

UPSC & PCS PRELIMS 2026

DECODE CURRENT

AFFAIRS

POLITY + GOVERNANCE + IR

(PART-1: MAY-DECEMBER 2025)

CONTENT



**∞ * (PR + FOMO +
NOISE + FREEMIUM +
FAKE CLAIMS) ^ ∞**



MUDIT JAIN

EX-IPS | EX-IRS

AIR - 222, 207 & 173



DECODECIVILS

| | |
|--|-----------|
| POLITY & CONSTITUTION..... | 14 |
| Deputy Speaker..... | 14 |
| Anti-defection..... | 14 |
| Private Member Bill..... | 14 |
| Constitution in Santhali..... | 14 |
| Eighth Schedule of Constitution..... | 15 |
| Timeline for Governors & President..... | 16 |
| SC's Advisory Opinion..... | 17 |
| Secularism & Socialism..... | 17 |
| Different Constitutional Drafts..... | 17 |
| Nominations to J&K Assembly..... | 18 |
| All India Speakers' Conference..... | 18 |
| LARRDIS..... | 18 |
| LS Members Attendance..... | 18 |
| Vice-president Resignation..... | 18 |
| CJI Appointment..... | 19 |
| Contempt of Court..... | 19 |
| Dual Taxation on Broadcasting Services..... | 20 |
| UCC..... | 20 |
| 130th Constitutional Amendment Bill, 2025..... | 20 |
| National Flag Day (22nd July)..... | 20 |
| Seva Teerth..... | 22 |
| Constitutional and Non-constitutional Bodies..... | 22 |
| 8th Central Pay Commission..... | 22 |
| CAG to Launch AI System..... | 22 |
| UPSC..... | 22 |
| National Commission for Scheduled Castes..... | 23 |
| National Commission for Minorities..... | 23 |
| CBI..... | 24 |
| Lokpal..... | 24 |
| Lokpal - NPC..... | 25 |
| Central Information Commission..... | 25 |
| Fundamental Rights..... | 25 |
| Right to Digital Access..... | 25 |
| Child Labour..... | 25 |
| Compulsory Early Childhood Care..... | 26 |
| Rights of Pedestrians..... | 26 |
| Personality Rights..... | 26 |
| Narco Tests..... | 26 |
| Grounds of Arrest..... | 27 |
| Right to Vote..... | 27 |
| Right to Vote vs Freedom of Voting..... | 27 |
| Kamalesan Case..... | 27 |
| SC on Social Media Conduct..... | 28 |
| Obscenity..... | 28 |
| Defamation..... | 28 |
| Sahyog Portal..... | 28 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| Sanchar Saathi App..... | 29 |
| Freedom of Religion..... | 30 |
| Preventive Detention..... | 30 |
| UAPA Chargesheet..... | 30 |
| Citizenship..... | 30 |
| Detaining Non-citizens..... | 30 |
| Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025..... | 31 |
| CAA..... | 31 |
| Proof of Citizenship..... | 31 |
| Federalism..... | 32 |
| Special Category Status - Andhra's Demand..... | 32 |
| Federalism and Funds..... | 32 |
| Fair Share..... | 32 |
| President's Rule..... | 33 |
| National Emergency..... | 33 |
| Ladakh & J&K..... | 33 |
| Leh Elected Representatives..... | 35 |
| Zonal Councils..... | 35 |
| The Chandigarh Question..... | 35 |
| Selecting Head of Police..... | 36 |
| Inter-State Water Dispute..... | 36 |
| Goa vs Karnataka - Mahadayi River..... | 36 |
| Yettinahole, Kalasa-Banduri & Upper Bhadra Projects..... | 36 |
| SYL Canal..... | 36 |
| Andhra Pradesh's Godavari-Banakacherla Project..... | 37 |
| Reservation..... | 37 |
| Sickle Cell..... | 37 |
| Supreme Court Staff Reservations..... | 37 |
| Nagaland Internal ST Quota Policy..... | 37 |
| Reservation 50% Cap..... | 38 |
| Women Reservation..... | 38 |
| ST Status..... | 38 |
| OBC Lists..... | 38 |
| Bills, Acts, Laws and Policies..... | 39 |
| Service Fee..... | 39 |
| CCI Predatory Pricing Guidelines..... | 39 |
| Draft Registration Bill..... | 39 |
| Emblems Act..... | 39 |
| POCSO..... | 40 |
| Copyright Act, 1952..... | 40 |
| Cinematograph Act, 1952..... | 40 |
| Indian Ports Bill, 2025..... | 41 |
| Sikh Marriage Registration..... | 41 |
| Income Tax Act, 2025..... | 41 |
| Digital Personal Data Protection Rules, 2025..... | 42 |
| RTI - DPDP..... | 42 |
| Karnataka Mis-Information and Fake News (Prohibition) Bill, 2025..... | 42 |

| | |
|---|-----------|
| SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989..... | 42 |
| Law on Phone-tapping..... | 43 |
| Sedition Law..... | 43 |
| Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960..... | 43 |
| Online Gaming Act, 2025..... | 44 |
| National Sports Governance Act 2025..... | 44 |
| Protection of Civil Rights (PCR) Act..... | 44 |
| Health Security National Security Cess..... | 44 |
| Central Excise (Amendment) Act, 2025..... | 45 |
| SHANTI Act 2025..... | 45 |
| VB-G RAM G Act, 2025..... | 46 |
| Waqf Properties..... | 46 |
| DIGIPIN..... | 46 |
| DHRUVA..... | 47 |
| Labour Policy..... | 47 |
| National Cooperative Policy 2025..... | 47 |
| PM's Independence Day Address..... | 48 |
| Judiciary..... | 48 |
| LIMBS..... | 48 |
| Alteration of Arbitral Awards..... | 48 |
| Veeraswami Judgment..... | 49 |
| India Justice Report 2025..... | 49 |
| Pendency of Cases & Vacancies..... | 49 |
| Foreign Lawyers & Foreign Law Firms..... | 49 |
| Mediation Campaign..... | 49 |
| Judge Removal..... | 50 |
| Legal Aid Systems..... | 50 |
| ADR..... | 50 |
| e-Courts Project..... | 51 |
| Master of Roster..... | 51 |
| NJAC vs Collegium..... | 51 |
| HC Collegium..... | 51 |
| District Judges..... | 51 |
| Women Judges..... | 51 |
| Ad hoc Judges..... | 52 |
| Pendency of Cases..... | 52 |
| Client Info Confidentiality..... | 52 |
| Temple Funds..... | 52 |
| Live-in Couples..... | 52 |
| Consumer Protection..... | 52 |
| Suspension of Sentence..... | 52 |
| Criminal Justice System..... | 53 |
| 1 Year of Criminal Laws..... | 53 |
| UAPA & Bail..... | 53 |
| 498-A..... | 53 |
| Preponderance of Probabilities..... | 53 |
| Principled Criminalisation..... | 53 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| e-Zero FIR Initiative..... | 54 |
| Biometrics of Arrestees..... | 54 |
| Civil and Criminal Cases..... | 54 |
| Support to Poor Prisoners Scheme..... | 54 |
| Elections..... | 55 |
| ECINET..... | 55 |
| NOTA..... | 55 |
| Index Cards..... | 55 |
| Model Code of Conduct..... | 56 |
| SIR..... | 56 |
| Rajasthan SIR..... | 57 |
| Electoral Roll Responsibility..... | 57 |
| SIR 2003 vs 2025..... | 58 |
| Citizenship Scrutiny..... | 58 |
| State Election Commission..... | 58 |
| Machine Readable Electoral Rolls..... | 58 |
| EC Launches e-sign..... | 58 |
| EC De-listing Political Parties..... | 59 |
| INDIA bloc considers motion to remove CEC..... | 59 |
| Cash Donations..... | 59 |
| International IDEA..... | 59 |
| Simultaneous Polls..... | 59 |
| Nomination Process..... | 60 |
| Panchayats and Municipality..... | 60 |
| Panchayat Level Data..... | 60 |
| Municipalities Revenue..... | 60 |
| AI-tool 'SabhaSaar'..... | 60 |
| Census..... | 61 |
| Census 2027..... | 61 |
| Caste Census..... | 62 |
| Census Urban Area..... | 62 |
| Trials..... | 62 |
| GOVERNANCE..... | 63 |
| Education..... | 63 |
| QS Rankings & Index..... | 63 |
| Rhodes Scholarship..... | 64 |
| Foreign Universities..... | 64 |
| JNU - Turkiye..... | 64 |
| Co-op University..... | 65 |
| NIRF Rankings..... | 65 |
| The Vice-Chancellor..... | 65 |
| Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishthan Bill..... | 65 |
| Vishwa Bandhu Scholarships..... | 65 |
| Samagra Shiksha & PM SHRI..... | 65 |
| Minority-run Schools - RTE Act..... | 66 |
| TET in Non-minority Schools..... | 66 |
| Performance Grading Index..... | 66 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 3 Language Formula..... | 67 |
| Padhai With AI..... | 67 |
| AI in Education..... | 67 |
| Viksit Bharat Buildathon..... | 67 |
| World's Best School Prize 2025..... | 67 |
| Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report 2024..... | 67 |
| Digital Literacy..... | 68 |
| Mizoram Full Functional Literacy..... | 68 |
| Girl Education..... | 68 |
| Oxford Big Read Global Challenge..... | 68 |
| Eklavya Schools..... | 69 |
| Prime Minister Professorships..... | 69 |
| Prime Minister Internship Scheme..... | 69 |
| PARAKH..... | 69 |
| Numeracy Gap..... | 70 |
| NCERT Textbooks..... | 70 |
| UDISE+..... | 70 |
| Govt Schools & Students..... | 71 |
| MERITE..... | 71 |
| National Education Policy..... | 71 |
| Vulnerable Sections..... | 71 |
| National Policy on Senior Citizens..... | 71 |
| WHO Report on Social Connection..... | 72 |
| Pension Mitra..... | 72 |
| Centenarians..... | 72 |
| Jeevan Pramaan - Digital Life Certificate..... | 72 |
| Internal Complaints Committee..... | 72 |
| Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) Index..... | 72 |
| Childcare Workers..... | 73 |
| POSH Act..... | 73 |
| Acid Attack Survivors..... | 74 |
| Tech for Vulnerables..... | 74 |
| E-governance..... | 74 |
| NAMASTE..... | 74 |
| Anticipatory Bail in SC/ST Act..... | 75 |
| Child Marriage..... | 75 |
| Crime Against Children..... | 75 |
| Disables..... | 75 |
| Disabled Prisoners..... | 75 |
| Transgender Jobs Data..... | 76 |
| Health..... | 76 |
| Nutrition..... | 76 |
| Malnourishment..... | 76 |
| Obesity..... | 76 |
| Mitochondrial Uncouplers..... | 77 |
| 'Activated' Gold..... | 77 |
| Sugar Boards..... | 77 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Salt Overload..... | 78 |
| Diseases..... | 78 |
| Diabetes..... | 78 |
| Vaccination..... | 78 |
| Influenza Vaccination..... | 79 |
| Wild Polio Virus..... | 79 |
| Leprosy..... | 80 |
| Acanthosis Nigricans..... | 80 |
| Nipah..... | 80 |
| Ebola..... | 81 |
| Scrub Typhus..... | 81 |
| Sickle Cell Disease..... | 81 |
| New COVID Variants..... | 81 |
| Measles Vaccine..... | 82 |
| MASLD..... | 82 |
| Bacteria - Heart Attacks..... | 82 |
| Alzheimer's Plaques..... | 82 |
| Cholera..... | 82 |
| Cramped Muscles..... | 83 |
| Chronic Venous Insufficiency..... | 83 |
| Rare Diseases..... | 83 |
| Haemophilia..... | 83 |
| Thalassaemia..... | 83 |
| Anaemia..... | 84 |
| Amoebic Meningoencephalitis..... | 84 |
| Lyme Disease..... | 85 |
| Heart Attack "Notifiable"..... | 85 |
| Emergency Care..... | 85 |
| Vitamin D Deficiency..... | 85 |
| GERD..... | 85 |
| Hepatitis A - UIP..... | 85 |
| Antibiotics - Mental Health..... | 86 |
| Mental Health - WHO..... | 86 |
| Mental Health - SC..... | 86 |
| Mental Health Response..... | 86 |
| Women - Heat..... | 87 |
| Autism..... | 87 |
| Gonorrhoea..... | 87 |
| HIV Cases..... | 87 |
| Broadly Neutralising Antibodies (bNAbs)..... | 87 |
| HIV Transmission in Children..... | 87 |
| AIDS & TB Fight..... | 88 |
| WHO Global Tuberculosis Report 2025..... | 88 |
| Breast Cancer..... | 88 |
| Oral Cancer..... | 89 |
| Cancer - NAMS Report..... | 89 |
| Circulatory System Ailments..... | 89 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Cleft..... | 89 |
| Innovations, Drugs and Medicines..... | 89 |
| BioEmu - Protein Structures..... | 89 |
| Google's C2S-Scale..... | 90 |
| T Cells - Foxp3 Gene..... | 90 |
| Wound-healing Pad..... | 90 |
| CEREBO..... | 90 |
| E-tattoo..... | 90 |
| MRgFUS - Tremors..... | 90 |
| Strokes..... | 90 |
| Deep-brain Stimulation..... | 91 |
| Cough Syrup..... | 91 |
| GLP-1 Drugs..... | 91 |
| Semaglutide..... | 92 |
| Tirzepatide (Mounjaro)..... | 92 |
| Type 1 Diabetes..... | 92 |
| Traditional Medicine..... | 92 |
| Snake Bites..... | 93 |
| Eroom's Law..... | 93 |
| Precision Medicine..... | 93 |
| India's 1st Dengue Vaccine..... | 93 |
| Malaria Vaccine..... | 94 |
| Mosquitoes..... | 95 |
| Ejiao - Donkeys..... | 95 |
| Cancer Drugs..... | 95 |
| Dopamine..... | 96 |
| Ketamine..... | 96 |
| Oxytocin..... | 96 |
| Risdiplam..... | 96 |
| ORSL..... | 96 |
| Health Policies..... | 97 |
| Licences for New Drugs, Trials..... | 97 |
| Drug Quality Norms..... | 97 |
| MMR..... | 97 |
| Ayushman Bharat–Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY)..... | 98 |
| Pandemic Agreement..... | 98 |
| WHA's Resolution on Skin Diseases..... | 98 |
| Polio Surveillance Network..... | 98 |
| Breastfeeding..... | 98 |
| Euthanasia..... | 99 |
| Rare-blood Donor Registry..... | 99 |
| Organ Transplants..... | 99 |
| Cornea Transplant..... | 100 |
| Organ Transplants Laws..... | 100 |
| Stunting..... | 100 |
| Functional Foods..... | 101 |
| Benchmarks for Yoga Practice..... | 101 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| SHRESTH..... | 101 |
| State of Food Security and Nutrition Report..... | 101 |
| Oil, Sugar Content..... | 101 |
| Palm Oil..... | 102 |
| Out-of-pocket Expenditure..... | 102 |
| Medical Education Scheme..... | 102 |
| Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021..... | 103 |
| Drugs and Magic Remedies Act..... | 103 |
| World Health Summit 2025..... | 103 |
| Patient Safety..... | 103 |
| GLASS AMR..... | 103 |
| Misc..... | 104 |
| SDG 3..... | 104 |
| Global Tobacco Epidemic 2025..... | 104 |
| Sex Ratio..... | 104 |
| WHO's GNAFCC Membership..... | 105 |
| Endocrine Disruptors in Plastic..... | 105 |
| Microcrystalline Cellulose..... | 105 |
| Uranium in Breast Milk..... | 105 |
| Healthy Ageing..... | 105 |
| AYUSH Practitioners..... | 106 |
| Ayurveda Aahara..... | 106 |
| Ayurvedic Doctors..... | 106 |
| AMRIT Pharmacy..... | 106 |
| National Convention on Health Rights..... | 106 |
| NMR ID..... | 106 |
| Kombucha - Gut Ecosystem..... | 107 |
| Schemes and Policies..... | 107 |
| Orange Economy..... | 107 |
| Safe Harbour..... | 107 |
| Road Accident Victims..... | 107 |
| Pradhan Mantri Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana (PMVBRY)..... | 107 |
| Digital India..... | 108 |
| PM Vishwakarma Scheme..... | 108 |
| FCRA Renewal..... | 108 |
| Zoho's Suite..... | 109 |
| Visakhapatnam Declaration..... | 109 |
| International Institute of Administrative Sciences..... | 109 |
| Dumpsite Remediation Accelerator Programme..... | 109 |
| Pension Reforms..... | 110 |
| PLI Schemes..... | 110 |
| Cover doctors deputed for COVID-19 duty under PMGKY..... | 110 |
| Reports..... | 110 |
| Global Gender Gap Report 2025..... | 110 |
| Global SDG Rankings..... | 111 |
| World Happiness Report..... | 111 |
| INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS..... | 112 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| Neighbourhood..... | 112 |
| Pakistan..... | 112 |
| Indus Water Treaty..... | 112 |
| Response to Pahalgam Attack..... | 113 |
| Sir Creek..... | 114 |
| ADB's Funding to Pakistan..... | 114 |
| 27th Constitutional Amendment..... | 115 |
| Sikh Pilgrims Visa..... | 115 |
| Muridke - Place in News..... | 115 |
| Operation Mahadev..... | 115 |
| Saudi-Pakistan Pact (SMDA)..... | 115 |
| Bangladesh..... | 115 |
| Water Sharing..... | 115 |
| India Restricts Bangladeshi Exports via Land Ports..... | 116 |
| Restrictions on Jute from Bangladesh..... | 116 |
| Afghanistan..... | 116 |
| Russia & Taliban..... | 116 |
| Afghanistan - Malnutrition..... | 116 |
| India-Taliban Engagement..... | 117 |
| China..... | 117 |
| Border History..... | 117 |
| Border Wing Home Guards..... | 117 |
| Mansarovar Yatra..... | 117 |
| China - Pak..... | 118 |
| Dalai Lama Succession..... | 118 |
| China Population..... | 119 |
| China Trade Barriers..... | 119 |
| China Policing Network..... | 119 |
| Debt Trap - Chequebook Diplomacy..... | 119 |
| Colombia Joins BRI..... | 119 |
| Xinjiang to Tibet Railway..... | 119 |
| Maldives..... | 120 |
| SAGAR & MAHASAGAR..... | 120 |
| Sri Lanka..... | 120 |
| Starlink - Third in South Asia..... | 120 |
| Sri Lankan Tamil Refugees..... | 120 |
| Fishing Troubles..... | 121 |
| Operation Sagar Bandhu..... | 121 |
| Bhutan..... | 121 |
| GPPF Visit..... | 121 |
| Bhutan-India Rail Link..... | 121 |
| Nepal..... | 121 |
| Transit Treaty..... | 121 |
| Gen Z Protests..... | 121 |
| South Asia..... | 122 |
| SAFTA & NAFTA..... | 122 |
| East and South East Asia..... | 122 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| Mongolia | 122 |
| India - Security Programme..... | 122 |
| Myanmar | 122 |
| Chin..... | 122 |
| Policy on Myanmar..... | 123 |
| Stakeholders Involved..... | 123 |
| Philippines | 123 |
| Strategic Partnership..... | 123 |
| Indonesia | 123 |
| Indonesia Protests..... | 123 |
| BrahMos Deal..... | 123 |
| Singapore | 124 |
| Singapore PM Visits India..... | 124 |
| Japan | 124 |
| Japan-China-Taiwan..... | 124 |
| India–Japan Ties..... | 125 |
| Central Asia | 126 |
| Forums..... | 126 |
| India-Kyrgyzstan BIT..... | 126 |
| West Asia | 126 |
| Turkey and Azerbaijan | 126 |
| Pahalgam..... | 126 |
| Syria | 127 |
| HTS - Kurds..... | 127 |
| Israel-Iran | 127 |
| Conflict's Comprehensive Analysis..... | 127 |
| Nuclear Restrictions..... | 129 |
| U.S. - Chabahar..... | 130 |
| UN Convention Against Terror Finance..... | 130 |
| Israel-Palestine | 130 |
| Two-state Solution..... | 130 |
| Statehood Recognition..... | 130 |
| Famine..... | 131 |
| Genocide..... | 131 |
| Israel - Microsoft Azure..... | 131 |
| Israel– Hamas Ceasefire..... | 131 |
| Gaza Peace Plan..... | 132 |
| Bilateral Investment Treaty..... | 132 |
| Qatar | 132 |
| FTA..... | 132 |
| Israeli Air Strike on Qatar..... | 132 |
| UAE | 132 |
| UAE's Golden Visa Scheme..... | 132 |
| Oman | 132 |
| FTA..... | 132 |
| Jordan | 133 |
| PM Visit to Amman..... | 133 |

| | |
|---|------------|
| Bahrain | 133 |
| Defence-Trade..... | 133 |
| Iraq | 133 |
| Iraqi Oil..... | 133 |
| Saudi Arabia | 133 |
| U.S. - Saudi Arabia..... | 133 |
| Russia and Ukraine | 134 |
| Minerals Deal..... | 134 |
| Russia's Demands & Treaties..... | 134 |
| India-Russia | 134 |
| BRICS Grain Exchange Plan..... | 134 |
| India-Russia Forums..... | 135 |
| Russian Oil..... | 135 |
| Putin's Visit to India..... | 135 |
| Europe | 135 |
| Cyprus and Croatia..... | 135 |
| EU-India Partnership..... | 136 |
| Euro..... | 136 |
| EFTA - TEPA..... | 136 |
| Norway-India..... | 136 |
| Digital Services Act..... | 136 |
| Germany-India..... | 137 |
| UK | 137 |
| U.K. India Infra Bridge..... | 137 |
| Free Trade Agreement..... | 137 |
| Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement..... | 137 |
| Deport Now, Appeal Later..... | 138 |
| Chagos Islands..... | 139 |
| US | 139 |
| India-U.S. Energy Future..... | 139 |
| U.S.-India Subsea Cable Agenda..... | 140 |
| Rice to U.S..... | 140 |
| India - U.S. FTA..... | 140 |
| India-U.S. Tariffs Row..... | 141 |
| H-1B & Student Visa..... | 142 |
| US - UNHRC..... | 142 |
| US - Diwali..... | 142 |
| US - HIRE Bill..... | 142 |
| US - Latin America..... | 142 |
| US - Venezuela..... | 143 |
| Cashless Bail..... | 143 |
| Fentanyl..... | 143 |
| G-2..... | 144 |
| Defence Ties..... | 144 |
| Nuclear Weapons Testing..... | 144 |
| U.S. Travel Ban..... | 145 |
| Canada | 145 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| EPTA..... | 145 |
| Digital Services Tax..... | 145 |
| C-3 Bill..... | 145 |
| Paraguay..... | 145 |
| President's Visit to India..... | 145 |
| Australia..... | 145 |
| Aus-India Clean Energy Partnership..... | 145 |
| Ind-Aus Defence Ties..... | 146 |
| Social Media Ban..... | 146 |
| New Zealand..... | 146 |
| FTA..... | 146 |
| Pacific Islands..... | 146 |
| India-Fiji..... | 146 |
| Africa..... | 146 |
| DRC..... | 147 |
| Morocco..... | 147 |
| Solar Schemes in Africa..... | 147 |
| PM Modi's Five-Nation Tour..... | 147 |
| India-Ethiopia..... | 148 |
| Malnourishment - Nigeria - MSF..... | 148 |
| India-Africa Digital Compact..... | 148 |
| India-Africa..... | 149 |
| Treaties, Regional and International Groupings..... | 149 |
| G-7 Summit 2025..... | 149 |
| BIMSTEC..... | 149 |
| 25th SCO Summit 2025..... | 149 |
| 19th NAM Mid-term Ministerial Meeting..... | 150 |
| ASEAN Summit..... | 150 |
| RCEP minus China..... | 151 |
| 32nd APEC Summit..... | 151 |
| Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting..... | 151 |
| Pax Silica..... | 152 |
| 17th BRICS Summit 2025..... | 152 |
| BRICS Financial Independence..... | 152 |
| High Seas Treaty..... | 153 |
| World Summit for Social Development..... | 153 |
| G-20..... | 153 |
| International Solar Alliance..... | 154 |
| World Toilet Summit 2025..... | 154 |
| The Indian Ocean..... | 154 |
| Colombo Security Conclave..... | 155 |
| BRIDGE..... | 155 |
| Kimberley Process..... | 155 |
| UN..... | 155 |
| UN Security Council..... | 155 |
| UNSC's Counter-Terrorism Committee..... | 155 |
| UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)..... | 156 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| Abstentions All-time High..... | 156 |
| Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4)..... | 156 |
| US - UNESCO..... | 156 |
| Global South..... | 156 |
| India - IDEAS..... | 156 |
| Global South Meet..... | 156 |
| Misc..... | 156 |
| India's Arctic Outlook..... | 156 |
| María Machado..... | 157 |
| Diaspora..... | 157 |
| Necropolitics..... | 157 |
| Healthocide..... | 157 |
| Henley Passport Index..... | 157 |
| Global Peace Index 2025..... | 157 |
| E-Passport..... | 158 |
| ACLED Report..... | 158 |
| Radio Ceylon..... | 158 |
| Gen Z Protests..... | 158 |
| New Caledonia..... | 158 |
| Malta's 'Golden Passports'..... | 158 |

"This content is the exclusive intellectual property of the author, Mudit Jain, and is fully protected under applicable copyright laws. Any unauthorized copying, reproduction, redistribution, modification, or commercial use of this material, in whole or in part, is strictly prohibited and may result in legal action."

"Coaching institutes are advised to make their own content and not use screenshots from this file to make fake claims over questions from their reference/study material."

POLITY & CONSTITUTION

Deputy Speaker

Why in news: Deputy Speaker's post has remained vacant since 2019. The post is not ceremonial; it ensures legislative continuity, neutral arbitration, and effective functioning of Parliament.

- Constitution doesn't specify time frame, allowing delays in appointing Deputy Speaker.
- All powers of the Speaker apply to the Deputy Speaker when presiding over the House.
- Office of Deputy Speaker dates back to Gol, 1919, where he was known as Deputy President.
- Deputy Speaker is elected by simple majority of members present and voting in Lok Sabha.
- While usually elected in the second session, there is no bar on electing in the first session.
- Deputy Speaker M Ananthasayanam Ayyangar filled in after Speaker G V Mavalankar's death in 1956, and P M Sayeed did the same in 2002 after Speaker G M C Balayogi's death.
- The first 4 Deputy Speakers (1952–1969) were from the ruling Congress.
- Article 89 establishes Deputy Chairman of Rajya Sabha, elected only by Rajya Sabha. The Deputy Chairman plays a vital role in managing House proceedings and steps in for the Chairperson/Vice President when needed.

Constitutional Mandate and Conventions

- Article 93 mandates election of the Deputy Speaker "as soon as may be," implying urgency, not discretion.
- Article 94 ensures continuity of the Deputy Speaker's office until resignation, removal, or disqualification.
- Article 95(1): Deputy Speaker performs the duties of the Speaker if the post is vacant.
- Article 178 mirrors Article 93 for state Assemblies, mandating election of Speaker and Deputy Speaker.
- Article 179 governs vacation, resignation, and removal of Speaker and Deputy Speaker in state Assemblies.
- Article 180 empowers Deputy Speaker to act as Speaker in their absence in state assemblies.
- Rule 8 of Lok Sabha Rules (1952) requires Speaker to fix date for election to the post, reinforcing the procedural urgency.
- Rule 9: Speaker nominates Panel of up to 10 Chairpersons to preside in absence of Speaker & Deputy Speaker.
- Conventionally, Deputy Speaker's post is offered to the Opposition, fostering checks and balances.
- The Deputy Speaker presides over important committees like Private Members' Bills and the Budget Committee.

Anti-defection

- Bench headed by CJI allowed the Speaker three months to complete the disqualification proceedings under the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution. The Bench stated that the disqualification petitions must be decided within said time or Speaker faces contempt.
- SC reiterated that Speaker does not enjoy constitutional immunity while acting as a tribunal under 10th Schedule.
- Court clarified its power and duty to ensure that Speakers, acting as quasi-judicial tribunals under the anti-defection law, should not sit on disqualification petitions until they "die a natural death" towards the end of the House's tenure.
- 52nd Amendment added 10th Schedule, which disqualifies MP and MLA for defecting. A legislator can be disqualified for voluntarily giving up party membership or disobeying the party whip on.
- 91st Amendment in 2003 modified the law, requiring a two-thirds majority within a party for a merger to avoid disqualification. This amendment made small-scale defections difficult and curtailed political maneuvering.
- Speaker (Lok Sabha/Assembly) or Chairman (Rajya Sabha/Council) makes the initial decision on disqualification, and their ruling is considered "final" within the legislature, but crucially, it's not absolute and is subject to judicial review by the High Courts and Supreme Court, as established by the Supreme Court in the Kihoto Hollohan case.

Private Member Bill

- PMBs: MPs, who are not Ministers, can propose legislation. Can be from either the ruling party or Opposition.
- Fridays are usually reserved in each session for PMB discussion.
- Allows MPs to propose legislation based on personal convictions, constituency demands, or emerging social needs, irrespective of party. Since Independence, only 14 PMBs have been passed and received Presidential assent; none has cleared both Houses since 1970.
- The Right to Disconnect Bill, 2025 proposes an employees' welfare authority to confer the right to disconnect from work-related calls and emails beyond work hours and holidays.
- Congress MP introduced the Menstrual Benefits Bill, 2024. The Bill aims to provide facilities at the workplace for women employees during menstruation.

Global Best Practice: Ten-Minute Rule (U.K.)

- Allows any MP to make a 10-minute speech for a PMB. Another MP may oppose it for the same time.

Constitution in Santhali

- President released the Constitution of India in the Santhali language spoken by tribal people in Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal, and Bihar. It is written in Ol Chiki script.
- Santhali lacked its own script until a century ago. This led to the use of scripts such as Roman, Devanagari, Odia, and Bengali. In 1925, Pandit Raghunath Murmu created the Ol Chiki script.

- President released the **digital version of the Constitution of India** in **nine languages** during Constitution Day celebrations (theme this year is "Hamara Samvidhan–Hamara Swabhiman").
- The **nine languages**: Malayalam, Marathi, Nepali, Punjabi, Bodo, Kashmiri, Telugu, Odia and Assamese.
- It is the **first time** that the **Bodo and Kashmiri editions** of the Constitution are being **introduced**. The **Punjabi edition** of the Constitution is being **updated after almost 50 years**.
- Since **2015**, **Constitution Day / Samvidhan Diwas** has been celebrated on **November 26** to commemorate the **adoption of the Constitution** by the **Constituent Assembly on November 26, 1949**.
- **Two months later**, on **January 26, 1950**, the **Constitution came into effect** after being **signed by 284 members**.

Eighth Schedule of Constitution

Why in news: Kokborok Sahitya Parishad requested inclusion of Kokborok in 8th Schedule. Script for Kokborok can be Bengali or Devanagari.

- On **International Mother Tongue Day (Feb 21)**, there was a demand for inclusion of **Bhojpuri** in Eighth Schedule. **Bhojpuri** holds **constitutional status** in **Mauritius and Nepal** but remains unrecognised in India.
- **Eighth Schedule of Constitution lists officially recognised languages**; provisions are in **Articles 344(1) and 351**.
- **Article 344(1): Mandates the President** to form a commission to review the progressive use of Hindi and recommend measures, referencing languages in the Eighth Schedule.
- **Article 351** mandates the Union to promote Hindi and enrich it using **Sanskrit and other Eighth Schedule languages**.
- **Other articles like 343–348** detail official language provisions for Union, States, Judiciary, and Special Directives, ensuring linguistic recognition and use in administration and education.
- **Sindhi** was added by 21st Amendment Act 1967); **Konkani, Manipuri, Nepali** by 71st Amendment Act (1992); **Bodo, Dogri, Maithili, Santhali** by 92nd Amendment Act (2003). **English is not** included in the 8th Schedule.
- **Ashok Pahwa Committee (1996)** proposed criteria: official language of a state, significant population, independent language, Sahitya Akademi recognition, developed literary tradition.
- **Sitakant Mohapatra Committee (2003)** suggested: at least **5 million speakers**, medium of instruction up to secondary/university level, script in use for at least **50 years**.
- **MHA states that no fixed official standard exists** for selecting languages for the Eighth Schedule.
- Benefits of inclusion include: **translation services in Parliament, inclusion in UPSC language papers, and developmental funds from the Centre**.

What is the Eighth Schedule?

It lists **22 languages** officially recognised by the Indian Constitution.

These include:

Assamese, Bengali, Bodo, Dogri, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Maithili, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Odia, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Santhali, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu.

- Last year, '**Classical Language**' status was granted to **Marathi, Pali, Prakrit, Assamese, and Bengali**, bringing the total number of classical languages to **11**. Previously, only **six languages** held the '**Classical**' status: **Tamil (2004), Sanskrit (2005), Kannada (2008), Telugu (2008), Malayalam (2013), and Odia (2014)**.

- In **2004**, Centre created the **category of "classical languages"**. **Tamil** became the **first Indian language** to receive classical status due to its **high antiquity and rich literary tradition**.

Key criteria for a language to be considered a **Classical Language** in India:

- Must have an **early history of 1500–2000 years**.
- It should have a **body of ancient literature or texts** regarded as **heritage** by its speakers over generations.
- There must be **knowledge texts**, including **prose, poetry, and epigraphic/inscriptional evidence**.
- **Classical language & its literature** may be **distinct from its modern form** or may show **discontinuity** over time.

Additional information:

- **Department of Official Language** under MHA implements constitutional provisions and Official Languages Act, 1963 relating to Hindi and English in official purposes of the Union. Established in 1975 (50 Years), it promotes Hindi in official work while supporting linguistic diversity as per Articles 343–351 of the Constitution.
- India does **not have a national language** to preserve **linguistic diversity**.
- **Article 343**: Hindi (in Devanagari) is the **official language of the Union**; States may choose their own.
- **Article 29** ensures **minorities can preserve their language, script, and culture** and protects against discrimination based on language.
- **Article 344**: Situated within Part XVII (Official Language), mandates the establishment of a Commission and a Committee of Parliament to oversee the progressive use of Hindi for official purposes of the Union.
- **Official Language Commission**:
 - Constitutional body under Article 344. First constituted in 1955 (10 years after commencement of the Constitution) by notification of the Ministry of Home Affairs; thereafter every 10 years.
 - Members are appointed by the President; Commission consists of a Chairman + members representing languages in the Eighth Schedule.
 - 30 members — 20 from Lok Sabha and 10 from Rajya Sabha, elected by proportional representation (single transferable vote); Home Minister is conventionally the Chairman; President decides terms & procedure.

- **Bharatiya Bhasha Anubhag (Indian Languages Section)** launched in 2025 to reduce dominance of English, promote regional languages, enable officials to communicate in mother tongues. It includes universal translation tools (C-DAC support), aligned with NEP 2020 emphasis on indigenous languages. **Official Languages Rules** govern Centre's language correspondence with Region A, B, and C States. Communications to Region C States (TN, Kerala, Karnataka) are done in English, but BBA will help enable replies in State languages.
- **Bhasha Sangam Initiative**, a Ministry of Education program under Ek Bharat Shreshtha Bharat, teaches 100 basic conversational sentences in 22 languages of the Eighth Schedule. It uses digital platforms (DIKSHA/ePathshala) and booklets for school children to foster linguistic tolerance and cultural integration nationwide.
- **Hindi Shabdsindhu**, an online dictionary initiative, developed by Department of Official Language, Central Hindi Directorate, and scientific/technical committees. It provides a comprehensive repository of Hindi words for administrative, scientific, and technical usage, making Hindi versatile and widely accepted.
- Technical education has been introduced in **12 Indian languages**, and **Madhya Pradesh** has started **medical education in Hindi**. He urged all States to provide engineering and medical education in their **State's language**.
- **Dogri**: UNESCO report ranked India as the country with the maximum number of dialects on the verge of extinction, raising serious linguistic and cultural concerns. J&K Official Languages Bill, 2020 granted Dogri recognition as one of the UT's 5 official languages (Urdu, Kashmiri, Hindi, Dogri, English).

Timeline for Governors & President

Why in news: SC's decision in the **Tamil Nadu Governor case** imposed a **three-month timeline** for the **President to act on Bills under Article 201**. The **Centre raised a Presidential Reference**.

- Reference asked if a **judiciary can prescribe a time limit** for the President when **Article 201 does not specify one**.
- The **three-month timeline** was based on the **2016 MHA guidelines & OMs**. **Sarkaria and Punchhi Commissions** had recommended **expedited decisions on State Bills** referred to the President. For **ordinances of urgent nature**, a **three-week disposal timeline** was prescribed. The **second OM** mandated that objections from ministries must be **shared with the concerned State government**, with a **one-month response time**.
- **Notable Past References**: SC declined only once — the Ram Janmabhoomi reference (1993).
- **42nd Amendment made Article 74(1)** explicit that the **President must act according to Cabinet advice, Article 163 (Governor's powers)** was not amended in the same way

Constitutional Provisions

- **Article 141**: Law declared by the Supreme Court is binding on all courts within the territory of India. This provision ensures that there is a uniform and consistent application of laws across the country.
- **Article 143**: The President may refer any question of law or fact of public importance to the SC for an advisory opinion, based on Cabinet advice. The advisory jurisdiction under Article 143 is inherited from Gol Act, 1935, which allowed the Governor-General to refer questions to the federal court. A similar advisory mechanism exists in Canada, while the U.S. Supreme Court refrains from such opinions due to strict separation of powers. SC must **limit itself** to the questions referred and **cannot exceed the scope** of the Reference. **Advisory opinions** under Article 143 are **not binding**, but have persuasive value.
- The **Constitution is silent** on whether an **opinion** given by the Supreme Court under **Article 143** can **overrule a binding judgment**. **Article 144** states that **all authorities, civil and judicial**, in the **territory of India** shall **act in aid** of the **Supreme Court**. **Articles 141 and 144**, read together, make it clear that the **law declared through judgments** of the Supreme Court is **binding**, and **all authorities** are **bound to comply**. It is argued that an **advisory opinion** may even go so far as to **"overrule, if necessary"** an earlier **judgment**.
- **Article 145(3)**: The reference must be heard by a bench of at least five judges.
- Under **Article 167**, the Chief Minister must keep the Governor informed on **contemplated laws**, enabling pre-legislative consultation, but **assent after passage is mandatory**.
- **Article 200: Options for Governor** Assent, withhold assent, return for reconsideration (except for Money Bills), or reserve the bill for the President's consideration. The Governor can also return the bill to the legislature for reconsideration, but must give assent if the bill is passed again. Governor enjoys **discretion** in choosing among these options and is **not bound by the aid and advice** of the Council of Ministers. Under the **Gol Act, 1935**, both the **Governor-General** and the **Governor** had discretion (Sections **32** and **75**) to assent, withhold, or return Bills.
- **Article 201**: Deals with Bills reserved by the Governor for the President's consideration, granting the President power to assent, withhold assent, or return the bill for reconsideration
- **Article 254(1)**: If a State law conflicts with a valid Central law on a Concurrent List subject, the Central law takes precedence, rendering the State law void to the extent of the repugnancy.
- **Article 254(2)**: A State law repugnant to a Central law can prevail within that State if it's reserved for the President's consideration and receives their assent, overriding the Central law in that specific state.
- **Proviso to 254(2)**: Parliament retains the power to enact a new law on the same subject at any time, even after the President's assent, further amending, varying, or repealing the State law.

Can Article 143 Be Used to Overturn a Ruling? (As per various newspaper articles before opinion in this case came):

- **Article 143** cannot be used by the executive to seek **review or reversal** of SC rulings. Only **review or curative petitions** can challenge settled SC judgments. **Cauvery Water Disputes Reference** clarified this principle.

- **Constitution does not permit SC to act as an appellate court** over itself, nor can the **President vest appellate jurisdiction** through Article 143. SC may **clarify or restate law** under Article 143(1) if the earlier **ratio decidendi** remains intact.

SC's Advisory Opinion


- A **five-judge Bench** delivered the opinion, calling it a **"functional reference"** as it deals with day-to-day functioning of **constitutional functionaries** and the interplay between the **State legislature, Governor, and President**.
- Governor's actions under **Article 200** are **not justiciable**, but in exceptional cases of **prolonged and unexplained inaction**, Court may issue a **limited mandamus** directing the Governor to act.
- The Court stated it **cannot prescribe timelines** for the President or Governor, since none exist in the Constitution.
- Decisions of the **President (Article 201)** and **Governor (Article 200)** are **not justiciable before a Bill becomes law**.
- Court held that **Article 142 cannot substitute** constitutional powers of President or Governor, and thus **"deemed assent"** is not permissible.
- Earlier rulings including **Shamsher Singh (1974) & Nabam Rebia (2016)** had held that Governors must act on the **aid and advice of the COM**.
- **Punchhi Commission (2010)** recommended that Governors should decide on Bills within **6 months**. In **K.M. Singh (2020)**, the Court prescribed a **three-month limit** for Speakers on disqualification petitions, though no constitutional timeline existed.

Supreme Court's advisory opinion

Breaking down the court's response to **14 questions raised by the President** asking if a constitutional court can impose timelines for Governors and the President to give assent to Bills passed by legislatures

| Governor's discretion under Article 200 | Judicial limits | Governor's accountability |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ May assent to the Bill ■ May withhold assent, but must communicate reasons to the State legislature ■ May refer the Bill to the President for consideration under Article 201 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ SC cannot impose timelines for assent or create a concept of 'deemed assent' under Article 142 <p>President's role under Article 201</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ When a Bill is referred, the President need not seek SC's advisory opinion under Article 143 every time | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Governors cannot indefinitely sit on a Bill; if they do, limited judicial review applies ■ Courts can direct Governors to decide within a reasonable time frame, but not dictate the outcome |

- Tamil Nadu had argued that the May 13 Presidential Reference was only a thinly-veiled "appeal" against the April 8 judgment in the Governor case
- The Reference Bench, however, pointed to a majority opinion delivered by Justice Y.V. Chandrachud (retired) in a 1978 PR in which he said that "our opinion may even go so far as to overrule, if necessary"



Secularism & Socialism

Why in news: On the eve of the **75th anniversary of the Constitution**, the **Supreme Court** upheld the inclusion of **"secular"** and **"socialist"** in the **Preamble**.

- These terms were added through the **42nd Amendment (1976)** during **Emergency**. Phrase **"unity of the nation"** was replaced with **"unity and integrity of the nation"**.
- In **Kesavananda Bharati (1973)**, even before the amendment, the Court declared **secularism as a basic structure** of the Constitution. It also held that **Preamble** was an **integral part** of Constitution, and was **subject to amending power** of Parliament, provided **Basic Structure** was not tinkered with.
- **S.R. Bommai Case (1994)**: Reaffirmed secularism as part of the basic structure.
- Secularism was **implicit from day one**, made **explicit in 1976**. **Articles:** 14, 15, 16, 27, 28, 29, 30 and 325.
- Influence of **Ashoka's Dhamma: Rock Edict 7** promoted **coexistence of religions**, **Rock Edict 12** prohibited **religious glorification and condemnation**.
- **Motilal Nehru Report (1928)**, **Karachi Resolution (1931)**, and even **Hindu Mahasabha draft (1944)** endorsed **no state religion**. In **1949**, a proposal to begin the **Preamble with "God"** was **defeated by 17 votes**.

Comparative Global Models

- Unlike **France's strict separation** or the **U.S. non-establishment**, Indian secularism balances **religious autonomy** with **state neutrality**. It prevents **domination of any religion** while ensuring **freedom of all faiths**.
- **England: Anglican Church** official, but **equality maintained**.
- **Pakistan: Islam state religion**, but **minorities' rights guaranteed** (Articles 2, 36).
- **Sri Lanka: Buddhism** given foremost place (**Article 9**), but **Article 10 ensures freedom of religion**.

Different Constitutional Drafts

Why in news: India's journey to becoming a republic was shaped by **five major constitutional drafts (1895–1948)** that offered diverse visions on **sovereignty, governance, rights, and identity**, influencing the final 1950 Constitution.

- **Constitution of India Bill, 1895:** Linked to nationalists like **Bal Gangadhar Tilak**; proposed **representative government, separation of powers, and civil liberties**. Focused on dominion status rather than complete independence.
- **M.N. Roy's Constitution of Free India (1944):** Proposed a **federal India** with linguistic provinces, **right to revolt**, enforceable socio-economic rights, and **citizens' committees** for participatory governance.
- **Constitution of the Hindusthan Free State Act (1944):** Pushed for **cultural unification** with a **unitary state**, but surprisingly guaranteed **religious freedom** and non-discrimination while emphasising **national identity**.
- **Gandhian Constitution for Free India (1946):** Drafted by **Shriman Narayan Agarwal**; rooted in Gandhi's ideals of **non-violence, trusteeship, and gram swaraj**. Advocated **village republics** and moral self-regulation, yet included the **right to bear arms**, reflecting tensions between pacifism and pragmatism.
- **Socialist Party Draft Constitution (1948):** Led by **Jayaprakash Narayan**; inspired by **Marxist and socialist thought**. Proposed **nationalisation of industries, workers' control, land reforms, and class-based unicameral legislature**.

- (Sir B.N. Rau, a distinguished civil servant and jurist, was **appointed Constitutional Adviser in July 1946**. Rau had earlier helped in drafting the **Government of India Act of 1935** in British India. He **had no seat in the Constituent Assembly and no political mandate**).

