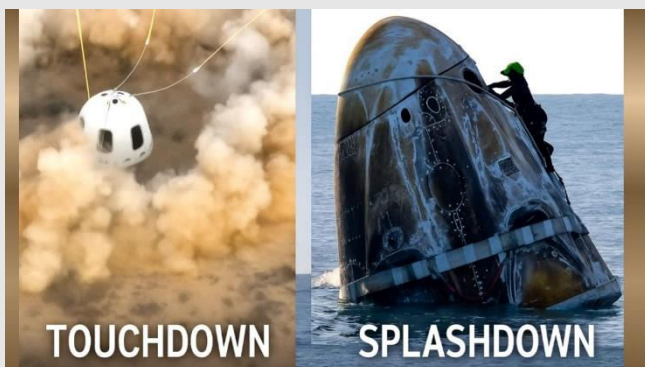
Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Science & Technology

Source: Indian Express

## **13. Why Spacecraft Prefer Ocean Splashdowns Over Ground Landings**

### **Recent Example: Axiom-4 Mission**

The spacecraft carrying Indian astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla and three others from the Axiom-4 mission safely splashed down in the Pacific Ocean after a 20-hour return from the International Space Station (ISS).



## Why Splashdowns Are Preferred

### 1. Simpler and Safer

- Spacecraft re-enter the Earth's atmosphere at extremely high speeds — up to 27,359 km/h.
- Slowing down enough for a vertical ground landing would require extra systems, like landing legs and strong brakes, making it complex and expensive.
- Water landings offer a natural cushion

to absorb the impact, even at speeds of 25–30 km/h.

### 2. Reduces Risk of Damage

- The high density and low viscosity of water help absorb shock during landing.
- This reduces the risk of damage to the spacecraft, instruments, and crew.

### 3. More Room for Error

- Ground landings need precise targeting to avoid buildings, rocks, or people.
- Oceans provide vast open space, reducing risk even if the spacecraft is slightly off-course.

## How Spacecraft Are Built for Water Landings

- Most crew capsules are conical and designed to float.
- The rounded end acts like the hull of a ship, helping the capsule bob on the water's surface after landing.

## How a Splashdown Landing Happens

### 1. Re-entry and Speed Reduction

- As the spacecraft re-enters the atmosphere, friction slows it down.
- Additional slowing is done using parachutes:
  - At 18,000 feet, two drogue parachutes open to stabilize and reduce speed.
  - At 6,500 feet, four main parachutes deploy to further slow the descent.

### 2. Glide Angle and Distance

- The spacecraft glides down at an angle, not straight down.
- It travels 5,000 to 7,000 km from re-entry to landing.
- Final landing speed is brought down to a safe 25–30 km/h for splashdown.

## ISRO's Approach

For its Gaganyaan mission, ISRO has also chosen sea landing for returning astronauts — following the same safe and proven method used globally.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Science & Technology

Source: Indian Express

## 14. Govt's New Move: Display Nutrition Info for Common Snacks

## Introduction



To promote healthier eating habits, the Union Health Ministry has urged all ministries and public institutions — including schools and offices — to display information about the sugar and fat content in popular Indian snacks and foods like samosas, jalebis, vada pav, burgers, cakes, and soft drinks.

Contrary to media reports, no warning labels or bans have been proposed. The initiative aims to raise awareness, not restrict consumption.

### What Does the Govt Letter Say?

In a letter dated June 21, Health Secretary Punya Salila Srivastava proposed installing "Sugar and Oil Boards" to act as visual nudges for healthier choices. These are informational boards, not legal

warnings (like those on cigarette packs).

### Example from the Boards:

- Samosa (100g): 362 kcal, 28g fat
- Burger: 590 kcal, 20.5g fat
- Gulab Jamun (62g): 203 kcal, 32g sugar

### • Daily Limits Suggested:

- o Fat: 27–30g
- o Sugar: Adults — 25g; Children — 20g

### Why This Initiative?

India is facing a sharp rise in obesity and related diseases like:

- Diabetes
- Hypertension
- Heart disease
- Cancers

### Govt Measures So Far:

- PM Modi urged people to cut oil consumption by 10%
- CBSE told schools to monitor sugar intake after type 2 diabetes rose among children

- Studies show children's sugar intake is 2–3x above recommended levels

### **The Obesity Problem in India**

According to The Lancet's Global Burden of Disease study:

- Obese/overweight adults:
  - o 2021: 18 crore
  - o 2050 (projected): 44.9 crore
- General Obesity: 28.6% of Indians (~25.4 crore)
- Abdominal Obesity: 39.5% (~35.1 crore)

Visceral fat (around organs) is more harmful than regular body fat, leading to a higher risk of chronic illnesses even at lower BMI levels.

### **Are All Fats Bad?**

No. Healthy fats are necessary, especially from:

- Nuts, seeds, pulses, and beans

### **Recommended Limits:**

- 4–10 teaspoons of oil/day
  - o Lower for sedentary people
- Use a mix of 2–3 oils high in MUFA (Monounsaturated Fatty Acids) & PUFA (Polyunsaturated Fatty Acids), e.g. sunflower, soybean

Repeatedly heated oil, common in street food, forms harmful compounds linked to heart disease and cancer.

### **What Are Ultra-Processed Foods and Trans Fats?**

#### **Ultra-Processed Foods:**

- High in sugar, salt, and fat
- Industrially made with ingredients not found in home kitchens
- Often nutrient-poor but calorie-dense
- Highly addictive and reduce healthy food intake

#### **Trans Fats:**

- Found in fried snacks, chips, cookies
- Increase bad cholesterol (LDL) and lower good cholesterol (HDL)
- Raise risk of:
  - o Diabetes
  - o Breast/colon cancer
  - o Preeclampsia (during pregnancy)
  - o Nervous system disorders

### **How Much Sugar Is Okay?**

ICMR Guidelines:

- Sugar < 5% of total energy
  - o Equals ~25g or 5 teaspoons

- Avoid added sugars like:
  - o Honey, jaggery, maple syrup, date syrup — all count
 Natural sugars in fruits, dairy, and vegetables are fine in moderation.

### **What About Artificial Sweeteners?**

The WHO discourages artificial sweeteners for weight loss:

- May cause short-term weight loss
- But in the long run, linked to:
  - o Weight gain
  - o Type 2 diabetes
  - o Heart disease
  - o Higher mortality

However, small amounts can still be used by diabetics in tea or coffee, experts say.

### **FSSAI Regulations Still Pending Full Implementation**

The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India (FSSAI) was required to revise labelling norms under the 2017-22 national Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD) action plan.

- Although amended in 2020, implementation of front-of-pack labels remains stalled.
- The Supreme Court, on July 15, directed the FSSAI to act.
- To move forward, FSSAI must first define safe limits for sugar, salt, and fat — still pending approval.

### **Evidence Favors Warning Labels**

Studies show clear benefits:

- 2022 study: Warning labels are most effective in helping people identify unhealthy foods
- ICMR-NIN study: Both warning labels and nutri-star ratings reduce consumption, even of moderately unhealthy foods

### **Conclusion: Laws Needed, Not Just Labels**

While awareness campaigns are useful, real change requires strong legislative action. Without laws to regulate food content, advertising, and packaging, current efforts risk being merely symbolic.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Science & Technology

Source: Indian Express & The Hindu

## **15. Why Is the recent Black Hole Merger Important?**

### **Introduction**

Scientists recently detected gravitational waves from the merger of two very large black holes—one 140 times and the other 100 times the mass of the Sun. This is the biggest black hole merger ever recorded and challenges what we currently know about how black holes and stars form and behave.

### **What Are Gravitational Waves?**

Gravitational waves are ripples in spacetime caused by the movement of very massive objects, like black holes. Think of them as ripples in a pond when you drop a rock. But these waves are extremely weak, and only massive cosmic events like black hole mergers can create waves strong enough to be detected on Earth.



# LIGO-INDIA PROJECT

## How Do We Detect Them?

The existence of gravitational waves was predicted by Albert Einstein in 1915, but they were detected for the first time only in 2015 using very sensitive instruments at the LIGO (Laser Interferometer Gravitational Wave Observatory) in the US.

Since then, hundreds of such waves have been detected, mostly from black hole mergers.

## What Makes This Merger Special?

- The two black holes involved were much more massive than those detected in earlier events.
- They combined to form a black hole 225 times the mass of the Sun.
- This falls into a “forbidden” size range (100–150 solar masses) that current theories say shouldn’t form black holes at all.
- One of the black holes was also spinning very fast, almost reaching the maximum speed allowed by physics.

This event could force scientists to rethink how stars die, how black holes form, and even tweak existing models of the universe.

## Why Can’t We See These Events?

Until 2015, scientists studied the universe mostly through light and other electromagnetic waves (radio, X-rays, etc.). But most of the universe is made of dark matter and dark energy, which don’t emit or reflect light, making them invisible to telescopes.

Gravitational waves help scientists “see” these invisible parts of the universe, especially black holes, which can’t be observed using traditional methods.

### **What Is the LVK Collaboration?**

Gravitational wave detectors across the world work together as the LVK Collaboration:

- LIGO in the U.S.
- Virgo in Italy
- KAGRA in Japan

The latest discovery was made by this global team.