Nominations to J&K Assembly

Why in news: L-G can nominate **5 members** to Assembly **without aid and advice** of the elected government.

- Nominations are a **statutory function**, exercised in **discretion** based on **J&K Reorganisation Act, 2019** (amended 2023): 2 Kashmiri migrants (including 1 woman), 1 from PoJK community, 2 women, if under-represented.
- The issue revolves around **"aid and advice"** → whether the L-G is bound by the elected Council of Ministers in making nominations. **2023 amendments** added **Sections 15A & 15B** to the J&K Reorganisation Act.
- **High Court is examining** Sections **15, 15A, 15B** → Allow nomination **beyond sanctioned Assembly strength**.
- **Constitution allows nominated members:**
 - **Rajya Sabha:** 12 by **President** (on Union Cabinet's advice).
 - **Legislative Councils:** 1/6th by **Governor** (on State Cabinet's advice).
 - **Lok Sabha & State Assemblies:** Anglo-Indian nominations **discontinued in 2020**.
- **Union Territories Precedents:**
 - **Delhi:** 70 elected MLAs, **no nominated** members.
 - **Puducherry:** 30 elected + **3 nominated** by Centre.
 - **J&K UT:** 90 elected + **5 nominated** by L-G under 2019 Act (amended 2023).

All India Speakers' Conference

Why in news: At the **All India Speakers' Conference**, **Union Home Minister** highlighted the crisis of **frequent disruptions**.

- All India Speakers' Conference**

 - 2025 conference, the 85th All India Presiding Officers' Conference, was held in August 2025 in New Delhi.
 - **Key Theme:** The event marked the 100th anniversary of Vithalbhai Patel's election as the first Indian Speaker.
 - **Attendees:** Included speakers and deputy speakers from state legislative assemblies and councils, as well as other national and state dignitaries.

Vithalbhai Patel

 - **Swaraj Party:** Co-founded it with C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru to use legislatures for nationalist goals.
 - Created the independent Parliament Secretariat and introduced security/procedural reforms, vital for understanding Indian Parliament.
 - Advocated for free and compulsory education in Bombay Presidency.

LARRDIS

Why in news: Legislating on issues like **economic reforms, climate change, technology** requires **world-class research & referral services**. **Parliament Library and Parliament Library and Reference, Research, Documentation and Information Service (LARRDIS)** are efficient but underutilised, providing digitised data but limited in-depth research.

- MPs mostly rely on **political aides, party notes, or LAMP fellows**, leading to **partisan or shallow debates**.
- **Egypt, Sweden, Benin, and Colombia** embed researchers within Parliament, enhancing **technical paper quality**.

LS Members Attendance

Why in news: From upcoming **Monsoon Session of Parliament**, **Lok Sabha members** must mark their **attendance from their seats** using a **multimedia device (MMD)**. Previously, MPs marked attendance by **signing a register in the lobby**.

- The **register will remain available temporarily** to allow MPs to **familiarise themselves** with the new **electronic system**. MPs can mark attendance at their **division seats** using their **I-card, biometrics (thumb impression)**, or **by entering a PIN**. The **Rajya Sabha** is also likely to **adopt the system soon**.
- It is **compulsory for MPs** to mark attendance in order to **receive daily allowances** during sessions.
- **Ministers and the Leader of the Opposition** are **exempt** from signing in their attendance.

Vice-president Resignation

Why in news: **Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar** resigned citing **health reasons** under **Article 67(a)** of the Constitution.

- His resignation letter was addressed to the **President of India**.
- Unlike removal, process under 67(a) doesn't require parliamentary action.
- He was elected as the **14th Vice-President in 2022** and had **two years remaining** in his term. This is the **first resignation of a Vice-President** in such a manner; earlier resignations were only to contest the **President's post**.

Constitutional Provisions for Election of Vice-President

- In case of **death, removal, or resignation**, the **Election Commission** must hold a **fresh election immediately**; meanwhile, the **Deputy Chairman** presides over Rajya Sabha proceedings.
- **Nomination rules** under the **Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections Rules, 1974:**
 - Nomination paper must have **20 proposers** and **20 seconders**.

- Paper is submitted between **11 a.m. and 3 p.m.** to the **Returning Officer** by the candidate or proposer/seconded. **Security deposit** is ₹15,000.
- By convention, the **Secretary-General of Lok Sabha or Rajya Sabha** serves as **Returning Officer**, by rotation.
- Two senior officers are appointed as **Assistant Returning Officers**.

Election Process and Qualifications

- Election conducted under **Article 66(1)** through **proportional representation** by **single transferable vote** and **secret ballot**. Unlike the Presidential election, every vote has **equal value (one)**.
- Vice-President is elected by an **Electoral College** comprising **Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha members** (both elected and nominated). **State legislatures do not participate** in the **Vice-Presidential election**.
- Members of the Electoral College can vote **freely** using a **secret ballot** and are **not bound by party whip**.
- Election Commission of India is responsible for conducting the election.
- The **single transferable vote system** allows electors to give **multiple preferences**.
- Winning candidate must secure **50% of valid votes plus one**. If no one crosses the **quota in the first round**, the **candidate with the fewest first-preference votes** is **eliminated**, and their votes are **transferred based on second preferences**. The process continues **until one candidate crosses the quota**.
- **Eligibility criteria:** Must be a **citizen of India**, Must be at least **35 years old**, Must be qualified to be elected to the **Rajya Sabha**, Must be a **registered elector** in any parliamentary constituency, Must not hold any **office of profit** under Union or State governments (exceptions: **President, Governor, Minister**).
- The election is governed by the **Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections Act, 1952** and the **Elections Rules, 1974**. Conduct of election falls under the EC's powers as per **Article 324** of the Constitution.

Removal Process (In news last year)

- 60 MPs submitted a notice to the Rajya Sabha Secretary-General (50+ needed) seeking **removal of Vice-President**.
- The Vice President draws powers under **Article 63** of the Constitution. **Article 64** designates the Vice President as the **ex-officio Chairman of Rajya Sabha**. The process for removal is detailed in **Article 67(b)**.
 - **Term** is of five years unless the Vice President resigns by submitting a letter to the **President**.
 - **Removal:** A resolution passed by a **majority of Rajya Sabha members** and agreed to by the **Lok Sabha**.
 - **Notice Period:** At least **14 days' notice** is required before moving such a resolution.
 - **Approval:** The resolution must pass with a **simple majority** in both Houses.
 - **Resolution** does **not lapse** when session is prorogued. It can be taken up in **next session** or **special session**.
- As per **Article 92**, the **Chairman or Deputy Chairman cannot preside** over proceedings when a resolution for their removal is under consideration. The Chairperson can **speak** and **participate** in proceedings. The Chairperson is **barred from voting** on the resolution or any matter during the proceedings.
- The motion must first be **accepted** by the **Deputy Chairperson** for these provisions to apply. Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha **rejected** no-confidence motion & emphasized that NCM requires at least **14 days' prior notice**

CJI Appointment

Why in news: Justice Gavai was sworn in as the 52nd CJI. (Justice Surya Kant 53rd).

About CJI appointment process:

- **Authority:** The **President of India** appoints the CJI under **Article 124(2)** of the Constitution.
- **Seniority Convention:** The **senior-most judge** of the SC is recommended, based on **service length** (not age).
- **Recommendation:** The **outgoing CJI** traditionally recommends the successor to the **Union Law Minister**.
- **Government's Role:** **Law Minister** forwards the recommendation to PM, who advises the **President**.
- **Consultation:** If there are doubts over **fitness** of senior-most judge, other **SC judges** are consulted under **124(2)**.
- **Eligibility Criteria:** Candidate must be an **Indian citizen** and have served as **HC judge for 5 years**, or **advocate for 10 years**, or be a **distinguished jurist** as per the **President's opinion**.
- **Memorandum of Procedure:** The process is guided by the **MoP** for **transparency** and **consistency**.
- **Oath:** The new CJI takes the **oath of office** administered by the **President**.
- **Tenure:** The CJI remains in office until the age of **65 years**.
- **Removal:** By the **President** after **Parliament** presents an **address** with a **special majority** in both Houses.

Contempt of Court

Why in news: SC ruled that **no law passed by Parliament or State legislature can amount to contempt of court**.

- The plea alleged **non-compliance** by the **Chhattisgarh government** with the Court's **2011 directions** to stop support to **vigilante groups like Salwa Judum** and disarm **Special Police Officers (SPOs)**.
- Petitioners claimed **Chhattisgarh Auxiliary Armed Police Force Act, 2011**, enacted after the Court's order, **legalised existing SPOs**, thereby violating the earlier judgment.
- The Court stated that **enactment of a law after its order does not amount to contempt**, unless declared **unconstitutional** by a competent court. It emphasized that **State legislatures have plenary powers**.
- Court urged both **State and Union** to take **coordinated steps for peace and rehabilitation** in violence-affected regions. Under **Article 315**, it is the **duty of both governments** to ensure peace and restore normalcy.

● **Contempt of Court** means **disobedience or disrespect** towards a **court**, undermining its **authority, dignity, and**

administration of justice. It is defined and regulated by the **Contempt of Courts Act, 1971.**

- **Civil Contempt** refers to **willful disobedience** of any **judgment, decree, order, or breach of court undertaking.** **Criminal Contempt** includes acts that **scandalize/lower authority of court, interfere with judicial proceedings, or obstruct justice.**
- **Punishment** can be **simple imprisonment up to 6 months, fine up to ₹2,000, or both.** Courts may **waive punishment** if a **satisfactory apology** is offered.
- **Article 129** gives SC power to punish for contempt. **Article 215** gives HCs power to punish for contempt.
- **2006 Amendment** allows **truth and good faith** as defense and restricts punishment to acts that **substantially interfere** with justice. **Fair and accurate reporting** of proceedings or **criticism** of judicial orders after case disposal is **not contempt.**

Dual Taxation on Broadcasting Services

Why in news: Centre can impose service tax on **broadcasting service** under **Finance Act, 1994.** Simultaneously, **States can levy entertainment tax on cable operators and entertainment providers,** based on their legislative powers.

- The Court clarified that **two different taxes on two aspects** of the same activity are **legally permissible** and **do not constitute overlapping taxation.** **Broadcasting** is taxed as a **service (Entry 97, Union List)** while **entertainment** is taxed as a **luxury (Entry 62, State List)** under the **Seventh Schedule.**
- The Court emphasized that the term **“entertainment”** includes **modern, private forms** like streaming via **mobiles, smartwatches,** and other **personal devices.**

UCC

Why in news: The **Uttarakhand Assembly** cleared **nine key Bills,** including **UCC (Amendment) Bill, 2025.**

- The **UCC (Amendment) Bill, 2025** increased **punishment for illegal live-in relationships** and **extended marriage registration period from six months to one year.**
- The **Minority Education Bill, 2025** extended **minority status benefits** to institutions run by **Sikhs, Jains, Christians, Parsis, and Buddhists.**
- Uttarakhand **became first Indian state to implement the UCC (Article 44, DPSP, not legally enforceable, aim to guide the government in policy-making) post-independence.** The UCC applies to all residents except STs and natives who have migrated out of the state. Currently, **Goa** is the only state in India with a UCC, retaining its common family law, known as the **Goa Civil Code,** after its liberation from Portuguese rule in 1961.

130th Constitutional Amendment Bill, 2025

Why in news: **PM, CM and Ministers** lose office if detained in custody for **30 consecutive days** in offences punishable with **5+ years imprisonment.** Re-entry to office permitted **only after release or acquittal.**

- Similar provisions extend to **J&K and Puducherry** through amendments to their governing laws.
- Bill requires **two-thirds majority in both Houses** for passage.

Key Provisions

- **Amendments to Articles 75** (Deals with the Council of Ministers at the Union level, including the Prime Minister), **164** (Concerns the Council of Ministers at the state level, including the Chief Minister), **239AA** (Provides special provisions for the Union Territory of Delhi, including its Council of Ministers and Chief Minister):
 - **Ministers** removed after 30 days in custody → either on **advice of PM/CM** or **automatically on 31st day.** **President,** on the **advice of the PM,** must **remove** the Minister from office by the **31st day of such custody.** If such advice is not given, the Minister shall **automatically cease** to hold office. For **State Ministers,** the **Governor** shall act on the **advice of the Chief Minister.**
 - In the case of the **Prime Minister or Chief Minister,** they must **resign by the 31st day** of detention, failing which they **automatically cease to hold office.**
- Applies to **all offences with punishment ≥5 years,** not just corruption/moral turpitude.
- The Bill does **not account for default bail** under **Section 167(2) CrPC** (now **Section 187 BNSS**), where an accused has a **right to bail** if investigation is not completed within **60–90 days.**
- **Special laws** such as: **PMLA, NDPS, and UAPA** impose **twin conditions for bail** absent in the CrPC/BNSS:
 - The accused must **prove they are not guilty.**
 - The accused must **prove they will not commit an offence while on bail.**

National Flag Day (22nd July)

- In 1904, **Sister Nivedita** proposed a red and yellow flag with **“Vande Mataram”** inscribed in Bengali.
- The **first tricolour (1906)** had blue, yellow, and red stripes with eight stars.
- Other versions: **Calcutta flag (1906), Berlin flag (1907)** by **Madam Bhikaji Cama,** and the **Home Rule flag (1917).**
- In 1947, after independence announcement, **Dr Rajendra Prasad** led a flag committee.
- Gandhi approved a modified **Pingali Venkayya** design, replacing the **charkha** with the **Ashoka Chakra.**

Adopted by Constituent Assembly on July 22, 1947

- **Tricolour** with **saffron, white, green**, and the **Ashoka Chakra** was officially adopted as the **National Flag**.
- **Saffron**: Courage, sacrifice, renunciation; **White**: Purity, truth, peace; **Green**: Fertility, growth, auspiciousness; **Blue Chakra**: Represents **movement and progress**, stressing that **stagnation leads to death**.

**Ashoka Chakra in Flag**

- **24 spokes** represent **24 hours** of the day and the **eternal wheel of law**.
- Inspired by **Dharma Chakra** in **Sarnath Lion Capital of Emperor Ashoka** (3rd century BC).

Flag Dimensions and Size

- Flag can vary in size but must maintain a **3:2 length to width ratio**, ensuring a **rectangular shape** only.

First Indian to Raise Flag on Foreign Soil

- **Madam Bhikaiji Cama** hoisted the Indian flag on **22 August 1907** in **Stuttgart, Germany** during a revolutionary meet.

Flag Code of India

- The **Flag Code of India, 2002** governs usage, display, and hoisting of the National Flag.
- Covers **private, public, and government** institutions. Came into **effect on January 26, 2002**.

Flag Manufacturing

- As per the **amendment on December 30, 2021**, the flag material can be **handspun, handwoven, or machine-made** using **cotton, polyester, wool, silk, or khadi bunting**.

National Flag on Vehicles

- The **National Flag** can only be flown on vehicles of the **President, Vice President, Prime Minister, Governor**, and select **dignitaries**. The flag must **not be used to cover the sides, back, or top** of any vehicle.

Right to Hoist the National Flag is a Fundamental Right

- In **2002**, the **Supreme Court** declared that hoisting the national flag is a **fundamental right under Article 19(1)(a)**, affirming its importance in the **freedom of expression**.

- As per **Flag Code of India, paragraph 2.2**, effective **January 26, 2002**, **any person, organisation, public or private, or educational institution (including scout camps)** may hoist the **Tricolour on all days and occasions**, ensuring it is done with **dignity and honour**.

Rules Regarding a Damaged Flag

- Damaged or disheveled flags must **not be displayed**. The flag must always be in a **position of honour**, placed **distinctly and above all other flags or buntings**. No **object, garland, or emblem** should be placed **on or above the flagmast**. The flag must **not be used as a festoon, rosette, or decorative item**, nor should **ads be attached** to the flagpole. It should be **folded in a rectangle**, with **saffron band on top**.

Punishment for Disrespecting the Flag

- Under **Section 2 of Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971**, anyone who **burns, mutilates, defaces, defiles, disfigures, destroys, tramples, or brings contempt** to flag may face **up to 3 years jail, or fine, or both**.

Respectful Storage and Disposal of the Tricolour

- The flag should be **stored without allowing it to get dirty or damaged**. If damaged, it must be **destroyed privately** and **respectfully**, preferably **by burning** or any other method that maintains its **dignity**.
- **Paper flags** should not be discarded on the ground. The flag **must not touch the ground, floor, or water**.

Pingali Venkayya:

- The design of the **Indian tricolour** is largely attributed to **Pingali Venkayya**, an Indian **freedom fighter**.
- Venkayya was born in **Machilipatnam, Andhra Pradesh** in **1876**.
- He went to school in **Madras** and then to **Cambridge University**. He joined the **British Indian Army** and was in **South Africa** where he met **Mahatma Gandhi** and became his **disciple**.
- He published a **book of flags containing 30 different designs** in **1916** after returning to India.
- He wrote **letters to freedom fighters** including Mahatma Gandhi about his idea of having a **national flag**.
- He spoke about the national flag **idea at Congress meetings**.
- In **1921**, at a **meeting in Vijayawada**, Mahatma Gandhi and others **approved Venkayya's design**.
- The first design had **two bands—red and green—and a charkha**. On Mahatma Gandhi's insistence, a **white band was added**. The **red colour was later changed to saffron** and the **Ashok Chakra replaced the charkha**.
- Venkayya **passed away** in **1963**. In **2009**, a **stamp was issued** in his memory.

Seva Teerth

- The **new complex housing the Prime Minister's Office** in the **final stages of completion** will be called **Seva Teerth**. The complex was earlier known as the **'Executive Enclave'** under the **Central Vista Redevelopment project**.
- Besides the **PMO**, it will also house the offices of the **Cabinet Secretariat, National Security Council Secretariat, and India House**. **India House** will be a **venue for talks with visiting dignitaries**.

Constitutional and Non-constitutional Bodies**8th Central Pay Commission**

Why in news: The **Union Cabinet** has approved the **Terms of Reference (ToR)** for the **eighth CPC**, which will determine the **pay structure and retirement benefits of Union government employees**, including **defence personnel**.

- The **8th CPC** will comprise **one chairperson, one part-time member, and one member-secretary**, and is expected to **submit its recommendations within 18 months** of its constitution i.e. in April 2027 but will be effective retrospectively from January 1, 2026.
- **Justice Ranjana Prakash Desai (retd.)** has been appointed as the **Chairperson**. Other members include IIM Bangalore Professor Pulak Ghosh (Part-time Member) and Petroleum Secretary Pankaj Jain (Member-Secretary).
- The **CPC's recommendations** will directly affect around **50 lakh Central government employees**.
- While formulating its report, the Commission is required to **consider multiple economic and fiscal factors**, including:
 - The **current economic conditions** of the country.
 - **Fiscal prudence** and **sustainable expenditure**.
 - The need to **maintain adequate resources** for **developmental and welfare programmes**.
 - **Unfunded liabilities of non-contributory pensions**.
 - The **impact of pay revisions on State finances**.
 - **Existing emolument structure** of govt employees.
 - **Compare public and private sector pay structures**.
- The establishment of **8th Central Pay Commission** continues India's periodic review mechanism for government pay and pension reforms, following the **7th CPC**, whose recommendations were implemented in **2016**.
- The **compression ratio** (lowest to highest salary) was **1:12.5** in the 7th CPC when measured against the Apex Scale, though the ratio relative to the absolute highest salary of the Cabinet Secretary is 1:13.9. It is used to ensure pay equity while remaining competitive for high-level talent.
- **Pension bill** for **2025-26** is estimated at **₹2.76 lakh crore** out of the total revenue expenditure of **₹39.44 lakh crore**.
- It is not mandatory to set the commission every 10 years.
- It is an **executive body**, established by government resolution (administrative order) under its executive power, not a constitutional one, though it operates within the constitutional framework to advise on employee remuneration, making its **recommendations advisory**. It is a temporary commission set up periodically.

| Country | Public sector wage bill (% of GDP) | Public sector wage bill (% of total expenditure) | Public sector employment (% of total employment) |
|---------|------------------------------------|--|--|
| India | 5.48 | 17.70 | 8.5 |
| U.S. | 9.50 | 20.58 | 12.9 |
| U.K. | 10.20 | 20.29 | 29.0 |
| France | 13.37 | 21.43 | 31.5 |
| Germany | 8.51 | 16.46 | 22.4 |
| Brazil | 10.65 | 24.92 | 12.5 |

Source: World Bank - World Bureaucracy Indicators - 2021

CAG to Launch AI System

Why in news: **CAG** is developing a **LLM** powered by **AI** to help **auditors** improve audit analysis.

- The model will be **trained using previous inspection reports** to build analytical capability and enhance institutional learning. The LLM will assist auditors in analysing large datasets, generating documents such as inspection reports, and preparing comprehensive audit findings.
- The CAG has also developed a new **'Connect Portal'**, which will provide 10 lakh audit entities with a unified digital interface to respond directly to audit queries, observations, and inspection reports. Connect Portal aims to make the entire auditing process transparent and efficient.

CAG:

- CAG is a constitutional functionary appointed under Article 148 of the Constitution.
- **Audit of Expenditure:** It audits all expenditures from the Consolidated Funds of India and of each state and Union Territory to ensure money is spent legally and appropriately.
- **Audit of Receipts:** The CAG also audits all government receipts, such as revenue, to ensure rules are in place for effective collection and are being followed.
- **Audit of Govt Undertakings:** It audits government undertakings, including PSUs, to oversee their financial performance & compliance.
- Submits **reports** on Union accounts to President, who then lays them before Parliament, and reports on State accounts to Governor, who presents them to State Legislature, ensuring financial accountability to the legislature (PAC).

UPSC

Why in news: **UPSC** marked a **century of its establishment on October 1**, celebrating **100 years** of service to the nation as a guardian of **meritocracy** and fairness in governance.

- **Gol Act, 1919** first provided for such a body. In **1926**, **Public Service Commission** was set up, following **Lee Commission (1924)** recommendations to protect civil service from **political influences**. Headed by **Ross Barker**, it began with **limited powers** under colonial rule.

| Article | Subject |
|---------|---|
| 315 | Establishes Public Service Commissions for the Union (UPSC) and for the states (SPSC). |
| 316 | Covers the appointment and term of office for members of the commission. |
| 317 | Outlines the procedure for the removal and suspension of a member. |
| 318 | Grants the President the power to make regulations regarding the conditions of service for commission members and staff. |
| 319 | Prohibits members of the commission from holding certain offices after they cease to be members. |
| 320 | Specifies the functions of the Public Service Commissions, including conducting examinations, direct recruitment by selection, and advising the government on recruitment and disciplinary matters. |
| 321 | Provides the power to extend the functions of the commissions. |
| 322 | Deals with the expenses of the Public Service Commissions. |
| 323 | Concerns the reports of the Public Service Commissions. |

- **Gol Act, 1935** elevated it to the **Federal Public Service Commission**, giving **Indians a greater role** in administration.
- UPSC has launched a **new online application portal** and **face-recognition technology** to ensure **zero impersonation**.
- **PRATIBHA Setu** initiative provides **employment opportunities** for those reaching the interview stage but not in the final list. Future plans include using **digital technologies and AI** for **efficient and transparent functioning**.
- The current civil services exam structure traces back to the **Macaulay Report (1854)**, which introduced **selection by merit** and emphasized **transferability of academic talent to administration**. Post-Independence, the **Kothari Committee (1975)** recommended a **three-stage format: Prelims, Mains, and Interview**.
- (The Union Education Ministry has set up a panel headed by **Higher Education Secretary Vineet Joshi** to recommend ways to reduce student dependency on coaching centres). (**Civil Services Day - April 21**).

National Commission for Scheduled Castes

Why in news: **National Commission for Scheduled Castes** has issued **new guidelines** specifying conditions under which complaints may be **rejected or closed** — in some cases, **without a hearing**.

- To **address high pendency of cases** and to prevent **non-SC individuals** from misusing the complaint mechanism.
- The directive applies to all three wings of the Commission — **Service Safeguard Wing, Economic and Social Development Wing, and Atrocities and Protection of Civil Rights Wing**.
- Complaints may be **rejected** if they are **unsigned, improperly addressed, anonymous, or lack a self-declaration of SC status**. Will **not entertain complaints** that are already **decided or pending before courts**, or those merely seeking **implementation of court orders**. **Policy-related complaints** may also be rejected.
- NCSC allows **closure of atrocity-related complaints without a hearing** if the petitioner **withdraws the case**, is **satisfied with the action taken**, or the complaint **lacks contact information**.
- **General administrative or institutional grievances** will **not be entertained** unless they have a **specific SC context**.

About NCSC:

- **Constitutional Body (Art. 338):** Established by 89th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2003, which bifurcated the earlier NCSCST into **NCSC and NCST**.
- **Appointment & Tenure:** Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and other Members are **appointed by the President**; their conditions of service and tenure are also determined by the President (not fixed by the Constitution).
- **Powers — Civil Court Authority:** The Commission has powers of a **civil court** while investigating matters: summoning, requiring document production, receiving evidence, etc.
- **Monitoring Safeguards:** It investigates and monitors all **constitutional and legal safeguards** for SCs, including implementation of laws like the Protection of Civil Rights Act and SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act.
- **Reports:** Submits reports to **President**, who lays them before **Parliament** along with a memorandum of action taken.

National Commission for Minorities

Why in news: **Delhi High Court** sought a **response from the Union government** on long-pending **vacancies in NCM**.

- It works under the **Ministry of Minority Affairs** and has **quasi-judicial powers**, should have **7 members**, including the **Chairperson** and the **Vice-Chairperson**. 5 Members, including Chair, shall be from amongst minority communities.
- The **National Commission for Minorities Act, 1992** mandates the appointment of **one member from each of the six minority communities — Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, Parsi, and Jain**.
- **Statutory Body:** NCM is **not** a Constitutional body; it is a **statutory body** created under the **NCM Act, 1992**.
- **Notified Minorities:** The Central Government (not the Commission) notifies minority communities. Currently notified: **Muslims, Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Zoroastrians (Parsis), and Jains (latest, 2014)**.
- **Appointment:** They are nominated by Central Government from amongst persons of eminence, ability and integrity (not the President). **Term:** Each Member holds office for a period of 3 years from date of entering the office.

- **Nature of Powers:** Unlike NCSC/NCST, **NCM does not have civil court powers** by default. It can inquire and recommend but its recommendations are **advisory**, not binding.

CBI

Why in news: The **CBI** is a central agency governed by the **Delhi Special Police Establishment Act, 1946**, tracing its origins to the **Special Police Establishment formed in 1941** to weed out corruption in war-time procurements.

- **Premier investigative body** probing crimes with **inter-State and national ramifications**.
- The Supreme Court has a **well-developed jurisprudence** imposing **self-restraint** on the exercise of the power to order a **CBI probe** under **Article 32** or **Article 226**.
- Circumstances requiring judicial transfer of investigation typically include **systemic failure**, involvement of **high-ranking State officials or politically influential persons**, or **reasonable doubt** about the neutrality of **police** & requires **sufficient material** showing a **prima facie need**, not merely allegations in pleadings.
- **Public order (Entry 1)** and **police (Entry 2)** are **State subjects**, and that investigation is primarily the **responsibility of the State Police**.

About CBI

- Established by an **executive order** (resolution) by the **MHA** in 1963, absorbing the earlier Special Police Establishment.
- It followed from recommendations of the Santhanam Committee on Prevention of Corruption.
- Its **authority to investigate** comes from the DSPE Act, 1946, not a separate Act of Parliament.
- It is an **attached office** to the DoPT under operates under Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions.
- CBI's power source is an existing DSPE Act, 1946 that it was brought under, but the Act itself didn't create the CBI as a new statutory entity.

Lokpal

Why in news: **Complaints received by Lokpal declined sharply** from a **peak of 2,469 in 2022–23** to **233 in 2025–26**.

- The **Lokpal**, India's **anti-corruption ombudsman**, has **jurisdiction to inquire into corruption allegations** against the **Prime Minister, Union Ministers, and government officials**.
- A large number of **complaints are being dismissed on technicalities**, such as **format or procedural errors**.
- The **Lokpal has not uploaded any annual reports since 2021–22**.
- The **Lokpal currently has seven members**, including its **Chairperson**, against a **sanctioned strength of eight members**.

Related News:

- SC shifted a **suo motu case** on **Lokpal's jurisdiction over High Court judges** to another Bench. The **Lokpal concluded** that **High Court judges are "public servants"** under the **Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013**.
- The **Lokpal assumed jurisdiction** to inquire or investigate complaints against **High Court judges** on **constitutional and legislative history**. It cited that **High Courts were constituted** under **British parliamentary Acts** — the **Indian High Courts Act, 1861**, and the **Government of India Act, 1935**, and **Letters Patent**.
- The **Lokpal rejected the claim** that High Court judges were outside its scope, calling it **"too naive"**.
- **Lokpal cited Clause (f) of Section 14(1)** of the **2013 Act** to justify its jurisdiction over **HC judges** arguing that since **HCs are established by Acts of Parliament**, their judges qualify as **"public servants"** under **Lokpal Act**. **SC has stayed this order**, emphasizing that all **judges, including High Court judges, are appointed under the Constitution**. The Court held that judges are **immune from Lokpal's jurisdiction** pending further **judicial review**.

About:

- Headed by former Supreme Court judge. It was established under the **Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013**, enacted after the **Jan Lokpal movement** led by **Anna Hazare in 2010**. India got its **first Lokpal in 2019**.
- Under the 2013 Act, the Lokpal consists of a **chairperson** and **members not exceeding eight**, with **50% judicial members**. Not less than **50% of the Lokpal members** must be from **SCs, STs, OBCs, minorities, and women**.
- Members are appointed by **President** on recommendation of a **Selection Committee** comprising **PM, Speaker of Lok Sabha, Leader of Opposition/ largest opposition party leader, Chief Justice of India, and an eminent jurist**.
- For states, Act mandates that **every State shall establish a Lokayukta** within one year of the Act's commencement.
- **Section 11** requires the Lokpal to constitute an **Inquiry Wing**, headed by a **Director of Inquiry** (not below Joint Secretary rank), appointed by the Central Government.
- The Lokpal also has a **Prosecution Wing**, headed by the **Director of Prosecution**, for prosecuting public servants.
- Lokpal's jurisdiction covers **public servants**, including **PM, ministers, MPs, and Groups A, B, C and D central government employees**. Even **Lokpal members themselves** fall under the definition of public servants.
- Has **superintendence over the CBI and CVC** in corruption cases.
- For allegations against the **Prime Minister**, Lokpal cannot inquire if they relate to **international relations, external/internal security, public order, atomic energy, or space**.
- Complaints against the Prime Minister cannot be probed unless **the full bench considers the inquiry** and **at least 2/3rd members approve**. Such an inquiry, if conducted, must be held **in camera**, and if dismissed, records must **not be published or shared**.

Lokpal – NPC

- **Delhi HC quashed proceedings** initiated by the **Lokpal of India** against **Defence Secretary**, in a case related to alleged irregularities in promotions at the National Productivity Council.
 - The **Lokpal acted beyond its jurisdiction**, as the **Lokpal and Lokayuktas Act, 2013** requires complaints to involve **allegations of corruption or offences under the Prevention of Corruption Act**.
- **National Productivity Council (NPC)**, established in 1958, is an autonomous tripartite organisation under the DPIIT, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, with equal representation from government, industry and labour.
 - The **mandate** of NPC is productivity enhancement through consultancy, training, research, seminars, awards, and data dissemination across industry, services and agriculture.
 - NPC represents **India** in **Asian Productivity Organization**, established in 1961 in **Tokyo**. APO is an **intergovernmental body** with **21 member countries**, including **India** as a **founding member**, to boost productivity through regional cooperation. It operates 13 Regional Directorates, the Dr. Ambedkar Institute of Productivity, Chennai, and Local Productivity Councils across the country. **India** has formally assumed the **Chairmanship of the APO for 2025–26**.
 - **Key functions** include energy efficiency audits, skill development, lean manufacturing, quality management, scheme monitoring, and policy advisory as a think tank for Viksit Bharat productivity goals.

Central Information Commission

Why in news: President administered the **oath of office** to former **IAS officer Raj Kumar Goyal** as the **Chief Information Commissioner** of the **CIC**. He took charge and administered the **oath of office** to **eight new Information Commissioners** in the presence of **two incumbent ICs**.

- The **Central Information Commission** now has a **full panel** for the **first time in nine years**.

Appointment Process:

- CIC comprises **1 Chief Information Commissioner** and **up to 10 Information Commissioners**.
- **Appointed by President** based on recommendations of Selection committee including **PM (Chairperson)**, **Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha (or leader of single largest opposition party)** & **Cabinet Minister nominated by the PM**.
- **Candidates** must be **persons of eminence in public life** with **expertise in law, science and technology, social service, management, journalism, mass media, administration, or governance**.
- **Ineligible** if they are **MP/State legislatures**, **hold office of profit**, have **political affiliations**, or **engage in business/profession**.
- **Tenure** is as prescribed by the **Centre** or until **age 65**, whichever is earlier, following the **RTI Amendment Act, 2019**.
- **Powers – Civil Court Authority:** While inquiring into complaints, the Commission has powers of a **civil court:** summoning, requiring documents, examining witnesses, etc.
- **Jurisdiction & Binding Nature:** CIC can order disclosure of information from **public authorities** under the Central Government; its decisions are **binding**, but it cannot impose penalties except on **PIOs** (not on public authorities).

Fundamental Rights**Right to Digital Access**

Why in news: **Inclusive and meaningful digital access** to **e-governance and welfare delivery systems** is a part of the **fundamental right to life and liberty – Article 21**, the **Supreme Court** held in **Rajive Raturi vs Uoi (2024)**.

- **Bench** heard a **petition** highlighting the difficulties **people with disability** face in completing the **digital KYC process**.
- Court stated that **state has an obligation** to provide an **inclusive digital ecosystem** for the **marginalised, underprivileged, vulnerable, disabled, and historically excluded sections** of society.
- The **right to digital access** is an **instinctive component of the right to life and liberty**.
- **Preamble, Fundamental Rights and Directive Principles** mandate inclusive policy and infrastructure for PwDs. Citing **Articles 14, 15, 21, and 38**, the Court expanded the right to life to include **equal digital access** for **PwDs, rural populations, the elderly, the poor, and linguistic minorities**.
- **RPwD Act, 2016 Section 42** mandates **accessible audio, print, and electronic media**, and **universal-design principles** for everyday electronic goods.
- Under **PLMA**, KYC verification is **mandatory** for financial services like **banking, insurance, pensions, SIM access**.
- **RBI's 2016 Master Direction on KYC** introduced **Video-based Customer Identification Process (V-CIP)** requiring users to complete tasks like **OTP verification, facial capture, digital signature, reading codes** on screen.

Child Labour

Why in news: **World Day Against Child Labor** is observed on **June 12** every year under auspices of the **ILO**. It brings together **governments, employers, workers' organisations, and civil society** to work towards ending child labour. The theme for 2025 is "Progress is clear, but there's more to do: Let's speed up efforts!".

- **SDG Target 8.7** calls on global community to take effective measures to end child labour in all its forms by **2025**.
- **160 million children** involved in child labour worldwide – almost **one among 10 children**. **Africa, Asia, and the Pacific regions** together account for almost **nine out of every 10 children** being in child labour.

- **COVID-19 pandemic** exacerbated the situation. **Census 2011** estimated **43.53 lakh children (5-14 years)** involved in child labour. Child labour prevalent in **beedi, carpet-weaving, and firework factories**.

Legal and Policy Measures in India

National Child Labour Project (NCLP)

- **Central Government scheme** launched in **1988**.
- Objective: **Rehabilitate child labourers** by **withdrawing children from hazardous work**.
- Provides **education, vocational training, and health care** through **special centres**.
- Operates across **hundreds of districts** to **mainstream rescued children** into **formal education**. Focuses on **raising community awareness** to **eliminate child labour**.
- Implementation by **District Project Societies** under **Ministry of Labour and Employment**.
- Now under **Samagra Shiksha**.

- India's approach to child labour involves constitutional provisions (**21A, 24, 39(e/f)**).
- **Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act (CLPRA), 1986**. **National Policy on Child Labour, 1987**: gradual approach with focus on rehabilitation.
- **National Child Labour Project** launched in high-incidence areas. **PENCiL Portal** (Platform for Effective Enforcement for No Child Labour) is technology-driven platform for monitoring and reporting child labour.
- CLPRA replaced by the **Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2016**:
 - Prohibited employment of children **below 14**.
 - Provisions for prohibition of **adolescents (14-18 years)** in scheduled hazardous occupations.

- **Right to Education** mandates free and compulsory education for children aged **6-14**.

Compulsory Early Childhood Care

- **Rajya Sabha** discussed a **private member's resolution** moved by **Sudha Murty** urging government to amend the Constitution to introduce **Article 21B** guaranteeing **free and compulsory early childhood care and education (ECCE)**.
- The proposed Article 21B covers nutrition, health services, and pre-primary learning for all children aged three to six years. Resolution also sought universal access to quality ECCE through strengthened Anganwadi services.
- **Article 21A** declares that State shall provide free and compulsory education to all children of the age of 6-14 years. It was not in the original Constitution; it was inserted by the **86th Amendment Act, 2002**.

Rights of Pedestrians

Why in news: SC stated that the **right to unobstructed and disabled-friendly footpaths** is guaranteed under **Article 21**.

- **SC directions** include: all **public roads must have footpaths** accessible to **persons with disabilities**, **Removal of encroachments** from footpaths is **mandatory**, **States and UTs** must **evolve policies** to ensure the **availability and maintenance of footpaths and footways**.

Personality Rights

Why in news: **Delhi HC** protected **personality rights of Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev** from being misused.

- Misuse of AI poses risks to **reputation, privacy, and economic interests** of public figures.
- **Personality rights** refer to an individual's right to **control unauthorized use of personal attributes** like **name, image, voice, likeness, and distinctive expressions**. These rights cover **both commercial and non-commercial aspects** but are **not expressly mentioned in any Indian statute**.
- **Right to Publicity:** Protects image and likeness from commercial exploitation, partially governed by **Trademarks Act, 1999** and **Copyright Act, 1957**. **Common law tort of "passing off" (Section 27)** protects goodwill of an unregistered mark from false endorsement or misrepresentation.
- **Right to Privacy:** Protects against **public representation of personality without permission**, broadly under **Article 21** and **Justice K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd.) Case, 2017**.
- **Posthumous Personality Rights in India:** No specific statutory recognition; **Emblems Act, 1950** prohibits commercial use of images of **Mahatma Gandhi and Prime Minister**. **Deepa Jayakumar v. AL Vijay (2019)**: Personality rights, reputation, or privacy enjoyed during a person's lifetime **end after death**.
- **Article 19(1)(a)** guarantees **freedom of speech**, including **criticism, satire, and parody** of public figures.
- Courts maintain that this right is **not absolute** and must be **balanced with individual dignity and autonomy**.

Narco Tests

Why in news: The **Supreme Court** recently **overturned the Patna High Court's order** allowing **narco-tests on all accused and witnesses**. The judgement was based on the **Supreme Court's observation in Selvi v. State of Karnataka (2010)**, which examined the **constitutional validity of narco-analysis, polygraph, and other similar tests**.

- Forced narco tests violate fundamental rights, particularly **Article 20(3)** (protection against self-incrimination) and **Article 21** (Right to Life, Privacy, and Personal Liberty).
- SC has ruled that such tests require **free, informed consent**, must have safeguards, and results are generally inadmissible as primary evidence, though they can lead to discovering other evidence.
- Involuntary tests infringe upon **mental privacy, bodily autonomy, and the right to a fair procedure** ("**Golden Triangle**" of **Articles 14, 19, 21**).

| | |
|------------------------|--|
| Polygraph Test: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operates on presumption that specific physiological responses are triggered on lying. Administered by attaching instruments like cardio-cuffs or sensitive electrodes to suspect. Measures blood pressure, galvanic skin response (a proxy for sweat), breathing and pulse rate. |
| Narco-analysis: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Injection of drug called sodium pentothal into accused, induces hypnotic or sedated state. Assumption is that a subject in such a state is likely to divulge information. Because the drug is thought to weaken the subject's resolve to lie, it is referred to as "truth serum." |
| Brain Mapping: | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Measures subject's neural activity, brainwaves, using electrodes attached to the face and neck. It operates on principle that the brain generates distinctive brainwaves when exposed to familiar stimuli, such as an image or a sound. |

Grounds of Arrest

- SC held that **arrested persons must be furnished with the grounds of arrest in writing** in a language they understand, irrespective of the nature of the offence or statute involved.
- In case of **non-compliance**, the **arrest and subsequent remand would be rendered illegal** and the **person would be set free**, the court directed.

Right to Vote

Why in news: **Natural rights** are inherent and inalienable; not directly enforceable by courts unless embodied in fundamental rights. **Fundamental rights** are in **Part III** of Constitution; enforceable under **Article 32**; prohibit state from violating equality and liberty. **Constitutional rights** exist **outside Part III** (e.g., right to property, free trade); enforceable under **Article 226** or relevant laws. **Statutory/legal rights** are granted through **ordinary laws** (e.g., rights under MGNREGA); enforceable through respective legal provisions.

Right to Vote under the Constitution and Law

- Article 326** provides for **universal adult franchise** for citizens aged 18 and above, subject to disqualifications.
- The **61st Constitutional Amendment (1989)** reduced the voting age from **21 to 18 years**.
- RP Act, 1950: Sec 16** disqualifies non-citizens. **Sec 19** requires the person to be **18 years** and **ordinarily resident** in a constituency. **Sec 62** grants right to vote to those on the electoral roll; excludes those disqualified or in prison.
- PUCL (2003):** Justice P.V. Reddy stated it is a **constitutional right**, even if not fundamental.
- Kuldip Nayar (2006)** and **Anoop Baranwal (2023)**: Reaffirmed **right to vote is a statutory right**.
- In **Kesavananda Bharati (1973)**, democracy was held part of the **basic structure**.
- Current Position:** The **right to vote is a statutory right**. (**Right to Vote is a constitutional right - UPSC 2017**)

Do you know?

- The **ECI** is a **permanent, independent, and constitutional authority** responsible for conducting **free and fair elections** in the Union and the States of India.
- The **ECI** is empowered to **supervise, oversee, and manage elections** to **Parliament, state legislatures**, and the offices of **President and Vice-President**.
- Since the **ECI** does not oversee elections to **state-level urban bodies** like **municipalities and panchayats**, there is a separate **State Election Commission**.
- Articles 324-329** empower the **EC** and provide insight into its **roles and functions**.
- Article 324:** The **superintendence, direction and control** of preparation of **electoral rolls** and conduct of all elections to **Parliament, State Legislatures**, and elections to the offices of **President and Vice-President**.
- Article 325:** No individual to be **excluded from electoral rolls** on the basis of **religion, race, caste, sex**.
- Article 326:** **Adult suffrage** shall be the **basis for elections** to the **House of the People** and **Legislative Assemblies**.
- Article 327:** **Parliament** may enact laws relating to **elections to Parliament** and **Legislative Assemblies**.
- Article 328:** A **state's Legislature** may by law make provisions regarding **elections to the State Legislature**.
- Article 329:** The article **prohibits courts** from becoming involved in **electoral matters**.

Right to Vote vs Freedom of Voting

- The **Centre** told the **Supreme Court** that the '**right to vote**' is a **statutory right**, while the '**freedom of voting**' is part of the **fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression**.
- The case concerns **Section 53(2) of the RPA** and **Rule 11 with Forms 21 and 21B** of the **Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961**. These provisions apply to **uncontested elections**, where the **number of candidates equals the number of available seats** in an **Assembly or Lok Sabha election**.
- Under **Section 53(2)**, **RO** must **declare all such candidates duly elected** without holding a poll. Declaration is made using **Form 21** (for general elections) or **Form 21B** (for by-elections).
- Petition argued that **declaring candidates elected without a poll** deprives citizens of the **right to express dissent** by voting for the **NOTA** option.

Kamalesan Case

- Lieutenant Samuel Kamalesan**, dismissed from the **Indian Army** for **refusing to enter the sanctum** of his regiment's **temple or gurdwara** during **mandatory parades**. **Delhi HC** upheld the dismissal and the **SC declined to interfere**.

- The Court relied on **military necessity, discipline**, and powers under **Article 33 of the Constitution**.
- The judgment treated the refusal as **disobedience of a lawful command** rather than **practice of personal faith**.
- Article 33 empowers Parliament to **restrict or abrogate the Fundamental Rights** of specific categories of personnel to ensure the proper discharge of their duties and the maintenance of discipline.
- This power belongs **exclusively to Parliament**; State Legislatures cannot make laws under Article 33.
- It **covers** members of the Armed Forces, Paramilitary forces, Police forces, Intelligence agencies, and personnel in telecommunication systems set up for these forces. It applies not just to soldiers but also to **"non-combatant"** employees of the forces, such as barbers, carpenters, cooks, and mechanics.
- Laws made under Article 33 **cannot be challenged** in any court on the ground that they violate any Fundamental Right.
- Parliament can also exclude Court Martials (military tribunals) from the **writ jurisdiction** of High Courts (Article 226) and the Supreme Court (Article 32) regarding Fundamental Rights.

SC on Social Media Conduct

Why in news: Directed **Union** to frame **guidelines** in consultation with **National Broadcasters and Digital Association**.

- **Commercialisation of free speech:** Influencers earn from content → responsibility required.
- **Types of speech recognised by SC:**
 - **Free speech** – protected under **Article 19(1)(a)**.
 - **Commercial speech** – allowed but regulated (e.g., **advertisements**).
 - **Prohibited speech** – restricted under **Article 19(2)** → **hate speech, obscenity, defamation**.
- **IT Rules, 2021** (Intermediary Guidelines & Digital Media Ethics Code): Already increased govt. control over online speech. **Amendments** allow govt. to act against platforms for **content flagged by state**.
- The **Constitution** allows restrictions on free speech only under **Article 19(2)**, such as sovereignty/integrity, security, public order, decency/morality, friendly relations, defamation, contempt of court, and incitement. **Past rulings** (e.g., **Shreya Singhal v. Union of India**) affirmed that speech which **offends, shocks, or disturbs** is still constitutionally protected, provided the restrictions are **reasonable**. **SC** has consistently held that **restrictions on free speech** cannot go beyond those explicitly mentioned in **Article 19(2)**.
- **SC** in **Ranveer Allahbadia vs Uoi (2025)** stated that self-styled bodies are insufficient to regulate online content, suggested **neutral autonomous regulators**, asked government to publish draft guidelines for public comments.
- **Section 67, Information Technology Act** and **Sections 294, 295, 296, BNS** penalise obscenity. **Sections 66, 66E, 66F, IT Act** deal with hacking, privacy violations, and cyber-terrorism.
- **IT (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021** impose prior restraint.

Obscenity

- The **Union government** has proposed **guidelines defining "obscenity" and other disallowed content online** under the **Information Technology Rules, 2021**, governing **social media, OTT platforms, and digital news platforms**.
- The proposal applies to **all digital content** and incorporates restrictions from the **Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995**.
- The proposed amendment would **explicitly define "obscene digital content"** and base the **Code of Ethics** on **Section 67 of the IT Act, 2000**, the **Cable Television Networks (Regulation) Act, 1995**, and the **Indian Penal Code**, precursor to the **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita**.
- For **OTT platforms**, the proposal requires compliance with the **Cinematograph Act, 1952**.

Defamation

Why in news: Judge voiced **exasperation** at the **increasing use of criminal defamation law**.

- In **Subramanian Swamy vs Uoi (2016)**, the court ruled **criminal defamation** as a **"reasonable restriction"** under **Article 19(1)(a)** (Right to Free Speech).
- **Types of Defamation:**
 - **Libel:** Defamatory statement that is written, published, or visible.
 - **Slander:** Defamatory statement that is spoken and causes loss of reputation.
- **Section 356 of BNS** defines defamation as making or publishing any imputation intending to harm, or knowing it will harm, a person's reputation.
- **Scope of Offence:** Applies to living individuals, the dead, companies, associations, and includes statements made ironically or by alternatives. Courts locate **reputation within Article 21**.

Sahyog Portal

Why in news: X announced it would **appeal Karnataka HC's decision** rejecting its **challenge to the Sahyog portal**.

- **Sahyog portal**, set up **last year**, allows **police and authorised agencies** to **send takedown notices to social media platforms**. **X stated** that the **Sahyog portal enables officers** to **order content removal** based only on **allegations of illegality, without judicial review or due process**.

- **Section 79 of IT Act** grants "safe harbor" protection to online intermediaries, protecting them from liability for third-party content if they act neutrally. Under **Section 79(3)(b)**, intermediaries lose this immunity if they fail to act expeditiously on notices regarding illegal content.
- **Platforms like X** could become **liable for user content** as if they were **publishers**. **X argued** that the **Sahyog portal** functions in a **similar way** to that **fact-checking regime** and that content regulation orders be issued only under **Section 69A of the IT Act, 2000**.

Sahyog Portal

- **Launched by MHA** to enhance collaboration between government agencies and social media intermediaries for easy compliance and safer cyberspace.
- It streamlines the reporting and removal of unlawful content and facilitates data requests from law enforcement under the **IT Act, 2000**.
- It **integrates authorized agencies** (like police) and intermediaries on a single platform, ensuring swift action against illegal digital activities.

Amendments

- **MeitY** will amend **social media takedown rules** to make officers sending notices more **"accountable"**.
- The new safeguards will be introduced through an amendment to the **Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021**.
- Under the new rules, the government **will give a reasoned intimation** whenever any such order is passed.
- Orders will be passed at a **senior level** — **Joint Secretary and above** for the Central government, and **Deputy Inspector-General** at the State level.
- The social media platform **X** had challenged the use of **Rule 3(1)(d)** as an unconstitutional and arbitrary method for police officers to issue **"censorship" orders**.

Boosting transparency

The amended rules on social media takedown notices seek to build clarity in government communication and reduce arbitrary or unclear takedown action. The amendment will be notified within a week and is expected to take effect from November 15

What is Rule 3(1)(d) of the Information Technology Rules, 2021?

This rule allows government officials to flag online content that may violate Indian laws or pose risks. When flagged under Rule 3(1)(d), social media companies lose 'safe harbour' protection, meaning they can be held legally responsible for the content — like publishers, not just intermediaries



ISTOCK PHOTO

Each notice must now:

- ✓ Clearly state it is a "warning", not a takedown order
- ✓ Explain why safe harbour does not apply
- ✓ Be issued only by authorised senior officers

What is changing?

Notices under these rules will now: Include a clear explanation ("reasoned intimation")

Be issued only by Joint Secretary & above (Central level) and Deputy Inspector General & above (State level)

Sanchar Saathi App

- **DoT** initially ordered smartphone manufacturers to **pre-install the Sanchar Saathi app** on new devices sold from **March 2026**. **Government revoked the order**.
- The original direction was issued after DoT gave itself new powers to regulate **Telecommunication Identifier User Entities (TIUE)** which allows DoT to issue orders to entities using phone numbers, **beyond telecom operators**.
- The app is intended to **verify the authenticity of IMEIs** used in mobile devices. The move was aimed at safeguarding citizens from buying **non-genuine handsets**.
- The app can be used to **report scam calls, identify SIM cards registered** in a person's name, and **remotely disable stolen phones**.
- The platform was first introduced as a **portal in 2023** and later expanded into an app.
- **Blocked or blacklisted IMEIs** can be checked using app. **Spoofed or tampered IMEIs** allow the same IMEI to function on multiple devices simultaneously, complicating enforcement. The initiative helped recover **50,000 lost or stolen devices in October**.
- **SIM-binding directions** were described as essential to plug a **security gap** exploited by **cybercriminals**. Accounts on **messaging and calling apps** continue to function even after SIMs are removed, deactivated, or moved abroad. This enables **anonymous scams, digital arrest frauds, and government-impersonation calls** using Indian numbers.

Secure system

The Government has issued a directive to mobile phone manufacturers as part of a crackdown on telecom scams

- The DoT order requires pre-installation of Sanchar Saathi app on all new phones
- Govt. says 50,000 lost phones are recovered per month due to the app
- For devices that are in the market, the app must be installed as part of an OS software update
- The app is used for blocking stolen phones, ensuring IMEI on device is genuine, reporting scam calls
- The move may face resistance from premium smartphone maker Apple, which has resisted similar moves by TRAI in the past
- The order comes after the DoT directed messaging platforms to perform 'SIM binding'



- **SIM binding** ensures that a user's account is disabled if the physical **SIM is removed**.
- The **K.S. Puttaswamy (2017) judgment** established that any state intrusion into privacy must satisfy the tests of **legality, necessity, and proportionality**.
- The government already possesses **less intrusive means** to verify device genuineness. **Sanchar Saathi web portals, SMS-based checks, and USSD codes** should suffice.
- DoT will mandate telecom operators to show **KYC-registered names** for **all incoming calls via Indian phone numbers**. A **trial** of the system is currently underway in **Haryana**. **Caller Name Presentation (CNAP)** will display the **registered name of the caller**, instead of labels like 'suspected' or 'suspicious'.
- **India already has a telecom spam and fraud reporting system** built around the **Sanchar Saathi and CEIR portals**, the **TRAI 'DND' app**, and the **1909 short code**.

- The **Reserve Bank of India** has long run **e-BAAT sessions** and other outreach programmes on safe digital banking, warning users to **not share PINs, passwords, and OTPs** and explaining **typical fraud scripts**. The '**RBI Kehta Hai**' campaign has taken these **messages to mass media and digital platforms**.

Freedom of Religion

Why in news: SC recently **reaffirmed that secularism is fundamental principle** and part of **basic structure of Constitution of India**. The Court's reiteration came in response to a **petition** challenging **invitation of Kannada writer Banu Mushtaq, a Muslim, to inaugurate Mysuru Dasara festival at Chamundeshwari Temple**.

- **Karnataka government** had invited **Banu Mushtaq, International Booker Prize-winning Kannada writer**, to inaugurate the **State-sponsored Mysuru Dasara festival**.
- The **petition filed** alleged that her participation **violated Articles 25 and 26**, which guarantee **freedom of religion**. **Bench dismissed the petition**, clarifying that the **Dasara festival is a State event**, not a **private religious ceremony**.
- **Right to practise and profess religion** cannot be read as a **right to restrict others** from participating in religious or cultural practices. Though **some places of worship still limit access**, such practices remain **legally debatable**.
- **Banu Mushtaq's short story collection Heart Lamp**, translated from Kannada to English by Deepa Bhasthi, won the **International Booker Prize 2025**. It marked the first time a Kannada title won **£50,000 prize — divided between author and translator**.

Preventive Detention

Why in news: SC in **Dhanya M. vs State of Kerala** set aside a **preventive detention order**.

- It clarified that **individual liberty** cannot be curtailed **lightly**, distinguishing **"public order"** from **"law and order"**.

Constitutional and Historical Background

- **Articles 22(3) – (7)** constitutionalised **preventive detention**, creating a space where **liberty, equality, and due process** often vanish. Provisions allow **detention without trial**, posing a serious threat to **fundamental rights**.
- Preventive detention traces back to the **Bengal Regulations of 1818**, used by the **British for colonial control**.
- The **Gol Act, 1935** empowered provincial legislatures to make **preventive detention laws for public order**.

Judicial Interpretation and Safeguards

- In **S.K. Nazneen**, the Court held that preventive detention is **unjustified** in mere **law and order** issues.
- **Rekha vs State of TN** declared preventive detention as an **exception to Article 21**, applicable in **rare cases**. **Banka Sneha (2021)** reiterated that preventive detention must meet **Article 21's test of fairness, justice, and reasonableness**.
- **Maneka Gandhi vs Union of India (1978)** held that **"procedure established by law"** must be **fair, just, and reasonable**, integrating **due process** into Indian law. The judgment established that **fundamental rights are interlinked**, reinforcing **Article 21** as a safeguard against **arbitrary detention**.
- **Article 22(4) Limits on Detention Period:** No person can be held under preventive detention for more than three months. Detention beyond three months is only allowed if an Advisory Board reports sufficient cause for continued detention. This board comprises persons qualified to be Judges of a High Court, ensuring judicial oversight.
- **Article 22(5) Rights of the Detenu:** The authority must communicate the grounds for detention to the person detained. Facts deemed prejudicial to public interest do not need to be disclosed. The detained person must be given the earliest opportunity to make a representation against the detention order.

UAPA Chargesheet

- The **chargesheet** must be filed **within the statutory period** prescribed under the **UAPA, 1967**. **Section 43D(7)** imposes a **statutory bar on bail** for a **non-Indian citizen** who has **entered the country illegally**, except in **exceptional circumstances**.
- Under **Section 43D(2)(a) of the UAPA**, the **investigation period** may be extended only up to **180 days**.

Citizenship

Detaining Non-citizens

Why in news: Under the **National Security Act, 1980** and the **Foreigners Act, 1946**, **non-citizens** can be detained.

- **Detention must be backed by judicial power** (**conviction, trial, preventive detention**) under **Article 22**. **Liberty deprivation** must be constrained by law and **judicial oversight**; **arbitrary detention is unconstitutional**.
- Assam CM announced implementation of the **1950 Act** to **push back foreigners into Bangladesh** based on **District Collectors' prima facie findings**. This action will be in **addition to the ongoing pushbacks** of people already **declared foreigners by Foreigners' Tribunals (FTs)**.
- CM cited the **2024 SC judgment** that upheld the **constitutional validity of Section 6A of the Citizenship Act**. Section 6A sets **March 24, 1971 as the cut-off date for citizenship in Assam**.
- The Supreme Court's judgment included a **direction to apply the Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act, 1950**.
- **FTs are quasi-judicial bodies** that give opinions on **whether a person is foreigner under the Foreigners Act, 1946**.
- In **1964**, the **FT Order** was passed by the Centre under **Section 3 of the Foreigners Act**.

- FTs handle cases based on **references from border police** and **individuals marked as D (Doubtful) voters** in electoral rolls. **Foreigners Act** places the **onus of proving citizenship on the person concerned**, not the state.
- **Immigrants (Expulsion from Assam) Act, 1950**
- It empowers the **Central Government** and **delegated local officers** to **expel immigrants from Assam**.
- Expulsion can be ordered if presence is considered **harmful to public interest** or the **rights of Scheduled Tribes**.

Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025

Why in news: MHA has notified the **Rules, Order, and Exemption Order** making the **Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025** operational. The law, passed in April 2025, seeks to **regulate all matters related to foreigners and immigration**.

- The Act **repeals** and replaces the **Passport (Entry into India) Act, 1920**, **Registration of Foreigners Act, 1939**, **Foreigners Act, 1946**, and **Immigration (Carriers' Liability) Act, 2000**.
- For the **first time**, the **Bureau of Immigration (BOI)** has been **legally designated** to examine **immigration fraud**, coordinate with States on **identification, deportation, or movement restriction** of foreigners, and **maintain an immigration database**.
- The Rules introduce **mandatory biometric recording** for **all foreigners**, earlier limited to select visa categories.
- **Educational institutions** must now report all **foreign students** to the **Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO)** and share their **semester-wise academic performance** and **conduct reports**.
- The definition of "undesirable foreigner" has been expanded to include **"illegal migrants."**
- The Rules specify the role of **immigration officers**, who will be officers **provided by the Intelligence Bureau (IB)**.

Immigration and Foreigners Order, 2025

- Order grants **FTs** — earlier limited to Assam — **powers of a First-Class Judicial Magistrate**. FTs can now **send persons to detention or holding centres** if they **fail to prove citizenship** and can **issue arrest warrants** for non-appearance.
- The **number of FT members** is now **capped at three**, and **ex-parte orders** can be reviewed within **30 days**.
- **Border guarding forces and the Coast Guard** to **intercept illegal migrants**, record their **biometrics**, and **push them back** through a **Central Government portal** — a practice earlier conducted via **executive orders**.
- Assam currently has **100 operational FTs**, expanded after the **National Register of Citizens (NRC) 2019** exercise, which excluded **19 lakh individuals** out of **3.29 crore applicants**.

Immigration and Foreigners (Exemption) Order, 2025

- The Order continues to **exempt citizens of Nepal, Bhutan, and Tibetans** from the Act's provisions.
- It now **exempts registered Sri Lankan Tamil nationals** who took shelter in India **up to January 9, 2015**, from the **passport or visa requirements** under Section 3 of the Act.
- It also exempts **undocumented minorities** — **Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, Christians** — from **Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan** who entered India **before December 31, 2024**, from **penal provisions and deportation**.
- MHA clarified that while such minorities can apply for **long-term visas (LTVs)** — a **precursor to citizenship** — this exemption **does not apply** to Sri Lankan Tamils.

2025 Order vs Assam Accord

- Plea challenged constitutionality of a provision allowing persecuted **religious minorities from Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Bangladesh** who entered India without valid documents before **December 31, 2024**, to stay in **Assam**.
- The plea challenges **Clause 3(I)(e)** of the **Immigration and Foreigners (Exemption) Order, 2025** as violative of the **Assam Accord** that required foreigners who entered Assam on or after **March 25, 1971** to be identified and deported.
- The intent of the Assam Accord was made explicit through the insertion of **Section 6A** into the **Citizenship Act, 1955**. **Section 6A** barred citizenship to immigrants who entered Assam after **March 25, 1971**.

CAA

Why in news: **185 displaced persons from Pakistan** were officially recognised as **Indian citizens** under the **Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA), 2019**.

- **Citizenship (Amendment) Rules, 2024** were notified by MHA in **2024**, enabling **CAA, 2019** implementation.
- Grants citizenship to **Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, Christians** from **Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan**.
- **Illegal Migrants:** Individuals entering without valid documents or overstaying their permitted period.
- **Cut-off Date:** Migrants entering on or before **December 31, 2014**, are eligible.
- **Residency Requirement:** Reduced from **11 years** to **6 years** for specified communities.
- **Legal Exemption:** No prosecution under **Foreigners Act, 1946**, or **Passport Act, 1920**.
- **Immigrant Status:** Applicants are not considered illegal migrants.

Proof of Citizenship

Why in news: The **Bombay High Court** rejected the **bail plea** accused of **illegally entering India from Bangladesh** and obtaining **forged Indian identity documents**. The court observed that the **Citizenship Act, 1955** is the controlling law on nationality, and documents like **Aadhaar, PAN, or voter ID** do not confer citizenship.

- The **Indian passport** is meant to be issued only to **Indian citizens**, and only **citizens** are supposed to be on the **electoral rolls** of the country. Holding an **Indian passport** or having one's name on the **electoral rolls** is **no proof of citizenship**, because people can **forge** these documents.

- **Citizenship Act, 1955**, as amended in **2004**, provides the **Central Government** to **compulsorily register every citizen** and issue a **National Identity Card** to citizens entered in the **NRC**, a subset of the **NPR**. The **NRC** is **mandated in the Act**, while the **NPR** is **authorised by rules** framed under the Act. The **NRC** is to include **only citizens**.
- The law is clear that the **onus of proving citizenship** lies on the **individual**, and not the **state**.
- The founders favoured **Jus Soli (Right of the Soil)**, though **blood lineage and ethnicity** were also included. Over time, **Jus Sanguinis (Right of Blood)** gained more prominence. **Citizenship by birth** in India has **multiple caveats**.
 - Persons born **before July 1, 1987** are eligible for **citizenship by birth** regardless of parents.
 - Persons born between **July 1, 1987 and December 2, 2004** are citizens only if **either parent is a citizen**.
 - Persons born on or after **December 3, 2004** require **one parent to be a citizen** and the **other not an illegal migrant**.
- A section of **identified illegal immigrants** qualify for citizenship under the **Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019**.

Federalism

Special Category Status – Andhra's Demand

Why in news: 14th Finance Commission's recommendation led to discontinuation of the 'special category' classification by the Centre.

- Earlier, this status offered **substantial Plan assistance**; now it mainly provides **soft-term external loans** (e.g., from World Bank). Therefore, the **status is diluted** and may not benefit Andhra Pradesh meaningfully today.
- Better solution is **Finance Commission-recommended package**, which carries **constitutional legitimacy**.

About Special Category Status

- **Introduction:** In **1969** based on recommendations of **Fifth Finance Commission**.
- **Aims:** To aid States disadvantaged in geographic, social, economic terms to achieve parity with developed.
- **Qualification:** SCS required factors such as majority tribal population, low population density, proximity to international borders, socio-economic backwardness, and inadequate State finances.
- Higher share of Central funds (**90% for SCS States** vs. 60%–80% for others), **Tax concessions** and Additional grants for development projects.
- Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu & Kashmir, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura, and Uttarakhand, with **Telangana recently added**, though the 14th FC altered SCS provisions, focusing on increased tax devolution instead of direct status for most new requests like Andhra Pradesh or Bihar's demands.

Federalism and Funds

Why in news: Kerala decided to **join PM SHRI** scheme (paused later), which aims to **upgrade and brand 14,500 schools across India** as **model institutions** aligned with **NEP 2020**.

- Kerala, along with **Tamil Nadu** and **West Bengal**, had **previously opposed the NEP-2020**, arguing that it **encroaches on the subject of school education**, which lies under the **Concurrent List** of the Constitution.
- **PM SHRI scheme** is designed to showcase **best practices in pedagogy, digital learning, and inclusivity**, while also integrating **NEP's components** such as **multidisciplinary learning, vocational education, experiential learning**.
- Reports suggest that **federal funds under the Samagra Shiksha scheme** had been **withheld**, leading to **salary arrears for teachers and non-teaching staff** in the State, possibly prompting Kerala's participation.
- By enrolling in the scheme, Kerala may be **required to comply with provisions of the NEP-2020**, including the **integration of Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS)** into the curriculum — one of the more **controversial aspects** of the policy for States opposing central interference in education.
- **Samagra Shiksha Scheme:** SSA is an **overarching** programme for **school education**, covering **pre-school to class XII**. It is a **CSS** launched by Ministry of Education in 2018. **Aim:** Bridge social-gender gaps, equity and inclusion in school education, promoting vocational education. **Funding:** It involves a 60:40 split in funding between Centre and most States. **Subsumes 3 Schemes:** Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan, Teacher Education.

Fair Share

Why in news: 16th Finance Commission will make recommendations for **financial devolution from April 1, 2026**. **22/28 States**, including BJP-ruled ones, have **demanding an increase** in the **divisible tax pool share** from **41% to 50%**.

- **Finance commission:** It is a constitutional body established under Article 280. It is constituted by the President of India every five years, or earlier if deemed necessary. The first commission was established in 1951.
- It consists of a chairman and 4 members. 16th Finance Commission, chaired by Arvind Panagariya.
- **Union government** has **reduced divisible pool** by increasing revenue through **non-shareable cesses & surcharges**. **Cesses and surcharges** rose from **12.8% (2015–20)** to **18.5% (2020–24)** of Centre's gross tax revenue.
- As a result, States' **effective share** in gross tax revenues dropped from **35% to 31%** over the same period.
- The current **horizontal devolution formula** heavily relies on **population and income distance**, seen as penalising **economically progressive Southern States**.
 - **Horizontal devolution** refers to the **distribution of states' share** from the **divisible tax pool** among different **states** using specific **criteria** to ensure **equity and fiscal balance**.
 - The formula uses multiple **weighted criteria: Income distance (45%), Population 2011 (15%), Area (15%), Forest &**

Ecology (10%), Demographic performance (12.5%), Tax & fiscal effort (2.5%).

- **Income distance** (gap between a state's per capita income and the richest state) has the **highest weight** to promote **fiscal equity** by allocating more funds to **economically weaker states**.
 - **Demographic performance** rewards **states with better population control efforts** (fertility rate reduction).
- Role of the State Finance Commission (SFC)**
- States must constitute an **SFC every five years**. **SFCs may recommend**:
 - A **share** for panchayats and municipalities in the State's revenue pool; Assignment of **revenue handles**
 - **Conditional and unconditional grants-in-aid**; Assignment of **civic functions and functionaries**
 - Local governments thus depend heavily on **Union fiscal transfers**. **Article 280(3)(bb) and (c)** mandates the **Union Finance Commission (UFC)** to recommend measures to **augment State finances** for local governments.

President's Rule

Why in news: Manipur has been under President's Rule since February 2025 due to security and political instability.

- **Article 356** allows the **President** to take over a State's governance if it **cannot be run per constitutional provisions**. It can be imposed **based on the Governor's report or otherwise**, including **Article 365** situations (failure to comply with Union directions). This is connected to the Union's duty under **Article 355** to protect states and ensure their constitutional functioning.
- A **proclamation** must be approved by **both Houses of Parliament within two months** by **simple majority**.
- Once approved, it continues for **six months**, extendable up to **three years** in total.
- No **uniform practice** exists for **dissolution of Assemblies** after imposition of President's Rule.
- Some **Governors accepted advice** of outgoing Chief Ministers with doubtful majority (e.g., Kerala 1970, Punjab 1971), others **refused** (e.g., Punjab 1967, U.P. 1968, M.P. 1969, Orissa 1971).
- **S.R. Bommai case (1994)** set limits:
 - Article 356 should apply only during **breakdown of constitutional machinery**, not mere law-and-order issues.
 - Its **use is subject to judicial review** and **should not be for political reasons**.
 - Assembly should be in **suspended animation** till **Parliament's approval**.
- **Wrongful use struck down** in cases of **Bihar (2005), Uttarakhand (2016), Arunachal Pradesh (2016)**.
- If no government commands majority, **fresh elections** are normally held, after which **President's Rule is revoked**.

National Emergency

Why in news: Fifty years of Emergency.

- The **declaration of Emergency** converts the federal structure into a **de facto unitary one**, giving the **Union complete control over state governments**.
- During Emergency, **Parliament may extend the Lok Sabha term by one year**, **make laws on State List subjects**, and **extend Union executive powers to the states**.
- The **President can modify**, with **parliamentary approval**, constitutional provisions on **allocation of financial resources** between the **Union and states**.
- Under **Article 352**, **President may proclaim emergency** if **security of India or any part** is threatened by **war, external aggression, or armed rebellion**.
- In **1975**, the ground used was **"internal disturbance"**, not armed rebellion. This was the **only instance of Emergency proclaimed due to "internal disturbance"**. Earlier emergencies, proclaimed in **1962 & 1971**, were on grounds of **war**.

Major Constitutional Amendments during Emergency:

- **38th Amendment (1975)**: Barred **judicial review of Emergency declarations**, making the **President's satisfaction 'final and conclusive'** under **Articles 352, 356, and 360**.
- **39th Amendment (1975)**: Changed the **method of deciding election disputes** for **President, Vice President, Prime Minister, and Speaker**, keeping these offices **effectively beyond judicial scrutiny**.
- **42nd Amendment (1976)**:
 - Gave **primacy to Directive Principles over Fundamental Rights** under **Article 31C**.
 - Curtailed powers of **Supreme Court and High Courts**:
 - **Article 32A** denied SC power to consider constitutional validity of **State laws** (later omitted by 43rd Amendment).
 - **Articles 131A & 226A** denied HC power to check constitutional validity of **Central laws**.
 - Extended **Lok Sabha term from 5 to 6 years**.
 - Gave **Parliament power to amend Constitution virtually unchecked** via **clauses 4 & 5 of Article 368**.
- During the Emergency, **civil liberties and fundamental rights were suspended** (ADM Jabalpur case), **media was censored**, and **mass arrests** occurred under laws like **MISA**.

Ladakh & J&K

Why in news: The SC sought a detailed response from the Centre on restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir.

- **Admission of State** → Political unit with organised government may be admitted (e.g., J&K).
- **Establishment of a State** → Through acquisition under **international law** (e.g., Goa, Sikkim).
- **Formation of a State** → Under **Article 3** by separation, unification, alteration of **boundaries/area/name**.

- The Union may diminish a State’s area but **can it convert a State into a Union Territory permanently?** This question was to be answered in SC but it wasn’t as Gol submitted that J&K’s statehood will be restored soon.
- **Explanation 1 to Article 3** clarifies that "State" in this context includes a Union Territory, meaning Parliament can carve a UT out of a State. **Article 4:** Laws made under Article 2 or 3 can include provisions for the amendment of the First and Fourth Schedules and incidental matters, enabling UT creation.
- The 2019 reorganisation of J&K into two Union Territories was enacted by the Parliament of India **without direct, prior consultation with the state's elected Legislative Assembly.** This was possible because the **State was under President’s Rule** at the time, and the powers of the state legislature were vested in the Parliament.

| Basis | Article 2 | Article 3 |
|-------------------|--|--|
| Subject | Admission or establishment of new States | Formation of new States, alteration of existing States |
| Nature | Deals with external addition to India | Deals with internal reorganisation of India |
| Territory | Territories not originally part of India | Territories within India |
| Examples | Admission of a foreign territory as a State (e.g., Sikkim initially) | Creation of Telangana, Jharkhand; alteration of state boundaries |
| Parliament | Parliament may prescribe terms & conditions of admission | Parliament may pass a law after President’s recommendation |
| State Legislature | No consultation required | State legislature is consulted (opinion not binding) |

Related

- India is a **Union of States (Article 1)**; States **cannot secede**. The term **Union** preserves unity and integrity; federal traits ensure **equitable distribution of resources**. India’s **federal character** is part of the **Basic Structure**.
- In **2023**, SC upheld abrogation of **Articles 370 & 35A** but directed **restoration of statehood & Assembly elections**.
- The **Darbar Move**, an annual practice of **shifting capitals between Srinagar and Jammu** introduced in **1872 by Maharaja Gulab Singh**, was discontinued by LG’s administration in **2021**. The **Cabinet has already cleared the proposal for Darbar Move**. The file was forwarded to **LG** who has given approval.

Leh Protest and Rising Unrest

- Key demands: **Statehood, Sixth Schedule inclusion, local job reservation, greater political representation**.
- Two coalitions lead the agitation: **Leh Apex Body (LAB)** and **Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA)**, united on a **four-point agenda** for constitutional safeguards and autonomy.
- **Domicile status determines eligibility for 5% gazetted govt vacancies**, amid fears of **job competition from outsiders**. **Reservation breakup** for Ladakh includes **80% for STs, 4% for those along LoC/LAC, 1% for SCs, 10% for EWS**.

Job Reservation: President **notified four new regulations** for **Ladakh**, covering:

- **85% reservation** in government jobs for resident Ladakhis.
- **5% quota** for non-local domiciles with 15 years of continuous stay since October 31, 2019.
- **10% quota** for EWS — total 95% reservation, among the highest in India.
- Tehsildars authorised to issue **domicile certificates**.
- **Official languages of Ladakh:** English, Hindi, Urdu, Bhoti, Purgi.
- One-third seats in **Leh Hill Council** reserved for women, on a rotational basis.
- After **abrogation of Article 370 and 35A in 2019**, locals demanded **restoration of protections** similar to those under **Article 35A** (land ownership and job reservations for residents).
- Only **job reservations** are resolved; **land protection & Sixth Schedule inclusion** remain open issues.

MHA offered Article 371 provisions to Ladakh

- **Article 371** deals with **“Temporary, Transitional and Special Provisions”** and exists under **Part XXI**. It is applicable in **12 States:** Nagaland, Assam, Manipur, Mizoram, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Arunachal Pradesh, Goa, Sikkim, and Karnataka.

- The **Sixth Schedule** contains provisions regarding the **administration of 10 tribal areas** in the states of **Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram**. Inclusion under the **Sixth Schedule** would allow **Ladakh** to create **Autonomous District Councils (ADCs)** and **Autonomous Regional Councils (ARCs)**.
- **Fifth Schedule** is applicable to **‘scheduled areas’**, declared **by President**. Guiding norms for declaring an area as a ‘scheduled area’ include preponderance of tribal populations, compactness of area, a viable administrative unit like a district or block, and economic backwardness. At present, **10 States** have such ‘scheduled areas.’

| | |
|--|--|
| Features and Powers of Fifth Schedule Areas | Features and Powers of Sixth Schedule Areas |
|--|--|

- | | |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Tribes Advisory Councils (TAC): Set up in specific states with max 20 members, 3/4th tribal MLAs. ● Role: TAC advises on welfare and advancement of Scheduled Tribes (STs). ● Governor's Powers: Can make land allotment and transfer regulations for STs, regulate money-lenders in scheduled areas, and modify parliamentary or state laws in these areas (with Central govt. approval). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Autonomous District Councils (ADCs): Formed in tribal areas; 30 members (up to 4 nominated by Governor, rest elected). ● Legislative Powers: Can make laws on land management, shifting cultivation, inheritance, marriage/divorce, and social customs (with Governor's approval). ● State Laws: Not applicable in tribal areas unless extended by ADCs. Administrative Functions: Can establish/manage primary schools, dispensaries, roads, waterways; assess/collect land revenue; impose trade and profession taxes; issue mineral extraction licenses. ● Judicial Powers: ADCs can set up village and district courts for disputes involving ST members within the district |
|---|--|

- 'Tribal areas' included within Sixth Schedule enjoy greater autonomy through ADC with more executive, legislative, judicial and financial powers than 'scheduled areas' of Fifth Schedule."
- The regulations made by Governor in 'scheduled areas' are subject to approval by Central government. Similarly, laws made by ADCs in 'tribal areas' are subject to approval of Governor of State.
- Apart from Fifth and Sixth Schedules, there are special provisions applicable to many of northeastern States under **Part XXI of the Constitution**. These are contained in Articles 371A (Nagaland), 371B (Assam), 371C (Manipur), 371F (Sikkim), 371G (Mizoram) and 371H (Arunachal Pradesh).
- They provide for: **Protection of local customary laws** and practices with respect to Nagaland and Mizoram; Mandates **committees of MLAs** from 'Tribal Areas' and 'Hill areas' in Assam and Manipur respectively; and Lists out **special responsibilities of Governors** of Sikkim and Arunachal for development/maintenance of law-order.
- There are numerous ST habitations across the country — both within the 10 States under Fifth Schedule and other States — that are not notified as 'scheduled areas.'

National Commission for Scheduled Tribes

- **Constitutional body** established in 2004 to safeguard the rights and welfare of STs.
- Created by the **89th Constitutional Amendment Act** of 2003, which split the previous combined commission for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes into two.
- **Composition:** The commission consists of a chairperson, a vice-chairperson, and three other members, all appointed by the President of India.
- **Advisory role:** It advises the government on matters related to the socio-economic development and welfare of STs. It addresses and investigates grievances of Scheduled Tribes.
- **Online complaint system:** The commission provides an online platform, NCSTGRAMS Network.

Leh Elected Representatives

- **Leh district in Ladakh** has **no elected representatives**, with the **five-year term of the Hill Council** coming to an end. **Elections to the local body** are expected to be **delayed** until **talks between civil society groups and the Centre** reach a **decisive conclusion**. **Ladakh MP** is currently the **only elected representative** from the region.
- The **Ladakh administration** cited the **ongoing process of creating new districts** and the resulting **need to redraw council boundaries and constituencies** as the main reason for the **delay in elections**.
- It also mentioned the need to **implement amendments to the Ladakh Autonomous Hill Development Councils (LAHDC) Act, 1997**, which provide for **one-third reservation for women** in the councils.
- **Hill Council** is empowered to take **decisions on 40 functions**, and each **councillor has a development fund of ₹1.5 crore**. Additionally, **four councillors are nominated by the Lieutenant-Governor**.

Zonal Councils

Why in news: 25th Central Zonal Council meeting held in **Varanasi**.

- **5 Zonal Councils** were created under **States Reorganisation Act, 1956** to resolve **inter-State and regional issues**.
 - The **five Zonal Councils** in India are **statutory advisory bodies** established under the **States Reorganisation Act, 1956**. Purpose is to promote **cooperation and coordination** among **states** in each **zone**.
 - The **five councils** are **Northern, Central, Eastern, Western, and Southern Zonal Councils**.
 - Each council comprises specific **states and union territories**.
 - The **Union Home Minister** is the **Chairman** of all Zonal Councils.
 - The **Chief Ministers of member states** act as **Vice-Chairmen** on a **rotational basis**.
 - Aim is to address **interstate issues** and foster **balanced regional development**.

The Chandigarh Question

- **Central government** has backed away from introducing a **Bill** to include **UT of Chandigarh** under **Article 240**.

- **Article 240** empowers the **President** to make **regulations** for the **peace, progress, and good governance** of certain **UTs** that do not have their **own legislatures**.
- Govt wanted "to **align Chandigarh** with other **UT without legislatures**". Such UTs include **Andaman and Nicobar, Lakshadweep, Dadra & Nagar Haveli & Daman and Diu, Puducherry** (legislative assembly is dissolved or suspended).
- **Claim over Chandigarh** – the joint capital of Punjab and Haryana has been an emotive issue since the Punjab Reorganisation Act, 1966. **Punjab Governor** serves as the **Administrator of Chandigarh**.
- In **1985**, the **Rajiv-Longowal Accord** reaffirmed that **Chandigarh would be transferred to Punjab**.

Selecting Head of Police

- In **Prakash Singh versus UoI (2006)**, the SC laid down detailed guidelines for the **selection of State DGPs/HoPF**.
- **The Court mandated that:** DGP of the State shall be selected by the State Government from amongst the three senior most officers of the department who have been empanelled for promotion to that rank by the UPSC, on the basis of their length of service, very good record, and range of experience for heading the police force.
- It further ruled that the **selected officer must be granted a minimum tenure of two years**, irrespective of their **date of superannuation**. **State governments** are required to send proposals to the UPSC at least three months before the anticipated vacancy of the DGP.

Inter-State Water Dispute

Goa vs Karnataka – Mahadayi River

Why in news: **Goa-Karnataka water-sharing dispute** over the Mahadayi river has lasted for **over two decades**.

- **Karnataka's diversion plans** will impact **Goa's Kalasa tributary**, which will affect **northern Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary**
- About Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary:**
- **Mhadei Wildlife Sanctuary** is located in **North Goa**, within the **Western Ghats**, covering **~208 sq. km**.
 - It is **habitat for Bengal tigers** and has been **recommended for declaration as a Tiger Reserve** under **WPA, 1972**.
 - Sanctuary includes Goa's **three highest peaks: Sonsogod (1027 m), Talavche Sada (812 m), and Vageri (725 m)**.
 - The **Mhadei River** flows through the sanctuary, with notable waterfalls such as **Vazra Sakla Falls** and **Virdi Falls**.
 - It is significant for **avian conservation**, serving as a **nesting ground for critically endangered Long-billed vultures**.
 - The sanctuary is also designated as an **International Bird Area (IBA)**.

Yettinahole, Kalasa-Banduri & Upper Bhadra Projects

Why in news: **Karnataka government** has petitioned the Centre for approval of **Yettinahole, Kalasa-Banduri, and Upper Bhadra projects**. The State also seeks **notification of the Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal-II award**.

- **Yettinahole project** in **Hassan district** faces a roadblock due to **forestland acquisition issues**. **Kalasa-Banduri project** is **opposed by neighbouring Goa**. Karnataka is also **seeking funds** to complete the **Upper Bhadra project**.
- The **Krishna tribunal-II award** is yet to be notified by the Centre, affecting irrigation in **north Karnataka**.

Yettinahole Integrated Drinking Water Project:

- Karnataka inaugurated the project to harness water from catchment area of **Nethravathi River**, which originates in **Western Ghats** to provide water to seven arid districts of southern Karnataka.
- Project will benefit **Tumakuru, Kolar, Chikkaballapur, Bengaluru Rural, Ramanagara, Hassan, Chikkamagaluru**.
- **Paramashivaiah report** expressed unhappiness with the way the project was being planned.
- **Nethravathi River: Origin:** **Bangrabalige valley, Yelaneeru Ghat** in Karnataka. It merges with **Kumaradhara River**, a left-bank tributary, at **Uppinangadi** before flowing to the **Arabian Sea**.

Kalasa-Banduri:

- To divert water from the Mahadayi River's tributaries, **Kalasa and Banduri**, to the **Malaprabha River** to address drinking water shortages in several of its northern districts. Dispute with **Goa and Maharashtra**.

Upper Bhadra:

- To provide irrigation and drinking water to drought-prone taluks by lifting water from the **Tunga and Bhadra rivers**.

SYL Canal

Why in news: SC **termed Punjab's denotification of SYL (Sutlej-Yamuna Link) canal land** as act of "**high-handedness**". It reminded Punjab of the **2017 apex court order** to maintain **status quo** on land and properties related to the canal.

- **Punjab passed a resolution** declaring it would not spare "**even a single drop of water**" from its share to **Haryana** and the **Sutlej and Beas waters solely belong to Punjab**.
- The resolution termed the **Dam Safety Act, 2021** as an **attack on the federal structure**, granting the **Centre control over rivers and dams** even within state borders & demanded the **immediate repeal of the Dam Safety Act**.
- In 2017, **Haryana had approached the Court** after Punjab attempted to **return project land to farmers**.
- **1981 water-sharing agreement** is between Punjab, Haryana, and Rajasthan. The **SYL canal originated from the 1981 agreement** to reallocate the **Ravi and Beas waters**.
- **SYL canal dispute began in 1996**, when **Haryana filed an original suit**, and the **SC ruled in its favour in 2002**. In 2004, the Court **reiterated its direction for Punjab to complete its portion**.

Do you know?

- **Article 262** deals with **disputes related to inter-State rivers or river valleys**. **Clause (1)** allows **Parliament to make laws for adjudicating disputes** over the **use, distribution, or control** of such waters. **Clause (2)** permits **Parliament to bar the jurisdiction** of the **Supreme Court and other courts** in these matters. Using these powers, **Parliament enacted the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956**.
- **Bhakra and Beas projects** were developed as a **joint venture** of undivided **Punjab and Rajasthan**.
- After the **reorganisation of Punjab in 1966**, **Bhakra Management Board** was constituted under **Section 79 of the Punjab Reorganisation Act, 1966**. **Bhakra Nangal project** was handed over to **Bhakra Management** in 1967.
- After completion of the **Beas Project** in 1976, the board was renamed **Bhakra Beas Management Board (BBMB)**.
- **BBMB regulates water and power supply** to **Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, Himachal, Delhi, and Chandigarh**. Its management includes a **Chairperson** and **two whole-time members: Member (Power)** from Punjab and **Member (Irrigation)** from Haryana. **Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh** have state-nominated representation in BBMB. New rules allow appointment of technically qualified members from **across India**, not just from **Punjab and Haryana**.

Andhra Pradesh's Godavari-Banakacherla Project

Why in news: **Telangana CM and Irrigation Minister** sought **Union Jal Shakti Ministry's intervention** to stall **Andhra Pradesh's Godavari-Banakacherla project**. **Telangana claims the project violates the 1980 Godavari Water Disputes Tribunal order and the AP Reorganisation Act, 2014**.

- The **Godavari-Banakacherla project** aims to **divert surplus floodwaters from the Godavari River** to drought-prone regions of **Andhra Pradesh**, especially **Rayalaseema, Prakasam, and Nellore**.
- **Implementation:** Diverting water from Godavari using the **Polavaram Project to the Krishna basin**, Transporting water to **Bollapalli Reservoir**, Channeling water to **Banakacherla** via a 31-km tunnel, canals, and lift systems.
- The **main tunnel** would pass through the **ecologically sensitive Nallamala forest and tiger reserve**.

Reservation**Sickle Cell**

Why in news: The Indian government's **2024 revised RPWD guidelines** excluded **Sickle Cell Disease (SCD)** from the **4% disability quota**, raising concerns.

- **RPWD Act, 2016** does **not include SCD** under the disability reservation quota, which covers **vision loss, hearing impairment, locomotor and intellectual disabilities**.
- Act focuses on **visible impairments**. **Episodic, invisible disabilities** like SCD (pain, fatigue, organ damage) severely disrupt **daily life, education, employment, healthcare**. **40% disability threshold** excludes many with impairments.

Supreme Court on Upward Mobility for PwDs

- The Court asked the Centre to clarify whether **meritorious PwDs** qualifying in the **unreserved category** are moved up to allow more PwDs to benefit from reservation.
- Failure to provide **upward movement** results in meritorious PwDs occupying **reserved seats**, denying opportunities to lower-scoring PwDs. This defeats the purpose of **reservation under Section 34** of RPWD Act.
- While backward-class candidates move to **unreserved seats**, this principle is not applied to PwDs.

Legal Provisions Under RPWD Act, 2016

- Reservation increased to **4%** for persons with **benchmark disabilities (over 40%)**.
- Within this, **1%** is reserved for **specific disability categories**.

Supreme Court Staff Reservations

Why in news: **SC has amended its staff recruitment rules** to include **reservation for OBCs**, in addition to **SCs and STs**.

- Extended reservation benefits to **physically challenged persons, ex-servicemen, and dependents of freedom fighters**.
- The amendment to **Rule 4A SC Officers and Servants Rules, 1961** was made under **Article 146(2) of the Constitution**.
- **OBC reservation** in Supreme Court staff recruitment comes **33 years after the Indira Sawhney judgment (1992)**, which upheld **27% reservation** for OBCs in Central services.

Nagaland Internal ST Quota Policy

Why in news: **Nagaland's five-decade-old reservation policy** is under debate with agitation to **end reservations** for **"backward tribes"** on one side and demand to **increase the quota** on the other.

- 5 **"advanced tribes"** – **Ao, Angami, Sumi, Lotha, Rengma** – resumed protests for a **review of the reservation policy**.
- The policy provides an **internal quota**, reserving **37% of posts** for **"backward tribes."**
- There are **14 recognized Naga tribes** and **Indigenous ST groups** like **Garo, Mikir, Kuki and Kachari** in Nagaland.
- **Reservation for STs** was first introduced in **1967** in **Nagaland State Services**.
- In **1977**, **internal reservations** were introduced: **25% of reserved vacancies** for **7 tribes** – **Konyak, Chakhesang, Sangtam, Phom, Chang, Yimchunger, Khamnungan** (now 37%).
- Outside **Kiphire**, **Sumis** are among the **5 non-BT communities** along with **Angamis, Aos, Lothas, and Rengmas**.

Reservation 50% Cap

Why in news: SC issued notice to **Union government** on a **petition seeking a “creamy layer” system** for **SCs and STs**.

- **Articles 15 & 16:** Guarantee **equality before law** and **equality of opportunity** in public employment and education. They empower the **State to make special provisions** for **socially and educationally backward classes, OBCs, SCs, and STs**.
- **Central Reservation (59.5%):** OBCs: 27%, SCs: 15%, STs: 7.5%, EWS: 10%.
- Reservation % **vary across States** based on demographics and policies.

Judicial Standpoints on Reservation

- **Balaji v. State of Mysore (1962):** Fixed an **upper ceiling of 50%**.
- **Indra Sawhney v. Union of India (1992):** Upheld **27% OBC reservation**. Reaffirmed **50% ceiling**, except in **extraordinary situations**. Introduced **‘creamy layer’ exclusion** for OBCs to prevent elite capture.
- **Janhit Abhiyan v. Union of India (2022):** Upheld **10% EWS reservation**, holding that **economic criteria** can justify affirmative action. Clarified that **50% ceiling applies only to backward classes**, not to new categories like EWS.
- **Rohini Commission findings (OBCs):** **97% of reserved jobs/seats** taken by **~25% of OBC castes**.
- **State of Punjab v. Davinder Singh (2024):** Urged the Centre to frame policies for **creamy layer exclusion** in SC/ST reservations. However, **Cabinet** reaffirmed that **creamy layer does not apply to SC/STs**.