### **What’s LIGO-India?**

India is building its own gravitational wave observatory called LIGO-India:

- It will be located in Hingoli, Maharashtra.
- The government approved funding of ₹2,600 crore in 2023.
- Construction is expected to start in 2025 and finish by April 2030.

Once completed, it will join the global network to improve the detection of gravitational waves.

### **Why Does This Matter?**

This black hole merger:

- Challenges current scientific theories.
- May lead to new insights about the universe’s structure.
- Gives scientists new tools to explore space beyond what light-based telescopes can see.

In short, it’s a major leap in understanding some of the most mysterious phenomena in the cosmos.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Science & Technology

Source: Indian Express

## **16. India Successfully Tests Akash Prime in High-Altitude Ladakh**

### **Introduction**

India achieved a major milestone on July 16, 2025, with the successful trial of Akash Prime, an upgraded indigenous air defence system, at high altitudes in eastern Ladakh. The missile scored two direct hits on fast-moving aerial targets during tests conducted at over 15,000 feet. This test validated the missile system for timely induction into the Army and enhanced India’s air defence preparedness in high-altitude areas.

### **What Is Akash Prime?**

- Akash Prime is the latest version of the Akash medium-range, surface-to-air missile system.
- It has been customised for high-altitude warfare, with the ability to operate effectively above 4,500 metres.

### **Key Features Enabling High-Altitude Launch of Akash Prime:**

#### **1. Canisterised Missile System**

- Fully canisterised design means the missile is stored, transported, and launched from a sealed tube.
- This provides:
  - o Protection from harsh environments (temperature, pressure variations at high altitudes).
  - o Quicker launch capability with minimal preparation.
  - o Ease of mobility, allowing deployment in rugged terrain.

## 2. Lighter Composite Motor Casings

- Akash Prime uses composite materials instead of metal in its rocket motor casing.
- This makes it lighter and more efficient, improving its performance even from less favorable (thin air, high-altitude) locations.

## 3. Dual-Stage Solid Propulsion

- The missile has two solid-fuel stages, which are more reliable and responsive at different altitudes.
- Solid propulsion is less sensitive to altitude-related ignition problems, unlike some liquid-fuel systems.

## 4. Improved Guidance and Control

- Incorporates advanced navigation systems (inertial + satellite guidance) and gyroscopes (used for maintaining orientation).
- Ensures high accuracy even when launched from uneven or elevated terrains, where environmental variables differ from coastal launch sites.

## 5. Mobile Launch Platform

- Can be launched from a road-mobile launcher, which allows it to be transported and fired from mountain roads or highland bases.
- Increases survivability and flexibility in deployment.

## Strategic Advantage

Being able to launch Akash Prime from high-altitude regions (e.g., in the Himalayas) offers India:

- Quicker response capability against threats from China or Pakistan.
- Greater range boost due to altitude advantage (thinner atmosphere reduces drag).
- Strategic surprise and second-strike survivability.

## Other Missile Tests: Prithvi-II and Agni-I

In a separate development, the Ministry of Defence confirmed the successful test-firing of Prithvi-II and Agni-I ballistic missiles from the Integrated Test Range in Chandipur, Odisha.



**India Successfully Tests Akash Prime Missile In High Altitude Ladakh**

- Conducted under the Strategic Forces Command.
- These tests confirmed that all technical and operational parameters were met.
- It reaffirms the reliability of India's strategic deterrence capabilities.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Science & Technology

Source: Indian Express and PIB

## 17. INS Nistar: India's New Deep-Sea Rescue Lifesaver

### What Is INS Nistar?

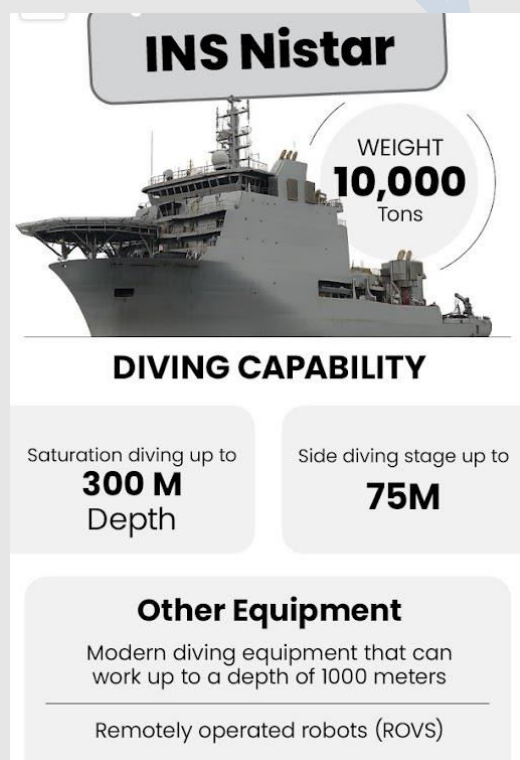
- INS Nistar is a newly commissioned Diving Support Vessel (DSV) of the Indian Navy.
- Built by Hindustan Shipyard Limited, it is over 80% indigenous.
- It is the first of two DSVs, with its sister ship INS Nipun to follow soon.
- Commissioned at the Naval Dockyard in Visakhapatnam.

### Why It Matters

- INS Nistar is built to rescue trapped submariners in deep-sea emergencies.
- It marks a major upgrade in India's submarine rescue capabilities.
- With this ship, India joins a small group of 12 countries possessing such technology.
- Earlier, India relied on leased vessels, which limited rescue speed and availability.

### Key Features and Capabilities

- Size: 10,500 tonnes, 120 metres long, with 60+ days endurance at sea.
- Advanced Diving Systems:



- o Includes both air and saturation diving setups.
- o Equipped with Remotely Operated Vehicles (ROVs) and side-scan SONARs.
- DSRV Carrier: Acts as a mothership for the Deep Submergence Rescue Vehicle (DSRV).
- o India bought two DSRVs from the UK in 2018–19—one for Nistar, the other for Nipun.
- Medical Facilities:
  - o Has an operation theatre, ICU, 8-bed hospital, and hyperbaric treatment units.
- Other Equipment:
  - o Can carry a 15-tonne subsea crane.
  - o Supports helicopter operations for faster rescue.

### Why It's a Strategic Asset

- Located on the Eastern Seaboard (Visakhapatnam), INS Nistar ensures:
  - o Quick response in submarine emergencies.
  - o Full-time readiness, reducing dependence on leased ships.
- INS Nipun, once operational, will be based in Mumbai to cover the Western Seaboard.

- This gives the Navy dual-coast coverage for submarine rescue.

### **Conclusion: A Leap in Undersea Safety**

INS Nistar is a powerful symbol of India's self-reliant defence manufacturing and a critical tool for saving lives in deep-sea operations. It enhances both national security and global humanitarian outreach, making it a landmark addition to the Indian Navy.

### **Saturation and Air Diving**

Saturation diving is a technique that allows divers to work at great depths for extended periods by saturating their body tissues with the breathing gas, meaning the inert gases in their system reach equilibrium with the surrounding pressure. This saturation allows for decompression to be done only once, at the end of the entire dive period, regardless of how long they stayed at depth.

Air diving, on the other hand, is a more traditional form of diving using compressed air as the breathing gas, and it is typically limited to shallower depths due to the risks of nitrogen narcosis and decompression sickness.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Science & Technology

Source: Indian Express

## **18. Air India AI 171 Crash: Why Cockpit Ergonomics Matters**

### **What Happened in the AI 171 Crash?**

A preliminary investigation into the Air India flight AI 171 crash revealed that fuel control switches moved from 'RUN' to 'CUTOFF' just after takeoff, which caused the crash. These switches are designed to require deliberate action to move, sparking debate on whether it was human error or a mechanical issue.

US NTSB chief Jennifer Homendy cautioned against speculation, stating the investigation is ongoing and complex.

### **What Is Cockpit Ergonomics?**

#### **Understanding Ergonomics**

Ergonomics, or human factors, is the science of designing systems to match human capabilities and limitations. In aviation, it focuses on making cockpits user-friendly, minimizing stress and the chance of error.

The goal: Make flying safer and easier by aligning cockpit design with how pilots think and move.

### **Key Elements of Cockpit Ergonomics**

#### **1. Instrument Layout**

- Instruments must be easy to read quickly, especially in emergencies.

- Since the 1970s, digital displays (like EFIS) replaced analog dials, allowing better data visibility and focus.

## **2. Human-Machine Interface (HMI)**

- Refers to the design of buttons, switches, knobs, etc.
- These controls should be easy to operate, but hard to activate by mistake.
- In Boeing 787s, fuel control knobs have brackets and stop-locks—but some experts now suggest adding caps or repositioning them.

## **3. Pilot Seating & Visibility**

- Seats are designed to reduce fatigue and allow clear visibility.
- Heads-Up Displays (HUDs) now show data in the pilot's line of sight.
- Some aircraft seats have vital sensors to alert pilots about fatigue or health risks.
- Displays use anti-glare and backlit features to work in all lighting conditions.

## **4. Alarms, Communication & Team Coordination**

- Alerts are designed to be noticeable but not overwhelming.
- There are strict protocols for shared decisions, like fuel cutoff, which require agreement from both pilots.

## **The Rise of Automation in Cockpits**

### **Why Automate?**

Automation helps pilots by:

- Handling repetitive tasks
- Reducing workload
- Letting pilots focus on critical decisions

Today, planes can often fly themselves for most of the journey.