Commissions

- The **first Backward Classes Commission (Kaka Saheb Kalelkar Commission, 1955)** identified **837 “most backward” castes** out of **2,399 Backward Castes in India**.
- The **Mungeri Lal Commission Report (1976)** played a key role in facilitating **reservations for backward castes in higher education and State government employment** in Bihar.

Women Reservation

- SC heard a petition challenging the provisions of **“Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam”** (Constitution 106th Amendment) granting **33% reservation for women** in the Lok Sabha and Assemblies.
- It mandates 33% reservation (one-third) of seats for women in the Lok Sabha, the State Legislative Assemblies, and the Legislative Assembly of the NCT of Delhi.
- Act includes **horizontal reservation**; applied across various categories. It ensures that women constitute a specific percentage within each group, rather than a separate, overarching category.
- **Article 15(3)** mandates State to take **affirmative action** and make **special provisions** for the empowerment of women.
- The **2023 law** would be implemented only after the **next Census** and the subsequent **delimitation exercise** to determine seats to be reserved for women. The **quota for women** in the Lok Sabha and Assemblies would continue for **15 years**, and **Parliament could later extend** the benefit period.

ST Status

Why in news: **Assam Cabinet** approved **GoM report** on granting **ST status to six communities**.

- The communities include **Koch-Rajbongshi, Matak, Moran, Chutia, Tai Ahom, and tea tribes (Adivasis)** of **Assam**.
- The protesters argued that extending ST status to additional communities would dilute the rights and constitutional safeguards of existing tribal groups. **5 Step Process:**
- **State Initiation:** Process originates from State or UT government, which recommends Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
- **RGI Scrutiny:** Registrar General of India examines the proposal based on five established criteria (e.g., primitive traits, distinctive culture, geographical isolation).
- **NCST Review:** If the RGI approves, NCST must provide its concurrence. **Cabinet:** Proposal goes to Union Cabinet for a final executive decision. **Parliamentary Act:** Finally, a Bill is introduced in Parliament to amend the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order, 1950. Once passed and signed by the **President**, the community is officially added.
- (Gorkhas demand **grant of ST status to 11 Gorkha sub-communities**, Gurung, Mangar, Khas, Yakha/Dewan, Rai, Newar, Bhujel, Sunuwar, Jogi, Thami, and Dhimal).

OBC Lists

- **National Commission for Backward Classes** has recommended **excluding 35 of 37 communities** added in **2014** from **West Bengal’s Central OBC list**, as disclosed by the **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment**.

The journey of reservations

A brief summary of important developments with respect to reservations at the central level

| Year | Key development |
|---------------|---|
| 1950 and 1951 | Commencement of the Constitution and the First Amendment – enabling provisions in Articles 15 and 16 for the advancement of OBCs, SCs and STs |
| 1982 | Reservations for SCs and STs fixed at 15% and 7.5% respectively in central educational institutions and public sector undertakings |
| 1990 | The introduction of 27% reservation for OBCs in central government employment based on the recommendation of the Mandal Commission |
| 2005 | Article 15(5) inserted by the 93rd constitutional amendment that enabled reservations for OBCs, SCs and STs in educational institutions, including private ones |
| 2019 | Articles 15(6) and 16(6) inserted by the 103rd constitutional amendment which enabled up to 10% reservation for the EWS among the unreserved category in educational institutions and public employment |

- These communities were earlier included based on findings of the **State Commission for Backward Classes**, citing **social, educational, and economic backwardness**, low representation in services, and historical caste-based discrimination, including parallels with SC/OBC groups in other States.
- The original inclusion aligned with broader assessments like the **Sachar Committee Report (2006)** and **Ranganath Mishra Committee Report (2007)**.
- Since **2022**, the NCBC reviewed West Bengal's OBC lists, arguing that **religion appeared to be the dominant criterion**, a view echoed by the **Calcutta High Court in 2024** (order later stayed by the **Supreme Court of India**).
- The **Supreme Court** has sought **quantifiable data** on backwardness and representation in public employment, questioning the adequacy of earlier evidence used for inclusion.
- Any change now requires **Parliamentary approval and Presidential notification** under the **Constitution (102nd) Amendment Act, 2018**, unlike 2014 when the executive could notify OBC lists directly.

Bills, Acts, Laws and Policies

Service Fee

Why in news: A **3-year legal battle** is ongoing in the **Delhi HC** over the **legitimacy of service charges** in restaurants. In **2022**, Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) issued **guidelines prohibiting default service charges**.

- **Tips are voluntary**, depending on **service quality**. **Service charges**, however, are **pre-fixed**, added **regardless of experience**. In **1958**, a government committee opposed forced tipping, calling it "**injurious to dignity**" and **harassment for customers**. In **2016**, the Ministry of Consumer Affairs stated **service charges are voluntary**.
- **2022 CCPA guidelines banned:** Automatic addition of service charges.
- **2024 Delhi HC ruled:** Service charges or tips must be voluntary, not compulsory or mandatory.

CCI Predatory Pricing Guidelines

Why in news: **Competition Commission of India** has notified **new definitions for costs** to determine whether **pricing is predatory**, as per the **Competition Act 2002**.

- **Predatory pricing** refers to selling **below cost** with the intent to **reduce competition and eliminate rivals**.
- The **new framework assumes cost as average variable cost (AVC)**, calculated by dividing **total variable cost by total output**. **Total variable cost** includes all production-related costs **excluding fixed costs and overheads**.
- **Cost Regulations 2025** provide a **sector-agnostic, cost-based framework** that is **flexible and adaptable** to various industries, including the **digital economy**. CCI **rejected sector-specific cost definitions** and chose to **assess costs on a case-by-case basis**.
- CCI was established under **Competition Act, 2002** under **Ministry of Corporate Affairs**, and became fully operational in **2009**. Prevents **anti-competitive agreements**, curbs **abuse of dominant position**, regulates **mergers & acquisitions**, ensures a **level playing field**. Safeguards **consumer interests**, sustains **free trade**, and promotes **innovation, competitive pricing, and quality**.
- Includes a **Chairperson and 6 members**, appointed by the **Central Govt**, with **diverse professional expertise**.

Draft Registration Bill

Why in news: **Ministry of Rural Development** has circulated the **draft Registration Bill, 2025**, to replace the **117-year-old Registration Act, 1908** that provides the legal framework for **registration of immovable property**. The **new Bill introduces provisions for online registration**, including **electronic presentation and admission of documents**.

- It enables **issuance of electronic registration certificates & digital maintenance of records**. Bill allows for **Aadhaar-based authentication** along with **alternative verification mechanisms** for those without or not using Aadhaar. The new law enables **electronic integration with other record-keeping systems**.
- It aims to make the **registration process more accessible and citizen-centric**, especially for **individuals and small businesses**. Bill promotes **plain language drafting, transparent procedures, simplification**.
- Since 2006, the administration of the Registration Act has been under the **Department of Land Resources, Ministry of Rural Development**. (Before 2006, it was under MHA).
- **Supreme Court** said that **property disputes account for 66% of civil litigation** in the country.
- **Registration procedures vary from State to State**, as land is a "**State subject**" under the Constitution.
- **Right to own immovable property includes the freedom to acquire, possess and dispose of it at will**.

Emblems Act

Why in news: **SC rejected plea** to include **V.D. Savarkar's name** under **Emblems and Names (Prevention of Improper Use) Act, 1950**. **About the Act:**

- **Objective:** Prevents improper use of **certain names and emblems** for trade, business, or professional purposes.
- Amended by **Central Govt via notification** in Gazette.
- **Prohibition:**
 - **No person** can use protected names/emblems for commercial/professional purposes.
 - **Prohibits** registration of companies, firms, trademarks, patents bearing protected names/emblems.

- **Penalty:** Contravention punishable with fine.

Examples in the Schedule

- **National symbols:** National Flag, Gol seal. **High offices:** President, PM, Rashtrapati Bhavan. **Freedom fighters/historical figures:** Mahatma Gandhi, Indira Gandhi, Chatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. **International organisations:** UN, WHO, Interpol. **Indian organisations:** Tuberculosis Association of India, St. John's Ambulance, Ramakrishna Math, Bharat Scouts & Guides, Auroville.
- **Recent additions:** 2004: Sri Sathya Sai Central Trust, National Human Rights Commission. 2013: FIFA.
- **Naveen Jindal case (2004):** SC held that flying the National Flag is a **fundamental right under Article 19(1)(a)** as an expression of patriotism. But this right is **qualified**, subject to restrictions under: Article 19(2) (reasonable restrictions), The 1950 Act, and Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971.

POCSO

Why in news: A 13-year-old girl from West Bengal was found living with a 25-year-old man. The trial court convicted the man under **POCSO and IPC Sections 363, 366, 376(2)(n), and 376(3)** and sentenced him to 20 years. The Calcutta High Court overturned the conviction using Section 482 of CrPC, suggesting **consensual adolescent relationships** should be excluded from POCSO's scope.

- **Supreme Court struck down HC ruling**, reaffirming that **POCSO does not recognise consensual sex with minors**. However, sentencing was **withheld under Article 142**, pending a **report from an expert panel** that flagged **systemic failures** and suggested maintaining the family unit.

Related News

- **Amicus curiae Indira Jaising** told the **Supreme Court** that **consensual sexual acts** between adolescents aged 16–18 in voluntary relationships should **not** be treated as **"abuse"** or prosecuted.
- She argued that the law **criminalises consensual activity** between adolescents and deters them from seeking **safe medical care** due to **mandatory reporting obligations** under **Section 19 of POCSO**.
- The **2023 Law Commission report** opposed changing the **age of consent**. **Union government** objected before the **Supreme Court** to reducing the **age of consent from 18 to 16 years**.

- In 2010, the **Ministry of WCD** drafted the **POCSO Bill, 2010**. After revisions, the **POCSO Act came into force in 2012** & it criminalises **penetrative and non-penetrative assault, sexual harassment, and child pornography**.
- It is a **gender-neutral law** that treats **all under-18s ("child" in Section 2(d) of POCSO)** as **incapable of consent**, ensuring **victim-centric procedures** like **special courts, in-camera trials, and video testimonies**.
- **Punishments graded:** Minimum 10 years RI for penetrative assault; life/death for aggravated cases (e.g., by relatives, teachers). **2019 Amendment:** Death penalty for assault on children <12; minimum 20 years for repeat offenders; higher fines for child porn. No provision for consent if child involved; abetment equally punishable.
- **Links to Constitution:** Article 21, 21A, 23–24, 39(f). **Speedy trials (within 1 year)**
- **POCSO offences are cognizable and non-bailable;** arrests can be made **without a warrant**, and **bail is not automatic**. The law **does not provide statutory bail guidelines**.

Copyright Act, 1952

Why in news: YouTube channels in India have complained that ANI is **"threatening"** to issue copyright complaints for using its footage without licensing.

- **ANI syndicates content** (news reporting, photography, videography) to others **for a fee**.
- Under YouTube policy, copyright holders can **seize revenue or issue strikes**, with **three strikes in 90 days** possibly leading to **channel termination**. YouTube does **not decide copyright ownership**, but allows **claims and counterclaims**.
- **India's fair use (fair dealing) exemptions**, under **Section 52 of the Copyright Act, 1952**, include **personal use, criticism/review, court reproduction, teaching, freedom of panorama and reporting of current events**.
- Act has been amended six times, the latest being the Copyright (Amendment) Act 2012, to keep pace with technological changes, digital content, and global standards.
- Act aligned India's legal system with **international standards** such as the Berne Convention 1886, Universal Copyright Convention 1951, Rome Convention 1961, and TRIPS Agreement. India later joined the WIPO Copyright Treaty (WCT) and WIPO Performances and Phonograms Treaty (WPPT) in 2013, strengthening digital copyright protection.

Cinematograph Act, 1952

Why in news: The **Union government** notified **revised age-based certification categories** for films.

- The aim is to promote **age-appropriate viewing**, especially for audiences needing **parental guidance**.
- **Ministry of Information and Broadcasting** issued the changes. The rules were originally notified in **1991**.
- **CBFC** is empowered to issue certificates for **unrestricted public exhibition** with specific endorsements. The new endorsements are **'U/A 7+', 'U/A 13+', and 'U/A 16+'**, indicating the **nature and type of content**.

- **CBFC** regulates the public exhibition of films under the Cinematograph Act, 1952. It consists of a Chairperson (Prasoon Joshi) and 12 to 25 members appointed by the Central Government. HQ: Mumbai, with 9 regional offices.
- **Films are certified into:** U (Unrestricted) suitable for all ages. UA (Parental Guidance) (U/A 7+: May include mild violence or themes needing supervision; U/A 13+: May contain moderate violence, horror, or mature themes; U/A

16+: Can include stronger violence, mature themes, and intense scenes). A (Adults Only) Restricted to viewers aged 18 and above. S (Specialized) Restricted to specialized audiences (e.g., doctors, scientists).

Related News

- Information & Broadcasting Ministry proposed amendments to 2014 Policy Guidelines for Television Rating Agencies. The **draft amendments** aim to **remove restrictive provisions** and allow **more players** beyond the current **Broadcast Audience Research Council (BARC)**. It is "not-for-profit" joint-industry company, It was established in 2010 following recommendations from the TRAI and guidelines from the MIB.
- The Ministry noted that current **Television Rating Points (TRP)** mechanisms do **not fully capture evolving viewership patterns** across **smart TVs, mobile apps, and online platforms**. This **gap in measurement** could **impact rating accuracy**, affecting **broadcasters' revenue planning** and **brands' ad strategies**.

Indian Ports Bill, 2025

Why in news: Indian Ports Bill, 2025 was passed in Lok Sabha & Rajya Sabha.

- It **repeals the Indian Ports Act of 1908** and forms part of a **maritime reform package** along with the **Coastal Shipping Act, 2025**, the **Carriage of Goods by Sea Bill, 2025**, and the **Merchant Shipping Act, 2025**.
- Focuses on **ease of business, sustainable port development, and regulatory coherence**. Seen as essential for **expanding trade, attracting foreign investment, and boosting India's maritime competitiveness**.

Indian Ports Act, 2025

- Establishes the **Maritime State Development Council (MSDC)** chaired by the **Union Minister of Ports** as a **central policy-making authority**. MSDC can **direct States** to follow **central guidelines**, undermining **State autonomy**.
- State maritime boards** cannot modify their own frameworks without central approval.
- Clause 17** bars **civil courts** from hearing **disputes**, forcing parties into **internal dispute resolution committees**.

Merchant Shipping Act, 2025

- Updates regulations on **registration, safety, environment, and liability**.
- Expands vessel definition to include **offshore drilling units** and **non-displacement crafts**. Strengthens oversight of **maritime training institutes**. Aligns **liability and insurance rules** with **international conventions**.
- Removes full Indian ownership requirement; allows **"partial" Indian ownership** including by **OCIs and foreign entities**.
- Introduces **Bareboat Charter-Cum-Demise (BBCD)** registration — allows leasing of foreign ships with intent to purchase later. Without strict enforcement, could let **foreign lessors retain control indefinitely**.
- Requires **registration of all vessels**, even small ones, imposing **bureaucratic burdens**.

Coastal Shipping Act, 2025

- Aims to **strengthen cabotage rules** (restricting domestic coastal trade to Indian-flagged vessels).
- Grants **Director General of Shipping** broad discretion to license **foreign vessels** under vague grounds like **"national security"** or **"strategic alignment"**. Could allow **arbitrary or selective use** of powers.
- Act **centralises control** through a **National Coastal and Inland Shipping Strategic Plan**.

Sikh Marriage Registration

Why in news: SC directed States & UTs to **frame rules** for **registration of Sikh marriages** under **Anand Marriage Act, 1909** to ensure that **Sikh couples** across India can **legally register marriages** under their **own religious tradition**.

- The **1909 Act**, a **one-page law**, aimed to **legally sanctify marriages** performed through **Anand Karaj** but did **not include provisions for registration**. The **Anand Marriage (Amendment) Act, 2012** introduced **Section 6**, directing **state governments** to frame **rules for registration** of Anand Karaj marriages.
- Once registered under the Act, a couple **need not register under any other law**. The 1909 Act lacks provisions for **divorce or matrimonial disputes**, forcing **Sikhs to seek divorce** under the **Hindu Marriage Act, 1955**.
- Most **Sikh couples register under the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955**, which also recognises **Sikh marriages**.

Income Tax Act, 2025

Why in news: Lok Sabha passed the **Income Tax Bill, 2025** to replace the **Income Tax Act, 1961**.

- President** gave assent. To come into effect from **April 1, 2026**.
- 1961 Act outdated:** heavily amended → complex, jargon-heavy, difficult to interpret. **New law** uses **simple language** with examples. **Reduces wordage** and eliminates archaic terms. Sections reduced: **819 → 536**; Chapters reduced: **47 → 23**. **Taxpayer-friendly provisions:**
 - Income Tax Returns (ITRs) can be **updated up to 4 years** from relevant AY.
 - Mistakes can be rectified** without penalty/tax incidence.
 - Reopening of assessments** limited to **5 years** (earlier longer).
- Search operations:** Officials may now **break into "virtual digital space"** i.e. **personal emails, WhatsApp, social media, and electronic records**. Any person with **electronic records** must provide **access codes/passwords** to authorised officers. Officials empowered to **override access codes** if passwords are not given. **Section 132 of the Income-Tax Act, 1961** allowed search and seizure of **physical spaces** only.
- Proposal allows **sweeping access** without **warrants, relevance thresholds**, or distinction between financial and non-financial data. This contradicts **SC's proportionality test** in **Justice K.S. Puttaswamy vs Uoi**.

Digital Personal Data Protection Rules, 2025

- The **Union government** notified large parts of the **DPDP Act, 2023**, a step forward in compliance with the **Supreme Court's 2017 K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India judgment**, affirming the **right to privacy**.
- The law, passed in **2023** in **Parliament**, requires firms to **safeguard digital data** of citizens, provides **exemptions** for the **State and its instrumentalities**, and prescribes **penalties** for firms that breach these obligations.
- **Data fiduciaries** will have time until **November 2026** to comply with some provisions, such as publishing details of their designated **Data Protection Officer (DPO)**.
- Triggers the formation of the **Data Protection Board of India (DPBI)** and operationalising parts of the **DPDP Act, 2023**.
- **DPDP Act, 2023** is India's **data protection law**, similar to **Europe's GDPR** and **Singapore's Personal Data Protection Act, 2012**.
- It sets **baselines** for how **companies (data fiduciaries)** should handle data of **users (data principals)**. Requirements include **access control, encryption, and security audits**.
- **Informed consent** must be taken from users, with a **summary** of what data is collected and how it will be used. Users have rights to **erase, modify, or delete** their data. Firms must **delete user data** after a specified period of **inactivity**.
- **Large firms** must appoint a **DPO** to oversee compliance.
- **DPBI**, a subordinate office of **MeitY** with **four members**. **DPBI** will function under the **MEITY**.

Closer to compliance

With key parts of the DPDP Act now notified, the government edges closer to enforcing the 2017 Supreme Court privacy judgment and strengthening protections for Indians' personal data



report and a draft data protection Bill

Dec. 2022: A fresh draft Bill prepared by the IT Ministry

Aug. 2023: Parliament passes the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023

Jan. 2025: Draft rules to enforce the Act are put out for public consultation

Aug. 2017: The Supreme Court rules that privacy is a fundamental right

July 2018: Retd. Justice B.N. Srikrishna-led committee submits its

RTI - DPDP

Why in news: DPDP Act has **amended Section 8(1)(j)** of RTI Act, altering scope regarding "personal information".

- The original **proviso** stated: "Information which cannot be denied to Parliament or a State Legislature shall not be denied to any person." **Restrictions on RTI** must stay within limits of **Article 19(2)**.
- **DPDP Definition** – Expands "person" to include HUFs, firms, companies, associations, and the State. Under the **expanded definition**, "almost everything becomes personal information."
- The **DPDP Act overrides all other laws** in case of conflict and imposes **penalties up to ₹250 crore** for violations.
- Despite issues, online RTI queries may cross one million in 2025.
- **Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT)** manages the **RTI online portal** launched in **2013**.

Karnataka Mis-Information and Fake News (Prohibition) Bill, 2025

Why in news: Karnataka introduced the **Mis-Information and Fake News (Prohibition) Bill, 2025**, sparking debate over **free speech and state overreach**.

Do you know?

- In **Kunal Kamra vs Uol case**, Bombay HC struck down the amended **Information Technology Rules, 2023**, which empowered the Centre to set up a **FCU**.
- **FCU** had **authority to determine** if content on social media is **fake, false, or misleading**. Once content is deemed misleading, intermediaries are required to take action or risk their **"safe harbor" protection** under IT Act.
- **Issues in FCU:** Court said Rule 3(1)(b)(v) of Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021 violated Article 14, 19, 19(1)(g) (freedom and right to profession). The expression **"fake, false and misleading"** in the Rules was "vague and hence wrong".
- In **Shreya Singhal (2013)**, Court struck down **Section 66A** of the IT Act, stating **vague definitions cannot justify curbing free speech**.

SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989

Why in news: The **Madras High Court** ruled that police **cannot conduct a preliminary inquiry** on complaints disclosing **cognisable offences** under the **SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989**.

- The court directed that police must **immediately register an FIR** against suspects in such cases.
- **Section 18A(1)(a)** of the Act, introduced in **2018**, which explicitly states **no preliminary inquiry** is required for FIR registration to ensure **immediate and unfiltered registration** of caste-based atrocity complaints.
- Investigations in SC/ST cases must be **completed within 60 days** of FIR registration. Final **reports/chargesheets** must be filed before **special courts** within this 60-day timeline.
- **Act** is aimed at **preventing atrocities** against members of SC and ST. It was enacted in **1989**. **Offences:** There are **37 defined offences under the Act**. Some of them are Forced labor or exploitation; Intimidation or coercion regarding voting rights; False legal proceedings against members of SCs/STs.

Law on Phone-tapping

Why in news: Madras and Delhi High Court examined whether **economic offences** could qualify as “**public emergency**” or “**public safety.**” Delhi High Court upheld the **interception order**, while the Madras High Court quashed it.

- **Madras HC:** Quashed a **2011 MHA interception order** against an accused in a **₹50 lakh bribery case** involving a senior **Income Tax officer** and concealment of **undisclosed taxable income.**

Do you know?

- The government’s **powers to intercept communication** are defined and limited by **three laws**:
 - **Indian Post Office Act, 1898** – allows interception of **postal communication.**
 - **Indian Telegraph Act, 1885** – used for **tapping voice calls.**
 - **Information Technology Act, 2000** – governs interception of **WhatsApp messages, emails, etc.**
- The **140-year-old Telegraph Act**, originally for **telegrams**, now includes **telephone conversations. Section 5(2)** empowers **state and central governments** to authorise interception “**on the occurrence of any public emergency, or in the interest of public safety.**”
- **Free speech** and **privacy** are **fundamental rights**, so any **surveillance** is only permissible on **narrow constitutional grounds**. These grounds are listed under **Article 19(2)**; **sovereignty and integrity of India, security of the state, friendly relations with foreign states, public order, or preventing incitement to commit an offence.**
- **Section 5(2)** mirrors these, meaning interception is lawful **only if actions qualify** under **reasonable restrictions.**

Sedition Law

Why in news: **Petition in Supreme Court** challenges **Section 152 of BNS, 2023.**

- **Claim:** Section 152 **repackages colonial sedition law** once codified as **Section 124A IPC, 1860.**
- Though language differs, **substantive content remains same** or even **more expansive.**
- **Section 152 Criminalises:** “Subversive activity”, “Encouragement of separatist feelings”, Acts “endangering unity or integrity of India”. Punishes “**acts endangering sovereignty, unity and integrity of India.**”
- **Petition argues Section 152 violates:** **Article 14** – equality before law, **Article 19(1)(a)** – freedom of speech and expression, **Article 21** – personal liberty. Section’s **vague wording** risks **chilling free speech.**
- **Judicial Precedent:** **Kedar Nath Singh (1962) SC upheld sedition law** but narrowed scope. Sedition applies **only when clear incitement to violence or public disorder** proven.

Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960

Why in news: **SC suo motu** took up issue after **rising stray dog attacks** in Delhi, including on **children and infants.**

- Initially directed **Delhi govt. & civic bodies** to **capture and confine all stray dogs**, never releasing them back.
- **SC modified directive:** Strays must undergo **sterilisation, deworming, immunisation** then **released back to localities**, per **Rule 11(19), Animal Birth Control Rules 2023.**
- **Animal Birth Control (ABC) Rules, 2023** mandate **capture–neuter–vaccinate–release (CNVR)**; forbid permanent relocation except rabid/incurably ill/aggressive dogs.
- **Criticisms of Initial Order:** Contradicted **WHO guidelines** and **NAPRE 2030** strategy. Contradicted **ABC Rules, 2023 & SC ruling** upholding them. **Article 51A(g)** imposes duty to show **compassion for living creatures.**
- **WHO:** 99% of human rabies caused by **dog bites.**
- **National Action Plan for Dog-Mediated Rabies Elimination (NAPRE) 2030:**
 - Joint initiative by India’s Ministry of Health & Family Welfare and Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying to eliminate dog-mediated rabies by 2030.
 - Key components include mass dog vaccination, the control and management of stray dog populations through the implementation of ABC Rules, 2023, strengthening surveillance and diagnostics, and raising public awareness.
 - **Targets:** Vaccinate **over 70% of dogs for 3 years** → elimination; Reduce human deaths from rabies by 75% by 2030; Reduce dog bites by 50% by 2025.
- **Rajasthan first State** to issue detailed guidelines post-SC directive.

DOG BITES IN INDIA

THE LARGEST population of stray dogs is in India; numbers are not known, but are estimated to run into crores. In 2019, the government told Lok Sabha that stray dogs numbered 1.53 crore; it repeated this data in 2022.

MORE THAN 37 LAKH cases of dog bites were reported in the country in 2024, up from 30.5 lakh in 2023 and 21.9 lakh in 2022, according to government data from February this year. Nearly 4.3 lakh dog bites were reported in January this year.

IF THE DOG IS RABID, its bite can infect the victim with rabies, a viral disease that affects the central

nervous system and is almost always fatal if not treated immediately. According to government data from February 2025, 54 people died from rabies in 2024, up from 50 deaths in 2023 and 21 deaths in 2022.

36% OF RABIES DEATHS in the world occur in India, according to estimates by the World Health Organization. Dog bites are responsible for about 96% of the mortality and morbidity associated with rabies in India, the WHO says. 30-60% of reported rabies cases and deaths in India occur in children under the age of 15 years, according to WHO.

- **Dog bite is dangerous** due to **bacteria** in mouth: **staphylococcus, pasteurella, capnocytophaga** → can cause **serious infections. Complications like sepsis** may be **life-threatening** if untreated.
- **Rabies = fatal viral disease** transmitted through **dog saliva.**
- **Rabies survival extremely rare**; once symptoms appear, fatality rate is **nearly 100%**. Only **few human survivors worldwide** → due to **aggressive critical care** or **weakened viral strain. Post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP)** (rabies vaccine series) must be taken **before onset of symptoms**, otherwise outcome is **fatal.**
- **Medical care within 24 hours** of any animal bite is **vital** to reduce risk of **infection, tetanus, rabies.**

- **Minor bites** can also drive bacteria deep → causing **infections** (symptom: **redness, swelling, discharge, fever**).
- **Rabies** can infect any mammal, not just dogs. Other **possible carriers**: **cats, cattle, horses, goats, ferrets, bats, raccoons, skunks, foxes, coyotes, monkeys**.

Online Gaming Act, 2025

Why in news: Cabinet **approved** the **Promotion and Regulation of Online Gaming Bill, 2025** to prohibit **real money games (RMGs)**. **Lok Sabha passed** the Bill by voice vote; **Rajya Sabha cleared** it; received **Presidential assent**.

- **Rationale for the Act:** Financial losses 15,000 crore, compulsive behaviour, financial distress, family disruption, terror funding, tax evasion, opaque algorithms.
- **RMG Definition:** Online game involving **monetary deposits/stakes** with expectation of monetary/stake-based reward.
- **Categories of games:**
 - **E-sports:** Recognised under **National Sports Governance Act, 2025**; prize-money based.
 - **Social gaming:** Recreational/educational; promoted by govt. with budgetary allocation from **Consolidated Fund**.
 - **RMGs:** Banned → includes **Poker, Rummy, Fantasy Cricket, Ludo**.
- **Prohibited activities:** Offering, operating, facilitating, advertising, promoting, or participating in RMGs.
- **Penalties:** Offering RMGs → up to **3 years jail / ₹1 crore fine / both**; Advertising RMGs → up to **2 years jail / ₹50 lakh fine / both**; Offences **cognisable & non-bailable** (per BNSS, 2023).
- **Enforcement:** **CERT-IN** empowered to block apps. **Interpol** may be roped in for offshore operators. Players/users **not penalised** (clarified by IT Minister).
- **Constitutional challenge likely:** **Article 19(1)(g)** – right to practice any trade/profession may be violated.
- **Seventh Schedule, List II (Entries 34 & 62)** → betting & gambling are **State subjects**.
- States like **Telangana (2017), Andhra Pradesh (2020), Tamil Nadu (2022)** had already banned online gambling.

National Sports Governance Act 2025

Why in news: Received **assent from the President**, marking a major reform in India's sports administration.

- **Sports regulation** falls within the **jurisdiction of the states** under **Entry 33 of the State List (Seventh Schedule)**.
- The **Cabinet has approved the National Sports Policy 2025**, which **supersedes the 2001 policy**. **NSP 2025** is structured around **five core pillars** focusing on **global excellence, economic and social development through sports, sports as a people's movement, and integration of sports with education**.
- The Act provides for establishing **national sports bodies** such as the **National Olympic Committee, National Paralympic Committee, and National and Regional Sports Federations** for each sport.
- These bodies will be **affiliated with international bodies** and have **state and district-level units**.
- These bodies will be **governed by international charters and statutes**.
- A **National Sports Board (NSB)** will be established to **grant recognition** to sports bodies and **register affiliate units**.
- Only **recognised bodies** will be **eligible to receive central government funding**.
- Every **National Sports Body** must formulate a **Code of Ethics** to ensure **ethical conduct** of stakeholders.
- A **recognised organisation** under the Act will be **considered a public authority under the RTI Act, 2005**.
- The **central government** will decide the **composition of the NSB** and appoint its members on the **recommendations of a search-cum-selection committee**. Eligibility for NSB members includes **special knowledge or experience in public administration, sports governance, or sports law**.
- **National Sports Tribunal** will be constituted to **adjudicate sports-related disputes**. The Tribunal **will not have jurisdiction** over disputes relating to **international games or internal disputes of national sports bodies**.
- Every **national sports body** must form an **electoral panel** to supervise elections of its **affiliated units**.
- The **central government** may **exempt a national body or affiliate** from provisions of the Act in **public interest** for the promotion of that sport.

Protection of Civil Rights (PCR) Act

Why in news: 97% 'untouchability' cases pending in courts. The number of **criminal cases under the 1955 Act** for "untouchability"-related offences declined in **2022**, according to **MoSJE's annual report**.

- Enacted to enforce Article 17 of the Constitution (abolition of untouchability).
- The **PCR Act** defines **manifestations of untouchability** in **social and religious spheres** and prescribes **penalties**.
- The Act mandates an **annual review report** with inputs from **States and Union Territories**.
- In **2022**, only **13 cases** were registered under the PCR Act, down from **24 in 2021** and **25 in 2020**.
- In contrast, **cases under the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, 1989**, have been **rising steadily**.

Health Security National Security Cess

- **Health Security National Security Cess Bill, 2025** and the **Central Excise (Amendment) Bill, 2025** were passed.
- Bills are aimed at replacing revenue from **GST compensation cess on tobacco products**, which will be discontinued soon. **GST compensation cess** was introduced in **2017** during the launch of the GST system.

- Proceeds were to be used to **compensate States for any losses** they faced due to the implementation of GST for a period of **five years**. During the **COVID-19 pandemic years of 2020-21 and 2021-22**, the proceeds from this cess fell short of the compensation requirement. This led to the **Centre borrowing money** to compensate the States.
- Compensation cess on **tobacco products** is to be discontinued once government pays back **interest on these loans**.
- The **Health and National Security Cess** will be **over and above GST**. The cess will be levied on the **production capacity of machines** in **pan masala manufacturing factories**. Initially, the Bill applies to **pan masala**, but the government may **extend the cess to other goods**.
- The cess as a percentage of **gross total revenue** is **6.1% in the current fiscal**, lower than **7% during 2010-2014**.

Central Excise (Amendment) Act, 2025

- **Tax hike on cigarettes** is an **excise duty**, not a **cess**, and will be part of the **divisible pool of taxes shared with States**.
- The **duty on cigarettes** was **higher in the pre-GST regime** and was later reduced to a **nominal rate under GST** as cigarettes attracted a **compensation cess**.
- With the **compensation cess set to be withdrawn** after repayment of pandemic-related loans, the Centre introduced the Bill to increase the base excise duty so that tax incidence does not fall.
- There is **no change in tax incidence on beedis**. **Tobacco tax rates were increased annually** in the **pre-GST period**.
- Tobacco products will continue to be taxed under the **demerit category at 40% under GST**, though there will be **no compensation cess**.

SHANTI Act 2025

- **Sustainable Harnessing and Advancement of Nuclear Energy for Transforming India** to incentivise **private sector**, both **Indian and foreign**, in **nuclear power production**. It has been passed by Parliament.
- The Act **replaces the Atomic Energy Act, 1962 and the Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage (CLND) Act, 2010**.
- It creates an **atomic energy regulatory structure answerable to Parliament**, removes **NPCIL's monopoly** over operating nuclear plants, **restricts operator compensation claims** from equipment suppliers in case of an accident.
- **Revised civil liability framework** and confers **statutory status** on the **Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB)**.
- It strengthened **safety, security, safeguards, quality assurance, and emergency preparedness**.
- **Operator liability** for a nuclear incident is capped at **₹3,000 crore**, with graded limits based on **plant size**.
- > 3,600 MW: ₹3,000 crore; 1,500 MW-3,600 MW: ₹1,500 crore; 750 MW-1,500 MW: ₹750 crore; 150 MW-750 MW: ₹300 crore; < 150 MW, fuel cycle facilities, & transport: ₹100 crore.
- The **Centre** is liable for damage beyond the operator's cap and may assume **full liability** for a non-government installation in **public interest**.
- Operators are required to maintain **insurance or financial security**, while **Central government installations** are exempt.
- **Operator recourse** against suppliers is allowed only through **written contracts** or where damage is caused with **intent**. The clause in the **CLND Act, 2010** allowing recourse against suppliers for **faulty equipment** has been **removed**.
- Maximum penalty for even a **"severe breach"** is capped at **₹1 crore**.
- Sensitive **fuel cycle activities** remain under **state control**, while private participation is allowed in **plant delivery** and parts of the **supply chain**.
- Nuclear power currently accounts for about **1.5% of installed capacity** and around **3% of electricity generation**. India plans to scale nuclear capacity from **8.8 GW to 100 GW by 2047**. **State-owned utilities** are projected to add **54 GW**, with the remainder expected from the **private sector**.
- The plan includes a **₹20,000 crore mission** to develop **SMRs** and **customised 220 MW pressurised heavy water reactors**. The government targets installation of **five indigenous SMRs by 2033**. SMRs require **enriched uranium-235**, produce electricity similar to **Stage 1 reactors**, and do not significantly advance **thorium utilisation**.
- The **CLNDA, 2010** imposed a **strict, no-fault liability** on operators capped at **₹1,500 crore**, with the government liable for additional **₹2,100-₹2,300 crore**. **Section 17(b)** allows the operator a **right of recourse** against suppliers in case of defective equipment or substandard services. **Section 46** allows for **civil and criminal liability beyond CLNDA**, exposing suppliers to **unlimited liability**.
- Several key projects are **stalled due to liability concerns**, including: The **Jaitapur project** with France's **EDF**, The **Kovvada project** with U.S. and Japanese partners. Only the **Kudankulam project** with Russia progressed, as it was signed **before CLNDA came into effect**.
- The Act aligns India closer to the **Vienna Convention on Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage**. It also makes India's framework consonant with the **Convention on Supplementary Compensation for Nuclear Damage**.

Core changes

The SHANTI Bill repeals existing legislation on nuclear activity and opens up private participation in civil nuclear sector

- The Bill enables private companies to run nuclear power plants and bring foreign investment into the sector
- It places the responsibility of managing nuclear plants on the 'operator' of the facility
- It limits operator liability to the capacity of the plants
- Govt. to stay in control of nuclear waste management

VB-G RAM G Act, 2025

- Parliament passed the Viksit Bharat Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) Bill, 2025 to replace MGNREGA, 2005. President granted assent to the VB-G RAM G Act.
- MGNREGA gave every rural household the right to demand 100 days of employment per year. The scheme was universal, with no targeting based on SC/ST/BPL status.
- **Prior to 2022**, workers were paid through an **account-based system** where **errors could be rectified locally** at the **block office**. In **2022**, the **government** mandated the **Aadhaar-based payment system (ABPS)** in MGNREGA, requiring workers to **link their job cards with Aadhaar**.
- In **2021**, the **government** introduced the **National Mobile Monitoring System (NMMS)** app to **digitally record attendance of workers**, which **denied attendance to many workers** and also **aided newer forms of corruption**.

Changes under VB-G RAM G Act

- Shift from a **demand-driven** to a **supply-driven** framework. **Allocations capped** within a fixed **Union budget**.
- Employment restricted to **rural areas notified by the Centre**. Guaranteed workdays increased from 100 to **125 days**.
- **States' financial burden** under MGNREGA followed a 90:10 model (Centre:State). Under the new Act 90:10 for north-eastern and Himalayan States/UTs; 60:40 for other States and UTs with legislatures.
- **Section 5(1)** empowers the Centre to **notify rural areas** for implementation.
- Introduction of a **blackout period** during **peak agricultural seasons**.
- **Article 41** directs the State to secure the **right to work** within its capacity. **Directive Principles** are instruments for **economic democracy**. The law earlier recognised **State responsibility** to ensure work at **minimum wages**. The new framework centralises control, raising **federal concerns**.

Waqf Properties

Why in news: Union Minister for Minority Affairs launched **Unified Waqf Management, Empowerment, Efficiency and Development (UMEED)** portal, a **centralised digital platform** for Waqf property management.

- The portal enables **real-time uploading, verification, and monitoring** of **Waqf properties**.
- It **will introduce transparency, accountability, and public participation** in Waqf asset administration.
- Portal, developed by the **Ministry of Minority Affairs**, will feature a **digital inventory with geotagging of all Waqf properties**. Key features include an **online grievance redressal system, integration with GIS mapping**, and other **e-governance tools**. It will provide **public access to verified records and reports** related to Waqf properties.

DIGIPIN

Why in news: Government has launched a **new digital address system** called **DIGIPIN** to enable **precise location identification** across the country.

- **DIGIPIN** is a **unique ten-character alphanumeric code** generated for any **4 by 4 square meter** property on **Indian land**. Unique **DIGIPINs** can be created for properties in **urban, rural, and maritime zones**.
- The **Department of Posts** developed **DIGIPIN's** technology in collaboration with **IIT Hyderabad** and the **National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC)** under **ISRO**.
- Each **DIGIPIN** is **encoded with geographic coordinates**, and does **not store any personal information**.
- **DIGIPIN will not replace** the existing **six-digit PIN code** system, but will serve as an **additional precision layer** over traditional postal addresses.

Postal Index Number

- **PIN** was **introduced on August 15, 1972** to simplify **mail sorting and delivery**. The **PIN system** helps manage issues arising from **similar place names** and the use of **multiple languages** in addresses. It **consists of 6 digits**:
 - **1st digit** indicates **postal region** — **Northern, Eastern, Western, Southern, and 9 for Army Postal Service**.
 - The **second digit** represents the **sub-region**. The **third digit** indicates the **sorting district**.
 - The **last three digits** pinpoint the **specific post office** for delivery.

National Geospatial Mission & NAKSHA:

- In **Budget 2025**, govt launched **National Geospatial Mission** to develop **foundational geospatial infrastructure and data**. Mission, using **PM Gati Shakti**, will support **modernisation of land records, urban planning, and infrastructure design**. By 2030, it will create a high-accuracy **Digital Elevation Model** for the entire country (25 cm resolution for plains, 1-3 m for hilly areas). By 2035, it will develop **National Digital Twins** (virtual replicas) for major cities and high-resolution bathymetric data for inland and deep-sea topography to support the Blue Economy. It is **overseen** by the Department of Science and Technology. It is **supported** by the Geospatial Data Promotion and Development Committee, the apex body that replaced the former National Spatial Data Committee.
- Under this Mission, **Union Rural Development Minister** launched '**NAKSHA**' (NAtional geospatial Knowledge-based land Survey of urban HABitations) in **February 2025**. **NAKSHA** is a **city survey initiative** under the **Digital India Land Records Modernization Programme (DILRMP)**. It is led by **Department of Land Resources** under **Ministry of Rural Development**, is **100% centrally funded**.
- **NAKSHA** aims to create a **comprehensive and accurate geospatial database** for urban land records.
- The initiative integrates **aerial and field surveys with GIS technology** to improve **land governance, streamline property ownership**, and aid **urban planning**. **Accurate geospatial data** under **NAKSHA** ensures **efficient**

decision-making, better land use planning, and certainty in property transactions.


DHRUVA

- **Department of Posts** released a draft amendment to **Post Office Act, 2023** to introduce interoperable, standardised, and user-centric addressing system called **Digital Hub for Reference and Unique Virtual Address**.
- On e-commerce platforms, individuals would be able to provide a **label instead of an address** and authorise firms to receive **geographic coordinates and full address text instantly**.
- The draft amendment would allow the postal department to set up a **Section 8 not-for-profit entity** under **government supervision**. This body would play a role similar to the **NPCI**, which administers the **UPI**.
- There is **no compulsion** in the draft amendment for **private players** to join.
- **DIGIPIN** was open-sourced by the department. Each **DIGIPIN** corresponds to a **14 square metre patch of land**. A mathematical function deterministically generates a **unique code** for each DIGIPIN. This translates to around **228 billion DIGIPINs** for **Indian territory**.

Smart addresses

A draft amendment seeks to enable an interoperable system replacing physical addresses with smart labels like "name@entity" powered by **DIGIPIN** for precise geolocation

- Labels will be provided by address service providers, while consent architecture will be managed by address information agents
- It will be based on the DIGIPIN system, which is a 10-character alphanumeric expression of latitude and longitude coordinates



- offer adequate information
- The draft amendment is under consultation; Section 8 entity proposed (like NPCI for UPI)
- The system will be built as part of government's digital public infrastructure initiatives, and will allow private firms to participate

- The technology was developed to provide more precise locations in rural areas or in cases where the textual expression of a physical address does not

Labour Policy

- Government unveiled the **draft Shram Shakti Niti 2025**.
- Introduces **portable Universal Social Security Account** merging EPFO, ESIC, PMJAY, e-SHRAM, State boards.
- Pledges strict enforcement of **Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code 2020** honouring **Directive 42** and **ILO Convention 155**.
- Goal of **"near-zero fatalities" by 2047** appears fanciful without penalties and given **inspector shortages**.
- MoLE will become an **employment facilitator** using **AI-driven NCS** for job matching.
- Targets **35% female labour participation by 2030** through childcare, flexible gigs, equal pay, apprenticeships – aligning with **Article 15** and **ILO Convention 195**.
- **Green-tech vision**: AI-enhanced safety, reskilling coal workers – aligns with **SDG 13** and **Article 21**.
- Policy hints at convergence through **LEPEI** (Labour & Employment Policy Evaluation Index) **dashboards**, linking NEP with Digital India, aiming to realise **Article 12**.

National Cooperative Policy 2025

Why in news: Cooperation Minister urged that **all States must announce their cooperative policy by January 31, 2026**.

- The **National Cooperative Policy launched** and will remain **effective from 2025 to 2045**.
- This is **only the second national policy** for the cooperative sector, **after the first in 2002**.
- **Vision:** To make **cooperatives key drivers for Viksit Bharat 2047** through Sahkar-se-Samriddhi.
- **Objective:** To bring **50 crore citizens** (non-members or inactive) into active participation in the cooperative sector. To triple cooperative sector's GDP contribution by 2034 and increase the number of cooperative societies by 30%.
- **Implementation:** To be carried out by the 'Implementation Cell' under the Ministry of Cooperation.
- **Monitoring:** 'National Steering Committee on Cooperation Policy', chaired by Minister of Cooperation.
- The policy **envisions six pillars**:
 - States to **amend cooperative laws** to enhance **transparency, autonomy, and ease of doing business**.
 - Proposes to **reduce cooperative taxes** and make them **eligible for sector-specific finance incentives**.
 - Encourages States/UTs to **develop at least 1 model cooperative village**; support **branding under 'Bharat' brand**.
 - Plans to create a **national 'Cooperative Stack'** integrated with **Agri-stack and other databases**.
 - **New Sectors:** Expansion of cooperatives into **clean energy, waste management, and technology sectors**.
 - **Inclusivity:** Promotes **inclusive participation of women, youth, and SC/STs**.
- **Discipline, innovation, and transparency** will be promoted through the **Model National Cooperative Policy Act**.
- Creation of **two lakh Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS)** is targeted for **completion by February 2026**.
- Key step being the creation of the **National Cooperative Database**. This **database covers national to tehsil levels** and supports the goal of establishing **a cooperative in every village within five years**.

- **Part IXB:** Added by the 97th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2011 – deals specifically with Co-operative Societies.
- **Article 43B (DPSP):** Promotes voluntary formation, autonomous functioning, democratic control of cooperatives.
- **Article 19(1)(c):** Amended to include the right to form cooperative societies as a Fundamental Right.
- **Multi-State Cooperatives** fall under **Union List** and are governed by **Multi-State Cooperative Societies Act, 2002**. **State Cooperatives** fall under **State List (32)** and are governed by **respective State Cooperative Societies Acts**.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Cooperation was created in 2021 for streamlining cooperative movement and policy.
- **2 seats have been reserved for women** on boards of **multi-State cooperative societies**. He added that **1 seat has been reserved for SC/ST communities** on these boards.

- Origin with **Cooperative Credit Societies Act, 1904**. It is an **autonomous association of persons**, united voluntarily to meet their **common economic, social, and cultural needs**.
- India has **more than 8 lakh cooperative societies**, including **2 lakh credit cooperatives (e.g., PACS)** and **6 lakh non-credit cooperatives (e.g., Consumer, Housing Cooperatives)**.
- **Top three cooperative sectors: Housing, Dairy, and Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS)**.

PM's Independence Day Address

Why in news: PM announced **Mission Sudarshan Chakra** (an indigenous air defence system by 2035), and warned of a **conspiracy to alter India's demographic composition**.

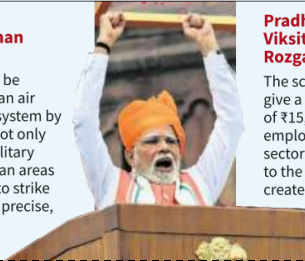
- **Announced Mission Sudarshan Chakra:** Fully indigenous air defence system by 2035. Inspired by Lord Krishna's shield for neutralising and retaliatory strikes to secure strategic & civilian infrastructure (hospitals, railways, centres of faith).

Key announcements

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in his Independence Day address, announced economic- and security-related reforms, and emphasised self-reliance. Highlights from the speech:

Mission Sudarshan Chakra

India will be building an air defence system by 2035 to not only shield military and civilian areas but also to strike back in a precise, targeted manner



Pradhan Mantri Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana

The scheme would give a one-time grant of ₹15,000 to first-time employees in the private sector and incentives to the private sector to create employment

Made-in-India semiconductors

India will launch 'Made-in-India' semiconductor chips by the end of 2025

Nuclear energy capacity

India will aim at increasing its nuclear energy capacity 10-fold via its 10 nuclear energy plants by 2047

PHOTO: SUSHIL KUMAR VERMA

- The PM also mentioned **India's Deep Ocean Mission**. It is aimed at exploring **resources under the sea**.
- Two Indian **aquanauts** recently completed trips up to **5,000 metres** in the **Atlantic Ocean**.
 - **Cdr (Retd) Jatinder Pal Singh** and **R Ramesh** dived to **5,002 metres** and **4,025 metres** respectively in the **French submersible Nautilie**. This is the **deepest an Indian has ever gone underwater**.
 - Most **Indian submarine dives** were limited to **500 metres**, with the previous record of **670 metres** held by **Cdr Singh**. The dives gave Indian aquanauts exposure to **mission protocols, vessel handling, and recovery operations**.
 - The dives are part of the preparation for **Samudrayaan**, India's **first manned deep-sea mission** aiming to send **three aquanauts to 6,000 metres** in the **indigenously developed Matsya6000 submersible by 2027**.
 - So far, only **five countries — USA, Russia, China, France, and Japan** — have successfully carried out **crewed deep-ocean missions**; **India is set to join this club**.
- Nations manage their **maritime territory and exclusive economic zones**, while the **high seas and international ocean floor** are governed by **UNCLOS (United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas)**.
- **UNCLOS applies to states regardless of ratification** or signing.

Judiciary

LIMBS

Why in news: The **Department of Legal Affairs, Ministry of Law and Justice**, inaugurated the **"Live Cases" dashboard** under the **Legal Information Management and Briefing System (LIMBS)**. The dashboard is designed to provide **real-time data visualisation of court cases** and offer an **overview of upcoming hearings**.

- **LIMBS:** Web-based platform developed by the **Ministry of Law and Justice** to efficiently manage and monitor government litigation. It brings together stakeholders like ministries, government departments, and advocates on a single platform to track the entire lifecycle of court cases.

Alteration of Arbitral Awards

Why in news: **Supreme Court** held that **courts have power to modify arbitral awards in limited circumstances**. Courts are judicially empowered under **Section 34 of the Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996** to **alter arbitral awards on restricted grounds**. **Modifications** are allowed to **amputate the invalid portion, correct typographical, computational, or clerical errors, or change post-award interest**.

- The **scope of judicial intervention under Section 34** is confined to **limited grounds expressly provided**, excluding **errors of fact, reconsideration of costs, or merits review**.
- SC may **flex its inherent powers under Article 142 of the Constitution** to ensure **complete justice**.

About Arbitration and Conciliation Act, 1996

- **Arbitration and Conciliation Act** establishes a **legal framework for arbitration and conciliation**, encouraging dispute resolution **outside** traditional courts.
- Ensures **party autonomy and minimal court intervention** — parties can choose **arbitrators and procedures**, with courts interfering only in limited circumstances.
- Applies to both **domestic & international commercial disputes**, aligning with **UNCITRAL Model Law**.
- **Arbitral awards are binding and enforceable as court decrees**, with only limited grounds for appeal.
- Provides for **conciliation and mediation** as alternatives, promoting **amicable settlements**.

Veeraswami Judgment

Why in news: Former Vice-President stated that the **K. Veeraswami judgment (1991)** should be revisited.

- It classified judges as **public servants under the Prevention of Corruption Act** but **requires CJI approval for prosecution (registering FIR)**, protecting the judiciary from executive interference with built-in immunity.
- **CJI as Safeguard:** For cases **against the CJI**, the **government must consult other SC judges**.
- **No Constitutional Immunity:** Unlike **President/Governors (Article 361)**, judges have **no constitutional immunity**; only **impeachment under Article 124** is the removal process.
- **First Use:** First CJI approval for FIR against a sitting judge in **2019 (Justice S.N. Shukla case)**.

India Justice Report 2025

Why in news: The **fourth edition of the India Justice Report 2025** was published recently.

- The report tracks each State's **structural and financial capability to deliver justice**.
- The IJR was **first published in 2019** with support from **Tata Trusts**.

Key findings:

- The **police-to-population ratio** stands at **155 per lakh**, below the **sanctioned 197**.
- The **judiciary faces a 20% increase in pending cases**, now **exceeding five crore**.
- **Prisons remain overcrowded**, with some exceeding **400% capacity**, and the **average overcrowding rate is 131%**.
- **Undertrials make up 76%** of the prison population, with **one in four** spending **1–3 years** awaiting trial.
- The **IJR 2025 includes India's rank in the Rule of Law Index 2024** by the **World Justice Project (WJP)**. India ranks **79 out of 142 countries** overall in the **Rule of Law Index** based on **eight indicators**. India ranks **89** in criminal justice, reflecting its **effectiveness in redressing grievances and prosecuting offenses**. India ranks **111** in civil justice, which assesses **accessibility, affordability, impartiality, and freedom from corruption and bias**.

Pendency of Cases & Vacancies

- **Filling vacancies in district and subordinate courts** is the responsibility of the **HCs and State governments**. Vacancies in the **SC and HCs** are being **filled continuously** in collaboration between the **executive and judiciary**.
- **Uttar Pradesh** has the **highest vacancies** in district and subordinate courts.
- The **Allahabad High Court** has the **maximum High Court vacancies**. The **Allahabad High Court** also has **11,66,971 pending cases**. Lower courts in **Uttar Pradesh** have **1,13,05,841 pending cases**, the **highest in the country**.

Foreign Lawyers & Foreign Law Firms

Why in news: BCI notified **Bar Council of India Rules for Registration and Regulation of Foreign Lawyers & Foreign Law Firms in India**. Rules facilitate **entry** of foreign legal practitioners while safeguarding domestic interests.

BCI's Statutory Mandate & Regulatory Position

- BCI is **statutory** not trade body, responsible for regulating **professional conduct** under **Advocates Act, 1961**. **Practice of law is not part of trade agreements**; governed by Union List Entries 77 & 78 (not trade/commerce entries).
- Supreme Court ruling (2024) in **Bar of Indian Lawyers vs D.K. Gandhi**: legal services are **personal contracts of service**, distinct from trade. India excluded legal services from **UK-India FTA**, affirming distinct regulatory regime.

Key Provisions of the Rules

- **Rules 3 & 4:** Foreign firms allowed to operate after **registration** and adherence to **ethical standards**.
- **Fly-in, fly-out** model: Foreign lawyers may visit India for up to **60 days/year** for permitted purposes.
- **Reciprocity principle** applied: Mirrors limited access Indian lawyers face in U.S. jurisdictions.
- **Rule 4(h)** requires foreign lawyers to submit a **certificate of good standing**.
- The rules are not sudden; follow **two decades** of debates, expert reports, and court rulings including: **Lawyers Collective vs BCI (2009)** and **Bar Council of India vs A.K. Balaji (2018)**.

Mediation Campaign

Why in news: Chief Justice of India scheduled to **launch a 90-day mediation campaign**, conceptualised by **NALSA** and the **Mediation and Conciliation Project Committee**. The campaign is titled '**Mediation for the Nation**'.

- It aims to **tackle pending cases** from **taluka courts to State High Courts**.
- Parties can **opt to participate online, offline, or in hybrid mode**.
- **Campaign launched by NALSA and MCPC** to resolve **pending cases in Taluka, District, and High Courts** through **mediation**. Campaign involves **trained mediators** conducting **physical, online, or hybrid sessions seven days a week**, focusing on **amicable settlement of matrimonial, commercial, and criminal compoundable cases**.
- **NALSA** constituted under **Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987**, established in **1995**, provides **free legal services** and organizes **Lok Adalats** for **justice to weaker sections** and **reducing judicial burden**. **NALSA** is headed by the **Chief Justice of India as Patron-in-Chief**; promotes **legal awareness, ADR, and victim compensation**.
- **Mediation and Conciliation Project Committee (MCPC)** was set up by the **Supreme Court in 2005** to promote **mediation as a dispute resolution mechanism**. **MCPC** conducts **mediator training**, coordinates **mediation efforts across courts**, and oversees **Section 89 CPC implementation**. **MCPC** also **accredits mediators**, supports **mediation**.

centers, and works with NALSA to expand mediation usage in India.

Judge Removal

Why in news: Motion for removal requires the support of at least **100 MPs in the Lok Sabha** or **50 MPs in Rajya Sabha**.

- The Constitution doesn't use the word impeachment but describes the process under Article 124(4) for SC judges and Article 218 for High Court judges. Removal of a judge is governed by **Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968**.
- **Article 121** prohibits discussions in Parliament about the conduct of Supreme Court and High Court judges while they are in the discharge of their duties, with the exception of a motion for the removal of a judge.

Procedure for Removal Under Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968

- A notice for removal must be signed by at least 100 members of the Lok Sabha or 50 members of the Rajya Sabha.
- Once a notice is submitted, **Speaker of Lok Sabha** or **Chairman of Rajya Sabha** may **accept or reject the motion**. If admitted in **both Houses**, a **three-member inquiry committee** is constituted jointly by the Speaker and the Chairman.
- **The committee consists of:** A Supreme Court judge, A Chief Justice of a High Court, A distinguished jurist.
- The committee must **investigate the charges** and submit its report within **three months**.
- The **Secretary-General** of Parliament facilitates the process.
- The **committee's report** is tabled in Parliament. The report is followed by a **discussion and voting** in both Houses.
- If both Houses pass the motion by the required **special majority**, the judge stands **removed from office**.

- Under **Article 124(4)**, a judge can be removed by Parliament only on two grounds — **"proved misbehaviour"** and **"incapacity."** **Article 218** states that the same provisions apply to a **High Court judge**.
- For impeachment of an SC or HC judge, at least **two-thirds of those present and voting** in both **Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha** must vote in favour, and this must also be **more than 50% of the total membership** of each House.

Legal Aid Systems

Why in news: Legal services institutions under the **Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987** are mandated to provide free legal aid to **nearly 80% of India's population**.

- Between 2023-24, only **15.50 lakh people** received legal aid — a **28% rise** from the previous year. Legal aid clinics exist in rural areas, but there is **one legal service clinic for every 163 villages**.
- Legal aid gets **less than 1% of the total justice budget** (police, prisons, judiciary, legal aid).
- Article 14, 21, 22(1) and 39A, directly or indirectly, provide for legal aid.

Legal Aid Defence Counsel (LADC) Scheme

- Introduced in 2022 to represent **only accused persons**, modelled on the public defender system.
- Operational in **610 of 670 districts**. LADC has potential to reduce system burden but is still **in its early stage**.
- Focus exclusively on **criminal cases**, offering end-to-end services like bail, remand, trial, and appeals.
- Involves establishing dedicated **LADC offices in districts** with full-time lawyers, distinct from the panel lawyer system to professionalize criminal legal aid for those who qualify under Sec-12 of Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987.
- Includes legal advice, representation in various courts, jail visits, and assistance at the pre-arrest stage.

ADR

Why in news: Doctrine of Panch Parmeshwar embodies the principle of **collective consensus in dispute resolution**.

- According to the **National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG)**, the **total number of pending cases** in India is **4,57,96,239**.
- **Constitutional basis of ADR** is in **Article 39A**, which mandates State to **provide equal justice and free legal aid**.
- Various **ADR processes** — **arbitration, conciliation, mediation, and judicial settlement (Lok Adalat)** — are recognised under **Section 89 of the Code of Civil Procedure, 1908**.
- **Arbitration Act, 2021** provides for establishment of an **Indian Arbitration Council**, giving **legal backing to arbitration**.
- The law **fixes a maximum period of 180 days** for dispute resolution, ensuring **faster justice**.
- If a party is **dissatisfied**, they can **exit the process after two sessions of mediation**.
- **Lok Adalats** are governed by the **Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987**, inspired by **Article 39A**.
- Apart from **Permanent Lok Adalat (Section 22-B)**, provisions of the **National Lok Adalat** and **e-Lok Adalat** are helpful in strengthening the justice system, provided **awareness** is made **effective and widespread**.
- The **first Lok Adalat** in India was organised in **Gujarat in 1999**.
- The **biggest feature** of Lok Adalats is that their **decisions are final** and **no appeal** is allowed. This is because these courts **resolve disputes before litigation**, but a **dissatisfied party** can still **file a suit in a court**.

- **NJDG** provides **real-time data** on **case pendency** and **disposal**, offering a **comprehensive view** of the judicial system's performance for district, subordinate, HCs, and SC. NJDG is a key part of the eCourts Project, which aims to modernize the Indian judiciary through technology and contains details on both civil and criminal cases.
- **India Justice Report** ranks States based on **case pendency, court infrastructure, and judge availability**.

e-Courts Project

Why in news: UK has expressed interest in India's e-Courts project.

- e-Courts project is in **third phase**, focusing on **upgrading digital infrastructure of the subordinate judiciary**. Under **Phase III**, system is set to be **migrated to cloud technology**, enabling **faster, secure, scalable data management**.
- The project is governed by the **e-Committee of SC**, established under the **National Policy and Action Plan for Implementation of ICT in the Indian Judiciary – 2005**, and department of Justice.
- The project also aims to **establish and expand virtual courts** to facilitate **online hearings**.
- Initiative under the National e-Governance Plan. The project has evolved through distinct phases since its inception in 2007: Phase I (2011–2015): Focused on basic computerization. Phase II (2015–2023): Emphasized service delivery to litigants and lawyers and launching the National Judicial Data Grid (NJDG).

Master of Roster

Why in news: SC found a HC Justice's **order** so "erroneous" that it directed to pair him with a **senior judge** and not assign him a **criminal roster**.

- SC clarified it never intended to interfere with the "**master of roster**" powers of the HC Chief Justice. The Court held that when **institutional concerns affecting rule of law** arise, it may step in to take **corrective steps**.
- SC has **no power of superintendence** over HCs. **Exclusive authority of a HC Chief Justice** to manage the **roster**.

NJAC vs Collegium

- CJI orally said the SC would **consider a plea seeking to revive the NJAC** and bring an end to the **Collegium system** of judicial appointments to the constitutional courts.
- **First Judges Case (1982):** In S.P. Gupta vs. UoI, SC ruled that "consultation" with CJI in judicial appointments did not mean "concurrence." This gave the executive more control.
- **Second Judges Case (1993):** In SC AOR Association vs. UoI, SC overruled First Judges Case, and changed the meaning of "consultation" to "concurrence", stating CJI's role in appointments should be primary. This established collegium, where CJI consults senior judges, shifting power to judiciary.
- **Third Judges Case (1998):** In the context of a Presidential reference under Article 143 of the Constitution, SC reaffirmed decision made in Second Judges Case. It led the SC to reaffirm collegium system, requiring CJI to consult four senior-most judges. This made collegium's collective opinion binding on the government.
- **Memorandum of Procedure (MoP):** Created under Second and Third Judges Cases, MoP outlines the process for appointing judges. Framed by the government and the judiciary together.
- **NJAC**, introduced in 2014 by 99th amendment, aimed to replace collegium with a commission including the CJI, two judges, Law Minister, and two eminent persons.
- **Fourth Judges Case (2015):** SC declared the NJAC unconstitutional.
- **Article 50** mandates separation of judiciary-executive. Collegium is not mentioned in Constitution. Article 124 refers to "consultation," which SC interpreted as "**concurrence**" in the 1993 Second Judges Case.

HC Collegium

Why in news: CJI clarified that the **SC Collegium** cannot **dictate names** to **HC Collegiums** for judicial appointments. **High Court Collegiums** take the **first call** on who they want as judges, while the Supreme Court can only **recommend names**. Out of the sanctioned **judicial strength of 1,122 judges**, only **777 judges** are serving across the **25 State HCs**.

District Judges

Why in news: SC held that **judicial officers** with **7 years in the Bar** before recruitment to the subordinate judicial service are **entitled to be appointed** as **District/Additional District Judges** who are considered for **appointment to HC**.

- Earlier, only **practising lawyers** with **seven years' experience** were **eligible for direct recruitment** as **District Judges**.
- **In-service judicial officers**, even with **7 years of prior practice**, were **not considered**, leading to a **lack of drive** and contributing to **pendency in lower courts**.
- The court noted that **Article 233(2)** does **not prescribe eligibility criteria** for persons already in **judicial service** for being appointed as **District Judges**. The **minimum age** for appointment as **District Judge or Additional District Judge**, for both **advocates and judicial officers**, is fixed at **35 years** as on the **date of application**.
- (SC reinstated the requirement of **3 years of legal practice** to appear for **subordinate judicial services exams**).

Women Judges

Why in news: Justice B.V. Nagarathna remains the **only woman** in the current bench.

- **11 women** have been appointed to the Supreme Court, constituting just **3.8%** of the total **287 judges** since 1950.
- Justice **Fathima Beevi** is the only judge from a **minority faith**. Only **one woman lawyer**, Justice **Indu Malhotra**, was appointed **directly** to the Court from the Bar, a stark contrast to the **nine male lawyers**.
- The first woman **CJI** will be Justice **Nagarathna**, who is scheduled to serve as CJI for just **36 days** in 2027.

- The current appointment process involves the **CJI** and a **Collegium of the four senior most judges**, with recommendations sent to the **Prime Minister** and **President**. **Origin:**
 - **Second Judges Case (1993)** → created Collegium.
 - **Third Judges Case (1998)** → entrenched it, giving primacy to **five senior-most SC judges**.
- Deliberations are **private, reasons rarely disclosed**.
- Out of **25 High Courts**, only **one is headed by a woman Chief Justice**. In contrast, **lower courts fare better (38%)**, as judges are **selected through competitive examinations**, ensuring **equal opportunities for women and men**.
- The **President of India** suggested the creation of an **All-India Judicial Service (AIJS)** to recruit judges through a **merit-based, competitive, and transparent process**.
- **Article 312 of the Constitution** empowers **Parliament** to **create new All-India Services**, including an **All-India Judicial Service**, to ensure **uniform recruitment, training, and service standards**.

Ad hoc Judges

- Alarmed by the **backlog**, the **Supreme Court** activated **Article 224A of the Constitution**. It allows **Chief Justices of High Courts** to appoint **retired former judges as ad hoc judges** to clear **criminal appeals**.
- The **response from High Courts** has been **lukewarm**, with several courts **not sending names for ad hoc appointments**. Some retired judges feel **embarrassed** to sit as a **junior judge** with a **serving judge**.

Pendency of Cases

Why in news: The **pendency of cases in the Supreme Court** has reached an **all-time high of 88,417** cases. This figure includes **69,553 civil cases** and **18,864 criminal cases**, according to the **National Judicial Data Grid**.

- The court is functioning with its **full sanctioned strength of 34 judges**.

Client Info Confidentiality

- The **Supreme Court** held that **investigating agencies cannot summon lawyers** or **coerce them to disclose professional communications made in confidence with their clients**.
- Compelling a lawyer to **prejudice his or her client** without consent amounts to an **“outrageous” infringement** of the client’s **constitutional right against self-incrimination under Article 20(3)**.
- The **ability of lawyers to protect their clients without fear** is part of their **fundamental rights under Article 19(1)(g)**(right to profession) and **Article 21** (right to life and liberty). The court highlighted that **lawyer-client privilege** is protected under **Section 132 of the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam (BSA), 2023**.
- **Exceptions** apply only if **the client consents**, or if the communication was made **in furtherance of an illegal purpose**, or if a **crime or fraud** was committed as a result.

Temple Funds

- The **Supreme Court** said that **money belonging to a temple deity** cannot be diverted to prop up **financially distressed cooperative banks**. Such money must be **saved, protected, and utilised solely** for the **interests of the temple**.

Live-in Couples

- **Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005** says that a woman who is in a **domestic relationship** has to be provided **protection, maintenance, etc.** Act has **not used the word “wife”**.
- **Section 114 of the Indian Evidence Act / Section 119(1) of Bhartiya Sakshya Adhinyam, 2023** states that if **couples live together for a significant amount of time**, they will be **presumed to be married**.

Consumer Protection

- Backlog of cases persists despite **statutory timelines** under the **Consumer Protection Act, 2019**. **Section 38(7)** mandates disposal within **three months** where **no testing** is required and **five months** where **testing or analysis** is necessary. The law discourages **delays**, stating **adjournments** should not ordinarily be granted without **sufficient cause** and **written reasons**.



Suspension of Sentence

- A three-judge vacation bench of the **Supreme Court** stayed the **Delhi High Court’s judgment** suspending the **life sentence** of **Kuldeep Singh Sengar** and granting him **bail pending appeal** in the **2017 Unnao rape case**.
- The case relates to allegations that in **2017**, the survivor, then a **minor**, was raped by the **then-sitting MLA** at his residence. Trial court convicted Sengar and he was sentenced to **imprisonment for the remainder of his natural life**.
- Under **Section 389 of the CrPC, 1973** (now **Section 430 of the BNSS, 2023**), a convict may seek **suspension of execution of sentence** and **bail**. **Suspension of sentence** halts only the **punishment** and not the **finding of guilt**.

- It is a **discretionary judicial power**. In serious offences punishable with **life imprisonment**, suspension is an **exception**.
- The High Court focused on conviction under **Section 5(c) of the POCSO Act**. Section 5(c) deals with **aggravated penetrative sexual assault** by a **public servant**.
- The **POCSO Act does not define "public servant"**. Under **Section 2(2) of the POCSO Act**, meanings are drawn from the **IPC, CrPC, JJ Act, or IT Act**. Only the **IPC, under Section 21**, defines "public servant", excluding **elected legislators**. Relying on **R.S. Nayak vs. A.R. Antulay (1984)**, the HC held that an **MLA is not a public servant**. This differed from the trial court, which relied on the **Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988** definition.
- The HC held, **prima facie**, that **Section 5(c) POCSO** and **Section 376(2)(b) IPC** were inapplicable. This formed the **basis for suspending the sentence and granting bail**.

Criminal Justice System

1 Year of Criminal Laws

- FIRs are registered via **CCTNS**, a core of the **Inter-operable Criminal Justice System (ICJS)**.
- A significant development is the **'e-Sakshya' mobile app** for real-time collection and preservation of **evidence**. Developed by **NIC** in consultation with **MHA**. **NIC** is also the nodal agency for implementing **ICJS**, connecting police with **labs, prosecution, jails and courts**.
- 'e-Sakshya' data is stored in **National Government Cloud** via **Sakshya lockers**.
- Mandatory **visit of forensic expert** to the crime scene under **Section 176 of BNSS** is proving helpful.
- Establishment of **Central Forensic Science Laboratory (CFSL)** and **National Forensic Science University (NFSU)** in Raipur announced by **Union Home Minister**.

UAPA & Bail

Why in news: **Delhi High Court** has **denied bail** once again to **Umar Khalid** and others.

- Court held that **5-year-long custody** is **not sufficient ground for bail**, relying on the stringent provisions of **UAPA. Section 43D(5)** of UAPA **bans bail** if there are **"reasonable grounds"** to believe the accusations are **prima facie true**.
- The law **forbids detailed examination of evidence** at the bail stage, forcing courts to **accept the prosecution's narrative**. If the **charge sheet alleges conspiracy** and contains **voluminous material**, the **accused remains jailed**.
- The UAPA's **180-day investigation period** and **prohibition of anticipatory bail** create a system where **the process itself becomes the punishment**.
- If **delay becomes a substitute for conviction**, it **undermines Articles 19 and 21**.

498-A

Why in news: In **Shivangi Bansal vs Sahib Bansal (2024)**, SC endorsed suspension of arrest or coercive action under **Section 498-A IPC** (now Section 85 of BNS).

- **Section 498-A:** Enacted in **1983** to penalise **cruelty against women** by husband or relatives. Punishment: **3 years imprisonment + fine**. **Cruelty** includes **dowry harassment, suicide instigation, and injury to life/health**.
- **Allahabad HC** directed **two months' cool-off period** with **no arrests** and creation of **family welfare committees**.
- **SC endorsement** amounts to **blanket protection** for accused.

Preponderance of Probabilities

- The **test of preponderance of probabilities** is the standard of proof used in civil cases to determine that a claim is true if it is more likely than not. It requires a party to convince the court that their version of events is more probable than the other side's, even if it doesn't reach the level of certainty required in criminal cases. This standard is less strict than the **"beyond a reasonable doubt"** standard used in criminal cases.

Principled Criminalisation

Why in news: **Procedural criminal law** often receives less attention compared to **substantive criminal law**. (Substantive law deals with **'what' crimes and punishments exist**, while procedural law deals with **'how' action is taken**).

- **SC ruling in Imran Pratapgarhi vs State of Gujarat** highlights that **principled criminalisation** depends on adherence to **criminal procedure law**, namely **BNSS**.

Key Provision in BNSS – Section 173 (3)

- This section grants **discretion to police** in investigating offences punishable with **3–7 years of imprisonment**.
- Instead of immediate FIR registration, police may: Conduct a **14-day preliminary inquiry**, Check for **prima facie case** before proceeding. Aim: **Prevent unnecessary criminalisation** and **police overreach**.
- The Court interpreted the **preliminary inquiry** as a **mandatory obligation**, not an option. Observed that police acted without first doing a **preliminary inquiry**, as required under Section 173(3).
- It **quashed an FIR** against Rajya Sabha MP **Imran Pratapgarhi** for posting a poem, citing **freedom of speech**.

e-Zero FIR Initiative

Why in news: The Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre (I4C) has launched a new system that automatically converts financial cybercrime complaints above ₹10 lakh into FIRs.

- e-Zero FIR initiative was launched on a pilot basis in Delhi.
- The initiative aims to expedite investigations and crack down swiftly on cybercriminals.
- The move addresses difficulties faced by victims in recovering money lost to financial cybercrime.
- The process integrates systems of I4C's National Cybercrime Reporting Portal, Delhi Police's e-FIR system, and NCRB's Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS).
- The Ministry of Home Affairs has stated that the initiative will be extended nationwide soon.

• I4C was established in 2018 under MHA to coordinate & address cybercrime-related issues at national level.

National Cybercrime Reporting Portal:

- Started in 2019 under MHA, managed by I4C. Enables victims to report cybercrimes like online financial frauds, hacking, identity theft, cyberbullying, child pornography, etc.
- Provides both secure and anonymous complaint mechanisms, with focus on women and children-related crimes. Victims can upload evidence, track complaint status online, and access cyber safety tips.
- Aims to strengthen coordination among law enforcement agencies, banks, and financial institutions for faster action against cyber fraud.

CCTNS:

- Initiated in 2009 by MHA as Mission Mode Project under National e-Governance Plan. Connects 17,130+ police stations nationwide, creating centralized platform for crime investigation, detection, law enforcement.
- Records crime data, FIRs, investigations, and charge-sheets in digital format for nationwide tracking.
- Provides complaint tracking, verification, and police clearance through an integrated online portal.
- Linked with the Integrated Criminal Justice System (ICJS), connecting police, courts, prisons, prosecution, and forensic labs for efficient justice delivery.

Biometrics of Arrestees

Why in news: The police in Delhi and Rajasthan have become the first in India to record, store, and analyse biometric data of arrested and accused individuals. Biometric data includes fingerprints, retina and iris scans, while DNA collection is yet to be rolled out due to limited forensic capabilities.

- The data collection began under the Criminal Procedure Identification Act (CrPI Act), 2022, which has come into effect on a pilot basis in these two states. The Act empowers police and central agencies to collect, store, and analyse physical and biological samples of arrested individuals.
- Although the Act and its Rules do not explicitly mention DNA and face-matching, the NCRB has informed State police that these will be implemented in around 1,300 locations across India.
- The NCRB has finalised SOPs for collecting fingerprints, palm-prints, footprints, photographs, iris and retina scans, physical and biological samples, and behavioural attributes.
- Forensic laboratories and NCRB have also finalised DNA loci pointers for use in DNA profiling under the Criminal Procedure (Identification) System. Collected data is being stored on a central server managed by NCRB.

Civil and Criminal Cases

Why in news: The SC has recently intervened twice in cases where High Courts allowed criminal proceedings to continue in what were essentially civil disputes.

- Civil law resolves disputes between private individuals/organisations; its goal is remedy, not punishment.
- Remedies include monetary compensation (damages) or injunctions (orders to do/not do something).
- Examples: property disputes, contract breaches, divorce, child custody, recovery of money.
- Criminal law deals with offences against the state/society; objective is to punish the offender and deter crime.
- The State (prosecutor) initiates proceedings; punishments include fines, imprisonment, death penalty.
- In civil cases, proof required is "preponderance of probabilities" (more likely true). In criminal cases, proof must be "beyond a reasonable doubt" due to serious consequences like loss of liberty.
- Perception: civil cases are slower than criminal trials. As of 2025: 70.17% criminal trials disposed within 1 year. Only 37.91% civil suits resolved in same timeframe.

• Motilal Setalvad, first Attorney General of India, stated that the Company's judicial hold began with the cession of Bombay by the Portuguese in 1668.

• IPC 1860 came into force in 1862 & was longest-surviving common law code in the world. BNS has replaced IPC.

• Bharatiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS) has replaced CrPC, 1973.

• The Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA) has replaced the Indian Evidence Act, 1872.

Support to Poor Prisoners Scheme

Why in news: Union raised concerns over States and Union Territories not utilizing funds allocated under the scheme.

- **MHA** emphasized that the scheme aims to **provide relief to poor prisoners unable to get bail or release due to financial constraints**.
- As per SOP, if an **undertrial prisoner is not released within a week after bail**, jail authorities must inform the **Secretary, District Legal Services Authority (DLSA)**. DLSA will check if the prisoner **cannot furnish financial surety** and forward such cases to the **District Level Empowered Committee** (chaired by a District Collector nominee and including a Prison Judge) every 2–3 weeks.
- After examining cases, **Empowered Committee may recommend relief up to ₹40,000 per case**.
 - **Support to Poor Prisoners Scheme** launched by the **Ministry of Home Affairs** in **2023**.
 - Provides **financial assistance** to **poor prisoners** who cannot **pay fines** or **secure bail** due to **financial constraints**.
 - Involves **district-level Empowered Committees** that assess cases and sanction up to **₹40,000 per case**. **Undertrials**: Up to ₹40,000 per case for bail surety. **Convicted**: Up to ₹25,000 for unpaid court fines. **Note**: Amounts exceeding these limits require approval from the State Level Oversight Committee.
 - **NCRB** acts as the **Central Nodal Agency** for **fund disbursement**.
 - Aims to **relieve indigent prisoners** and **reduce jail overcrowding** caused by **economic inability to secure release**.
 - The scheme **excludes accused persons** under the **Prevention of Corruption Act, PMLA, NDPS Act, UAPA**, and other notified laws.
 - The benefit is denied to those accused of **heinous crimes**, including **terrorism, national security offences, dowry deaths, rape, human trafficking**, and offences under the **POCSO Act**.

Elections

ECINET

Why in news: ECI with CDAC made digital platform **ECINET** for voters, officials, political parties, and civil society.

- **ECINET** will replace and integrate **over 40 existing mobile and web applications** (**Voter Helpline, Voter Turnout, cVIGIL, Suvidha 2.0, ESMS, Saksham, and KYC app**).
- It will reduce user burden by **eliminating the need to download multiple apps** and remember different logins.
- **Only authorised EC officials** will be allowed to enter data on ECINET. In case of data conflict, the **statutory form data** will prevail. ECINET is part of EC's **standardisation drive** addressing issues like **electoral roll anomalies** and **duplicate voter ID numbers**. It will integrate **death registration data** from **Registrar General** for removal of deceased voters.
- **Presiding officers** at each polling station will now **enter turnout figures every two hours** directly into the **ECINET app** on polling day. Previously, data was **collected manually**, relayed via **calls or messages**, and updated with a **4–5 hour delay** or even the next day. Now, **approximate voting trends** will be updated **every two hours**.
- **ECINET** allows voters to search the **one-billion-record database** using **mobile numbers, EPIC numbers, names, dates of birth, addresses, and family relations**.
- It detects **duplicate or missing entries** and supports services such as **registration, deletion, corrections, Aadhaar linking, locating constituencies and polling booths, contacting BLOs, downloading EPIC cards, filing complaints, and tracking their status**.

Related News:

- The **maximum electors per polling station** has been revised from **1,500 to 1,200**. **Additional polling booths** will be established in **gated communities and high-rises**. EC aims to ensure that **no voter has to travel more than 2 km** to cast their vote. **Voter slips** have been redesigned to enhance **clarity and visibility**.
- **EC issued instructions** to enhance voter confidence by **allowing mobile deposit facilities** outside polling stations. **Mobile phones** shall be permitted **within 100 metres of polling stations** in **switched-off mode**. **No mobile phones** will be allowed **inside the polling station** in line with **Rule 49M of the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961**.
- **Returning Officers** can exempt polling stations from the mobile rule based on **adverse local conditions**. The EC **rationalised canvassing norms**, disallowing **electioneering within 100 metres** of a polling station on **poll day**.
- The changes align with the **Representation of the People Act, 1951** and **Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961**.

NOTA

Why in news: PIL seeking to make **NOTA mandatory option** in every election, including **single-candidate contests**.

- **Rule 49-O Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961** : If an elector decided not to record his vote, a remark to this effect shall be made against the said entry in **Form 17A** by the presiding officer and the signature or thumb impression of the elector shall be obtained against such remark (**No Privacy**).
- **NOTA was introduced in 2013**, following **PIL by PUCL**, advocating **right to not vote while maintaining secrecy**.
- EC opposes **compulsory NOTA inclusion** in uncontested elections. Since **1971**, only **6 uncontested Lok Sabha elections**; since **1952**, only **9 candidates elected unopposed**.
- In **Lok Sabha elections (2014, 2019, 2024)**, around **1%** voted for **NOTA**.

Index Cards

Why in news: EC has **upgraded the mechanism for generating Index Cards**, making it **more technology-driven**.

- The **Index Card** is a **non-statutory, post-election statistical reporting format** that promotes **constituency-level data accessibility** for **researchers, academics, and policymakers**.
- The **new system replaces traditional manual methods**, which were **time-consuming and prone to delays**.
- **Index Cards form the foundation** for generating about **35 Statistical Reports for Lok Sabha elections** and **14 Statistical Reports for State Assembly polls**.

Model Code of Conduct

- **Norms for political parties and candidates**, evolved by **consensus** among parties. It is **not legally binding**.
- MCC becomes **operational** from the announcement of the election schedule until the announcement of results. It lays down guidelines for general conduct during election campaigns by political parties and candidates.
- For **parties in power**, it prohibits announcing financial grants, promising new projects, or laying foundation stones that could influence voters. However, it does not restrict grants or disbursements under ongoing programmes.

SIR

Why in news: ECI initiated a **Special Intensive Revision** of electoral rolls in Bihar — the **first since 2004**.

Migrant Voting

- India lacks a **national mechanism for remote voting** for migrants, despite a 2024 proposal by the ECI.
- **Remote Electronic Voting Machine** was **piloted in 2023** in 72 constituencies, but raised concerns.
- **Postal ballots**, currently for armed forces, can be **extended to migrants** through **advance registration**.

SIR Facts

- Under **Article 324**, the ECI has authority to supervise electoral roll preparation. The **RP Act, 1950**:
 - **Section 16** disqualifies non-citizens.
 - **Section 19** requires an individual to be **18+ and ordinarily resident**.
 - **Section 20** clarifies that **property ownership doesn't equal residence**, and **temporary absence doesn't negate it**.
 - **Section 21** allows special revisions when justified — in Bihar, due to **urbanisation, migration, and duplicate entries**.
- Unlike the 2003 SIR (door-to-door), the 2025 SIR requires **each elector to submit an enumeration form**.
- Pre-2003 voters may use **roll extract**, but post-2003 voters must furnish **birth-related documents**.
- **At least one document** (among 12 prescribed) is needed to prove **date/place of birth** — including Aadhar, birth certificate, passport, caste certificate, pension papers, EPIC, ration card.
- ECI empowered **Electoral Registration Officers (EROs)** to **refer suspected foreign nationals** to authorities under the **Citizenship Act, 1955**. However, there's **no defined methodology or checklist** for such referrals.
- While the **Home Ministry** holds the authority on citizenship, it may **delegate powers to states**.
- For voters without required documents, the **ERO is empowered** to decide on their **inclusion or exclusion** from the voters' list, as per the **Election Commission's March 2023 manual**.
- The ERO's decision is based on **field verification, BLO reports, and testimonials** from **village heads and families**.
- In the absence of documents, **oath from parents or Sarpanch**, and even **visible examination by the BLO**, can serve as **proof of age**. ERO can conduct **local enquiries** to establish **residence proof** if documentation is missing.

Legal and Administrative Framework

- EROs are appointed under **Section 13B of the Representation of the People Act, 1950**. Typically, **civil service or revenue officers**, such as **sub-divisional officers**, are appointed as EROs. In **Bihar**, EROs are from the **Bihar Administrative Service**, generally of **Senior Deputy Collector rank** or above.
- **Aadhaar was excluded** as valid proof of citizenship or birth. SC directed EC to accept Aadhaar as the **12th valid document** for this process. Under **Form 6 of the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960**, Aadhaar is accepted for **residence and DOB verification**.
- **RP Act suggests migrants should register where they live**, but preserves rights of **temporarily absent individuals**
- **Rule 8 of the Registration of Electors Rules** states that applicants must provide info **"to the best of their ability"**.

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.

- ECI's **Form 6**, used to register new electors, earlier required only **signed declaration of citizenship**, without **documentation**. For Bihar revision, ECI has introduced **new declaration form requiring proof of citizenship**.

Revision of Bihar Electoral Rolls

- **Article 324(1)** of the Constitution empowers ECI to **supervise electoral roll preparation**.
- **Section 21(3)** of RPA allows the ECI to **order special revision** at any time.
- Under **Registration of Electors' Rules, 1960**, revisions may be **intensive, summary, or both**.
- **Intensive revision** = fresh roll; **summary revision** = amending existing roll. EC conducts **summary revisions** before elections and

may conduct **SIR** anytime as permitted by law.

- Past intensive revisions took place in **1952–56, 1957, 1961, 1965, 1966, 1983–84, 1987–89, 1992, 1993, 1995, 2002, 2003, and 2004.**

Bihar Becomes First State to Use Mobile App for Voting

- Bihar pioneered mobile phone voting during municipal bypolls and elections in six Nagar Panchayats.
- Facility was extended to senior citizens, disabled persons, and pregnant women.
- Voters also accessed the State Election Commission website for voting.
- Eligible voters could install E-SECBHR app, made by C-DAC.
- App required voters to link their mobile number with the voter list.
- Two voters per mobile number were allowed (It refers to a feature of the Voter Helpline App that enabled the use of a single mobile number for logging in multiple registered voters during the SIR with identity verification through voter ID, blockchain, face-matching, and scanning technology for security and transparency).

MDCEI

- EC reactivated the **Multi-Departmental Committee on Election Intelligence (MDCEI)** after six years.
- Aim: curb money, liquor, drugs, freebies used to influence voters.
- Includes 17 departments and agencies, such as: CBDT, CBIC, ED, DRI, CEIB, FIU-India, RBI, NCB, RPF, CISF, BSF, CRPF, SSB, BCAS, AAI, Department of Posts, Indian Banks' Association.

| Form Number | Description |
|-------------|--|
| Form 6 | Application to be submitted by new voters to be registered as an elector. As per section 19 of the RP Act, the qualifying dates for completion of 18 years of age, are 1st day of January, April, July and October of the year in which the electoral roll is prepared or revised. |
| Form 6A | Form for inclusion by an Overseas Elector. Non-Resident Indians who have shifted out of India, on account of education, employment or otherwise, can register as an elector in the constituency in which their address as per passport is located. |
| Form 7 | Objection for proposed inclusion/deletion of name from existing roll. This form can be filed by a registered elector in a constituency in respect of any other registered elector or proposed inclusion in the roll or for deletion of applicant's own name. |
| Form 8 | Form for shifting residence/correction of entries. This form can be filed by a registered elector for shifting of residence or correction of entries. |
| Form 5 | Notice of publication of draft electoral roll by the ERO. |
| Form 9 | List of applications for inclusion of names received in Form 6. |
| Form 10 | List of applications for objection to inclusion of names received in Form 7. |
| Form 11 | List of objections/applications for correction of entries received in Form 8. |
| Form 11A | List of applications for shifting of address within the constituency received in Form 8. |
| Form 11B | List of applications for shifting of address outside the constituency received in Form 8. |

*Forms 9 to 11B are prepared and published by the ERO

EC Bars Print Ads on Poll Eve and Voting Day

- No political party, candidate, or individual may publish **print advertisements** on poll eve or polling day without **pre-certification** from the Media Certification and Monitoring Committee.
- Candidates must declare **authentic social media accounts** while filing nominations for **pre-certification of all political advertisements** on electronic media, including **social media**, before publication. Political parties should submit a **statement of expenditure** incurred on campaigning through the **Internet, including social media websites**, to the EC within **75 days** of the completion of the election.
- Bulk SMS and audio messages are banned during the **48-hour silence period** before polls conclude.
- While parties are legally required to submit **expenditure statements to the EC, digital spending is often disclosed ambiguously**, with payments listed under **platform names such as 'Facebook'** rather than the **specific entities**.
- Parties are required to report what they spend, but are **not required to disclose what others spend on their behalf**.

SIR 2.0 Across 12 States/UTs

- Chhattisgarh, Goa, Gujarat, Kerala, MP, Rajasthan, TN, UP, WB & Andaman & Nicobar, Lakshadweep, Puducherry.
- Verification burden placed partly on **citizens and political party Booth Level Agents**, raising concerns.
- EC directs **BLOs to make three house visits** for verification. No documents to be collected from electors during **enumeration**. For non-returned forms, BLOs must conduct inquiries and **record reasons** (death, duplication, etc.).
- Booth-wise lists of excluded electors to be **publicly displayed** in Panchayat Bhavans, urban local bodies, and Block Development Offices.

Rajasthan SIR

- Rajasthan completed **100% digitisation of its electoral roll** under the **Special Intensive Revision (SIR)**, becoming the **first State in the country** to do so.
- Rajasthan now also **leads the country in voter mapping**, with **more than 97% of the mapping work completed**, and as a result, **only 3% of voters** will need to **furnish documents** during the **claims-objections phase**.

Electoral Roll Responsibility

- SIR 2.0 is a **paperless exercise** aimed at improving the accuracy of **electoral rolls**.
- Under the **RPA, 1950, duplicate entries** in electoral rolls are violations, though often unintentional.
- **Section 22(b)** states that if a voter changes residence within the same constituency, the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) must transpose the entry to the correct part of the roll.
- **Section 23(2)** applies when a voter moves to another constituency and mandates inclusion in the new roll if the ERO is satisfied of eligibility. The ERO of the previous constituency must be informed to strike off the old entry.
- **Sections 17 and 18** prohibit multiple registrations, whether in different constituencies or within the same constituency.