### **But There Are Drawbacks**

- Over-dependence on automation can lead to loss of manual flying skills.
- Example: Boeing's flawed MCAS or Maneuvering Characteristics Augmentation System led to two deadly crashes (2018 & 2019) killing 346 people.

## **Boeing vs Airbus: Two Approaches to Ergonomics**

### **Airbus**

- Pioneered fly-by-wire (FBW) systems and side-stick controls. FBW is a semi-automatic and typically computer-regulated system for controlling the flight of an aircraft or spacecraft.

Side-stick controls, commonly found in modern Airbus aircraft, are a type of flight control system where a joystick-like device is positioned on the side of the cockpit, rather than in front of the pilot as with a traditional control yoke.

- Highly automated; reduces pilot fatigue and simplifies controls.

### **Boeing**



- Also uses FBW, but retains manual controls like the traditional yoke.
- Emphasizes pilot authority and control, especially in emergencies.

**Conclusion:**  
**Why**  
**Ergonomics**  
**Matters**

The AI 171 crash highlights how even small design choices—like switch placement—can have massive consequences. Cockpit ergonomics continues to evolve, aiming to strike a balance between human control and automated safety systems.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Science & Technology

Source: Indian Express

## 19. MiG-21s to Retire by September: End of an Era in the IAF

### Final Flight: MiG-21 Retirement Date Announced

- The Indian Air Force (IAF) will retire its remaining MiG-21 fighter jets on September 19, 2025, in a ceremonial event at Chandigarh airbase.
- These jets will be replaced by the indigenous Tejas Mark-1A aircraft.

### What is the MiG-21?

- Russian-origin, single-engine, single-seater, multi-role fighter jet.
- First inducted in 1963 as an interceptor, later upgraded for ground attack roles.
- Over 700 units inducted in various variants like Type-77, Type-96, BIS, and the modernized Bison.



### **Role in India's Wars**

- Played a key role in:
  - o 1965 war with Pakistan.
  - o 1971 Bangladesh Liberation War (especially Type-77).
  - o 1999 Kargil conflict.
- In 2019, Wing Commander Abhinandan Varthaman shot down a Pakistani F-16 flying a MiG-21 Bison.

### **The 'Flying Coffin': Crash History**

- Over 500 MiG-21 crashes in 60 years.
- 170+ pilot deaths.
- Causes: Technical faults, human error, bird hits, pilot disorientation.

### **Why Were They Still Flying?**

- IAF needs 42 squadrons, currently has only ~30.
- Retiring MiGs earlier would have left critical gaps until Tejas squadrons are ready.
- IAF officials argue crash rate is proportionate to its flying hours and age.

### **Why MiGs Were Inducted in 1963**

- Post-1962 war with China, India urgently needed a supersonic aircraft.
- US had given Pakistan the F-104 Starfighter (nicknamed "The Widowmaker"), but denied India mass access.
- India chose the MiG-21 from the USSR.
  - o First 6 jets assembled by Soviet engineers and flown to Chandigarh in April 1963.

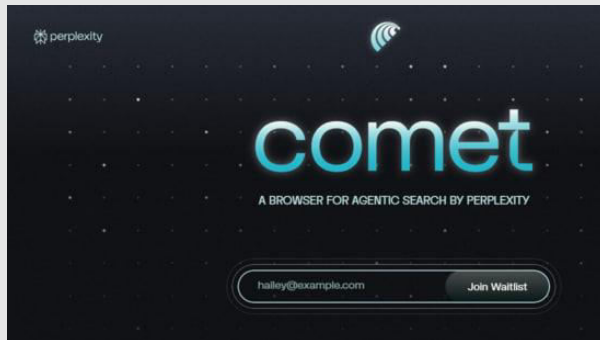
Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Science & Technology

Source: Indian Express

## 20. Perplexity's New AI-Powered Web Browser

### What is Comet?

Comet is a new browser developed by Perplexity, designed for “agentic AI” tasks — meaning it can perform web tasks for users. Think of it as an AI agent browsing the internet on your behalf, rather than you manually doing it.



Currently, Comet is available only to early access users under the Perplexity Max plan, which costs \$200/month.

### How is Comet Different from Regular Browsers?

#### Built Like Chrome, But Smarter

- Chromium-based: Comet looks and feels like Google Chrome since it is built on the

same open-source Chromium framework.

- Supports Chrome extensions: You can use your existing extensions, bookmarks, and sync settings.
- AI Agent Integration: The core difference is its built-in AI agents that act on your behalf — summarising, clicking, replying, scheduling, and more.

### Why Did Perplexity Build Its Own Browser?

#### Independence and Better AI Control

If Perplexity had built Comet on top of Safari or Chrome, it would be limited by Google or Apple’s AI tools.

#### By creating a standalone browser:

- Perplexity has full control
- The AI agent can access what tab you're viewing, read content, and take actions locally and instantly
- No need to copy-paste or log in again

### Key Features of Comet

#### What Can It Actually Do?

##### 1. Smart Email Assistant

- o Read emails
- o Suggest replies
- o Schedule meetings via Gmail
- o Create calendar events with links

##### 2. Shopping Companion

- o Compare product specs from different tabs
- o Summarise features (e.g., camera specs)

### 3. Video & Article Summarisation

- o Summarises YouTube videos using transcripts
- o Summarises web articles in seconds

### 4. Bulk Social Media Actions

- o Accepts LinkedIn connection requests in bulk
- o Evaluates requests for relevance

### 5. Agent-Like Actions Across Tabs

- o Click, navigate, fill forms, search across tabs
- o Use @mention to give tab-specific tasks (e.g., @YouTube – find top comment)

### Why Is Comet a Big Deal?

#### A New Era of Web Browsing

- Task delegation: Users can tell the browser what to do, instead of doing everything manually.
- Productivity boost: Helps handle information overload by summarising and filtering content.
- Agentic browsing: Represents a shift from passive browsing to AI-assisted actions.

#### The Catch: High Price, Limited Access

Currently, Comet is only available under a \$200/month plan, part of the Perplexity Max subscription.

The company may introduce a limited free tier in the future, depending on competition from OpenAI, Google, etc.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Science & Technology

Source: Indian Express

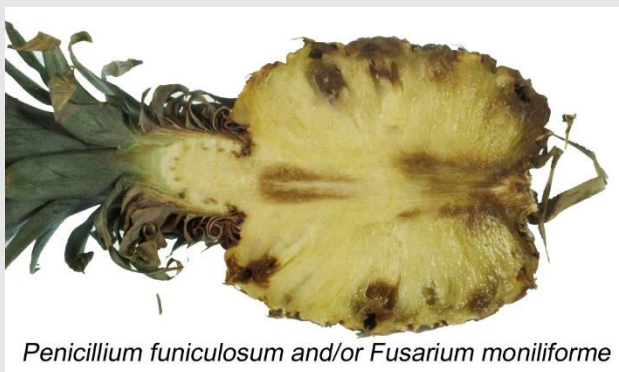
## 21. Breakthrough in Pineapple Disease Resistance

### Introduction

Indian scientists have identified a gene in pineapple that can help the fruit resist harmful fungal attacks. This discovery may help protect the crop from Fusariosis, a serious disease that causes major losses for farmers.

### What is Fusariosis?

- Fusariosis is caused by the fungus *Fusarium moniliforme*.
- It damages the stem, blackens leaves, and rots the fruit from inside.
- This disease results in heavy crop loss and unreliable harvests.



*Penicillium funiculosum and/or Fusarium moniliforme*

### The Genetic Discovery

Researchers from the Bose Institute (under DST) found a specific gene in pineapple called AcSERK3 (part of the SERK family) that:

- Helps in plant reproduction.
- Activates natural plant defences.

### How the Gene Works

- The scientists overexpressed (enhanced

the activity of) the AcSERK3 gene in pineapple plants.

- This boosted the plant's ability to fight fungal infections.
- The modified plants showed stronger immunity compared to regular pineapple plants.

### How the Experiment Was Done

1. The gene was inserted into pineapple tissues using Agrobacterium.
2. The modified plants were selected and validated.
3. These plants were then tested under controlled conditions for disease resistance.

### Results of the Study

- The genetically enhanced pineapples were much more resistant to Fusarium infection.
- These plants produced higher levels of protective compounds and enzymes.
- While normal plants wilted, the enhanced ones remained green and healthy.

### Why This Matters

- This is the first study to show that overexpressing a natural pineapple gene can make the plant resistant to fungal diseases.
- Future disease-resistant varieties can be developed using this method.
- The gene is unlikely to be lost over generations, making it suitable for long-term breeding.

### What's Next?

- Field trials are needed to confirm if this resistance works in real-world farm conditions.
- If successful, farmers may soon grow pineapple varieties that are:
  - o Tolerant to multiple fungi.
  - o Easily propagated using slips and suckers from the enhanced plants.