- ERO bears **responsibility** for ensuring **accurate, prompt, and simultaneous transposition, inclusion, and deletion**. In **Form 8**, a voter relocating to another State may **retain or receive a new Elector's Photo Identity Card number**.
- **Form 6** is meant for **new inclusions**; if a voter **falsely declares** that they are not registered elsewhere, it is a **legal violation**. **Responsibility** for false declarations is **shared by the voter and verification officials**.
- The **ECINet** is the **digital backbone** of India's **electoral roll system**, managed by **C-DAC, Pune**. **ECINet** can **detect duplicates, flag inconsistencies, and facilitate corrections** after **authorized verification**. **Duplicate entries** should automatically **trigger alerts for review and deletion**.

SIR 2003 vs 2025

- In **2003**, the onus of entering eligible names on the electoral rolls was wholly on the **Enumerator (now Booth Level Officer)** and not on the elector. There was **no enumeration form** to be filled by electors in 2003 and no **deadline** to be met by potential electors, unlike **SIR 2025**.
- There was **no general requirement** in 2003 for all potential electors to provide **at least one document**.
- There was **no general mandate to verify citizenship** of each elector in 2003. The **Guidelines of 2003** permitted inquiry into citizenship only for individuals declared **'foreigners' by competent tribunals**.
- **Gauhati High Court**, in **Dr. Manmohan Singh (1999)**, interpreted requirements in the **RPA, 1950** expansively, holding that an **ordinary resident** is a **habitual resident with intention to dwell permanently**. **ECI** and the **judiciary** presumed that **any resident adult** was a **valid voter by default**.
- **SIR inverts this presumption**, requiring **every elector**, irrespective of prior voting, to **prove legitimacy** using **old records or documents listed by the ECI**.

Citizenship Scrutiny

- **EC: Centre's power** was **"limited"** to inquiring into the **circumstances in which Indian citizens voluntarily acquired foreign citizenship**. **Section 9 of the Citizenship Act, 1955** deals with **termination of citizenship** in cases of **voluntary acquisition of foreign citizenship**. **EC** argued that it is only for this **limited purpose** that **exclusive jurisdiction is vested in Centre**, and every other aspect related to citizenship can be inquired into by other authorities.
- **Indian citizenship** is one of the **constitutional preconditions under Article 326** for **entry into the voter list**.
- The Commission emphasised that the **SIR exercises** was **not meant to determine the status of citizenship**.
- The Commission reiterated that its power to **scrutinise citizenship** flowed directly from **Article 324**, which empowers it to **supervise and control the conduct of elections**.
- **No parliamentary law** could oust the **EC's jurisdiction**, and even the **authority of Parliament** to make laws on elections under **Article 327** must align with the **commission's plenary powers**.
- The **RPA**, through **Sections 16 and 19**, requires that voters must be **Indian citizens**. **Section 16** disqualifies **non-citizens** from being included in the **electoral roll**. Electors must be **"ordinarily resident"** in a **constituency** to be registered.
- An **SIR**, conducted under **Section 21(3) of ROPA**, had to be **"intense"** and was triggered by **"felt necessities"**.
- **Electors were required only to sign their pre-filled forms** delivered at their homes by **booth-level officers**.

State Election Commission

Can the State Election Commission delete duplicate names?

- **SEC** is formed under **Articles 243K and 243ZA**. It is solely responsible for the **superintendence, direction, and control** of elections to Panchayats and Municipalities. It does **not** have the right to **add or delete names** from voters' lists.
- Constitutional provisions give the **SEC superintendence, direction and control** of elections to urban and rural local bodies. Under the five Local Body Acts, the **SEC does not** prepare a separate voters' list.
- It uses the lists prepared by the **Election Commission under the RP Act, 1950**, by **bifurcating** them into the relevant wards. For the upcoming elections, the **SEC will use the electoral list as of July 1, 2025**.
- The **SEC** is responsible for **delimitation** of all Assembly constituencies into **wards**.
- It divides the names of voters listed under each Assembly constituency into the **respective wards**.
- While the **SEC** cannot add or delete names, it will **mark double and doubtful entries**.

Machine Readable Electoral Rolls

Why in news: **Opposition** has demanded that **EC** provide **machine-readable voter rolls** to all parties, arguing it would help spot **duplicate entries and fraud** more easily.

- Voter rolls prepared by **district-level officials** via **ERONET** under **EC** authority.
- **EC provides: Image PDFs** (non-searchable, photos excluded) on website, **Printouts** to parties/public.
- In **2018**, **EC** stopped uploading searchable rolls, citing **data security**. **SC in Kamal Nath vs EC (2018)** refused to compel **EC** to share machine-readable rolls despite **EC's** manual saying draft rolls should be in text mode. Court held parties could do **OCR conversion** themselves.

EC Launches e-sign

Why in news: **EC** has launched **e-sign** feature on its **ECINet portal and app** to enhance **voter identity verification**.

- Requires applicants seeking **registration, deletion, or corrections** to **verify their identity using Aadhaar-linked mobile numbers**.
- Earlier, applicants could submit **Forms 6, 7, and 8** (for **addition, deletion, and correction**) by linking a **phone number with an EPIC number**, but **no verification** of ownership was done. Now, after filling the form, applicants are **redirected to an external portal hosted by CDAC (Centre for Development of Advanced Computing)**.
- Must **enter their Aadhaar number**, generate an **OTP sent to Aadhaar linked phone**, and **consent to authentication** before submission.
- The **new e-sign feature** aims to **prevent fraudulent voter addition or deletion** from electoral rolls.

EC De-listing Political Parties

Why in news: ECI has begun steps to **de-list 345 Registered Unrecognised Political Parties (RUPPs)** that haven't contested elections in six years and whose offices could not be physically located.

- The right to form associations is a **fundamental right under Article 19(1)(c)** of the Constitution.
- **Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951** governs registration of political parties with the ECI.
- A political party must submit a **memorandum/constitution within 30 days** of formation affirming allegiance to the **Constitution, socialism, secularism, democracy, and sovereignty** of India. ECI registers such parties as **RUPPs** after verifying internal democracy provisions like periodic elections for office bearers.
- RUPPs enjoy benefits such as **tax exemption u/s 13A of the Income Tax Act, common election symbols, and 20 star campaigners**. They must report **donors contributing over ₹20,000 annually** to the ECI, as per **Section 29C of the RP Act**. Donations above ₹2,000 must be received **only via cheque or bank transfers**.
- India has over **2,800 RUPPs** but only around **750 contested the 2024 general elections**.
- **RP Act does not empower ECI** to de-register a party for not contesting elections or violating internal democracy. The **Supreme Court (2002)** held that de-registration is only possible in **exceptional cases** like fraud, disloyalty to the Constitution, or declaration as unlawful by the government.

INDIA bloc considers motion to remove CEC

Why in news: Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (**Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office**) Act, 2023 provides **immunity to CEC and ECs** for all past and present decisions.

- The CEC can only be removed from office through a process similar to that for a Supreme Court judge. This removal is typically done through impeachment, which requires a special majority vote in both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha. The grounds for removal are the same as those for a Supreme Court judge.
- Removal requires a two-thirds majority of members present and voting in both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha.

Cash Donations

- SC agreed to examine a petition seeking to **stop cash donations up to ₹2,000 to political parties** for transparency. The petition calls for all political contributions, regardless of the amount, to be brought under the income tax regime.
- It challenges the legality of clause (d) of Section 13A of the Income Tax Act, 1961.
- **Section 13A** provides tax exemptions to political parties. **Clause (d)** allows accepting cash donations of up to ₹2,000.

International IDEA

- **Gyanesh Kumar, CEC**, will assume the role of **Chairperson** of the **International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA)** for **2026**.
- International IDEA is an **intergovernmental organization** headquartered in **Stockholm, Sweden**, founded in 1995 by 14 countries including India to support sustainable democracy worldwide.
- Its **mandate** covers electoral processes, constitution-building, democracy assessments, political participation, climate change-democracy links, and digitalisation. It **provides** knowledge resources, policy tools, and capacity-building support to electoral bodies and policymakers.
- Works through **regional offices** in Europe, Latin America-Caribbean, Asia-Pacific, Africa-West Asia, North America.
- Key **activities** include comparative election data, handbooks for reform, gender and inclusion mainstreaming, conflict sensitivity, and facilitating dialogue among academics, practitioners, and governments.

Simultaneous Polls

- Law Ministry, in a submission to JPC examining the Bills on 129th amendment bill i.e. simultaneous elections, said the proposed framework **does not violate the Constitution's basic structure** or **infringe upon the federal structure**.
- **Articles 83(2) and 172(1)** provide that the term of the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies shall be **five years "unless sooner dissolved."** The **five-year tenure is neither sacrosanct nor part of the basic structure**. Bill aims to insert a new **Article 82A** (President will notify an **"appointed date"** when the simultaneous cycle begins. The terms of all State Assemblies elected after this date will automatically expire with the end of that Lok Sabha's five-year term.)
- It pointed out that the **42nd Constitutional Amendment (1976)** during the Emergency extended the tenure of legislatures to **six years**, which was later restored to five years by the **44th Amendment**.

- During the briefing, the law panel noted that the **Constitution amendment Bill** does **not require ratification by 50% of State Assemblies** to come into force because it does not directly amend the "federal provisions" listed in the proviso to Article 368(2).
- **Contrast with Phase 2:** While the 129th Bill (Phase 1) focuses on Parliament and State Assemblies, a separate proposed amendment for local body elections (municipalities and panchayats) would require state ratification since local governance falls under the State List.
- **Special Majority Required:** Bill must be passed by each House of Parliament by a special majority.

State ratification is required for:

- **Article 54 & 55:** Election of the President. **Article 73 & 162:** Extent of executive power of Union and States. **Article 241:** High Courts for Union Territories. **Chapter IV of Part V & Chapter V of Part VI:** Supreme Court and High Courts. **Chapter I of Part XI:** Distribution of legislative powers between Union and States. **Seventh Schedule:** Union, State, and Concurrent Lists. **Representation:** Representation of States in Parliament. **Article 368 itself.**

Nomination Process

- Concerns have been raised about the **arbitrary rejection of election nominations** in India, highlighting procedural flaws and excessive discretion vested in **Returning Officers (ROs)** under the **Representation of the People Act (1951)**.

Nomination Rejections and Democratic Implications

- The **most undemocratic part** of India's election process occurs **before voting**, during **nomination scrutiny**.
- Under **Sections 33–36 of the RP Act** and the **Conduct of Elections Rules (1961)**, the RO wields **broad powers to accept or reject nominations**.
- **Section 36(2)** empowers the RO to conduct a **summary inquiry** and reject nominations for **defects of a substantial character**, though the law offers **no definition** of what is "substantial."
- **Article 329(b)** bars courts from intervening during elections, leaving candidates with **no remedy until after polling**.

Procedural Traps in Nomination Scrutiny

- **Oath Trap:** The oath must be taken after filing but before scrutiny; if taken too early or too late, rejection follows.
- **Notarisation Trap:** The **Form 26 affidavit** must be notarised by the correct authority; failure leads to rejection.

Panchayats and Municipality

Panchayat Level Data

Why in news: Though the **National Data Sharing and Accessibility Policy (NDSAP), 2012** mandates open access to non-sensitive data, platforms like **data.gov.in** lack **user-friendly visualisation tools** and **analytical support**, making it **inaccessible for common citizens and even researchers**.

- The **Panchayat Advancement Index (PAI) Baseline Report 2022–23**, released in **2025**, is based on **435 unique indicators** and **566 data points** across **nine Localization of Sustainable Development Goals (LSDG) themes** aligned with the **National Indicator Framework**.
- Data from **2.16 lakh gram panchayats** were validated and analysed.
- PAI enables **sarpanches and ward members** to identify their **panchayat's performance** across **LSDGs** (Poverty Free and Enhanced Livelihoods Village, Healthy Village, Child-Friendly Village, Water Sufficient Village, Clean and Green Village, Village with Self-Sufficient Infrastructure, Socially Just and Socially Secured Village, Village with Good Governance, and Women-Friendly Village) and guides **corrective measures**. **PAI portal** offers **constituency-wise reports** for **MPs and MLAs** to tailor their interventions, thereby **linking data with action**.

Municipalities Revenue

Why in news: Urban India generates nearly **66% of GDP**, yet municipalities control less than 1% of tax revenue.

- **Municipal finance** in India heavily depends on **intergovernmental transfers, loans, and central or state schemes**.
- Following the **introduction of GST**, Indian cities **lost nearly 19% of their own revenue sources**.
- **Octroi, entry tax, and local surcharges**, which were the **traditional revenue sources for municipalities**, were **subsumed under the GST framework**.
- In **Scandinavian countries** such as **Denmark, Sweden, and Norway**, municipalities have the right to **levy and collect income taxes directly**, forming the **foundation of their welfare states**.

AI-tool 'SabhaSaar'

Why in news: On **Independence Day**, AI-powered tool '**SabhaSaar**' launched in **Tripura**, later extended to other states.

- **SabhaSaar** generates **structured minutes of Gram Sabha meetings** from **video/audio recordings** using AI.
- Panchayat officials can **upload recordings via e-GramSwaraj login**; ensures **uniformity of minutes nationwide**.
- Built on **Bhashini**, AI-powered **language translation platform** bridging **literacy, language, digital divides**. Tool **transcribes, translates, summarizes** in Indian languages (Hindi, Bengali, Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, Gujarati) + **English**.
- **Gram Sabhas** must meet **4 times a year** (Jan 26, May 1, Aug 15, Oct 2). **Panchayat NIRNAY portal** launched for **real-time monitoring** of Gram Sabha meetings. **NIRNAY** allows **scheduling, agenda circulation, citizen notifications**, ensuring **participation & transparency**.

- Gram Sabha = bedrock of Panchayati Raj System; April 24 celebrated as Panchayati Raj Day (since 73rd Amendment Act, 1993). India has 2,55,397 village panchayats (MoPR data).

- BHASHINI launched by PM (2022) under the National Language Technology Mission. Aims to provide translation services in 22 scheduled Indian languages to break linguistic barriers and improve digital access.
- AI-based language translation tool enabling real-time translation across Indian languages.
- Seeks to build a National Public Digital Platform for languages and increase Indian language content online.
- Designed to integrate technology in governance with multi-language support.
- Promotes national integration, inclusivity, and digital empowerment using AI tools.

Other digital initiatives for Gram Panchayats:

- eGramSwaraj is a web-based portal for transparency in decentralized planning, progress reporting, financial management, work-based accounting, and asset details.
- AuditOnline launched to ensure timely audit of Panchayat accounts and for maintaining audit records.
- Common Service Centres (CSCs) set up in rural areas and Gram Panchayats to provide citizen-centric services online. CSCs function through a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) under the Ministry of Electronics and IT.

Census

Census 2027

Why in news: MHA: India's next Census will conclude by March 1, 2027, marking the first enumeration in 16 years.

- Registrar-General of India (RGI) issued the official notification under Section 3 of the Census Act, 1948.
- Freezing of administrative boundaries (districts, tehsils etc.) is now in force until Census is completed.
- Reference date for most States: March 1, 2027; for snow-bound regions (J&K, Ladakh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand): October 1, 2026.

Significance of the 2027 Census

- Inclusion of caste data for the first time since 1931. (The 1941 Census in India collected caste data, but it was never published due to WW-2. SECC 2011 collected caste data along with socio-economic information but the caste data was never officially released due to significant data issues, including 46 lakh different caste names, making classification and deduplication difficult).
- Basis for delimitation of Lok Sabha and Assembly seats after 2026.
- Data to support one-third reservation for women in legislatures from 2029 elections.
- First digital Census in Indian history, aiming to speed up data processing and policy-making.

Digital Innovations and Operational Framework

- Enumerators will use smartphones and mobile apps for real-time data entry.
 - Two mobile apps and a Census Management and Monitoring System (CMMS) portal.
 - Self-enumeration option available to public.
- CMMS features: Monitors appointments, training, field progress. Allows auto-generation of some Census records.

Legal and Historical Framework

- Census governed under Union List, Census Act, 1948.
- Census Commissioner appointed by the Centre; State staff (mainly teachers) conduct enumeration.
- Process conducted in two phases:
 - House listing phase (35 questions in 2011).
 - Population enumeration phase (reference date: March 1).
- Historical references: Kautilya's Arthashastra, Ain-i-Akbari, 1872 (non-synchronous), and 1881 (first synchronous Census under W.C. Plowden).

Concerns

- Southern, Northeastern, and smaller northern States are concerned about loss of representation due to population-based delimitation.
- Lack of clarity in notification on caste enumeration and exclusion of ST faiths. ST religions classified under "Other Religious Persuasion (ORP)", unlike recognized religions. 2011 Census: Only 0.66% (79 lakh) under ORP, despite STs forming 8.6% (10.43 crore) of total population. It means, in the 2011 Census, many ST faiths were not listed as distinct religions and were clubbed under the vague category "Other Religious Persuasion (ORP)", unlike major recognized religions.

- The 84th Amendment, enacted in 2002 froze states' share of Lok Sabha seats. The freeze was based on allocations from the 1971 Census. This freeze will remain "until the relevant figures for the first Census taken after:

Do you know ?

The Indian Census is the largest administrative and statistical exercise in the world. The responsibility for conducting the decadal census lies with the Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India, which is part of the

Do you know ?

Despite its deep roots in Indian tradition, the modern understanding and usage of the word "caste" came through European intervention. The term 'caste' is not an English but a Portuguese word; when Portuguese came to India, they found that society was classified in a certain way and called it caste. Sociologist Surinder S Jodhka notes in *Caste: Oxford India Short Introductions* (2012), the term "caste" is the English translation of the Spanish word *casta*, meaning "race". Portuguese traders, who arrived on India's west coast in the 15th century, were the first to use the term in relation to Indian society. Anthropologist Morton Klass points out that there is no exact equivalent for "caste" in Indian languages.

the year 2026 have been published". The previous reference year for this freeze had been 2000.

National Population Register

- **Census enumeration and NPR update** were approved by the Cabinet in 2019, originally scheduled for 2020 but postponed due to Covid-19.
- **NPR is the precursor to NRC**, as per law. It is governed by the **Citizenship (Registration of Citizens and Issue of National Identity Cards) Rules, 2003**, framed under the **Citizenship Act, 1955**.
- **Rule 3(4)** empowers the Central Government to **set a date** for preparing the Population Register by collecting details of **usual residents**.
- **Rule 3(5)** states that after **verification**, the **Local Register of Indian Citizens** will include verified individuals from the Population Register.
- **Rule 4(4)** mentions that those with **doubtful citizenship** will be marked during verification and informed through a **specified proforma**.
- **NPR data was first collected in 2010**, during the **2011 Census house listing phase**, and **updated in 2015** via a door-to-door survey.
- **Section 14A**, added through the **2003 amendment**, allows **compulsory registration of all Indian citizens** and the issuance of **national identity cards**, with the **Registrar General** designated as the **National Registration Authority**.

Caste Census

Why in news: Cabinet has decided to include **caste-based questions** in **upcoming Census**. This marks first such inclusion since 1931. Caste Census is under administrative control of **MHA: RGI and Census Commissioner of India**.

- **'Pasmanda'**, a Persian word, means the 'ones left behind', and is used to describe **depressed classes among the Muslims**.
- **Sachar Committee** put the number of OBC and SC/ST Muslims at **40%** (all India 2004-05).
- **1871 Census** said only 19% of Muslims in India were upper caste.
- Muslim society in India consists of several status groups or biradaris that are broadly sorted in three categories: the **Ashrafs** (the 'noble' elite or the 'honourable ones'), the **Ajlafs** (backward Muslims), and the **Arzals** (Dalit Muslims).
- **Caste enumeration began in 1881** under British rule. The **1931 Census**, under **J.H. Hutton**, listed **4,147 castes and sub-castes**. He focused on **occupation-based classification** and opposed hierarchical rankings.
- **1941 Census** collected caste data but never released it.
- Every Census in independent India from **1951 to 2011** has published data on **SCs & STs, but not on other castes**. Before that, **every Census until 1931 had data on caste**.
- **Kaka Kalelkar Commission (1953)** listed **2,300 OBCs**, but its **1955 report was discarded** due to vagueness.
- **Mandal Commission (1980)** used 1931 data to estimate **52% OBCs**, recommending **27% reservation** in central education and jobs.

2011 Socio-Economic and Caste Census:

- Launched by the **Ministry of Rural Development**.
- Used **open-ended caste questions**, creating **46 lakh caste names**, mostly surnames.
- Partial data released in **2016** but **caste-specific figures withheld**. **Failed due to:** No legal mandate under **Census Act, 1948**, poorly trained enumerators, ambiguous questions and handled by **non-expert ministries**.

Census Urban Area

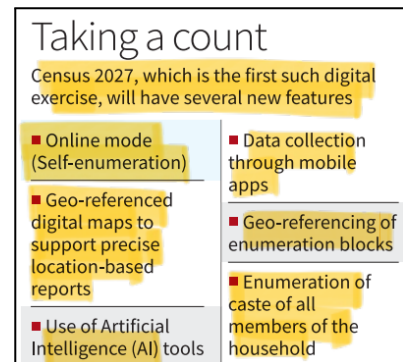
Why in news: **Census 2027** will **retain the same definition of an urban area as Census 2011** to ensure **comparability of urbanisation trends**.

- In **Census 2011**, urban units included **statutory areas** and "**census towns**" defined as villages with: **Population of at least 5,000, Density of 400 persons per sq. km and 75% of male working population in non-agricultural pursuits**.
- Census 2011 recorded **121 crore population**, with **68.8% rural and 31.2% urban**; in 1951, urban share was **17.3%**.
- An **urban unit** was defined as either a **statutory town** or a **census town**. **Statutory towns:** Formally notified as urban by the **State government** and have **urban local bodies** such as **municipal corporations, municipal councils, and nagar panchayats**.
- **Denotified tribes** were historically labeled as **'born criminal'** under the **Criminal Tribes Act, 1871** during British rule.
- **Nomadic and semi-nomadic communities** are those who **do not live in one place permanently**, moving from place to place. A **National Commission for DNTs, Nomadic and Semi-Nomadic Tribes (NCDNT)** was set up in **2006**, chaired by **Balkrishna Sidram Renke**.
- The **Renke Commission** submitted its report in **June 2008**, highlighting that these communities were **overlooked in the Constitution** and lacked **Scheduled Caste or Scheduled Tribe status**.
- Commission estimated their **population at 10.74 crore (Census 2001)**.
- A new Commission was constituted in **2014**, which submitted its report in **2018**, identifying **1,262 such communities** across India.

Trials

- **Census self-enumeration trial run** begins, marking **1st digital Census & 1st to enumerate caste in Independent India**.

- The Census will be conducted in **two phases: House Listing and Housing Operations** and **Population Enumeration** from **April 1, 2026, to February 28, 2027**.
- Both modules will be linked to the **Census Management and Monitoring System** developed by the **Registrar General** for the ongoing Census.
- **RGI** has designed a **Self-Enumeration portal** in **English** for the exercise. **Aadhaar** or **mobile number** to be **mandatorily collected** during the self-enumeration process.
- Data will be collected using two mobile applications: **Digital Layout Map (DLM)** and **Census 2027 – Houselist**.
- The **DLM app** digitally replicates the **traditional method** used by supervisors and enumerators to draw **notional sketches** for **houselisting blocks**, the primary data collection units. The app records **building coordinates (latitude and longitude)**, **locality names, roads or streets**, and **building numbers**. The app also captures the **building type**, classifying structures as **pucca** or **kutcha**.
- Census 2027 proposes to retain the same definition of an **urban area** that was used in **Census 2011** to ensure uniformity of comparison. **UN Statistical Commission** has introduced a global method, the **'Degree of Urbanisation'**, for a clearer delineation of urban, peri-urban, and rural areas.
- **Delhi** is set to be among world's **5 largest agglomerations (by population)** based on UN estimates. UN considers such agglomerations by their **true extent rather than administrative boundaries**, but Census records them separately.
- **Section 8(2) of the Census Act, 1948** states that **every person** of whom any question is asked under **sub-section (1)** shall be **legally bound to answer** such question to the **best of his knowledge or belief**.



GOVERNANCE
Education

QS Rankings & Index

Why in news: In the **QS Asia Rankings 2025**, **India** topped the list with **193 universities**, ahead of **China's 135**.

QS World University Rankings 2026

- For the first time, over 50 Indian universities have made it to the top 1,500 in the QS World University Rankings 2026, up from 11 in 2015 to 54 in 2026. IIT Delhi secured highest Indian rank at 123, followed by IIT Bombay, IIT Madras, IIT Kharagpur, IISc Bengaluru.
- Eight new institutions, including Ashoka University & Shiv Nadar Institute of Eminence, debuted in rankings.
- It is an annual global ranking of universities, evaluating over 1,500 institutions.
- It is published annually by London-based global higher education analytics firm Quacquarelli Symonds.
- A new indicator named International Student Diversity has been added this year under Global Engagement.

| Lens | Indicator | Weighting |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------|
| Research & Discovery (50%) | Academic Reputation | 30% |
| | Citations per Faculty | 20% |
| Employability & Outcomes (20%) | Employer Reputation | 15% |
| | Employment Outcomes | 5% |
| Global Engagement (15%) | International Faculty Ratio | 5% |
| | International Research Network | 5% |
| | International Student Ratio | 5% |
| Learning Experience (10%) | Faculty Student Ratio | 10% |
| Sustainability (5%) | Sustainability | 5% |

World Reputation Rankings 2025

- Included only four Indian institutions — IISc, IIT-Delhi, IIT-Madras, and Siksha 'O' Anusandhan — all placed in the 201-300 band.

QS Asia Rankings 2026: India vs China

- China overtook India as the most-represented country in the QS World University Rankings: Asia 2026.
- India added 132 institutions, reaching 294, while China added 259, reaching 394.
- In the previous two editions, India had the highest number of ranked universities.
- Seven Indian institutions featured in the top 100.
- IIT-Delhi was the highest-ranked Indian institution at 59, followed by IISc and IITs at Madras, Bombay, Kharagpur, and Kanpur, and Delhi University. China had 25 universities in the top 100, compared to India's seven.
- Although India retained the same number of top-100 institutions, their rankings declined.
- The top 10 positions were dominated by universities from Hong Kong, Singapore, and China.

QS Sustainability Rankings

- The QS Sustainability Rankings, launched in 2023, assess environmental impact, social impact, and governance.
- The 2025 edition covered nearly 2,000 institutions from over 100 locations. 103 Indian universities were featured.
- IIT-D was best Indian institution at 205. India had 12 universities in top 500, equal to China & Netherlands. Institutions from U.K., Canada, Sweden, and U.S. dominated the top 15, with Lund University (Sweden) ranked first.

CNCI:

- India's CNCI (quality metric) was 17th among 19 G-20 nations (2008–2019), rising only to 16th in 2024. CNCI (Category Normalized Citation Impact) measures the scientific impact of research publications, normalized by subject category and publication year for fair comparison. Score above 1 indicates above-average citation performance compared to the global baseline for similar research.

Global Innovation Index:

- India's Rank: 2014: 76, 2015: 81, 2024: 39. Malaysia (33) and Türkiye (37) are ahead. In 2025: 38th.
- Europe is the most innovative region, with 15 countries in the global top 25.
- India holds the #1 position among lower-middle-income economies and in the Central and Southern Asia region.
- Switzerland ranks as the world's most innovative country, followed by Sweden and the United States.
- It is published annually by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), a UN specialized agency.
- GII has been developed in collaboration with Cornell University and INSEAD since its inception in 2007.
- It is an annual ranking of around 130–140 economies, assessing innovation capabilities and performance using about 80 indicators such as institutions, human capital, infrastructure, market sophistication, and knowledge creation.

Research Ecosystem:

- SPARC (Scheme for Promotion of Academic and Research Collaboration, a government initiative to foster international research partnerships between Indian and foreign institutions) facilitates joint research with 28 countries, including the US, UK, Germany, and Australia.
- Programmes like Smart India Hackathon (nationwide, non-stop product development competition organized by the Ministry of Education's Innovation Cell (MIC) and AICTE to engage students in finding innovative solutions to real-world problems) with idea submissions growing **sevenfold since 2017**.

- **National Education Policy** is a comprehensive framework for the development of education in India; the first need for such a policy was raised in **1964** by MP **Siddheshwar Prasad**.
- **17-member Education Commission** headed by **D S Kothari** was set up, leading to the first **NEP in 1968**.
- India has had **three NEPs: 1968, 1986**—revised in **1992**, and **2020**.
- **NEP 2020** proposes major reforms like: Opening Indian higher education to foreign universities; Replacing UGC, AICTE with new system; Introducing 4-year multidisciplinary UG programme with multiple exit options; Discontinuing MPhil programme; promoting mother tongue/regional language as medium of instruction till 5th.
- **NIRF** launched in **2015**, outlines a methodology to rank institutions across the country. By Ministry of Education.
- **Parameters:** Teaching, Learning and Resources; Research and Professional Practices; Graduation Outcomes; Outreach and Inclusivity; Perception.
- **All India Survey on Higher Education (AISHE):** Started from **2010–11**, covers parameters such as **teachers, student enrolment, programmes, examination results, education finance, infrastructure**. By Ministry of Education.

Rhodes Scholarship

Why in news: The Rhodes Scholarship Trust plans to **increase the number of scholarships for Indians from 2028** to align with India's **population strength**.

- Currently, six scholarships are offered annually to Indian candidates for studying at the University of Oxford.
- It is a prestigious, fully-funded international postgraduate award to study at the University of Oxford.
- Covers tuition and living expenses for two or more years of study, with the possibility of extension to a third year.
- (**Schwarzman Scholars programme** (launched 2016 at Tsinghua University, Beijing) modeled after Rhodes Scholarship aims to cultivate future leaders familiar with China's systems, worldview, and aspirations).
- (MoSJE is seeking **additional allocation** for administering **National Overseas Scholarship** scheme for **marginalised students from SCs; DNTs; landless agricultural labourers; and traditional artisans for PG studies abroad**).

Foreign Universities

Why in news: The Ministry of Education, based on UGC recommendations, has handed over twelve Letters of Intent to top foreign universities to establish campuses in India.

- One **U.K. university** has already begun operations in **Gurugram** for the **2025–26 academic session**, marking a milestone in **India's higher education internationalisation** under the **NEP 2020**.
- **UGC (Setting up and Operation of Campuses of Foreign Higher Educational Institutions in India) Regulations, 2023** aims to allow top global universities to set up campuses in India with prior UGC approval. It directly aligns with the NEP 2020. These institutions can offer **UG to postdoctoral programs** and **award degrees equivalent to those in their home country**. They enjoy **autonomy over admission, fee setting, and faculty recruitment**, subject to **compliance with Indian laws** and **periodic reporting to the UGC**.

JNU - Turkiye

Why in news: JNU has suspended its MoU with **Inonu University, Turkiye**. Inonu University is located in **Malatya**.

Co-op University

Why in news: Union Minister laid the foundation stone for India's first national cooperative university in Anand, Gujarat.

- **Tribhuvan Sahkari University** named after **Tribhuvandas Patel**, a pioneer of the **Amul cooperative movement**.
- The university aims to **train professionals** in cooperatives, promote **transparency, innovation, technical education**.
- He highlighted that the **cooperative movement** started in **1946** under **Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel**.

NIRF Rankings

Why in news: NIRF will award **negative scores** for papers retracted in the last **three calendar years** and their citations.

- This is the **first time** NIRF is using **negative weightage** in its ranking calculations.
- Both the **number of retractions** and **citations from retracted papers** will be considered.
- The move aims to **promote ethical research** and discourage unethical practices.
- Institutions with **high retractions** may face **blacklisting** in the future.
- **NIRF Rankings Parameters include** teaching, learning, resources (.30), research and professional practice (.30), graduation outcome (.20), outreach and inclusivity (.10) and peer-perception (.10).
- For the **seventh straight year**, **IIT Madras** claimed the **top overall position** in NIRF rankings (IIT Madras > IISc Bangalore > IIT (Bombay) > Delhi > Kanpur > Kharagpur > Roorkee) > AIIMS > JNU > BHU. **IIT Madras** also remained **India's best engineering college** for the **tenth consecutive year**.
- The NIRF, launched in **2016**, has seen significant expansion — from **3,565 participating institutions** in its first year to **14,163 in 2025**, and from **four categories** to **17**.

The Vice-Chancellor

Why in news: Kerala Governor has submitted before the SC that the CM has **no role** in the **appointment of VCs**.

- Citing the **2018 UGC Regulations**, he argued that **members must be eminent persons unconnected to the university or its colleges**, thereby **excluding the Chief Minister** from the process.
- The **draft 2025 UGC Regulations** go further, proposing to **remove State governments' role** entirely and **vest V-C appointments in the Chancellor (Governor)**.
- **UGC Regulation 7.3** pertains to appointment of Vice-Chancellors in Indian universities. It **mandates** that Vice-Chancellor must possess highest level of competence, integrity, morals, institutional commitment.
- It requires the inclusion of a **UGC nominee in the search committee** to ensure uniform standards across universities.

Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishtan Bill

- Bill proposes a **12-member Viksit Bharat Shiksha Adhishtan (VBSA)** as an umbrella commission. Under VBSA, separate councils for regulatory (viniyaman), accreditation (gunvatta), and standards (manak) will operate.
- The Bill seeks to **subsume the functions** of UGC, AICTE, and NCTE. While UGC regulates higher education, AICTE oversees technical education in engineering and management, and the NCTE sets standards for teacher education.
- Proposes that UGC's grants-disbursal function be carried out through mechanisms devised by Ministry of Education.
- Citing the **National Education Policy, 2020**, the government said the Bill would **enable and empower universities** to achieve **excellence in teaching, learning, research and innovation**.
- The **VBSA** will consist of **12 members**, with each council having **up to 14 members**.
- The law **will apply** to Central and State universities, colleges, and HEIs, including technical, teacher, and architectural education institutions. It includes institutions of national importance and institutes of eminence. **Exempts** professional programmes such as medicine, dentistry, law, pharmacology, nursing, and veterinary sciences.
- The **Accreditation Council** is mandated to develop an **outcome-based institutional accreditation framework**.
- The **Regulatory Council** will set **standards for foreign universities** approved by the **Centre** to operate in **India**.
- It will also facilitate **high-performing universities** to set up **campuses abroad** and is fully in line with NEP.

Vishwa Bandhu Scholarships

- **NITI Aayog** recommended **Vishwa Bandhu scholarships and fellowships** to attract foreign students and faculty and easing regulatory frameworks to enable more international campuses in India.
- It proposed an **Erasmus+-like programme**, updated curricula, and expanding NIRF ranking criteria to meet the objectives of the National Education Policy, 2020.
- For **every one international student** coming to India, **28 Indian students** go abroad for **higher education**.
- Recommended setting up a **Bharat Vidya Kosh** as a national research sovereign wealth fund, proposing a \$10 billion corpus, with 50% from diaspora and philanthropy and 50% matching contribution from the Centre.

Samagra Shiksha & PM SHRI

- **PM SHRI (Pradhan Mantri Schools for Rising India)** is a **centrally sponsored scheme** launched in **2022** to **upgrade 14,500 existing schools** as model institutions aligned with NEP 2020.
- It focuses on **holistic student development, experiential and inquiry-based learning, competency-based**

assessments, and eco-friendly infrastructure.

- The scheme targets **existing schools** at the **elementary, secondary, and senior secondary levels**, run by the **central, state, and local governments**.

Why in news: Tamil Nadu urged the Centre to **release pending ₹2,200 crore under the Samagra Shiksha scheme.**

- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Education.
- It is an integrated CSS for school education from pre-school to class XII.
- Covers all government and aided schools.
- It subsumes Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan, and Teacher Education initiatives.
- **Aims** for inclusive, equitable, and quality education; supports **RTE Act and NEP 2020**.
- Focuses on **foundational literacy, digital education, vocational training, teacher development, infrastructure.**
- **Madras High Court directed the Union Ministry of Education** to consider splitting fund disbursement to Tamil Nadu under the **Samagra Shiksha Scheme** to release funds for **RTE reimbursements**.
- **RTE Act, 2009, creates an independent obligation** on both Centre and State governments to fund free and compulsory education. **Section 7 of the RTE Act** provides for concurrent responsibility of Centre and States to fund provisions of the Act.

Minority-run Schools – RTE Act

Why in news: The **Supreme Court** referred to a **larger Bench** the question of whether **minority educational institutions** are entirely exempt from the **Right to Education (RTE) Act, 2009**.

- SC made this reference in a judgment concerning **faculty clearing Teachers Eligibility Test** in **minority institutions**.
- **2014 Constitution Bench verdict** in the **Pramati Case** exempted **minority institutions** from **Section 12(1)(c)** of the **RTE Act**, which mandates **25% reservation** for **disadvantaged groups** at the entry level.

- **Article 30(1)** guarantees that **all minorities**, whether **based on religion or language**, have the **right to establish and administer educational institutions** of their choice. **Article 21A** (86th Amendment) provides for **RTE**, stating that **State must provide free and compulsory education to all children aged 6–14 years**, as determined by law.
- **RTE Act** ensures children access to **basic infrastructure, trained teachers, books, uniforms, and mid-day meals**.
- **Government schools** must provide free education to all enrolled children. **Aided schools** must provide free seats proportionate to the government aid they receive. **Private unaided schools** are required to reserve 25% of entry-level seats for children from disadvantaged groups, with reimbursement by the state under Section 12(1)(c).

Teacher Eligibility Test (TET):

- **TET** is the **minimum qualification** required for **appointment as a teacher for Classes 1 to 8**.
- The **RTE Act** sets **minimum standards** for **pupil-teacher ratios, trained teachers, infrastructure, and libraries**. It also **prohibits corporal punishment and capitation fees** and mandates **all schools to contribute to universal education**.

TET in Non-minority Schools

Why in news: Tamil Nadu has sought a **review of the SC's judgment** that requires **in-service teachers (Classes 1–8) in non-minority schools** to clear **TET** within **two years**, failing which they would face **"compulsory retirement."**

- **Teachers with less than 5 years** of service before retirement are exempted from taking TET, but must pass it for promotion. **Teachers with more than 5 years** of service must qualify the TET within two years from the date of judgment, failing which they would be retired with terminal benefits.
- **Future appointments and promotions** in non-minority schools would require TET qualification.
- **Section 23(1) of the RTE Act** empowers National Council for Teacher Education to prescribe minimum qualifications for teachers, including TET. **Section 23(2)** allows the Central Government to relax qualifications for up to 5 years in cases of teacher shortage or institutional constraints.
- The **proviso to Section 23** allows teachers who lacked minimum qualifications at the commencement of the RTE Act to acquire them within five years.

Performance Grading Index

Why in news: Chandigarh was adjudged **best performer in school education** for **2023–24** as per the **Performance Grading Index (PGI) 2.0**. Meghalaya ranked lowest with a score of **417**, falling into the **Akanshi-3** category.

- The **PGI 2.0** assesses States/UTs on **1,000 points** across indicators like **learning outcomes, access, infrastructure, equity, governance, and teacher education**.
- Report for **2023–24** uses data from **National Achievement Survey 2021, UDISE+, and PM-POSHAN**.
- PGI was originally launched in 2017 and was revamped as PGI 2.0 in 2021 to align with NEP 2020 and SDGs.
- **Score Range:** Daksh 941 – 1,000, Utkarsh 881 – 940, Ati-Uttam 821 – 880, Uttam 761 – 820, Prachesta-1 701 – 760, Prachesta-2 641 – 700, Prachesta-3 581 – 640, Akanshi-1 521 – 580, Akanshi-2 461 – 520, Akanshi-3 up to 460.
- No State or UT reached the **highest score range of Daksh**, indicating **scope for improvement**.
- **24 States/UTs** improved their scores in 2023–24, while **12 States/UTs** saw a **decline** from the previous year.
- **Chandigarh** scored **719**, making it the only State in **Grade Prachesta-1 (701–760)**.

- **Ten States/UTs** — Punjab, Delhi, Gujarat, Odisha, Kerala, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu, Haryana, Goa, Maharashtra, Rajasthan — fall under **Prachesta-3 (581–640)**.
- States like Telangana, Assam, Jharkhand, Tripura, Manipur, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, Nagaland, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh are in **Akanshi-2 (461–520)**.
- **Middle-ranking States/UTs** (Akanshi-I: 521–580) include Puducherry, Himachal Pradesh, Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Lakshadweep, West Bengal, MP, Sikkim, UP, J&K, Uttarakhand, Ladakh.
- **Bihar and Telangana** recorded the highest improvement in access to school education.
- **Delhi, J&K, and Telangana** made the highest progress in infrastructure between 2022–23 and 2023–24.

3 Language Formula

Why in news: National Education Policy 2020 mandates that all students must learn **three languages** in school.

- NEP 2020 is **more flexible** than earlier versions of the three-language policy.
- States can choose **any two Indian languages** and **one foreign language** in the three-language formula.
- **Three-language formula was first introduced in NEP of 1968**. This policy and Official Language Resolution, 1968 mandated the teaching of Hindi as a language in non-Hindi speaking States.
- **NEP, 2020 doesn't impose any language**. It specifies that the languages to be learnt will be the **choice of States, regions and the students**, so long as at least **two of the three languages are native to India**.
- The policy also emphasises **bilingual teaching**, particularly in the home language/mother tongue and English. It places significant emphasis on **Sanskrit** as an optional choice within the three-language formula. In **2019**, backlash led **Kasturirangan Committee** to remove the mandatory Hindi learning clause from the draft NEP.

Padhai With AI

Why in news: "Padhai with AI", an **artificial intelligence (AI)-based initiative**, was launched to help students in **difficult subjects** in Rajasthan's Tonk district.

AI in Education

Why in news: India AI's mission envisages the establishment of **AI Centres for Excellence (CoE)** in **education sector**.

- The mission is built on key **pillars** — **India AI Compute Capacity** and **India AI Future Skills**.
- **India AI Compute Capacity** focuses on building the infrastructure necessary to support AI innovation.
- **India AI Future Skills** aims to develop and equip talent to effectively utilise this AI infrastructure.
- The mission's **Application Development Initiative** seeks to create impactful AI solutions for large-scale socio-economic transformation.
- The Ministry of Education is set to introduce **AI in the school curriculum** for all students from **Class 3 onwards**.
- Under '**Skilling for AI Readiness**' initiative CBSE schools will offer AI as a skill subject starting from Class 6.
- **AI literacy** means the ability to understand how AI works and to apply critical thinking while evaluating its responses.
- **AI skills** refer to developing AI tools, AI products, or participating in the AI value chain.
- In **Class 6**, the focus is on **AI literacy**, while in **Classes 11 and 12**, it shifts to **AI skills** like Python programming and natural language processing (NLP). Students can develop these skills and then enter STEM careers.

Viksit Bharat Buildathon

Why in news: Union Education Ministry's Viksit Bharat Buildathon 2025 was inaugurated by **Education Minister**.

- About **1 crore students** from across **3 lakh schools** in the country participated in what the government has billed as "**India's largest synchronised innovation hackathon for school students**".
- **Students from Classes 6 to 12** were asked to come up with **ideas and product prototypes** for **Viksit Bharat**.

World's Best School Prize 2025

Why in news: A Zilla Parishad (ZP) school in Jalindarnagar village, Pune district, **won World's Best School Prize 2025** in the category of Community Collaboration in education.

- **Three other Indian schools** — one each from **Karnataka, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh** — were shortlisted under **various categories** for the award. The award is organised by **UK-based international education platform T4 Education**.
- One of the school's innovative approaches is the 'Vishay Mitra' (subject friend) initiative. It is a peer-learning model where senior students mentor juniors, helping clarify doubts in a comfortable, student-led setting.
- The World's Best School Prizes 2025 are global awards recognizing exceptional schools contributing to education and their communities. The awards cover **five categories**: Community Collaboration, Environmental Action, Innovation, Overcoming Adversity, and Supporting Healthy Lives.
- **Finalists** are invited to the **World Schools Summit in Abu Dhabi**.

Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report 2024

Why in News: UNESCO released **GEM Report 2024**, mandated by the '**Education 2030 Incheon Declaration & Framework for Action**' for monitoring **SDG 4 (Quality Education)** and its linkages with other SDGs.

- In the past **20 years**, schools were closed in at least **75% of extreme weather events**, affecting **5 million+ people**.
- **India-related Findings:**
 - Rainfall shocks in early life reduced vocabulary at age 5 and mathematics & non-cognitive skills at age 15.
 - Fast progress: Reducing out-of-school rate (primary children).
 - Slow: Reducing out-of-school rate (lower secondary) and gender gap in completion rate (upper secondary).
- **Education's Role in Climate Change:**
 - Education's potential in combating climate change is under-recognized in global agendas.
 - SDG 4 was addressed in only 2 of 72 transnational climate initiatives.

Digital Literacy

Why in news: Kerala Chief Minister declared Kerala as the **first fully digitally literate State in India**, after the completion of the first phase of the 'Digi Kerala'.

- Trainees learned to make **voice and video calls**, use **WhatsApp and social media**, carry out **digital transactions**, and access **government services**.
- Training was conducted by NSS volunteers, Kudumbashree members, SC/ST promoters, library council members.
- Evaluation required trainees to complete **at least six of 15 tasks**.

Mizoram Full Functional Literacy

Why in news: Mizoram declared a **fully literate state**, becoming the **first state in India** to achieve **full functional literacy**.

- Mizoram recorded 98.20% literacy rate as per the PLFS Survey 2023-24 (above 95% benchmark).
- In 2024, **Ladakh** became the **first administrative unit** to declare full functional literacy.
- **Goa** has become the **second state** to achieve **full functional literacy**.
- **Ministry of Education** considers **above 95% literacy rate = Full literacy**.
- Achievements due to implementation of **ULLAS – Nav Bharat Saaksharta Karyakram**.
- **Kerala** declared **full literacy in 1991** under National Literacy Mission (>90% literacy rate was old parameter). Kerala is not fully functionally literate but achieved the status of India's first **fully digitally literate** state in August 2025.
- **Literacy:** Person aged **7+ years** who can **read & write with understanding** in a language.
- **Functional Literacy:** Ability to **read, write, comprehend** and **apply information in daily life**. Includes tasks like reading instructions, filling forms, using technology, making informed decisions.
- **Himachal Pradesh** has been **declared a "fully literate state,"** joining **Tripura, Mizoram, Goa, and Ladakh**. **Literacy** was defined as "the ability to read, write, and compute with comprehension", along with critical life skills like digital and financial literacy. Achieving **95% literacy** in a **state/UT** may be considered **equivalent to being fully literate**.

ULLAS – Nav Bharat Saaksharta Karyakram (New India Literacy Programme, NILP):

- **Defined Literates:** Learners who can read, write, do basic math, and have digital & financial literacy.
- **Type:** Centrally Sponsored Scheme aligned with NEP 2020.
- **Target:** 5 crore learners (1 crore learners per year) via Online Teaching, Learning & Assessment System (OTLAS).
- **OTLAS:** A computer application embedded in the Web Portal/Mobile App under ULLAS, developed by NIC.
- **Duration:** FY 2022-23 to 2026-27. **Ministry:** Ministry of Education.
- **Target Group:** Adults aged 15+ who missed formal schooling.
- **Components:** Foundational Literacy & Numeracy, Critical Life Skills (financial literacy, digital literacy), Basic Education, Vocational Skills, Continuing Education.
- **Regional Languages:** Access via DIKSHA Portal and ULLAS Mobile App/Portal.
- **FLNAT (Foundational Literacy & Numeracy Assessment Test)** conducted **twice a year/on demand** at local schools.
- The scheme is **based on the spirit of Kartavya Bodh**, and is **implemented through volunteerism**.

Girl Education

Why in news: India has undergone a **powerful transformation in girls' education**.

- **The Gujarat Model: Kanya Kelavani campaign (2003)** promoted **awareness about girls' education** and addressed barriers such as **lack of separate toilets for girls** in schools.

Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao (BBBP)

- Inspired by Gujarat's success, **BBBP was launched nationwide in 2015** to **prevent female foeticide** and **promote girls' education**. The initiative initially focused on **100 gender-critical districts** and later **expanded nationwide**.
- It brought together the **Ministries of WCD, Health and Family Welfare, and Human Resource Development**.
- **Sex ratio at birth improved** from **919 girls per 1,000 boys (2015-16)** to **929 (2019-21)**.

Oxford Big Read Global Challenge

Why in news: Oxford University Press has launched the **seventh edition** of the **Oxford Big Read Global Challenge**.

- The challenge aims to **promote reading and literacy** among **school students** across **primary to secondary levels**.
- Participants will be grouped into **three levels: Classes 1-3, 4-6, and 7-9**, with tasks accordingly.

- Participating schools will receive **free access to the Oxford Reading Buddy platform** for **100 students per school for one month**. **National winners** will compete with peers from **over 15 countries**.

Eklavya Schools

Why in news: The **National Education Society for Tribal Students (NESTS)** runs over **470 Eklavya schools** for tribal students across India. NESTS has launched a programme with **UNICEF** to provide **psychometric assessment, career counselling, and life-skills training** for **1.38 lakh students**.

- The programme is called **TALASH — Tribal Aptitude, Life Skills, and Self-Esteem Hub**.
- **TALASH** is an **innovative digital platform** to help students with **self-discovery and career planning**.
- It aims to promote **self-awareness, informed career choices, and essential life skills**.
- A **common aptitude test** will generate a **career card** suggesting the **best career options** for each student. **EMRS:**
 - A CSS started in 1997–98 to impart quality education to ST children in remote areas.
 - Established in the States/UTs from the grants received under **Article 275(1)** of the Constitution of India.
 - Each school has a capacity of **480 students**, catering to students from **Class VI to XII**.
 - **Non-ST students** can be admitted in these schools on seats up to **10% of the total seats**.
 - **Implementation:** NESTS, autonomous organization under **Ministry of Tribal Affairs**.
 - **Established in** every block with **more than 50% ST population** and at least **20,000 tribal persons**.

Prime Minister Professorships

Why in news: ANRF has launched the **Prime Minister Professorships** to tap into the **expertise of retired scientists**.

- Each selected **Professor** will receive an **annual fellowship of ₹30 lakh** and a **research grant of ₹24 lakh**.
- The programme replaces the **SERB Distinguished Fellowship** & is **open to overseas scientists**, including **NRIs, PIOs, and OCIs**, unlike the previous fellowships.
- **Industry professionals** and **Professors of Practice** with a **distinguished research record** are also eligible to apply.
- Recipients must be **based at State universities** that qualify as **“spoke” institutions under Category A** of ANRF’s **Promoting Advanced and Inclusive Research (PAIR)** programme. **PAIR initiative** links **nascent research universities (“spokes”)** to **top-tier institutions (“hubs”)** in a **mentorship arrangement**.
- **“Hub” institutions** include those ranked **25 or below in the NIRF**. **About ANRF:**
 - **Total Members:** The Governing Board consists of 15 members. PM serves as President, with Principal Scientific Adviser to Union government, as Member Secretary. Members include Ministers of Science and Education, and Secretaries from Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST).
 - **Academic Representation:** Directors of the Indian Institute of Science and Tata Institute of Fundamental Research represent the academic community. A 15-member Governing Board and a 16-member Executive Council oversee ANRF operations. No Indian industry presence in Board.
 - **Funding Model:** Plans to secure the majority of funding from industry partnerships and non-government sources.
 - **ANRF** was established under the **ANRF Act (2023)** to fund research and improve **links between research, development, academia, and industry**. It will receive **₹50,000 crore** over **five years**, with **72%** expected from the **private sector**, indicating a shift towards **private sector funding** in research.
 - **Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB)**, which previously handled many of the country’s research funding activities, has been subsumed into ANRF.

Prime Minister Internship Scheme

Why in news: A little more than **50,000 candidates** have accepted the **1.53 lakh offers** made under **PMIS**. Of those who accepted, about **6%** have joined the respective companies as **interns**. (exceeded its target of providing **1.25 lakh internship opportunities** in a year).

- **PMIS**, announced in **Budget 24–25**, aims to provide **internships in India’s top 500 companies to 1 crore youth over 5 years** to bridge the gap between the skill sets of unemployable youth and the needs of employers.
- **Ministry:** Overseen by the **MoCA**.
- **Eligibility:** Internships are open to candidates who have passed **high school or higher secondary school**, hold an **ITI certificate**, have a **diploma from a polytechnic**, or are graduates with degrees such as **BA, B.Sc, B.Com, etc..**
- **Not eligible:** The scheme is **not open** to postgraduates, government employees’ children, graduates from premier institutes like **IITs, IIMs, NIDs**, or professionals such as **CA, CS, and MBBS** holders. Also, anyone from a household where someone earned over **₹8 lakh in 2023–24** is ineligible. Those **enrolled in other government-sponsored** skilling, apprenticeship, or internship programs, or undergoing **student training**, will not be eligible.
- Companies to **absorb** 10% of the interns. Each intern will receive a **monthly stipend of ₹5,000**. Companies can use **CSR funds** to cover part of the stipend and **training costs**.

PARAKH

Why in news: **PARAKH Rashtriya Sarvekshan**, formerly **National Achievement Survey**, revealed the **best performing States/UTs** in school education: **Punjab, HP, Kerala, Dadra Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu, and Chandigarh**.

- It is a **nationwide large-scale assessment** conducted by the **Ministry of Education**. It evaluates the **learning levels of students in Classes 3, 5, 8, and 10**.
- The survey **covers** government, government-aided, private unaided, and central government schools.
- NAS is a **system-level diagnostic tool**, not meant for individual student scoring. It helps policy makers assess the effectiveness of educational interventions and identify learning gaps for remedial measures.
- The survey uses **competency-based tests** across subjects such as **Language, Mathematics, Science, Environmental Studies, Social Science, and English** (as applicable to each class).
- NAS also collects **contextual information** on **students, teachers, and school environments**, enabling analysis of **factors influencing learning outcomes**. It has been **administered every three years since 2001**.
- **NCERT** is responsible for the **assessment framework**, while **CBSE** manages **survey operations**.
- The **findings of NAS influence education policy** at the **national, state, and district levels**.

Numeracy Gap

- **NEP 2020** identifies **Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN)** as the **cornerstone of all future learning**.
 - **ASER 2024** reports **48.7% of Class 5 students** can read fluently, but only **30.7% can solve a basic division problem**, an **18-point gap**. **No State** reports higher numeracy than literacy outcomes.
 - **NEP proposes sweeping changes** including opening up of Indian higher education to foreign universities, dismantling of the UGC and the AICTE, introduction of a four-year multidisciplinary undergraduate programme with multiple exit options, and discontinuation of the M Phil programme.
- NIPUN Bharat Mission**
- National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy.
 - **Aim:** Universal acquisition of FLN for children (3–9 years) by 2026–27, focusing on reading, writing, basic math.
 - **Alignment:** A core component of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and aligns with India's SDG 4.
 - **Implementation:** Through the Department of School Education & Literacy, under the Samagra Shiksha Scheme, with a five-tier mechanism (National to School level).
 - **Focus Areas:** Access & retention, teacher capacity building, high-quality materials, and tracking child progress.

NCERT Textbooks

Why in news: NCERT has introduced new **arts education textbooks** (Bansuri for Classes 3–5, Kriti for Classes 6–8) from academic year 2025–26, in line with **National Education Policy** emphasis on rooting education in Indian ethos.

- **Music:** Basics of **swar, laya, shabd**, introduction to **folk songs in regional languages**, recitation of **Sanskrit shlokas**, exposure to **seven notes** and their patterns, and basics of **ragas** from Hindustani and Carnatic music.
- **Dance:** Introduction to eight major Indian classical dance forms — **Bharatnatyam, Kathak, Kathakali, Kuchipudi, Manipuri, Mohiniyattam, Odissi, Sattriya**.
- **Textual sources:** Draws from **Natyashastra, Brihaddeshi, Sangeeta Damodara, Abhinaya Darpanam**, etc.

- **NCERT has added chapters on Field Marshal Sam Manekshaw, Brigadier Mohammad Usman, and Major Somnath Sharma** to the **Class 7 and 8 syllabus** from the current academic year. New chapters aim to provide students with **inspirational narratives on courage and duty**.
- **Practical:** Basics like **hasta mudras, leaps, jumps, circles** in dance and **ragas, taal** in music incorporated for appreciation rather than mastery.
- **Pedagogy:** Activity-based learning — storytelling, abhinaya (expressions), theatre, and projects blending classical with folk/contemporary forms.
- **1st-ever formal school-level textbooks** on Indian classical music and dance.

UDISE+

Why in news: **UDISE+ 2024–25** data released by the **Education Ministry** shows a **decline** in student enrolment.

- Total enrolment from **Classes 1 to 12** decreased by **11 lakh** students. The decline is largely attributed to **falling birth rates** in the **primary school-age population** and a shift to **pre-primary standalone private institutions**.
- **Classes 6–8** saw an increase of approximately **6 lakh** students. **Classes 9–12** saw an increase of **8 lakh** students.
- **Dropout rates** reduced significantly. **About (UDISE+):**
 - It is a digital application with the **mandate of collecting information from all recognized schools** imparting formal education from Pre-primary to XII UDISE+. Serves as the **official statistics system** of the Ministry of Education and is now operational in **all the districts** of the country. It was launched in **2018–19**.
 - **Revitalised UDISE+:** Launched in **22–23**, captures data on more than 60 fields for students.
 - **Nodal Ministry:** **Department of School Education & Literacy**, Ministry of Education.
 - UDISE+ collects information through an **online data collection form (DCF)** on parameters ranging from school, Infrastructure, teachers, enrolments, examination results, dropouts, etc. spread across 11 sections.
 - A separate **unique educational ID (EID) for every student** has been created in the UDISE+ portal.

Govt Schools & Students

- The **number of government schools** across the country has **declined over the last six years**.
- UDISE showed a steady rise in government schools with fewer than 10 or zero student enrolments. The number of teachers employed at these schools has risen. Education Ministry flagged trend of students preferring **private (unaided) schools** over **government schools** in **11 States and UTs**, including **Uttarakhand, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh**. (Education is on the **Concurrent List of the Constitution**).
- **Comprehensive Modular Survey**, part of **80th round of the National Sample Survey**, revealed insights about educational expenditure across India, highlighting disparities in school fees, coaching trends, and funding sources.
- **Government Schools**: Government schools account for **55.9%** of total enrolments, with **two-thirds** of enrolments in rural areas. **Private Schools**: Private unaided (recognised) schools account for **31.9%** of enrolments nationwide.

MERITE

Why in news: Cabinet approved implementation of the **Multidisciplinary Education and Research Improvement in Technical Education (MERITE) scheme** in **275 institutions** – **175 engineering institutes** and **100 polytechnic colleges**. The scheme aims to improve **quality, equity, and governance** in selected technical institutes.

- It will function as **Central Sector Scheme**. There will come external **assistance from World Bank** in form of a loan.
- Expected outcomes include **digitalisation strategies** in States/UTs, **guidelines for multidisciplinary programmes**, improving **learning, employability skills, transition rates** across student groups, and strengthening **R&D**.

National Education Policy

Why in news: NEP 2020 has completed **five years** since its launch.

- **Conceptual Understanding:** Focus on understanding rather than rote learning.
- **Use of Technology:** To enhance access, remove language barriers, and support Divyang students.
- **Respect for Diversity:** Incorporates local context in curriculum, pedagogy, and policy.
- **Research Orientation:** Promotes research as a key component of quality education.
- **Continuous Review:** Based on sustained research and periodic assessment.

School Education

- **Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE):** National Curricular and Pedagogical Framework for ECCE (NCPFECCE) for children up to 8 years.
- **Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN):** DIKSHA platform offers digital resources in **133 Indian languages**.
- **New Pedagogical and Curricular Structure:** 5+3+3+4 design and National Curricular Framework for School Education.
- **Multilingualism:** Medium of instruction till at least **Grade 5 (preferably till Grade 8 and beyond)** in **local language**.
- **Teachers:** Maintain **PTR below 30:1**; strengthen **TETs**; ensure **50 hours of annual professional development**.

Higher Education

- **Quality Universities and Colleges:** 3- or 4-year **Undergraduate degree programmes** with **multiple exit options**.
- **Academic Bank of Credit (ABC):** To digitally store and transfer academic credits across HEIs.
- **Regulatory Transformation:** Creation of **Higher Education Commission of India (HECI)** with four verticals.

Key Achievements (2020–2025)

- **Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER):** Nearly **universal at primary level (93%)**.
- **12.97 lakh teachers** trained under **NISHTHA**.
- **Foreign university:** Deakin University, Wollongong University (Aus), University of Southampton (UK) opened in India.

Vulnerable Sections

National Policy on Senior Citizens

Why in news: A **new national policy on senior citizens** is in the **draft stage** with the **Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment**. **20% of India's population will be senior citizens by 2047**.

- According to the **2011 Census**, senior citizens made up **8.23%** of the population.
- By **2026**, senior citizens are projected to form **12.16%** of the population.
- **5 lakh senior citizens** had received **free assisted living devices** under the **Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana**.
- **Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana (RVY)**, launched in 2017 by MoSJE, provides free assistive devices like walking sticks, hearing aids, wheelchairs, and dentures to senior citizens (60+ years) in the BPL category with age-related disabilities. RVY is implemented by Artificial Limbs Manufacturing Corporation of India (ALIMCO) and funded by the Senior Citizens' Welfare Fund.
- **Integrated Programme for Senior Citizens (IPSrC)** is a Central Sector Scheme by the MoSJE, aiming to improve the quality of life of indigent senior citizens. IPSrC provides basic amenities like shelter, food, medical care, and entertainment, and supports capacity building of government bodies, NGOs, and local institutions.

WHO Report on Social Connection

Why in News: The WHO released a report titled 'From Loneliness to Social Connection: Charting a Path to Healthier Societies', highlighting the **impact of social isolation and loneliness** on health, well-being, and society.

- **Social Connection:** Ways we relate & interact with others. **Social Disconnection:** When a person lacks enough social contact. **Loneliness:** Gap between desired vs actual connection. **Social Isolation:** Having very few relationships or not meeting people often.

Pension Mitra

Why in news: Department of Pensions and Pensioners' Welfare under the Central Government has finalised new guidelines to ensure timely payment of retirement dues to Union government employees.

- The guidelines include the **appointment of a welfare officer, or "pension mitra,"** for each retiring employee to assist in completing forms and formalities related to retirement. They will assist dependents of deceased pensioners.
- It was clarified that **no pension should be delayed due to pending vigilance clearance**, in line with provisions of the **CCS (Pension) Rules, 2021**. Ministries and departments have been directed to ensure that **vigilance clearance for retiring employees is issued 3 months prior to retirement**, as the **validity of clearance is limited to 3 months**.

Centenarians

- **Oldest-olds (centenarians, 100+ years)** offer insights into **longevity**. A recent paper using **LASI data** profiled **health and well-being of Indian centenarians**.

- India is projected to have the **highest number of centenarians by 2050**.

- **LASI: Longitudinal Ageing Study in India**, first nationwide panel survey on ageing for adults 45+ and spouses.
- **Launched 2017–18 (Wave 1):** Covered 72,250 households across 35 States/UTs (excluding Sikkim), with over 31,000 aged 60+. **Objectives:** Tracks health (physical, mental, biomarkers), economics (income, assets, pensions), and social aspects (family, support) for ageing policies.

Jeevan Pramaan – Digital Life Certificate

- **November is an important month for pensioners** as they are required to submit a **life certificate**.
- Pensioners are required to provide life certificates to **pension disbursing agencies** like **banks and post offices**.
- Traditionally, the pensioner must **personally present** before the agency or get the certificate issued by the **earlier authority**. This causes **hardship and inconvenience**.
- **Jeevan Pramaan (2014)** is a **biometric enabled (2021) digital service** for pensioners. Pensioners of the **Central Government, State Government, or other government organisations** can use it. Pensioners are **not required to appear personally** before the Pension Disbursing Officer.
- Each certificate has a **unique Pramaan-Id**. The **Pramaan-Id is not valid for life**. Validity is as per rules of the **Pension Sanctioning Authority (PSA)**. After expiry, a **new Jeevan Pramaan / Pramaan-Id** must be obtained.
- Jeevan Pramaan is **not mandatory**, but an **add-on facility**.

- **Centralized Pension Grievances Redress And Monitoring System (CPENGRAMS)** is an online computerised system developed with the objective of speedy redress and effective monitoring of grievances. Pensioners can also appeal if they are not satisfied with the redressal. Other ways to lodge grievances are through post, toll free number, and UMANG App.
- **Unified Mobile Application for New-age Governance (UMANG)**, a Digital India initiative of MeitY, provides multiple government services through the UMANG mobile app, website, and authorized assistive partner centers. Jeevan Pramaan or Digital Life Certificate can also be generated through the UMANG App.

Internal Complaints Committee

Why in news: Supreme Court's **Vishaka Guidelines (1997)** first mandated complaint committees after the **Bhanwari Devi case**, defining sexual harassment and requiring committees headed by women with third-party representation.

- Post the **Nirbhaya case (2012)**, POSH Act codified these provisions. The POSH Act mandates ICCs in workplaces with **10+ employees**; smaller enterprises rely on **Local Committees** set up by district authorities.
- Headed by a **Presiding Officer** (senior woman employee). Must include **two employees** with experience in women's issues/social work/legal knowledge and **one NGO member** or expert. At least **half the members must be women**.
- ICC has **civil court powers** under the Code of Civil Procedure to summon, take evidence, and conduct inquiries.
- Complaints must be filed **within three months**; inquiries completed **within 90 days**.
- ICC can recommend action, and employers must aid victims if they wish to file **criminal complaints**.
- **District officers** are meant to collect annual compliance reports, but there is little analysis or follow-up.

Women's Economic Empowerment (WEE) Index

Why in news: UP has launched **WEE Index**, the **first district-level gender index in India**, to systematically track and enhance women's participation in the economy.

- **WEE** will track women's economic participation at the **district level** across **five key economic levers**: Employment, Education and Skilling, Entrepreneurship, Livelihood and Mobility, Safety and Inclusive Infrastructure.
- The Index embeds a **gender lens** across all departments and datasets to identify **structural barriers**.
- **FLFPR** is 41.7%, but only **18% of working women** are in **formal employment**.

Childcare Workers

- In **2023**, **UN** declared **October 29** as **International Day of Care and Support**, recognising critical role of care and support policies, especially given disproportionate burden on **women and adolescent girls**.
- The **1972 Study Group Report** transformed childcare policy. This led to the launch of **ICDS** in **1975**.
- ICDS today has **1.4 million Anganwadi centres**, reaching **23 million children**, staffed by around **2.4 million workers**.
- The **Time Use in India 2024** survey shows women spend **426 minutes/day** on unpaid care work versus **163 minutes/day** by men. Unpaid care and domestic work constitute **15%–17% of GDP**.
- **Mobile Creches** and **FORCES** organised the **India Childcare Champion Awards** honouring excellence across seven categories. Recognition of childcare workers is a first step toward valuing their role in providing **quality, nurturing care** and building an **inclusive nation**.

(**May 12** marks **International Nurses Day**, celebrating **Florence Nightingale** and **contributions of nurses**. **2025 theme** is "Our Nurses. Our Future. Caring for nurses strengthens economies"). (**National Doctor's Day** is observed on **July 1st** in India to honour **Dr. Bidhan Chandra Roy**).

ICDS:

- **ICDS Scheme**: Launched in **1975**, world's largest early childhood development programme under **WCD**; **CSS**. Renamed and merged under Mission Saksham Anganwadi and POSHAN 2.0.
- **Targets**: Children **0–6 years**, **pregnant/lactating mothers**; vulnerable groups.
- **Objectives**: Break **malnutrition–mortality cycle**, improve **health and nutrition**, promote **holistic child development**.
- **Six Services at AWCs**: Supplementary Nutrition, Immunization, Health check-ups, Referral services, Nutrition/Health education, Pre-school education.
- **Implementation**: 14 lakh+ AWCs, ~8 crore beneficiaries; Anganwadi Workers and Helpers.
- **Key Components**: ECCE, nutrition counselling, community mobilization.
- **Nutritional Norms**: **500 calories** (children), **600 calories** (pregnant/lactating).
- **Funding**: Centre 60%, States 40% (NE 90:10); Poshan Tracker.
- **Constitutional Links**: Articles 45, 39(f), 47, Article 21.

Palna Scheme:

- **Palna Scheme**: CSS under Samarthya vertical of Mission Shakti, WCD; restructured from National Creche Scheme in 2022. **Targets**: Children 6 months–6 years; provides day-care crèches for all mothers (working/non-working) to support women's workforce participation.
- **Objectives**: Safe/secure crèche facilities, nutritional support, health/cognitive development, growth monitoring, immunization; enables SDG 8 (decent work).
- **Services**: Day-long care, sleeping arrangements, early stimulation (<3 yrs), pre-school education (3–6 yrs), supplementary nutrition, health check-ups.
- **Funding**: **60:40 (Centre:State)** for general states; **90:10** for **NE/special category**; **100%** for **UTs without legislature**.
- **Key Features**: Located near **homes/workplaces**, promotes **breastfeeding**; formalizes **childcare** to reduce **unpaid care burden on women**.

Related News

- **Government** issued **guidelines** to ensure **continuity in early childhood education** by **co-locating anganwadis with primary schools**. It aims to place **about 11 lakh anganwadis** on **school premises** to facilitate smooth transition to **formal schooling (Class 1)**. Govt also introduced a **curriculum titled 'Aadharshila'** for children aged **3–6 years**.
- **MoE** is in talks with **UIDAI** to link **civil registration and Aadhaar databases** so that a **unique identity number** can follow a child from birth, convertible into **Poshan Tracker** and **APAAR ID** upon school entry.

POSH Act

- A case in **Chandigarh**, where a college professor was **sacked** after a probe by **ICC** under the **POSH Act, 2013**, marks a **rare but important precedent**, exposing gaps in the law's ability to deliver **consistent and empathetic justice**.

POSH under WCD:

- **Workplace**: Wide definition, covering the organised and unorganised sectors, government and private bodies, hospitals, sports institutes, and even "any place visited by the employee arising out of or during the course of employment" (including transportation).
- **Internal Complaints Committee (ICC)**: Every office with 10 or more employees must constitute an ICC. It must be headed by a woman (senior employee), include at least 1 external member from an NGO or familiar with the issue.
- **Local Complaints Committee (LCC)**: For establishments with fewer than 10 employees or where the complaint is against the employer himself, the District Officer must constitute a Local Committee at the district level.
- **Conciliation Option**: Before initiating an inquiry, ICC/LCC can, at request of aggrieved woman, take steps to settle the matter through conciliation. However, no monetary settlement can be made the basis of such conciliation.

- **She-Box Portal:** WCD launched the SHE-Box (Sexual Harassment electronic-Box) as a single window access to every woman, irrespective of her work status, to facilitate the registration of complaints.

Acid Attack Survivors

- The **Supreme Court** decided to examine a plea that **acid attack survivors**, mostly **young women**, have not been paid the **minimum ₹3 lakh compensation** nor provided **free critical care** by **private hospitals**.
- Court had previously ordered States to pay a **minimum ₹3 lakh compensation**, with **₹1 lakh within 15 days** and the **balance within two months**. The court had **banned over-the-counter sale of acid**.
- It declared that **private hospitals** would be **criminally liable** for refusing **free treatment** to victims before referral.
- Court directed **district legal services authorities** to function as **criminal injuries compensation boards**. SC allowed survivors to approach **State or district legal services authorities** in case of **delay or default** in compensation. These statutory bodies were also ordered to ensure **private hospitals did not turn survivors away**.
- **Section 124 of BNS** deals with **acid attacks punishment**, but **trials remain long-drawn and conviction rates low**.

Tech for Vulnerables

Why in news: **Saksham Anganwadi initiative** is upgrading 2 lakh centres with smart infrastructure, digital devices, and learning tools for enhanced service delivery. Anganwadi workers are trained and equipped with smartphones, enhancing last-mile service delivery.

- **Poshan Tracker** integrates data from 14 lakh Anganwadis and over 10.14 crore beneficiaries, enabling real-time monitoring and policy interventions. The tracker has been recognised with the **PM's Award for Excellence in Public Administration (2025)** and supports **Poshan Bhi, Padhai Bhi** through digital early education modules.
- To curb leakages in **Supplementary Nutrition Programme**, facial recognition ensures benefits reach eligible recipients.
- **SHE-Box portal** enables single-window access for women to lodge and track workplace harassment complaints.
- **Mission Shakti dashboard/app** provide distress assistance by linking women to nearby one-stop centres.
- **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana** provides ₹5,000 for the first child and ₹6,000 for a girl second child.
- Under the **Juvenile Justice Act, 2015**, the **CARINGS portal** streamlines adoption and enhances transparency.
- Platforms by **NCPCR** track violations and enable coordination via **Mission Vatsalya dashboard**.

E-governance

Why in news: **Government** has made **Facial Recognition Software** mandatory in **Anganwadis** for authenticating beneficiaries under Poshan Tracker app. **Anganwadis:**

- Established in 1975 under the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) to address child malnutrition.
- There are about 14.02 lakh Anganwadis, each with at least one Anganwadi Worker and one helper, both local women.
- Anganwadis provide preschool services and Take Home Rations (THR) for children under three years and pregnant/lactating women under the National Food Security Act, 2013.

Poshan Tracker and FRS Integration

- In **2021**, the **Government** launched the **Poshan Tracker**, a **centralised platform** to monitor nutrition initiatives. AWWs must use the app to **upload nutritional data** of children periodically.
- Now, **THR distribution** requires **face authentication** of women beneficiaries through **FRS**, integrated with app.
- The government introduced the **National Mobile Monitoring System app** in **2022** to curb MGNREGA **fudged attendance records**. In **2017**, **Aadhaar-Based Biometric Authentication** was made mandatory for **PDS rations**.

- **Anganwadi workers (AWWs)** are part of the **Integrated Child Development Services Scheme (ICDS)** launched in **1975**, and their role relates to **nutritional education, supplementation for women and children, and facilitation of the delivery of maternal and child health services**.

- Though strictly not a part of the **healthcare system**, they work **closely with it**.
- In addition to capturing **beneficiary data**, the **Poshan Tracker dashboard** captures **national, state and district-level data** on Anganwadi infrastructure (centres built functional toilets or drinking water), number of beneficiaries who received take-home rations (not raw rations) and hot cooked meals & third, monitoring of nutritional outcomes.

NAMASTE

Why in news: **90% of workers** who died while cleaning **sewers** had **no safety gear or PPE kits**.

- **NAMASTE** programme, a scheme to mechanise sewer work and prevent deaths due to hazardous cleaning. In 2023-24, this scheme was brought in to replace Self-Employment Scheme for Rehabilitation of Manual Scavengers.
- It targets "workers directly associated with sewer and septic tank cleaning including drivers of desludging vehicles, helpers, machine operators and cleaners". Its goal is to profile such workers in a nationwide enumeration exercise, give them safety training and equipment, and offer capital subsidies that could turn sewer and septic tank workers into "sanipreneurs," or sanitation entrepreneurs.
- Govt's rationale is that manual scavenging as a practice has ended across the country and what needs to be fixed now is the hazardous cleaning of sewers and septic tanks.

Anticipatory Bail in SC/ST Act

Why in news: Recently, the **Supreme Court** quashed a **Bombay High Court order** that had granted **anticipatory bail**.

- **Section 18** of the **SC/ST Act, 1989** excludes the application of **Section 438 CrPC (now Section 482 BNSS)**, which allows **anticipatory bail**. The **bar protects victims** from **intimidation** and ensures **effective prosecution**.
- The **bar is constitutionally valid**, not violating **Articles 14 or 21**.

Child Marriage

- **First anniversary of the Bal Vivah Mukt Bharat Abhiyan** with a **100-day awareness campaign**, aligned with India's **UN commitment to end child marriage by 2030**.
- **SDG 5** aims to achieve gender equality and empower women. Target 5.3 seeks to eliminate harmful practices, including child marriage, early and forced marriage, and female genital mutilation.
- Progress is monitored using the indicator: **proportion of women aged 20–24 years married before 18**.
- In **2023**, **UNICEF** estimated **64 crore girls** were married in childhood globally, with **one-third in India**.
- Child marriage rates declined from **47.4% (2005–06)** to **23.3% (2019–21)**, as per **NFHS data**.
- **Highest child marriage rates** among women aged **18–29 years**: West Bengal – 42%, Bihar – 40%, Tripura – 39%.
- Other States with high prevalence include **Jharkhand, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Telangana, Mp, and Rajasthan**. **Lowest**: Lakshadweep – 4%, J&K – 6%, Ladakh – 6%, Himachal Pradesh – 7%, Goa – 7%, Nagaland – 7%.

Crime Against Children

Why in news: **9.2% increase over 2022**, according to the **NCRB report**.

- The **major crime categories** were “Kidnapping and abduction of children” (79,884 cases, 45%) and “POCSO Act offences” (67,694 cases, 38.2%). **MP** recorded the **highest number of cases (22,393)**, followed by **Maharashtra (22,390)** and **UP (18,852)**.
- India faces major **challenges in ensuring child protection** as guaranteed under **Article 39(f) of the Constitution**, a **DPSP**. **Children under 18 years** constitute **39% of India's population**.

- The **NCRB was established in 1986** to compile crime data, functioning under the **Union Home Ministry**.
- Apart from publishing annual reports, it engages in the **collection, coordination and exchange of information on inter-state and international criminals** to the respective states.
- NCRB acts as a **national warehouse for fingerprint records** of Indian and foreign criminals.
- It assists in **locating interstate criminals through fingerprint search**.

- Unlike the **NJDG**, there is **no central and public repository of information on Juvenile Justice Boards (JJBs)**.
- A **quarter of JJBs did not have a full Bench** even after **10 years of the JJ Act, 2015** being in force.
- **Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015**: Replaced **2000 Act** post-**Nirbhaya**; comprehensive law for **children in conflict with law (CCL)** and **children in need of care & protection (CNCP)**; under **WCD**.
- **Child (Section 2(12))**: Any person who has not completed eighteen years of age on the date of commission of offence; uniform definition applicable to both categories.
- **Child in Conflict with Law (Section 2(13))**: A child who is alleged or found to have committed an offence and who has not completed eighteen years of age on the date of commission of such offence; rehabilitation-oriented.
- **Child in Need of Care and Protection (Section 2(14))**: A child who is orphaned, abandoned, surrendered, victim of abuse/neglect, beggar, trafficked, or living in an immoral environment; requires state protection.
- **Institutions**: Juvenile Justice Boards (JJB); Child Welfare Committees (CWC); District Child Protection Units (DCPU); Special Juvenile Police Units.
- **Adoption Reforms: Statutory status to CARA**; streamlined process for orphaned/surrendered children; promotes foster care/sponsorship over institutionalization.
- **Offences against Children**: Stricter penalties — cruelty (upto 3–10 yrs RI), giving drugs/alcohol (7 yrs), corporal punishment (3 yrs), trafficking/begging (5–10 yrs).
- **Rehabilitation**: Individual Care Plans; observation homes, special homes, place of safety; aftercare for 18–21 yrs; no disqualification from jobs/education.

Disables

- The **DPDP Act, 2023**, and the rules **significantly restrict** what **minors** can do **online**, such as **setting up a social media account**, without **parental consent**. In the **draft rules**, this requirement was **spelled out** in a section that **included persons with disabilities**, causing **concern among disability rights groups**.

Disabled Prisoners

- **RPwD Act 2016** obligates governments to ensure **support for all services** in their control.
- **Prisons are a State subject** whereas the **Union government** shapes policy through a **model prison manual**.
- Recent **national guidelines on prisoners with disabilities** acknowledged **special needs** and called for **accessible infrastructure and procedures**, whereas many **State prison manuals** still reflect **older assumptions**.

Transgender Jobs Data

- Gov told Parliament that it has **no data** on the **employment of transgender people** in the Union government. The reply was in response to questions on the representation of transgender people in Union Ministries and Departments.
- The Centre said it ensured employment opportunities for transgender people through the **National Institute of Social Defence**. Since **2022–23**, it has helped place **223 transgender people** in **various jobs**.

Legal Framework for Transgender Rights

- **NALSA vs Union of India (2014)**: Recognised the right to **self-identify gender**, directed States to treat transpersons as **socially and educationally backward classes** entitled to welfare measures.
- **Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act, 2019**: Codified the principle of self-identification, obligated authorities to issue official documents in the **affirmed gender identity**.
- **Articles 14 & 21 of the Constitution**: Guarantee **equality and dignity**, extending to recognition of gender identity.

Health

Nutrition

Malnourishment

Why in news: Undernutrition and micronutrient deficiencies and Rising **overnutrition and obesity**.

- India ranks **102 out of 123** in the **Global Hunger Index 2025**.
 - The Global Hunger Index (GHI) is an annual, peer-reviewed report by Concern Worldwide and Welthungerhilfe that tracks hunger globally, regionally, and nationally.
 - GHI uses four indicators: undernourishment, child stunting, child wasting, and child mortality.
 - The GHI score ranges from 0 (no hunger) to 100 (worst hunger), with severity levels from low to alarming.
 - **Best**: Belarus, Armenia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Bulgaria etc with score < 5. **Worst**: Somalia. Pak 106th.
- **NFHS-5 (2019–21)** data highlights: **35.5%** stunted, **32.1%** underweight, **19.3%** wasted among under-5 children. **57%** of reproductive-age women are **anaemic**. **24% women** and **22.9% men** are **overweight/obese**.
 - **Stunted**: A child with low height for age due to chronic malnutrition.
 - **Wasted**: A child with low weight for height.
- **Food insecurity now includes**: Hunger, micronutrient deficiency, and diet-related NCDs.
- **Awareness Campaigns**: Use tools like **'MyPlate Blast Off' games, radio programmes** to spread awareness.
 - In **1971**, **V N Dandekar and N Rath** defined the poverty line based on 2,250 calories/day, setting it at Rs 15 (rural) and Rs 22.5 (urban) using 1960–61 NSS data.
 - In **1979**, the **Y K Alagh Task Force** revised it to 2,400 calories (rural) and 2,100 calories (urban), which became official until the 1990s.
 - In **1993**, **Lakdawala Committee** introduced state-specific poverty lines adjusted for regional prices.
 - In **2009**, the **Tendulkar Committee** set the 2004–05 poverty line at Rs 446.68 (rural) and Rs 578.80 (urban) per capita per month, moving away from calorie-based norms.
- **SAHAYOG Initiative**:
 - **Launched by**: Odisha to improve living standards of the economically backward through government schemes.
- **Urbanization & Urban Poverty in India**
 - Urban population: grew from 17.29% (1951) → 31.16% (2011).
 - UN projection: over 50% of India's population will live in cities by 2050.

Obesity

Why in news: 7th Poshan Pakhwada and **'Let's Fix Our Food' consortium** have brought **adolescent obesity** into focus.

- **SC** has mandated **government to finalise transparent food labelling regulations**.
- Adolescents face dual burdens: undernutrition and obesity linked to ultra-processed, high-sugar, high-fat diets.
- Poor nutrition impacts not only physical health but also **mental well-being, academic performance, and productivity**.
- The **World Obesity Atlas 2024** notes that India has one of the fastest-growing childhood obesity rates globally.
- **Comprehensive National Nutrition Survey** shows 5%–15% of adolescents in some States are overweight.
 - **Poshan Pakhwada** is a fortnight-long awareness campaign under POSHAN Abhiyaan, promoting nutrition and addressing malnutrition among women, children, and adolescents.
 - **World Obesity Atlas 2024** (by World Obesity Federation) provides a global overview of obesity trends, projecting the prevalence of overweight and obesity and its health, social, and economic impacts. It serves as an evidence base for policymakers to design targeted obesity prevention and management strategies.
 - **Comprehensive National Nutrition Survey** (Health Ministry) is India's first large-scale national nutrition survey. It provides data on triple burden of malnutrition—undernutrition, overweight, and micronutrient deficiencies—and offers insights on anemia and risk factors for non-communicable diseases.

- **UNICEF report**, 'Feeding Profit: How Food Environments Are Failing Children', highlights the issue of **childhood overweight** and **unhealthy food environments**.
- The report estimates that one in five children and adolescents (5–19 years) are living with overweight.
- It highlights increased exposure to unhealthy food environments through advertisements and food service facilities.
- **Children between 5–9 years and 10–14 years** make up the **highest shares** of those **living with overweight**.
- According to **UNICEF's U-Report poll (2023)**, **unhealthy foods and beverages** were **more commonly available in schools** than **fresh fruits or vegetables**.
- **Waist-to-hip ratio (WHR)** increases significantly with age in both **men (28% to 60%)** and **women (46% to 65%)**. **Urban obesity**: 46.1% of men, 43.1% of women vs 35.4% and 31.6% in rural areas, respectively.
- **18–59 age group** is most vulnerable to **early-onset NCDs**, worsened by **ultra-processed food dependence**. **Childhood obesity** rose **244% in 30 years**, expected to grow another **121%** in the next three decades.
- **Eat Right India** movement (FSSAI) promotes **safe, sustainable food** and campaigns like **"Aaj Se Thoda Kam"**.

Mitochondrial Uncouplers

- Researchers have developed experimental drugs targeting **mitochondria** to **work harder and burn more calories**, which may make way for new treatments for obesity. **Mitochondria are powerhouses of the cell**, as they turn the **food you eat into chemical energy**, called **ATP or adenosine triphosphate**.
- University of Technology Sydney focused on **"mitochondrial uncouplers"** – molecules that make **cells burn energy less efficiently** and **release fuel as heat** instead of converting it into **energy the body can use**.
- Mitochondrial uncouplers **trigger cells to consume more fats** to meet their energy needs. Compounds inducing mitochondrial uncoupling were first discovered about a century ago, but the drugs were lethal poisons that induced overheating and death.

'Activated' Gold

- Scientists found that **gold nanoparticles** injected into **fat tissue** and activated with **ultrasound** generate gentle heat that converts **white fat** into energy-burning **brown fat**.
- The nanoparticles also **released nitric oxide gas**, reducing harmful **inflammation**. They acted like **enzymes**, cleaning up damaging molecules and reducing **stress in fat cells**. It also **relieved type 2 diabetes** and **lowered high cholesterol**.
- **"Activated gold nanoparticles"** are gold nanoparticles that have been specifically functionalized with reactive chemical groups on their surface to enable stable, targeted attachment (conjugation) of biomolecules like proteins or DNA for specific applications in medicine and diagnostics.

Sugar Boards

Why in news: **CBSE directed 24,000+ affiliated schools** to set up **'sugar boards'** to spread awareness about **excessive sugar intake**. Concept introduced by **food influencer Revant Himatsingka** through DIY workshops with students.

- 'Sugar boards' visually depict the **amount of sugar in aerated drinks and packaged juices**.
- **Boards include:** Recommended sugar limits, Sugar content in popular foods, Health risks, Healthier alternatives.
- Supported by **National Commission for Protection of Child Rights**.
- Rising Type-2 Diabetes among children. **Contributing factors:** High sugar intake, Easy availability of sugary, processed foods in schools. WHO recommendation: Max 5% of daily calorie intake.
- **Health Star Rating (HSR) system** is a voluntary front-of-pack labelling system introduced by the Australian and New Zealand governments. It rates healthiness of packaged foods on a scale from 0.5 to 5 stars. It helps consumers compare similar products, based on sugar, sodium, saturated fat, fibre, protein, and fruit/vegetable content.
- **Current FSSAI rules:** "Low sugar" claim allowed only if **≤5g per 100g**. No official **HFSS intake limits for Indian population**. India uses **WHO cut-off of 25g sugar/day (6 teaspoons)**, but experts demand **India-specific lower limits** due to **genetic vulnerability**. FSSAI convened panels to define High Fat, Salt, Sugar (HFSS) foods for school meals.

| Area | Type 1 Diabetes | Type 2 Diabetes | Gestational Diabetes | Other Types of Diabetes |
|---------------------------|--|---|---|---|
| Cause | Autoimmune destruction of insulin-producing beta cells in the pancreas | Insulin resistance and/or insufficient insulin production | Develops during pregnancy due to hormonal changes | Monogenic diabetes (MODY; Neonatal), Type 3c (pancreatic disease related); steroid induced, LADA (type 1.5), and others |
| Age of Onset | Usually in children & young adults, but can occur at any age | Adults mostly, but increasingly in children and adolescents | During pregnancy | Varies (neonatal, young adults, or related to other conditions) |
| Insulin Production | Little or no insulin produced | Insulin produced but not effectively used | Usually normal but the body is insulin resistant | Varies by specific type |
| Symptoms | Rapid onset of symptoms like | Gradual symptoms, often mild initially | Usually asymptomatic or mild, detected by screening | Symptoms depend on the type |

| | | | | |
|------------------|---|--|--|--|
| | excessive thirst, urination, weight loss, fatigue | | | |
| Treatment | Requires daily insulin injections | Lifestyle changes, oral medications, sometimes insulin | Controlled by diet, exercise, insulin if required | Treatment varies; some require insulin, others oral meds |
| Prognosis | Lifelong condition requiring insulin | Chronic condition with risk of complications | Usually resolves after delivery, but increased risk of type 2 diabetes later | Depends on the type and timely diagnosis |

Salt Overload

Why in news: The rising burden of NCDs underscores the urgent need to address India’s high salt consumption.

- Indian adults consume 8–11 grams of salt daily, double the WHO-recommended level of 5–6 grams per day.
- Excess salt consumption contributes to hypertension, which affects 28.1% of Indian adults, raises cardiovascular risk.
- Rock salt, black salt, and Himalayan pink salt are wrongly believed to be healthier alternatives. All forms of salt contain sodium, and excess intake from any source raises blood pressure.
- Govt aims to provide 75 million people with hypertension and/or diabetes standard care by 2025 through the India Hypertension Control Initiative (IHCI). The IHCI was initiated in 2017 and operates in 25 districts across 5 states, focusing on simplified treatment protocols, team-based care, and decentralized care. IHCI won UN and WHO Award and was expanded to 140 districts in 2023.
- Sol: Reducing dietary salt through strategies like the WHO HEARTS initiative (including SHAKE the salt habit).

Diseases

Diabetes

Why in news: Scientists from Madras Diabetes Research Foundation (MDRF), in collaboration with Washington University School of Medicine, have discovered a new subtype of Maturity-Onset Diabetes of the Young.

- MODY is a rare, inherited, non-insulin-dependent diabetes caused by single gene mutations with autosomal dominant inheritance. 13 MODY subtypes have been recognised so far.
- Newly identified variant challenges existing assumptions about the condition. It usually manifests in non-obese adolescents or young adults (before 25 years), often with a strong family history.
- Accurate diagnosis is crucial, as some types respond to oral sulfonylurea drugs, while others require only lifestyle modifications. Genetic testing confirms the diagnosis of MODY.
- India has one of the highest burdens of NCDs globally, with over 100 million people living with diabetes and 136 million classified as pre-diabetic. Most diagnoses rely on conventional tools and tests, which often detect the disease only after significant damage has occurred.
- Blood metabolites, tiny molecules in blood, known as metabolites, may help detect kidney disease linked to diabetes at an early stage. Biochemical markers are small molecules produced during metabolic processes in the body. These include sugars, amino acids, lipids, and other compounds reflecting the state of organs and systems.
- Metabolomic profiling allows detection of subtle chemical changes in the body that may precede disease.
- Techniques such as liquid chromatography and mass spectrometry can analyse hundreds of metabolites from a single blood sample. Type 2 diabetes disrupts multiple metabolic pathways, not just blood sugar levels.
- According to the ICMR – India Diabetes Survey, 11.4% of adults have diabetes and 15.3% are pre-diabetic.
- Early gestational diabetes affects about one in five pregnant women.