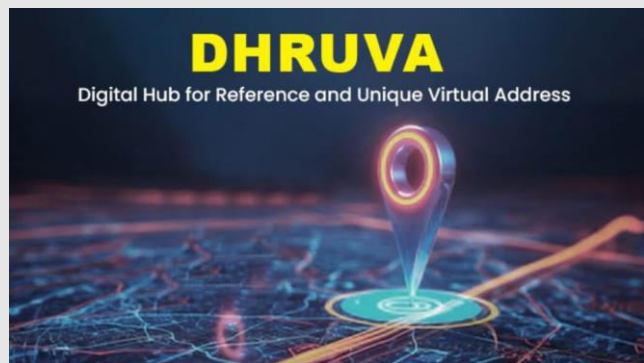
Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Science & Technology

Source: PIB

## 22. Dhruva Policy

### What is the Dhruva Policy?

The Dhruva Policy is a new government initiative aimed at improving how addresses are structured and managed in India. It introduces a more accurate and digital way of identifying locations across the country.



### **What is a DIGIPIN?**

- DIGIPIN is a unique code assigned to every 4x4 metre square on a map using a geo-coded grid system.
- This helps in precise location identification—much better than traditional addresses.

### **Digital Address Layer: Personalized and Easy to Share**

- Users can combine their DIGIPIN with regular address details (like house number, street name, etc.) to create a 'Digital Address'.
- This makes addresses:
  - o More accurate
  - o Easier to understand and share
  - o Useful for digital platforms and deliveries

### **Why It Matters: Benefits for Services and Planning**

The policy aims to improve services in sectors like:

- Postal
- Telecom
- Broadband

Especially in remote and underserved areas, where current address systems are often unclear or missing.

### **Built with Indian Technology: Aatma Nirbhar Bharat in Action**

- The Dhruva system is fully developed in India using open-source software.
- This supports local innovation and fits with the government's self-reliant India (Aatma Nirbhar Bharat) vision.

### **Expected Benefits**

Some key outcomes include:

- Better digital inclusion
- Smarter resource planning
- Lower delivery costs
- More responsive public services

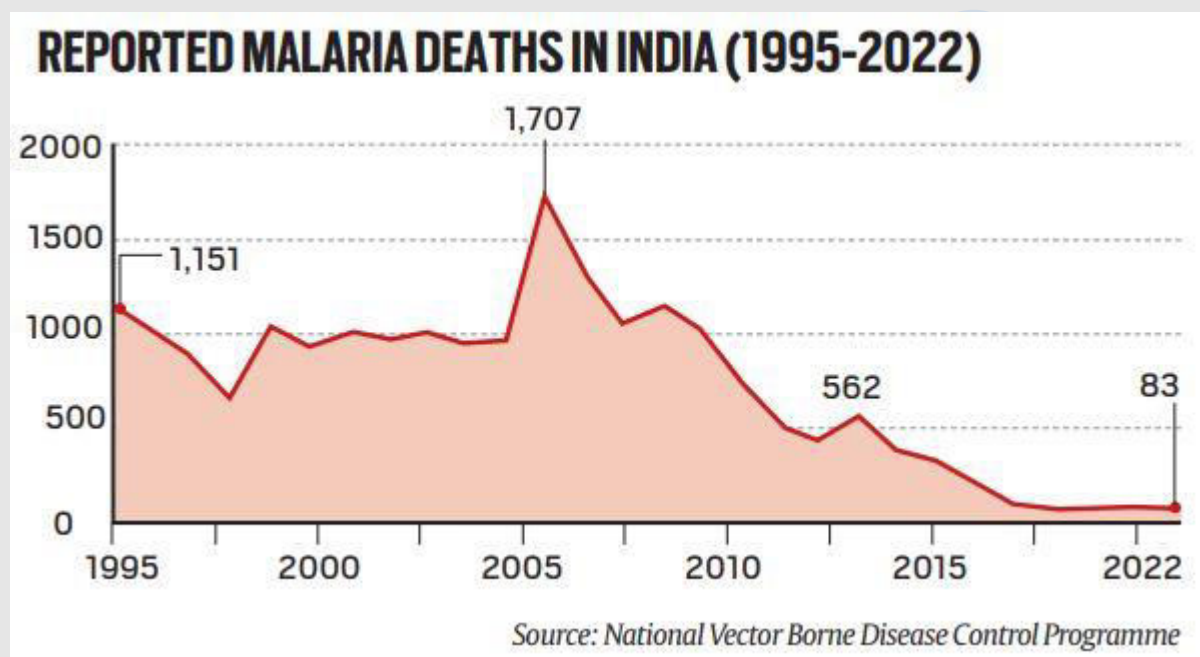
### **Current Status and Next Steps**

- The project is currently in its Proof-of-Concept (PoC) stage.
- A draft policy has been shared for stakeholder feedback before full rollout.

### 23. New Hope Against Malaria: ICMR Develops Promising Vaccine

#### Introduction

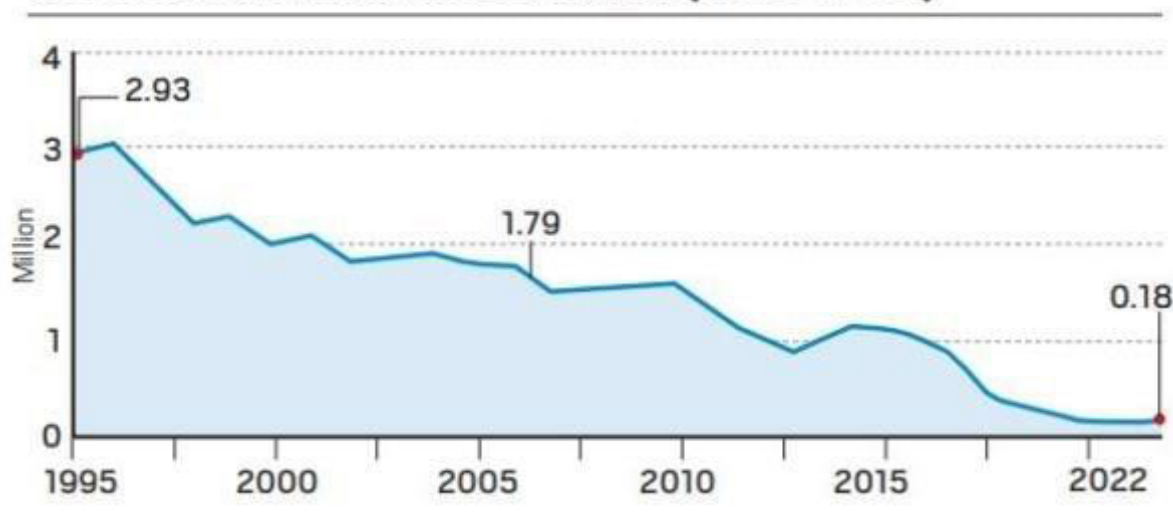
The Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has announced a new candidate malaria vaccine, AdFalcivax, that could significantly improve protection against the deadly disease. It will be further developed and tested with private partners.



#### Malaria: A Global Killer

- Malaria is caused by parasites and spread by mosquitoes.
- Common symptoms: fever, chills, vomiting, diarrhoea; severe cases can be fatal.
- It kills around 4 lakh (400,000) people globally every year.
- Most deaths occur in Africa.
- In India, deaths have reduced sharply — from 1,151 in 1995 to 83 in 2022.

## REPORTED MALARIA CASES IN INDIA (1995-2022)



### Why ICMR's Vaccine is a Big Deal

- Two existing vaccines — RTS,S and R21 — have limited protection (~75%).
- AdFalcivax showed over 90% protection in mice, offering better hope.
- It combines two proteins to protect individuals and reduce community transmission.
- However, it's effective only against *Plasmodium falciparum*, not *P. vivax*, which is common in India.

### How AdFalcivax Works

- It's a chimeric recombinant vaccine — uses parts of parasite genes to trigger immunity.
- Targets two parasite proteins:
  1. CSP – Prevents infection in the vaccinated person.
  2. Pro6C – Disrupts malaria transmission in mosquitoes.
- This dual action is unique compared to existing vaccines.

### Key Advantages of AdFalcivax

- Uses full-length CSP protein, unlike RTS,S and R21 — may lead to stronger immune response.
- Shows longer-lasting protection in animal trials — possibly equivalent to 10 years in humans.
- Uses alum adjuvant (substance that enhances the body's immune response to an antigen):
  - Safer than other adjuvants (AS01, Matrix M).
  - No risk of chronic inflammation.
- Can remain stable at room temperature for 9 months, easing transport and storage without refrigeration.

### What's Next: Human Trials and Partnerships

- ICMR is seeking private companies to:
  - Conduct human trials.
  - Scale up for commercial production.
- ICMR will retain intellectual property and earn 2% royalty on vaccine sales.

- Research rights and data will be jointly shared between ICMR and the private partner.

### **Conclusion**

AdFalcivax brings new optimism to the long fight against malaria, with better protection, longer immunity, and potential for large-scale impact — especially in malaria-endemic regions. Human trials will now be the key next step.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Science & Technology

Source: Indian Express

## **24. What makes NASA-ISRO NISAR satellite special?**

### **Introduction**

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is planning to launch the NISAR satellite from Sriharikota on July 30 onboard a GSLV Mk-II rocket. 'NISAR' stands for NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar and is a joint mission of the two space agencies. It is a sophisticated earth-observation satellite designed to study changes on the earth's surface in fine detail.

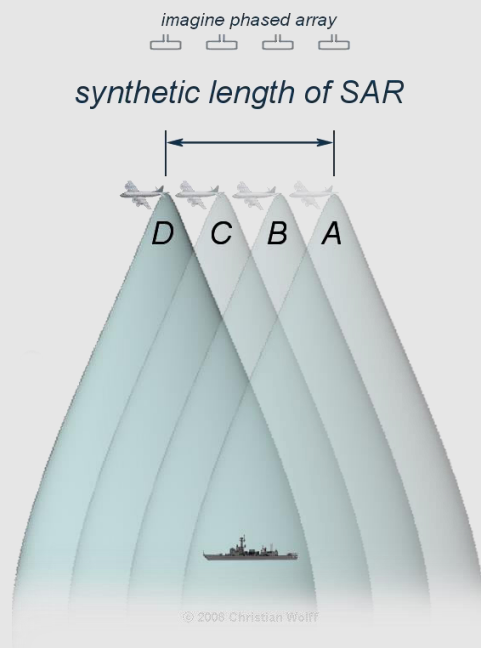
### **What's the need for NISAR?**

NISAR is the first major earth-observing mission with a dual-band radar, which will allow it to observe changes more precisely than any other satellite. It will be able to see through clouds, smoke, and even thick vegetation, both at day and night, in all weather conditions. The three-tonne machine costs more than \$1.5 billion, making it one of the most expensive earth-observing satellites to date.

The earth's surface is constantly changing. Natural disasters, human-driven changes, and climate shifts all affect environments and human societies. Satellites provide critical information by taking snapshots of these changes from space, helping scientists, governments, and relief agencies prepare for, respond to or study them. To this end, NASA and ISRO have created a powerful global mission that also allows ISRO guaranteed access to a stream of high-resolution data tailored to India's needs.

NISAR's science and application goals span six areas: solid earth processes, ecosystems, ice dynamics, coastal and ocean processes, disaster response, and additional applications (including tracking groundwater, oil reservoirs, and infrastructure like levees, dams etc.). The planned mission lifetime is three years although its design lifetime is at least five years. Notably, the mission's data policy entails that the data NISAR produces will be freely available to all users (typically) within a few hours.

### **How does NISAR work?**



Once it is launched, NISAR will enter into a sun-synchronous polar orbit at 747 km altitude and an inclination of  $98.4^\circ$ . From here, instead of snapping pictures, NISAR's synthetic aperture radar (SAR) will bounce radar waves off the planet's surface and measure how long the signal takes to come back and how its phase changes. The ability of a radar antenna to resolve smaller details increases with its length, called its aperture. In orbit, deploying an antenna hundreds of metres long is impractical. SAR gets around this by mimicking a giant antenna. As the spacecraft moves forward, it transmits a train of radar pulses and records the echoes. Later, a computer coherently combines all those echoes as if they had been captured simultaneously by one very long antenna, hence the "synthetic aperture".

NISAR will combine an L-band SAR (1.257 GHz), which uses longer-wavelength radiowaves to track changes under thick forests and soil and deformations on the ground, and an S-band SAR (3.2 GHz), which uses shorter-wavelength radiowaves to capture surface details, such as crops and water surfaces.

Although NISAR will operate globally at L-band, ISRO has reserved routine, planned acquisitions with the S-band SAR over India. The latter acquisitions have extended sensitivity to biomass, better soil-moisture retrieval, and mitigate ionospheric noise — all capabilities tuned to India's needs in agriculture, forestry, and disaster management. Because the L-band radar is the principal tool for NASA's mission goals, the instrument is expected to operate in up to 70% of every orbit. This said, operating both radars together is an official implementation goal so that mode conflicts over the Indian subcontinent are minimised.

Polarisation is the direction in which the electric field of some electromagnetic radiation, like radiowaves, oscillates. SAR can transmit and receive radar signals with horizontal or vertical polarisation. Using different combinations will allow the instruments to identify the structure and types of different surface materials, like soil, snow, crop or wood.

The swath width, that is, the breadth of the bands on the ground the SARs will scan, is an ultra-wide 240 km. The radars' SweepSAR design will transmit this beam and, upon its return, digitally steer multiple small sub-apertures in sequence, synthesising beams that sweep across the ground track. This scan-on-receive method allows the 240-km swath without compromising resolution.

The resulting scans will have a spatial resolution of 3-10 m and centimetre-scale vertical mapping — enough to spot impending land subsidence in cities, for example — depending on the mode. Each spot on the ground will be scanned once every 12 days. The satellite also features a large 12-m-wide mesh antenna. NISAR will produce annual maps of aboveground

woody biomass of 1 ha resolution and quarterly maps of active and inactive cropland. High-resolution maps of flooded versus dry areas will be available as well. During a disaster, NISAR can also be directed to collect data for 'damage proxy maps' to be delivered in under five hours.

This said, for certain acquisition modes, NISAR won't be able to achieve full global coverage at the highest resolution. Above roughly 60° latitude, every alternative observation will be skipped due to converging ground tracks. Similarly, some 10% of the surface may not be mapped from either direction (of the satellite's passage over the ground) in any given 12-day cycle.

### **How was NISAR built?**

At the time the two space organisations agreed to build NISAR, NASA and ISRO decided each body would contribute equivalent-scale hardware, expertise, and funding.

ISRO supplied the I-3K spacecraft bus, the platform that houses the controls to handle command and data, propulsion, and attitude, plus 4kW of solar power. The same package also included the entire S-band radar electronics, a high-rate Ka-band telecom subsystem, and a gimballed high-gain antenna. The S-band electronics were designed and built at the Space Applications Centre in Ahmedabad.

NASA's biggest contribution was the complete L-band SAR system. NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL) supplied all radio-frequency electronics, the 12-m antenna, a 9-m carbon-composite boom, and the instrument structure that carries both radars. The agency also fabricated the L-band feed aperture and provided the supporting avionics, including a high-capacity solid-state recorder, a GPS receiver, an autonomous payload data system, and a Ka-band payload communications subsystem. The spacecraft was to be integrated at the ISRO Satellite Centre in Bengaluru after the two radars were mated at JPL. Following observatory-level tests, the mission will lift off from Sriharikota onboard a GSLV Mk-II rocket, with ISRO providing end-to-end launch services.

While the mission operations are to be centred at the JPL Mission Operations Center, day-to-day flight operations will be led from the ISRO Telemetry, Tracking and Command Network in Bengaluru.

Once NISAR is in orbit, most of its data will be sent through NASA's Near Earth Network facilities in Alaska, Svalbard (Norway), and Punta Arenas (Chile), which can together receive around 3 TB of radar data per day. They will be complemented by ISRO's ground stations in Shadnagar and Antarctica. After the raw data arrive, India's National Remote Sensing Centre will process and distribute all products required for Indian users, mirroring NASA's pipeline.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Science & Technology

Source: The Hindu

## **25. India's Space Leap: A Stepping Stone for Gaganyaan**

### ISRO's First Astronaut Gets Space Experience

- Shubhanshu Shukla, part of India's first astronaut batch for the Gaganyaan mission (due in 2027), completed a 2-week mission to the International Space Station (ISS) on July 15.
- The mission was arranged by ISRO via Axiom Space for over ₹500 crore. Axiom Space, is an American privately funded space infrastructure developer headquartered in Houston, Texas. Founded in 2016, the company first flew a spaceflight in 2022: Axiom Mission 1, the first commercially crewed private spaceflight to the International Space Station (ISS). The company aims to own and operate a modular commercial space station in the late 2020s.

### Training Highlights

Shukla (and backup astronaut Prasanth Nair) trained in:

- Advanced spacecraft systems
- Emergency and anomaly protocols
- Scientific payload handling
- Microgravity adaptation & space medicine
- Manual operations, docking, re-entry

Shukla also operated inside Japanese and European ISS modules, receiving training in Japan and Germany.

### Value and Strategic Benefits

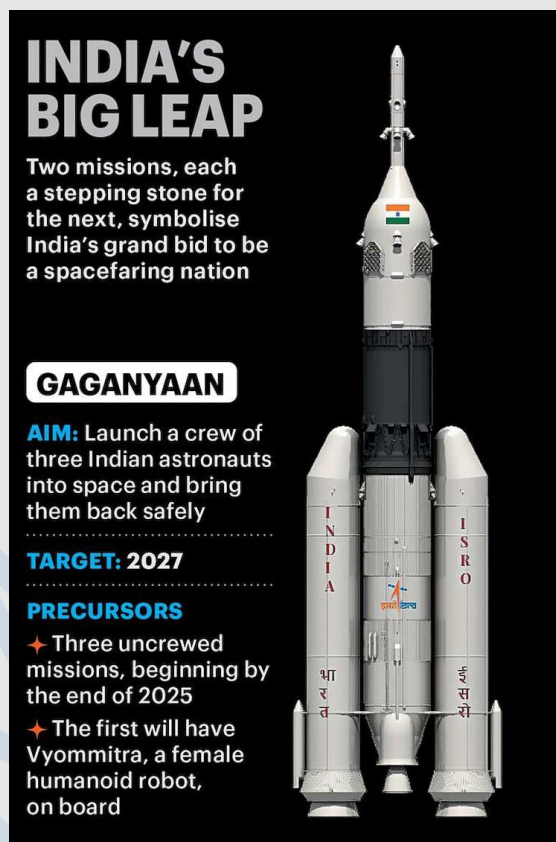
- ISRO Chief V. Narayanan stated the mission saved training costs compared to local alternatives.
- Collaboration with NASA and Axiom demonstrates international trust and strengthens India's future human spaceflight capability.

### Communication Gaps

- ISRO has not been proactive in publicly communicating mission details, despite Gaganyaan's large ₹20,000 crore budget.
- Public access and visibility of astronauts like Mr. Shukla are essential to build national excitement and global soft power.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Science & Technology

Source: Indian Express



### 1. Hyderabad Pharma Blast: 36 Dead, Six Missing; Spotlight on Safety in Drug Manufacturing

#### Tragedy at Sigachi Industries

An explosion at a pharmaceutical unit of Sigachi Industries in Pashamylaram, Telangana, has claimed 36 lives, with 6 workers still missing as of Tuesday. The blast occurred on Monday, with search and rescue operations continuing despite heavy rains and challenging conditions.

A total of 143 workers were present at the facility at the time of the explosion. So far, 74 have been affected. Overnight, 19 bodies were recovered from the debris, while 14 victims have been identified through autopsies and DNA samples.

#### Compensation Announced

Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy visited the accident site and met with victims' families. He announced:

- ₹1 crore compensation for each deceased worker's family
- ₹10 lakh for each injured worker

Most of the victims were young migrant workers from northern and eastern India, many lacking strong social or economic support.

#### What Caused the Blast?

Though the unit manufactured Microcrystalline Cellulose (MCC)—a chemically safe substance used in medicines and food—the production process involves heat-sensitive and high-risk equipment. Preliminary findings suggest a possible equipment malfunction due to poor maintenance, which could have caused an abnormal temperature rise, triggering the explosion.

#### Recurring Accidents Raise Alarms

This is not an isolated incident. Similar accidents have occurred:

- August 2024: Blast at a pharma unit in Anakapalli, Andhra Pradesh
- April 2024: Another accident in Hyderabad

Such tragedies highlight ongoing lapses in safety practices across the pharmaceutical manufacturing sector.

#### Urgent Need for Stronger Safety Culture

Experts stress that:

- Plants must follow HAZOP (Hazard and Operability) analysis



- Continuous monitoring of process data is essential
  - Operators must be trained, safety-conscious, and supervised by competent staff
  - Companies must embrace a safety-first culture, not just compliance on paper
- In an industry vital to India's exports and global image, such negligence not only endangers lives but also affects the credibility of the sector.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Disaster Management

Source: The Hindu

## 2. Early Arrival in Kerala

### Introduction

The southwest monsoon arrived in Kerala on May 24, eight days earlier than usual. It covered the entire country by June 29, nine days ahead of the normal July 8 schedule. This is only the tenth time since 1960 that monsoon reached across India in June.



### Key Reasons Behind the Rapid Progress

#### 1. Frequent Low Pressure Systems

India saw five low pressure systems in June. These acted like magnets, pulling in moist winds and accelerating rainfall inland.

#### 2. Active Madden-Julian Oscillation (MJO)

The MJO — a moving system of clouds and winds — was in an active phase in both May and June. This enhanced cloud formation and rainfall over India.

#### 3. Favourable Monsoon Trough Position

The monsoon trough, a low-pressure belt from northwest India to the Bay of Bengal, stayed south of its normal position, helping draw in moist winds and aiding monsoon advancement.

#### 4. Neutral ENSO and IOD Conditions

- ENSO (El Niño-Southern Oscillation): In a neutral phase, which typically allows for normal rainfall.
- IOD (Indian Ocean Dipole): Also in a neutral phase, with minimal impact on rainfall.

### How Was Rainfall in June 2025?

#### • All-India Average:

180 mm rainfall — 9% above normal

Ended the trend of deficient June rainfall seen since 2022.

#### • Central India:

Received 212.6 mm, which is 24.8% above normal — the first time this region performed well since 2022.

- **East and Northeast India:**

Continued to face rainfall shortage — 16.9% below normal, the third year in a row.

- **Other Regions:**

- No major rainfall trend in Peninsular or Northwest India.
- States like Manipur (242.7 mm) and Mizoram (466.9 mm) saw normal rainfall for the first time in several years.
- Below-normal rainfall in: Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Meghalaya, Sikkim, Bihar, Delhi, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, and Lakshadweep.

### **Impact on Agriculture**

Over 80% of meteorological subdivisions received normal or above-normal rainfall, benefiting areas crucial for kharif crop sowing.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper I; Geography

Source: Indian Express

## **3. Sanjog Gupta Appointed New CEO of ICC**

### **Introduction**

Indian media executive Sanjog Gupta has been named the new Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the International Cricket Council (ICC). He replaces Australian Geoff Allardice, who stepped down earlier this year due to personal reasons, just before the Champions Trophy.

### **Gupta's Background**

Gupta previously served as CEO (Sports & Live Experiences) at JioStar. He brings extensive experience in sports broadcasting and management to the ICC.

### **Global Search for New CEO**

The ICC received over 2,500 applications from 25 countries. Out of these, 12 candidates were shortlisted for the top post.

### **Selection and Approval**

The shortlisted names were reviewed by the Nominations Committee, which included:

- Imran Khwaja (ICC Deputy Chairman)
- Richard Thompson (ECB Chairman)



- Shammi Silva (SLC President)
- Devajit Saikia (BCCI Secretary)

The committee recommended Gupta, and his appointment was approved by ICC Chairman Jay Shah.

Relevance: GS Prelims; Miscellaneous

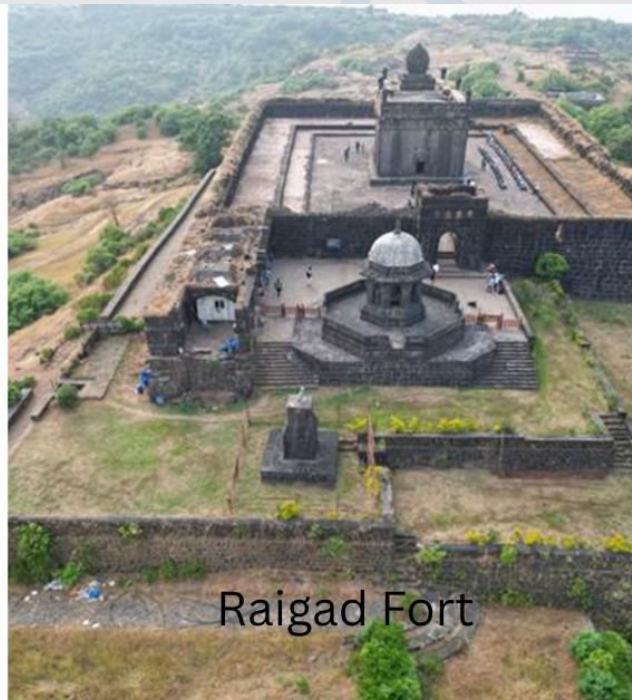
Source: The Hindu

#### 4. Maratha Military Landscapes Added to UNESCO World Heritage List

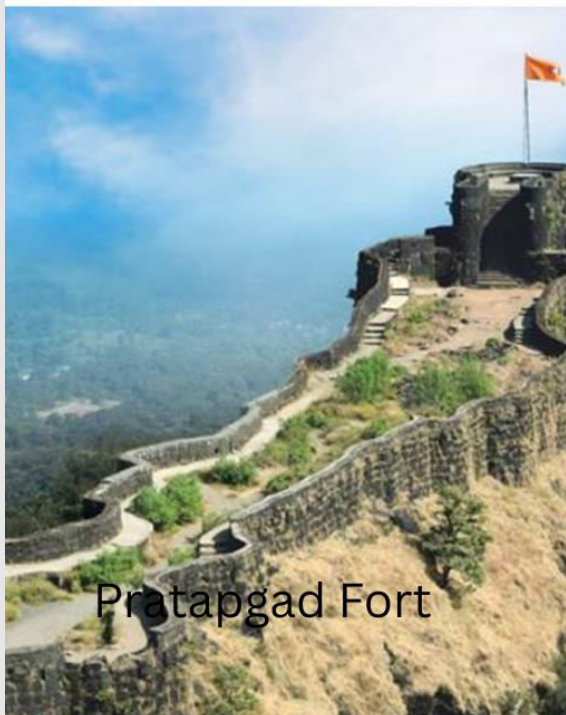
India's 44th World Heritage Site Recognized at 47th UNESCO Session



Sindhudurg Fort



Raigad Fort



Pratapgad Fort



Gingee Fort

India's official nomination for the 2024–25 cycle, Maratha Military Landscapes of India, has been inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List during the 47th session of the World

Heritage Committee held in Paris. This marks India's 44th World Heritage property. The ASI is the nodal agency for all World Heritage-related matters in India.

### **About the Maratha Military Landscapes**

#### **Showcasing Maratha Strategic and Architectural Brilliance**

These sites, built between the 17th and 19th centuries CE, include a network of 12 forts demonstrating the Maratha Empire's military foresight and architectural skill.

#### **List of the Forts:**

- In Maharashtra: Salher, Shivneri, Lohgad, Khanderi, Raigad, Rajgad, Pratapgad, Suvarnadurg, Panhala, Vijaydurg, Sindhudurg
- In Tamil Nadu: Gingee Fort

### **Site Classification and Geographic Diversity**

The forts represent a range of landscapes and defense strategies:

- Hill Forts: Salher, Shivneri, Lohgad, Raigad, Rajgad, Gingee
- Hill-Forest Fort: Pratapgad
- Hill-Plateau Fort: Panhala
- Coastal Fort: Vijaydurg
- Island Forts: Khanderi, Suvarnadurg, Sindhudurg

### **Recent Milestones**

- In 2024, the Moidams of Charaideo in Assam were inscribed during the 46th session held in New Delhi.
- This latest recognition highlights India's continued efforts to promote and preserve its rich cultural legacy on the world stage.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper I; Culture

Source: PIB

## **5. Air India Flight AI 171 Crash Investigation so far**

### **Background: Air India Flight AI 171 Crash**

On June 12, 2025, Air India's Boeing 787 8 (Flight AI 171) crashed shortly after take off from Ahmedabad, killing 241 people on board and 19 on the ground. The Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) released a preliminary report detailing how the loss of engine thrust triggered the disaster.

### **Key Finding: Fuel Switches Moved to "Cut Off"**

- **Timing:** Exactly three seconds after lift off, both engines' fuel control switches transitioned from RUN to CUTOFF, one second apart.
- **Consequence:** Both engines lost thrust, forcing the crew to declare "MAYDAY" before the aircraft descended and crashed just outside the airport perimeter.

### **Pilot Conversation Raises Questions**

- **Cockpit Voice Recording:** One pilot is heard asking, "Why did you cut off [fuel]?" The other replied, "I did not do so."
- **Unclear Who:** The report does not clarify which pilot spoke or provide the full transcript.
- **Expert View:** Aviation safety specialists note it's almost impossible for these guarded, lock protected switches to move accidentally.

The aircraft achieved the maximum recorded airspeed of 180 Knots IAS at about 08:08:42 UTC and immediately thereafter, the Engine 1 and Engine 2 fuel **cutoff** switches transitioned from RUN to **CUTOFF** position one after another with a time gap of 01 sec. The Engine N1 and N2 began to decrease from their take-off values as the fuel supply to the engines was cut off.

In the cockpit voice recording, one of the pilots is heard asking the other why did he **cutoff**. The other pilot responded that he did not do so.

The CCTV footage obtained from the airport showed Ram Air Turbine (RAT) getting deployed during the initial climb immediately after lift-off (*fig. 15*). No significant bird activity is observed in the vicinity of the flight path. The aircraft started to lose altitude before crossing the airport perimeter wall.

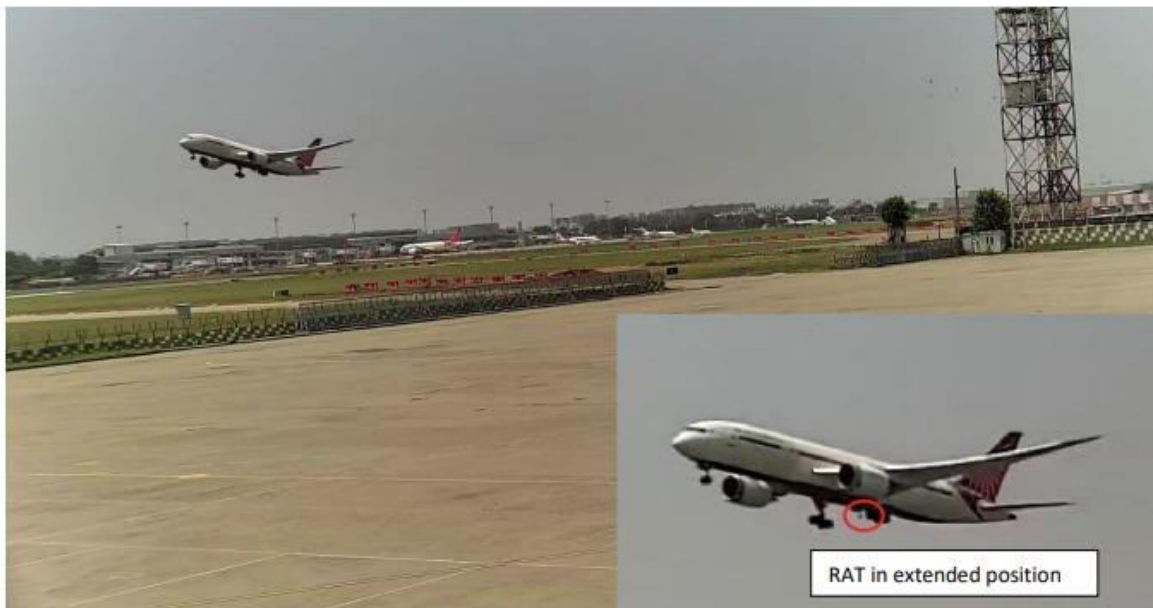


Figure 15 CCTV screenshot of RAT Deployment

### Recovery and Final Moments

- **Auto Recovery:** 10–12 seconds later, both switches returned to RUN. One engine recovered power, but the other continued to decelerate.
- **End of Data:** The flight data recorder stopped 17 seconds after the switches first moved to CUTOFF.

### Possible Causes Explored

#### 1. Mechanical Failure?

- o No prior defects found in maintenance records since the cockpit control panel was last replaced in 2023.
- o FAA had issued a non mandatory advisory in 2018 on the 787's fuel switch locking feature. The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is the agency of the United States Department of Transportation responsible for the regulation and oversight of civil aviation within the U.S.

## 2. Fuel Contamination or Bird Strike?

- o Fuel samples tested clear.
- o No significant bird activity recorded.

## 3. Human Intervention?

- o Experts argue deliberate action is the most plausible explanation, given switch design.
- o Speculation includes misidentification of a single engine failure or a deliberate act.

## Criticisms of the Preliminary Report

- **Ambiguity Over Pilot Roles:** The report notes the captain was monitoring and the first officer was flying—only the captain's hands would have been free to move the switches.
- **Inconsistent Flight Hours:** Contradictory figures for each pilot's logged hours raise concerns about data accuracy.
- **Lack of Detail:** Full cockpit voice transcripts and precise switch locking details were not provided, leaving critical "why" questions unanswered.

## What's Next?

- **Ongoing Investigation:** The AAIB's final report must explain how locked switches could move during take off and provide the complete sequence of system warnings.
- **Safety Implications:** Findings will influence procedures for switch guard design, pilot training, and emergency protocols—both in India and globally.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Disaster Management  
Source: Indian Express & The Hindu

## 6. Bridge Collapse in Gujarat Highlights Infrastructure Crisis

### What happened recently?

On July 9, a span of a 40-year-old bridge in Vadodara, Gujarat, collapsed, sending several vehicles into the Mahisagar river. Eighteen people were confirmed dead. Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel has ordered an investigation. Locals blame long-standing negligence by authorities.

### Recurring Infrastructure Failures Across India

This tragedy is not an isolated incident. Recent examples include:

- June 2025: Pedestrian bridge collapse in Pune due to overloading – 4 dead
- May 2025: Concrete slab falls at a bridge construction site in Cuttack – 3 dead

- 2024: Hoarding collapse in Ghatkopar, Mumbai – 17 dead
  - 2023:
    - o Railway bridge collapse in Mizoram – 26 workers dead
    - o Billboard collapse in Lucknow – 2 women dead
    - o Metro pillar collapse in Bengaluru – mother and toddler dead
  - 2022: Morbi suspension bridge failure in Gujarat – over 140 dead
- These are part of a broader pattern of catastrophic public infrastructure failures.



### **Systemic Issues Behind the Accidents**

These accidents, though seemingly isolated, reflect:

1. Ageing Infrastructure: Designed for smaller populations, many structures are unable to handle current loads.
2. Urban Pressure: Rapid urbanisation and industrial expansion are stressing peri-urban infrastructure.
3. Neglected Maintenance: Many departments responsible for upkeep are underfunded, understaffed, or negligent.
4. Lack of Transparency: Investigations often do not result in public failure analysis reports or lead to broad audits.

### **Need for Structural Reform and Regular Audits**

To prevent future tragedies, India needs a three-fold approach:

1. Strengthen Existing Infrastructure Programs

Modify schemes like the Urban Infrastructure Development Fund and AMRUT (Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation) to prioritise maintenance of ageing assets, especially in urban areas with populations over 10 lakh.

2. Enforce Audit Frameworks Uniformly

Municipal bridge audit guidelines already exist but need uniform enforcement and public transparency.

3. Mandate Independent Probes and Audits After Accidents

Every major incident should trigger:

- o A statutory probe
- o A mandatory audit of all major infrastructure in the area
- o Public disclosure of findings

### **Conclusion: A Bridge Too Far**

India's infrastructure is under severe strain. Isolated disasters are part of a deeper systemic failure. Without regular audits, transparent reporting, and proactive maintenance, these

tragedies will continue. A national commitment to infrastructure safety is no longer optional—it is urgent.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper III; Disaster Management

Source: The Hindu

## 7. What Is the Kanwar Yatra?

### Introduction



The Kanwar Yatra is an annual Hindu pilgrimage held during the month of Shravan (Saavan), where devotees of Lord Shiva (called Kanwariyas) collect water from the Ganga river and offer it to Shiva temples.

They travel in groups, often on foot, wearing saffron clothes, chanting "Har Har Mahadev" or "Bol Bam", and carrying decorated slings

(kanwars) filled with holy water.

### Religious Significance and Mythology

The origins of the Yatra are linked to the Samudra Manthan (cosmic ocean churning):

- When poison (halahal) emerged, Lord Shiva drank it to save the world.
- To soothe his burning throat, he was offered Ganga water.
- This act is re-enacted each year during Shravan by devotees.

### Key Beliefs:

- Ganga water is collected from places like Haridwar, Gangotri, Varanasi, Prayagraj, and Sultanganj.
- The water is offered to Shiva temples, including Jyotirlingas, Baidyanath Dham, Kashi Vishwanath, and local shrines.
- The kanwar must not touch the ground during the journey.
- Devotees are expected to practice discipline and abstention, mirroring Shiva's ascetic lifestyle.

### Astrological Importance

- Shravan month is named after the Shravana Nakshatra.
- Worshipping Shiva during this star alignment is considered especially auspicious.

### Historical Origins and Evolution

Despite its ancient feel, the modern form of Kanwar Yatra is relatively recent:

- Not documented extensively in early religious texts or colonial records.
- Possibly originated in Sultanganj (Bihar) in the 1700s.

- Gained momentum in the 1980s due to:
  - o Better roads and connectivity
  - o Rise in Hindu identity movements
  - o Devotional music cassettes
  - o Improved economic status in North India

#### **Anecdotal Reference:**

- A 19th-century memoir mentions a pilgrim carrying Ganga water barefoot — similar to today's Yatra but without the current scale.

#### **Socio-Cultural Aspects Today**

The Kanwar Yatra today reflects multiple societal forces:

Youth & Marginalised Participation:

- Many Kanwariyas are young, lower-income men.
- The Yatra provides a platform for expression, self-discipline, and social participation.
- It acts as a counter-space to economic exclusion, offering a way to assert identity and spirituality.

#### **Caste & Inclusivity:**

- Pilgrimage traditions often cut across caste lines.
- Historically, pilgrims traveled with trading caravans or armies for safety.
- These mass movements create a sense of community and equality, unlike rigid caste structures.

#### **Role of the State**

- State support and visibility (like flower showers by the UP govt) have contributed to the Yatra's growth.
- Improved infrastructure and facilities have made the pilgrimage more accessible and appealing.

#### **Conclusion: A Churning of Tradition and Modernity**

The Kanwar Yatra is not just a religious ritual — it's a blend of mythology, faith, identity, protest, and politics.

Rooted in ancient legends, shaped by modern forces, and powered by mass participation, it reflects the changing face of devotion in contemporary India.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper I; Indian Society

Source: Indian Express

### **8. What Is the World Championship of Legends (WCL)?**

#### **Introduction**

The World Championship of Legends (WCL) is a cricket league featuring retired and non-contracted players from major cricketing nations like India, Pakistan, England, Australia, South Africa, and the West Indies.

- India won the first edition of WCL, defeating Pakistan in the final.
- Big names in this year's edition include Chris Gayle, AB de Villiers, Brett Lee, Shahid Afridi, and Kevin Pietersen.
- The league is owned by Bollywood actor Ajay Devgn and singer Harshit Tomar.
- Matches are held across UK cities: Birmingham, Northampton, Leeds, and Leicester.



### **Why Was the India vs Pakistan Match Cancelled?**

The highly anticipated India vs Pakistan match, scheduled for July 20 at Edgbaston, was cancelled due to:

- Rising military tensions between the two nations following the Pahalgam terror attack in April.
- Indian players withdrawing, including Harbhajan Singh, Irfan Pathan, Yusuf Pathan, and Shikhar Dhawan.
- The main sponsor EaseMyTrip refused to support any match involving Pakistan, stating it was against their principles.

### **What Did the Organisers Say?**

In an official statement, WCL said:

- They had hoped to promote goodwill by allowing the match, inspired by recent India-Pakistan sporting events in volleyball and hockey.
- However, they admitted the decision unintentionally upset Indian legends and sponsors.
- The match was cancelled to respect public sentiment and the players' concerns.

### **Can India and Pakistan Still Meet Later in WCL?**

Yes, there is still a possibility of the two teams meeting:

- In the semi-finals or final, if both qualify.
- No official rule prevents retired Indian players from playing against Pakistani teams in such leagues.
- The decision to cancel seems based on individual player choices and current public mood, not a government ban.

### **What Is the Broader Context of India-Pakistan Cricket Ties?**

- No bilateral series since 2013. The countries only meet at ICC and multi-nation tournaments.
- India hasn't toured Pakistan since the 2008 Asia Cup, and relations worsened after the 26/11 Mumbai attacks.

- Pakistan players are banned from the IPL since the first season in 2008.
- Although India allows Pakistan to play in multinational events hosted here, both teams have agreed to play at neutral venues until 2027.

Relevance: GS Prelims; Miscellaneous

Source: Indian Express

## 9. Tribal Woman Marries Two Brothers in Himachal: What the Law Says

### The Incident: A Case of Polyandry in Himachal

- In Trans-Giri region, a woman married two brothers— a rare case of polyandry, locally known as Jodidaran.
- The practice is part of the Hatti tribe's customs, mainly to:
  - o Preserve undivided family land
  - o Strengthen family bonds
  - o Provide social security to women
- The Hatti community was recognized as a Scheduled Tribe (ST) in 2022.
- This is the fifth such marriage reported in the last six years.



### Is Polyandry Legal in India?

- No. Polyandry and polygamy are prohibited under:
    - o Hindu Marriage Act, 1955
    - o Special Marriage Act
    - o Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (criminal law)
- However, for Scheduled Tribes (STs):

- Customary laws can override general laws, unless the government issues a specific notification.

### Legal Loophole for Scheduled Tribes

- Section 2(2) of the Hindu Marriage Act excludes its application to STs, unless directed by the Central Government.
- Hence, undocumented tribal customs like polyandry may still prevail, though:
  - o They must meet standards of reasonableness, certainty, and public interest.
  - o Courts must be given evidence to accept them as legal.

### What Have Courts Said About Custom vs Constitution?

- Courts have repeatedly ruled that customs cannot override fundamental rights.
- Examples:
  1. Triple Talaq (2017): SC struck it down as arbitrary and violative of Articles 14 & 21.

2. Sabarimala Case (2018): Ban on women's entry ruled unconstitutional under Articles 14, 15, 21.
3. Ram Charan vs Sukhram (2024): SC ruled tribal women cannot be denied inheritance based on male-only customs.

### Key Takeaway:

"Customs too, like the law, cannot remain stuck in time" – Supreme Court.

### Conclusion: Law vs Tradition

- Polyandry remains illegal under national law, but customary practices among STs exist in legal grey zones.
- Courts can overrule customs if they violate equality, dignity, or fundamental rights.
- The future of such practices will depend on judicial interpretation, public policy, and community reform.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper I; Indian Society

Source: Indian Express

## 10. Why the Paika Rebellion Is Back in the News

### Introduction



Former Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik has strongly objected to the omission of the Paika Rebellion from NCERT's new Class VIII history book. He called it a "huge dishonour" to the Paikas, who fought against British rule in 1817, 40 years before the more famous 1857 revolt.

The NCERT has responded, saying the rebellion will be included in the second volume of the textbook due in September-October 2025.

### Who Were the Paikas?

- The Paikas (pronounced paiko) were military retainers under the Gajapati kings of Odisha.
- In return for their service, they were given hereditary, rent-free land (nish-kar jagirs).
- During peace, they cultivated this land; during war, they fought for the king.

### How British Rule Disrupted Paika Life

- In 1803, the British East India Company annexed Odisha with little resistance.
- They made a deal with the king of Khurda, Mukunda Deva II, but broke their promises.
- The king's advisor, Jayee Rajguru, tried to resist but was captured and executed in 1806.
- The king was dethroned, his lands seized, and Paikas lost their political and economic support.

### **Growing Anger and Hardships**

- The British introduced new land revenue systems, hurting Odia landowners and Paikas.
- Many lost land to Bengali landlords, and were forced to pay taxes in rupees instead of traditional barter systems.
- British control over salt in coastal Odisha added to public distress.
- These changes led to rising resentment among Paikas and tribal communities.

### **The Paika Rebellion of 1817**

- In March 1817, around 400 Kondhs and many Paikas, led by Bakshi Jagabandhu, rose in revolt.
- They:
  - Attacked Banpur police station
  - Burned government buildings
  - Looted treasuries
  - Killed British officials
- The revolt spread across regions but was eventually crushed by the British.
- Jagabandhu fled to the forests and surrendered in 1825 under a peace agreement.

### **Political Significance in Modern Odisha**

- The rebellion is a source of Odia pride and regional identity.
- In 2017, Odisha's BJD government demanded it be declared the "first war of independence".
- Although the Centre did not accept this, it acknowledged the event as one of the early uprisings against the British.

### **Latest Controversy Over NCERT Textbooks**

- BJD accuses NCERT and BJP of ignoring Odia history.
- BJP counters that BJD is spreading false claims.
- NCERT clarifies that Paika Rebellion and other regional uprisings will be included in the second volume of Class VIII history, releasing in September–October 2025.

Relevance: GS Prelims & Mains Paper I; Indian Society

Source: Indian Express