- According to the Global Burden of Diseases Report, while in 1990 diarrhoeal diseases were the leading cause of deaths, with the age-standardized mortality rate (ASMR) at 300.53 per lakh population.
- In 2023, ischaemic heart disease caused maximum deaths – ASMR rate at 127.82 per lakh population.
- According to WHO, NCDs, also known as chronic diseases, tend to be of long duration.
- They are the result of a combination of genetic, physiological, environmental and behavioural factors.
- The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development recognizes NCDs as a major challenge for sustainable development. By 2030, it aims to reduce by one third premature mortality from NCDs through prevention and treatment (SDG target 3.4).
- In 2019, the World Health Assembly extended the WHO Global action plan for the prevention and control of NCDs 2013–2020 to 2030. It also called for the development of an Implementation Roadmap 2023 to 2030 to accelerate progress on preventing and controlling NCDs.

Vaccination

Why in news: Diseases like measles, meningitis, and yellow fever are re-emerging due to missed vaccinations caused by funding cuts and disrupted immunisation programmes.

- U.S. has reported a measles outbreak in 2024 despite the disease being eliminated there in 2000.

- **Big Catch-Up initiative**, launched by WHO, UNICEF, Gavi (the Vaccine Alliance), and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation in **2023**, remains critical for reaching **children missed during COVID-19**.
- To achieve **90% coverage**, **Mission Indradhanush (MI)** launched in **2014**, followed by **Intensified Mission Indradhanush (IMI)** in **2017** to target **low-coverage and missed populations**.
- India has maintained polio-free status since 2011 through stringent surveillance. Achieved maternal and neonatal tetanus elimination (2015) and was declared Yaws-free (2016). Measles-Rubella campaign (2017–2019) vaccinated 34.8 crore children (9 months–15 years) and integrated rubella vaccine into UIP.
- **IMI 5.0 (2023)** targeted **under-five children nationwide**; **Zero Measles-Rubella Elimination Campaign (2025)** launched to boost **public awareness** and achieve **95% MR coverage** for herd immunity.
- **Cold chain logistics strengthened** via **Pradhan Mantri Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission. U-WIN platform**, built on CO-WIN success, enables digital vaccination record tracking for pregnant women and children up to 16 years, ensuring nationwide access for migratory populations. **Electronic Vaccine Intelligence Network (eVIN)** – vaccine stock management. **National Cold Chain Management Information System** – real-time tracking. **SAFE-VAC module** – vaccine safety reporting.

Why is vaccination important?

- The **measles vaccine alone** accounts for **60%** of lives saved by immunisation.
- India was declared **polio-free in 2014** and eliminated **maternal and neonatal tetanus in 2015**.
- As per NFHS-5 (2019–21), India's **full immunisation coverage** stands at **76.1%**.
- **Gavi's pledging summit** aims to raise **\$9 billion** to protect **500 million children** and save **at least 8 million lives** between **2026 and 2030**.

- **GAVI (The Vaccine Alliance)**, founded in 2000, is a global public-private partnership to improve access to life-saving vaccines in low-income countries, aiming for equal immunization worldwide. India has both benefited from and contributed to GAVI, supporting its initiatives financially and through vaccination campaigns.
- **Universal Immunization Programme (UIP)**, launched in 1985 in India, provides free vaccines against 12 preventable diseases (Diphtheria, Pertussis, Tetanus, Polio, Measles, Rubella, Childhood Tuberculosis (BCG), Hepatitis B, Pneumococcal pneumonia (PCV), Rotavirus diarrhea, Japanese Encephalitis (JE, in endemic areas), and diseases caused by Haemophilus Influenzae type b (Hib)) to eligible children and pregnant women.
- **Immunisation Agenda 2030 (IA2030)**, led by WHO, aims for **90% vaccination coverage** and to **halve the number of children missing vaccines by 2030**, targeting **50 million lives saved**. India must accelerate efforts to meet **IA2030**: Halve zero-dose children relative to 2019 baseline (1.4 million).
 - To ensure that everyone, everywhere, at every age fully benefits from vaccines for good health and well-being.
 - It focuses on achieving high vaccine coverage, reducing children missing vaccines, and introducing new vaccines, aiming to save over 50 million lives by 2030.
 - IA2030 is country-led, partnership-driven, and data-guided, strengthening immunization as a key part of primary health care and universal health coverage.
- **Gavi's Pledging Summit** brings together **global leaders, donors, and partners** to mobilize **funding for immunization**, with the **2025 summit** seeing **record commitments for vaccine financing and partnerships**.

About CoWIN:

- **CoWIN (Covid Vaccine Intelligence Network)** is a **government-owned web platform** under the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**, facilitating **registration, scheduling, verification, vaccination, and certification**.
- The **CoWIN system** was built on **five modules** – orchestration, vaccination cold chain, citizen registration, vaccinator, and certificate-feedback-adverse event reporting.
- **Eight vaccines**, including **Covishield, Covaxin, Corbevax, and Sputnik-V**, were integrated into the platform.
- In **2021**, **India offered the CoWIN** as a **digital public good to the world** to aid in the **global COVID-19 response**.

Influenza Vaccination

Why in news: Influenza (flu) is often seen as a **seasonal nuisance**, but it is a **major global cause of respiratory illness**.

- **Gol tracks influenza** through a **national surveillance system**, with focus mainly on the **H1N1 (swine flu) strain**.
- During winter 2024–2025, India saw a severe outbreak of influenza B, which usually causes milder illness in children.
- Later, the H3N2 strain caused another surge in the post-monsoon season.
- The **short-lived protection** from current vaccines raises concerns about the adequacy of flu vaccination. Influenza virus mutates frequently through antigenic drift, helping it evade immunity.
- Unlike measles or polio vaccines, flu vaccines offer only moderate, short-term protection.
- **Multiple influenza strains** such as **H1N1, H3N2, influenza B** circulate simultaneously, making **vaccines challenging**.
- India offers **two main types of influenza vaccines** – inactivated (injection) and live attenuated (nasal spray).
- Influenza vaccines are **not included** in India's Universal Immunisation Programme (UIP).

Wild Polio Virus

- **Germany** has found **wild polio virus** in a **sewage sample in Hamburg**, the **first such detection in Europe since 2010**.
- **Poliomyelitis** affects mainly children U-5, often asymptomatic, but can cause fever and vomiting.

- **2 forms:** Wild polio and vaccine-derived or variant polio. Both forms can cause paralysis and death, but wild polio is rarer and is now endemic only to Afghanistan and Pakistan. Wild polio causes tens of cases annually.
- The **strain found in German wastewater** is linked to the **strain circulating in Afghanistan**.
- **India** was declared **polio-free in 2014** after three years of zero cases, driven by the Pulse Polio campaign.

Leprosy

- **Laws** continue to contain provisions that **discriminate against persons with leprosy**. These provisions deny access to **public transport, public spaces, the right to run for elected office, employment, and running a business venture**.
- Leprosy is caused by **Mycobacterium leprae** and is among the earliest known infections, with evidence dating back to 2000 BCE. India reports **57% of cases**. **Genetic predisposition** and **unsanitary living conditions** raise susceptibility.
- NHRC recommended **UIDAI** to promote **iris scans for Aadhaar**, as leprosy affects **fingertips** through **nerve damage**.
- **Caused** by *Mycobacterium leprae*; spreads via airborne droplets from untreated individuals, not casual contact.
- **Symptoms:** Skin sores, nerve damage, numbness, eye issues, leading to disability if untreated.
- **Treatment:** Curable with Multi-Drug Therapy (MDT) (dapson, rifampicin, clofazimine), provided free by WHO.
- **India's Status:** Declared eliminated as a public health problem (Prevalence Rate < 1/10,000) in 2005, but still endemic in some areas.
- **National Strategic Plan and Roadmap for Leprosy** aims to achieve zero indigenous cases and interrupt transmission by 2027, three years ahead of the SDG 3.3 target of 2030.
- **Nikusth 2.0 portal** was launched in 2023 for real-time digital surveillance and drug stock management.
- Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP-SDR)—a single dose of **rifampicin**—is now administered to 92% of eligible healthy contacts to break the chain of transmission.

Acanthosis Nigricans

- **Acanthosis nigricans (AN)** is a **skin condition** characterised by **dark, velvety patches** on **skin folds**.
- AN is **strongly linked to insulin resistance**, making it an **early warning sign** for **prediabetes and diabetes**. For many individuals, AN is one of the **first visible clues** of difficulty in **regulating blood sugar levels**.
- AN can appear **behind the neck, underarms, under the breasts, groin, elbows** or **behind the knees** as **dark, thick, rough or velvety patches**.
- Skin changes develop **gradually over several months** and may be **itchy**, emit a **foul odour**, and show **hyperpigmentation**. When associated with **insulin resistance**, skin darkening often **progresses fast**.
- It is an **artificial sweetener** sold in **market**. It consists of **amino acids** and provides **calories** like other **amino acids**. Yet, it is used as a **low-calorie sweetening agent** in **food items**. **Aspartame** is **several times sweeter than table sugar**. **Food items** made with **small quantities of aspartame** yield **fewer calories on oxidation**.

Nipah

Why in news: Kerala has recorded Nipah outbreaks (8 in 8 years) involving human-to-human transmission, and four spillovers (2019, 2021, and two in 2024). **Spillovers are single cases without human transmission**, often due to **timely detection and isolation**, unlike outbreaks which involve **wider spread and fatalities**.

- In spillover cases, patients typically show **acute encephalitis syndrome (AES)**, while outbreaks often present **acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS)**. **ARDS** cases involve higher viral load, lung symptoms, and coughing, increasing the risk of human transmission, and were responsible for most Nipah deaths.
- Nipah virus (NiV) is a highly fatal zoonotic pathogen with repeated outbreaks in India, especially Kerala.
- **NiV** is a **single-stranded, negative-sense RNA virus** of the **Henipavirus genus, Paramyxoviridae family**.
- **Nipah virus** is a transmissible viral infection with a **high mortality rate (40%–75%)**.
- Even a **single case** requires **major public health attention** due to its lethality.
- There is **no effective treatment** available. **Prevention and awareness** remain the **primary tools** against the virus.
- **Natural reservoir** is fruit bats (*Pteropus* species, flying foxes), which shed the virus in saliva, urine, and feces.
- **Transmission** occurs via direct contact with infected bats, pigs, or their secretions, and through contaminated food such as fruits. Human-to-human transmission is possible through close contact and body fluids. Possible transmission routes include **droplet infection** from bat secretions/feces and consuming **bat meat**.
- **Climate change** and **habitat destruction** increase risks of zoonotics. **One Health programme is essential**.
- **Initial symptoms** include fever, headache, sore throat, cough, vomiting, and fatigue. Severe symptoms include encephalitis, acute respiratory distress, seizures, confusion, coma, with a high fatality rate of 40–75%.
- **ICMR** has **invited EoI** from organisations, companies, and manufacturers for the development and production of monoclonal antibodies against Nipah viral disease.
- **Monoclonal antibodies are crucial**, given the **high fatality rate** and the **absence of licensed vaccines**.
- The ICMR added that mAbs could serve as post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) for high-risk contacts, including healthcare workers, family members in close contact, and laboratory personnel with accidental exposure.
- When administered early, they can prevent disease onset by **reducing viral load and limiting disease progression**.
- **Nipah virus (NiV):** Zoonotic paramyxovirus from fruit bats; BSL-4 pathogen; no vaccine/treatment.

- **Origin:** 1998 Malaysia outbreak (pigs–humans); **India cases** in Kerala (2018, 2021, 2023) and WBI (2026).
- **Transmission:** Bat secretions on fruits/palm sap; pig–human contact; human–human via droplets (R0 0.3–0.4).
- **Symptoms:** Fever, encephalitis, 40–75% CFR; incubation 4–14 days; asymptomatic spread possible.

Ebola

Why in news: 16th outbreak of Ebola in Congo.

- The **Ebola virus** can **spread quickly** and be **fatal in up to 90% of cases**. **Symptoms** include **fever, vomiting, diarrhea, muscle pain, and internal and external bleeding**.
- The virus is **transmitted to people from wild animals** such as **fruit bats, porcupines, and non–human primates**. It then **spreads among humans** through **direct contact with blood, secretions, organs, or bodily fluids** of infected persons and **contaminated objects like sheets**.
- The **Ebola virus** was **first described in 1976** near the **Ebola River** in the **DRC**.
- **Ebolavirus** belongs to the **Filoviridae family (filovirus)**, along with **Marburgvirus** and **Cuevavirus**.

Scrub Typhus

- 9 deaths from Scrub Typhus disease in **Andhra Pradesh**. It is a **bacterial zoonotic disease caused by Orientia tsutsugamushi bacteria**, transmitted via bites of infected **chiggers (larval mites)** in Southeast Asia & India.
- **Symptoms** include high fever, chills, headache, rash, and an eschar (black scab) at the bite site, while severe cases can lead to multi–organ failure if untreated.
- Endemic in India with outbreaks in **Tamil Nadu, Odisha, Meghalaya, and climate factors** like humidity boost chigger activity, with no vaccine available.
- Treated effectively with **doxycycline antibiotic** if started early, and prevention includes avoiding scrub vegetation areas, use of repellents, and protective clothing.

Sickle Cell Disease

Why in news: India has the second–highest prevalence. Nigeria > India (MP > Chhattisgarh > Maharashtra) > DRC.

- **ICMR** has developed **India's first stigma scale for SCD – ICMR–SCD Stigma Scale for India (ISSSI)**. ISSSI includes two tools: ISSSI–Pt (patient scale) and ISSSI–Cg (caregiver scale), and is the fourth stigma scale globally.
- 6 **SCD–endemic districts**: Alluri Seetharama Raju (AP), Anuppur (MP), Chhoteudepur (Gujarat), Kandhamal (Odisha), Mysuru (Karnataka), and Udalguri (Assam).
- Prevalent among **tribal populations** due to **limited healthcare, socioeconomic challenges, and misinformation**.

About Sickle Cell Disease:

- **Caused by inheritance of 2 mutated β -globin genes (on chromosome 11)**, leading to formation of **abnormal sickle haemoglobin**. If both parents carry sickle cell trait, child has significant chances of being born with the disease. While healthy individuals have **disc-shaped RBCs**, those with sickle cell disease have **crenate or sickle-like RBCs**.
- RBCs become **rigid, sticky, and shaped like a sickle**. These sickled cells can **obstruct blood flow** in small vessels, resulting in pain, organ damage, and increased risk of infections due to their premature destruction in the spleen.
- It is an autosomal recessive disease or Mendelian disorder. It is a chronic single gene disorder.
- **Treatment: Blood Transfusions** can alleviate anemia and lower the risk; **Hydroxyurea** drug helps decrease frequency of painful episodes; **Gene Therapy**: Bone marrow or stem cell transplants, using techniques like CRISPR; US FDA approved two gene therapies designed for sickle cell disease: **Lyfgenia and Casgevy**.
- Included in the **21 disabilities** under Disabilities Act, 2016.
- **National Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission** launched in 2023 to eliminate Sickle Cell Disease by 2047. The mission aims to provide affordable, accessible, and quality care to SCD patients, raise awareness, and screen 7 crore individuals (aged 0–40 years) in affected districts across 17 tribal-dominated states.

New COVID Variants

Why in news: One case of **COVID–19 variant NB.1.8.1** and four cases of **variant LF.7** have been detected in **India**.

- **WHO classifies LF.7 and NB.1.8** subvariants as **Variants Under Monitoring**, not as Variants of Concern or Interest.
- These variants are reportedly **driving a rise in COVID–19 cases** in **China and parts of Asia**.
- The **NB.1.8.1 case** was reported from **Tamil Nadu**, while **LF.7 cases** were found in **Gujarat**. In India, the most common variant remains **JN.1 (53%)**, followed by **BA.2 (26%)** and other **Omicron sublineages (20%)**.
- Being an **RNA virus**, SARS–CoV–2 **mutates frequently**, contributing to new sub–lineages.

Long COVID Impact

- Affects at least **10% of recovered patients**, up to **50–70% of hospitalised cases**.
- Symptoms: **brain fog, memory issues, fatigue, concentration problems**.
- Brain scans show **measurable cognitive decline** and structural changes.

Measles Vaccine

Why in news: Measles was extremely common 60 years ago, infecting over 90% of children, with 25% of symptomatic cases hospitalised. The first effective measles vaccine was developed by John Enders in 1963.

- Expanded Programme on Immunisation by WHO (1970s) and later Gavi Vaccine Alliance (2000, PPP, Geneva) helped scale up measles vaccine access.
- EPI, now called Essential Programme on Immunization, was launched in 1974 to provide global access to life-saving vaccines, initially focusing on six childhood diseases and expanding to cover more diseases across all ages.
- Africa and Southeast Asia benefited the most, with 2.9 crore and 2.0 crore lives saved, respectively.

MASLD

Why in news: 40% of Indian population is affected by metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease (MASLD) compared to 30% global incidence, making it a silent pandemic.

- Weight reduction is key to treating this non-alcoholic fatty liver condition triggered by unhealthy lifestyle and metabolic risk factors like obesity, Type 2 diabetes, and insulin resistance.
- 53% of Indian population remains undiagnosed as MASLD presents minimal or no early symptoms until liver failure occurs. Early symptoms include fatigue, tiredness, and mild pain on the right side of the abdomen.
- Though MASLD is static or reversible in 80–85% of cases, 15% develop steatotic hepatitis over 7 years, and 5% develop liver cirrhosis over 25 years; some may even develop liver cancer.
- Recommended tests include blood tests and ultrasound every six months and non-invasive fibroscan every 1–3 years. High-risk individuals include those with diabetes, pre-diabetes, hypertension, high lipid profile, elevated liver enzymes, family history of heart disease and liver cirrhosis.
- Diet is both the cause and cure for MASLD, with advice to reduce portion size, calories, and follow a protein-rich, low-carb diet. Quitting smoking and alcohol, intermittent fasting are recommended.

Bacteria – Heart Attacks

Why in news: Oral bacteria, specifically viridans streptococci, could contribute to fatal heart attacks by forming biofilms in atherosclerotic plaques, hidden from the immune system until plaque rupture.

- Viridans streptococci bacteria were found in about 42% of coronary arteries from autopsy and surgical cases. These bacteria formed biofilms deep within atherosclerotic plaques, remaining undetected by immune cells, possibly contributing to plaque rupture and heart attacks.
- Previous studies suggested microbes like pneumonia bacteria, herpes viruses, and ulcer bacteria inside plaques, but none directly linked to rupture events.
- Biofilms in plaques shifted towards the outer layer during rupture, activating Toll-like receptor 2 (TLR2), an immune sensor, indicating inflammation leading to rupture. Biofilms resist antibiotics and immune clearance, making it difficult to treat coronary disease with antibiotics, which has previously failed in large clinical trials.
- Oral bioburden could be measured in high-risk individuals, with preventive penicillin treatment suggested.

Alzheimer's Plaques

- A new study led by Purdue University highlights the role of fat metabolism in microglia as a driver of Alzheimer's progression, opening avenues for targeted therapy.
- Alzheimer's: A progressive brain disorder causing memory loss, confusion, and mood changes. Caused by accumulation of amyloid-beta (A β) and tau proteins, damaging neurons. Destruction begins decades before symptoms appear. No cure exists, but treatments can slow symptoms.
- Microglia are brain's immune cells that clear A β and waste in healthy brains. In Alzheimer's, microglia fail to clear A β effectively. Microglia near plaques have high DGAT2 expression and are bloated with lipid droplets.
- DGAT2 Enzyme converts free fatty acids into triacylglycerols stored in lipid droplets. Microglia near plaques accumulate fat, reducing their ability to digest A β .

Cholera

Why in news: Jajpur, Odisha had a cholera outbreak.

- Cholera is caused by the Vibrio cholerae bacterium, usually spread through contaminated food or drinking water. It leads to severe diarrhoea and dehydration, and can be fatal if untreated, even in healthy individuals.
- Cholera toxin affects small intestine, triggering excessive water & electrolyte loss, leading to rapid dehydration.
- Asymptomatic individuals can spread bacteria through stool contamination of water sources for 7 to 14 days.
- Symptoms include diarrhoea, nausea, vomiting, and dehydration, with signs such as sunken eyes, dry mouth, extreme thirst, dry skin, low urination, and muscle cramps due to electrolyte imbalance.

Cramped Muscles

Why in news: A **cramp** is a **sudden, involuntary tightening** of a muscle or group of muscles that a person **can't immediately relax**. The muscle **locks up all at once**, often feeling like a **sharp knot** and can **hurt for a while**.

- **Muscle cramps** typically occur in **legs or hands** due to **dehydration, exercise, or low potassium or magnesium levels**.
- **Menstrual cramps** in the uterus are **hormone-driven contractions** to **expel the uterine lining**.
- **Stomach cramps** occur due to **gas, infections, or in people with irritable bowel syndrome (IBS)**.
- In all cases, a cramp happens when **muscle cells are stressed** and begin to **misfire**.
- People are at **greater risk** of cramps if they have **diabetes, thyroid problems, kidney disease**.

Chronic Venous Insufficiency

Why in news: **Trump** diagnosed with **chronic venous insufficiency** (leg veins don't allow blood to flow back to heart).

- **Arteries** carry **oxygenated blood** away from the **heart** and have **thick walls** with a **muscular layer** to keep blood moving.
- Arteries can be as wide as a **nickel (about two centimeters)** and are the **largest type of blood vessel** in the body.
- **Aorta** is **largest artery**, carrying blood from **heart to organs**. Arteries have small branches called **arterioles**, which adjust in size to **maintain BP**.
- **Veins** carry **deoxygenated blood** toward the **heart** and are often **close to the skin**.
- Veins lack the **muscular layer** found in arteries and rely on **valves** to keep blood moving.
- Veins start as tiny vessels called **venules**, which grow into **full-size veins** as they near the heart.
- **Veins** are **closer to the surface**, while **arteries** are **deeper inside muscles**.
- The **walls of veins** are **thinner** than arteries.
- **Veins** carry blood **from organs to the heart**, while **arteries** carry blood **away from the heart**.
- This condition is **common in those over 70**. It can start in **one leg, causing** blood pooling and pressure build-up, leading to skin changes, pain, swelling, cramps, ulcers.
- **Risk factors** include overweight, pregnancy, genetic history, leg injury/trauma, high blood pressure, sedentary lifestyle, lack of exercise, and smoking.
- **Deep vein thrombosis (DVT), vein inflammation, long bed rest, or cancer** can also trigger the condition; patients may be **symptomatic or asymptomatic**.
- Patients with this condition are **60% more likely** to have **severe cardiovascular disease**. **Doppler ultrasound** diagnoses the condition by **visualising blood flow**, identifying **clots/blockages**, and assessing **valve function**.
- Treatment includes **medications** to strengthen venous walls and **compression stockings** to aid circulation.
- Patients are advised **not to sit or stand for long periods** and to stay **physically active**.
- **Laser ablation surgery** can **close damaged veins** to improve blood flow. **Vein glue procedure** seals affected veins with **medical glue**, redirecting blood to healthier veins.

Rare Diseases

Why in news: About **10,000 rare diseases** have been identified globally; new ones continue to emerge.

- Nearly **80% are genetic** in origin and **predominantly affect children**. About **30% of affected children** don't survive beyond the age of five. Though individually rare, **300 million people worldwide** cumulatively have rare diseases.
- **Rare diseases include** thalassemia, sickle cell, ataxia, lysosomal storage disorder, congenital insensitivity to pain, acquired aplastic anaemia, muscular dystrophy, multiple sclerosis, sweet syndrome and pediatric cardiomyopathy.
- Absence of a national registry results in **inaccurate patient data**, hindering effective policy drafting.
- Of the 300 million global patients, **about 90 million live in India**. Actual number likely higher due to **endogamy**, which **preserves genetic conditions** within communities.
- Over **95% of rare diseases lack affordable therapies**; hence, **premarital counselling** becomes vital.
- Scientists are urging **genetic carriers not to marry within the mutation pool** to prevent transmission.
- **Crowdfunding portal** for rare disease treatment has raised only ₹3.9 lakh in 3 years since 2021.
- There are **12 Centres of Excellence (CoEs)** across the country for **rare disease treatment**.

Haemophilia

Why in news: India has only **29,000 diagnosed haemophilia cases** against the estimated **1–1.5 lakh patients**.

- Global best practice of **prophylaxis (regular replacement therapy)** is rare in India.
- **Inherited rare bleeding disorder** caused by deficiency of clotting factors, mainly **Factor VIII (Haemophilia A)**.
- Leads to **excessive bleeding** from minor injuries, spontaneous internal bleeding (joints, muscles, brain), and chronic disability. Each untreated bleed reduces life expectancy by ~16 days.
- India prevalence: **1 in 10,000**.
- **Shift in Treatment Approach:** Earlier on-demand therapy (treating bleeds after they occur). Now, prophylaxis (regular replacement of clotting factors) prevents bleeds altogether. Gene therapy developed to teach genes to produce clotting factor VIII. Advanced methods include non-factor therapies (subcutaneous injections).

Thalassaemia

- **Thalassaemia patients** have welcomed the introduction of **National Blood Transfusion Bill, 2025** in Parliament.

- Seeks to create a **National Blood Transfusion Authority** to set **uniform standards** for collection, testing, processing, storage, distribution, issuance and transfusion of blood and blood components. It mandates registration of all blood centres & seeks to promote **voluntary blood donation**.

- It introduces **strict penalties for unsafe or non-compliant practices**.

- An inherited autosomal recessive genetic blood disorder characterized by the body's inability to produce sufficient hemoglobin, leading to chronic anemia and excessive destruction of red blood cells.
- Caused by mutations or deletions in genes controlling the production of alpha and beta-globin protein chains.
- **Alpha-Thalassemia:** Affects alpha-globin genes (HBA1, HBA2). Most severe form is Hydrops Fetalis.
- **Beta-Thalassemia:** Affects beta-globin genes (HBB). Common in India. Minor (Trait): Carriers; usually asymptomatic. Major (Cooley's Anemia): Severe form requiring lifelong blood transfusions. Intermedia: Moderate severity between Minor and Major.
- India has approx 1.5 lakh patients, with 10,000 to 12,000 children born with Thalassemia Major annually.
- **Carrier Rate:** Roughly 3–4% of the Indian population are carriers, with higher prevalence (up to 40%) in certain tribal and regional communities (e.g., Eastern India due to Hemoglobin E).

Government Initiatives:

- **Thalassemia Bal Sewa Yojana (TBSY):** A flagship CSR initiative by Coal India Limited launched in 2017. Scheme has successfully completed over 800 Bone Marrow Transplants (BMTs).
- **National Policy for Rare Diseases (NPRD), 2021:** Thalassemia is treated under Group 1 (diseases curable with one-time treatment like BMT). Provides financial support of up to ₹50 lakh
- **RPwD Act, 2016:** Thalassemia is recognized as a specified disability.

RPwD

- **Haemophilia** causes serious mobility limitations and recurrent hospitalisations. Despite this, persons with haemophilia are reportedly denied **reservation benefits, educational support, and welfare entitlements**.
- **Haemophilia, thalassaemia, and sickle cell disease** are listed among the **21 specified disabilities** in the RPwD Act. Entitlements are limited to persons with benchmark disabilities (40% or more). Such persons are eligible for 5% reservation in higher education, 4% reservation in government employment, and free education (6–18 years).
- **Persons with Disabilities Act, 1995** followed India signing the Proclamation on the Full Participation and Equality of People with Disabilities in the Asian and Pacific Region. It was replaced by the RPwD Act, 2016 after India ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2007.
- **4% reservation** in government jobs applies only to five disability categories. Disabilities perceived as “visible” receive priority over “invisible” but disabling conditions.

International Day of Persons with Disabilities (IDPD)

- Celebrated on **December 3**, first in **1992**, following its proclamation by the **UNGA Resolution 47/3**. In 2006, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities was adopted. It seeks to provide equality of opportunity for people with disabilities by implementing the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals.
- The **theme for 2025** is “fostering disability-inclusive societies for advancing social progress.”
- The theme reaffirms the **commitment of world leaders** convened at the **Second World Summit for Social Development** to create a **more just, inclusive, equitable, and sustainable world for all**.

Anaemia

Why in news: Over **57% of women of reproductive age** in India suffer from undiagnosed and untreated anaemia.

- **Symptoms** like fatigue, dizziness, and weakness are often dismissed as routine. **Iron deficiency affects** foetal brain development, impacting long-term cognitive outcomes. **Anaemia at conception** increases risks of preterm birth, low birth weight, pre-eclampsia, and post-partum haemorrhage.
- **Oral Iron-Folic Acid (IFA)** remains the primary tool but has **limitations:** Causes nausea, constipation, poor absorption, Insufficient to treat long-standing anaemia during short span of pregnancy.
- **Intravenous Ferric Carboxymaltose (IV FCM)** is a safer, more effective alternative.
- **Iron Deficiency Anaemia (IDA)** is common, but not the only cause. Nearly **49% of women** suffer from **Vitamin B12 deficiency**, which affects **red blood cell formation and neurological health**.
- **Thyroid disorders** (hypo/hyperthyroidism) and **undiagnosed gestational diabetes** further exacerbate risks.

Amoebic Meningoencephalitis

Why in news: Kerala issued an **alert against primary amoebic meningoencephalitis (PAM)**.

- The infection has **very high mortality** but **does not transmit from person to person**.
- It is caused by **Naegleria fowleri**, a free-living **amoeba** that infects people when they **swim or bathe in stagnant waters**. The amoeba enters body **through the nose**, reaches the brain, and can also enter **through the eardrum**.
- **Children are more vulnerable** as their **cribriform plate** has more porous openings compared with adults.
- **Symptoms** appear within **5–10 days** & include headache, fever, nausea, vomiting, stiff neck, light sensitivity. In children, signs include refusing food, not playing, preferring to lie on the bed, along with fading memory, epilepsy, and fainting in severe cases.

- **1st case of PAM in India** was reported in **1971**. **1st case in Kerala** in **2016**.

- Globally, the **fatality rate of PAM is 97%**, but Kerala has reduced it to **25%**.
- The **spike in Kerala cases** is linked to **increased AES testing, climate change, and environmental pollution**.
- Kerala became the **first state in India** to issue a **special treatment protocol and SOP for PAM management** in 2023.
- **No effective treatment identified** so far; doctors currently use a **drug combination**: amphotericin B, azithromycin, fluconazole, rifampin, miltefosine, and dexamethasone.
- **Naegleria fowleri** thrives in **warm freshwater bodies**, grows best at **high temperatures up to 46°C**, and may survive at even higher levels. **Global warming** increases the risk of infections.

Lyme Disease

Why in news: Justin Timberlake revealed that he has been diagnosed with **Lyme disease**.

- It is a **bacterial infection** transmitted to humans by **infected black-legged ticks** (deer ticks).
- It can cause **flu-like conditions, neurological problems, joint pains** and other symptoms.
- Treated with **antibiotics** and is easier to treat if diagnosed **early**. It is caused by the bacterium **Borrelia burgdorferi**.
- The **tick picks up the bacteria** while biting an infected animal and transmits it to humans while biting.
- Lyme disease is more common in **temperate forests and tall grasses**, especially in **North America, Europe, Asia**.
- Ticks that can transmit Lyme disease are also found in **India**, particularly in the **Himalayan region**.
- **Ticks pick up the bacteria** from feeding on infected animals like **mice or deer**.
- It usually takes a **tick attached for 36–48 hours** to transmit the bacteria.

Heart Attack “Notifiable”

Why in news: All **sudden heart attack deaths among people aged below 45** in Karnataka must now be **notified to the Health Department**. The declaration was based on a **recommendation by an expert committee** headed by **K.S. Ravindranath**. The panel found **no association between premature cardiovascular disease and COVID-19**.

- **Hospital data (2020–2023)** shows that **50% of heart attack patients are under 40 years**.

Emergency Care

Why in news: The ‘**Golden First Hour**’ concept is now universally accepted not just in **trauma care** but also in **heart attack and stroke** cases.

- The world is now moving toward the ‘**Platinum Ten Minutes**’ standard — medical help (not just an ambulance) should reach the victim within 10 minutes. The **National Ambulance Code (AIS-125)**, mandated by the Union government, standardises ambulance design, construction, performance, and equipment.
- The **Motor Vehicles Act, 1988**, and its 2019 amendments, provide the legal basis for granting ambulances the right of way. The State-run **108 Ambulance service** is one of the most successful public-private partnerships, with about 10,000 ambulances deployed nationwide. The **right to life** includes the **right to emergency medical care**.

Vitamin D Deficiency

Why in news: **40% to 90% of Indians** suffer from **Vitamin D deficiency**, making it a public health crisis.

- Despite being the “**sunlight vitamin**”, staying indoors, use of **sunscreen**, and **sun-protective clothing** are major contributors. Deficiency can lead to **rickets in children** and **osteomalacia in adults**.
- Vitamin D supports **bone health, calcium absorption, and muscle health**. It helps regulate **blood pressure**, reduces **inflammation**, and lowers risks of **Type 1 diabetes, rheumatoid arthritis, respiratory infections, and certain cancers**.
- **Dietary sources:** fish, meat, egg yolk, fortified dairy products, and mushrooms.
- Since only **20% of orally consumed Vitamin D is absorbed**, **supplements** are critical for **at-risk groups**.
- Higher neonatal Vitamin D levels linked to: **18% lower schizophrenia risk, 11% lower ADHD risk** and **7% lower autism risk**. Indicates Vitamin D is part of the **neurodevelopmental puzzle**, not a standalone solution.
- Deficiency is often **passed from mother to child**, as **maternal Vitamin D levels dictate neonatal levels**.

GERD

Why in news: Gastroesophageal reflux disease is lifestyle disorder affecting individuals across all age groups.

- **Frequent reflux** causing **persistent heartburn, chest pain, and difficulty swallowing** can lead to **chronic GERD**.
- GERD affects **one in five individuals globally**, with high prevalence in **Europe, North America, and parts of Asia**.
- In India, GERD cases are increasing among young adults due to unhealthy lifestyles and eating habits.
- Quitting **smoking, alcohol**, avoiding **spicy and fatty foods**, late-night meals, and **managing stress and sedentary habits** is needed. Elevating the head during sleep, sleeping on the left side, wearing loose clothes while exercising.
- Untreated GERD may lead to **oesophageal ulcers, strictures, vomiting of blood, and pre-cancerous conditions**.

Hepatitis A – UIP

- As India debates the inclusion of the **typhoid conjugate vaccine (TCV)** in its UIP, experts argue that **Hepatitis A** — a growing cause of **acute liver failure** — may deserve **even greater priority**.

- Hepatitis A: Improved sanitation has reduced early childhood exposure, leaving **adolescents and adults unprotected**, where the disease is **far more severe**. Recent **outbreaks in Kerala, Maharashtra, UP and Delhi** highlight this shift.
- Unlike typhoid, there is **no specific treatment** for severe Hepatitis A; recovery depends on **supportive care**.
- Hepatitis A is **entirely preventable**. Both live-attenuated and inactivated vaccines offer **90–95% protection**, with immunity lasting **15–20 years**, often lifelong. India has an indigenous vaccine: **Biovac-A**, a live-attenuated vaccine with an excellent **safety and efficacy** record for over **two decades**.
- Hepatitis A vaccines do **not** face issues of **waning immunity, antibiotic resistance, or carrier states**.

Typhoid vs Hepatitis A

- Typhoid mortality has declined due to **antibiotics and better sanitation**, though **AMR remains a concern**.

Antibiotics – Mental Health

Why in news: Uncontrolled use of antibiotics seen as **undermining mental well-being** through effect on **gut-brain axis**.

- India ranks among the **highest consumers of antibiotics** globally, driven by **over-the-counter access, self-medication, and low public awareness**.
- The **gut microbiota** – trillions of microorganisms in the gastrointestinal tract – influence the production of **key neurotransmitters** like **serotonin** and **dopamine**, crucial for **mood regulation, sleep, and stress response**.
- **Antibiotic-induced disruption** of gut bacteria can trigger **anxiety, depression, and cognitive decline**.
- The **gut**, often termed the **“second brain,”** influences mental states via **short-chain fatty acids, immune modulation, and vagus nerve interaction**.
- India’s traditional foods – **curd, idli, dosa, pickles** – act as **natural probiotics** promoting **gut health**.

Mental Health – WHO

Why in news: WHO released data showing that **over 1 billion people worldwide** are living with **mental health disorders**.

- Mental health conditions are the **second leading cause of long-term disability** globally.
- The reports – **World Mental Health Today** and **Mental Health Atlas 2024** – show progress but highlight **major global gaps**. **Women are disproportionately affected**, especially by **anxiety and depression**.
- **UN SDG target** of reducing suicide mortality by one-third by 2030 – on track for only a **12% reduction**.
- According to **NCRB – ADSI 2023**, India recorded **1,71,418 suicides**, a **0.3% increase** from 2022. The **suicide rate per 1,00,000** declined slightly by **0.8%**, but population growth offset this decline.
- **Highest suicide rates:** Andaman & Nicobar Islands, Sikkim, Kerala.
- **States with most deaths:** Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, Mp, Karnataka, West Bengal (over **40% of all suicides**).
- **Men formed 72.8%** of all victims, showing **gendered economic and social stress**.
- **Causes:** Family problems (31.9%), Illness (19%), Substance abuse (7%), Relationship/marriage issues (~10%).
- **Farmer suicides:** 10,786 (6.3% of total), mostly in **Maharashtra and Karnataka**.
- **Homemakers and caregivers** mostly women suffer **high depression and distress** but remain **invisible in official data**.

WHO estimates: India’s suicide rate is **16.3 per 1,00,000**, far higher than official figures.

- **National Suicide Prevention Strategy (2022):** aimed to reduce deaths by 10%.
- **Government spending on mental health** remains **stagnant at 2% of total health budgets**, unchanged since 2017.
- India has only **0.7 psychiatrists per 100,000 people**, far below the **WHO’s recommended 3 per 100,000 ratio**.
- **National Tele-Mental Health Programme** commonly known as Tele-MANAS (Tele Mental Health Assistance and Networking Across States), was launched on October 10, 2022 (World Mental Health Day) to serve as the digital arm of the District Mental Health Programme (DMHP). **Nodal Centre:** NIMHANS, Bengaluru, handles overall coordination and training. **Technical Partner:** International Institute of Information Technology (IIIT), Bengaluru.
- **DMHP covers 767 districts**, offering **counselling, outpatient, and suicide prevention services**.

(The **Indian government** often cites the **WHO “benchmark” of one doctor for every 1,000 people**, however this is **not an officially prescribed standard** by the **WHO**. Assuming 80% of registered practitioners in modern medicine and AYUSH systems are available, the doctor-population ratio is estimated to be 1:811. There are 13,88,185 registered modern medicine doctors in the country. There are 7,51,768 registered practitioners in the AYUSH system of medicine).

Mental Health – SC

Why in news: In *Sukdeb Saha vs State of Andhra Pradesh* **mental health** declared fundamental right **under Article 21**.

- The **Mental Healthcare Act 2017** provides a **statutory right**, but **implementation is weak**.
- Introduced **binding interim orders** called **“Saha Guidelines”**, requiring: **Schools, colleges, hostels, coaching institutes** to build **support systems**; **States and UTs** to enforce rules **within two months**; **District-level monitoring committees** to oversee compliance.

Mental Health Response

Why in news: **World Mental Health Day (October 10)** underscores the **global mental health crisis**, with **over one billion people (13% of the world’s population)** suffering from mental disorders.

- India, too, faces a major burden, with a **13.7% lifetime prevalence** of mental disorders.

- **Theme for World Mental Health Day 2025** is “**Access to Services: Mental Health in Catastrophes and Emergencies.**”
- The **Mental Healthcare Act, 2017** guarantees the **right to mental health care**, **decriminalises suicide**, mandates **insurance coverage**, and upholds **patient dignity and autonomy** — covering nearly **200 million Indians**.
- The **Manodarpan programme** has reached **11 crore students**, promoting mental well-being among school children.
- **WHO's ICD-11** (International Classification of Diseases, 11th Revision (ICD-11) is the global standard for health data, clinical documentation, and statistical reporting) includes **complex PTSD, prolonged grief disorder, gaming disorder**, but these are **absent from Indian guidelines**, restricting diagnosis and care.

Women – Heat

- **70% report symptoms** such as fatigue, dizziness, dehydration, gastrointestinal discomfort during peak heat months.
- **Reproductive and menstrual health issues** including **urinary tract infections, irregular bleeding, and cycle disruptions** were **widely reported**. The **psychosocial impacts of heat** were also reportedly profound.

Autism

- **Autism Spectrum Disorders** are defined by **WHO** as a diverse group of conditions marked by difficulties in social interaction, communication, and atypical behavioural patterns. Often detectable in **early childhood**, though diagnosis may occur **much later**.
- Causes of autism involve both **genetic** and **environmental factors**. The **MMR vaccine** has been **scientifically debunked** as a cause. No **childhood vaccines** are proven to **increase the risk** of autism.
- **Environmental exposures** like **parental age** and **air pollution** may influence development, but no **single toxin** is scientifically confirmed. Autism is not a disease, but a developmental difference.
- Emphasis should be on **secondary and tertiary prevention: early diagnosis, intervention, and support**.

Gonorrhoea

- **FDA** approved **two new oral drugs for gonorrhoea: Nuzolve (zofludacin) and Blujepa (gepotidacin)** addressing **rising antimicrobial resistance** in sexually transmitted infections.
- **WHO** classifies **Neisseria gonorrhoeae** as a **high-priority pathogen (2024 list)** due to its **rapidly growing resistance**.
- Gonorrhoea, often **asymptomatic especially among women**, can cause **infertility and complications** if untreated.
- Driven partly by **reduced condom use** amid wider **HIV PrEP adoption**.

HIV Cases

- New HIV infections per 1,000 uninfected population stood at 0.05 nationally in 2024.
- **Mizoram (0.90)** reported highest estimated annual new HIV incidence rate > Nagaland (0.42) > Tripura (0.28).
- Annual new cases declined nationally by around 48.70% between 2010 and 2024.
- Annual new cases increased by more than 400% in **Arunachal Pradesh and Tripura**.
- **Globally**, annual new infections declined by **40% from 2010 to 2024**.
- The **annual AIDS-related mortality rate** was estimated nationally at **2.32 per 1,00,000 population**.

Broadly Neutralising Antibodies (bNAbs)

Why in news: Effectiveness of bNAbs against HIV varies between regions, with **Indian and South African strains** showing distinct patterns of resistance and sensitivity.

- In **1994**, the antibody **b12** was isolated, showing strong neutralising ability against multiple HIV variants.
- **bNAbs** can neutralise a wide range of HIV variants by targeting **conserved regions of the viral envelope**, such as the **CD4-binding site**, which the virus cannot easily mutate without affecting its survival.
- However, **HIV's genetic diversity** makes it difficult for any single bNAb to neutralise all viral strains, even within one patient. Researchers are now working to **induce bNAb production through vaccination**.
- Based on the findings, the researchers proposed a **three-bNAb cocktail** — **BG18, N6, and PGDM1400**.

HIV Transmission in Children

- **Mother to child transmission of HIV** remains a **major challenge** in eliminating **HIV in children**. **HIV transmission** can occur during **pregnancy, delivery, or through breastfeeding**.
- Some babies are diagnosed with **HIV** even though mothers **tested negative during pregnancy**. This pattern is called the **silent transmission gap**. The gap highlights weaknesses in **testing, timing, and follow-up care**.
- Many women test **negative in early pregnancy** but may **acquire HIV later**.
- **New HIV infection during pregnancy** is associated with a **very high viral load**. **High viral load** greatly increases the **risk of transmission to the baby**. A **single early pregnancy test** may miss **later infections**.
- After infection, a **window period** exists when **standard tests may not detect HIV**. During **window period**, **risk of HIV transmission is high**. **Transmission** can occur **before birth, during birth, or after birth through breast milk**.
- **AIDS is caused by HIV, which damages the immune system responsible for fighting infections. If HIV goes:**

untreated, it can kill **CD4 cells**, a kind of **immune cell**. The more **CD4 cells** are killed, the higher the **risk of infections** becoming **incurable**.

- Every **vaccine** undergoes “**extensive and rigorous**” testing, screenings and evaluations to determine the **antigen** needed to invoke an **immune response**.
- In **Phase 1**, a select number of volunteers are administered the vaccine to test immune response and determine the right dosage. In **Phase 2**, the vaccine is given to several hundred volunteers, involving multiple trials to assess different formulations across various age groups. This phase includes a control group that is not given the vaccine to compare results and rule out chance effects. In **Phase 3**, the vaccine is given to an even larger group and compared with a non-vaccinated group, usually across multiple countries and sites.

AIDS & TB Fight

- The **Government** launched the **National AIDS Control Project in 1992**. Every **State government** set up an **AIDS Cell** in the respective **medical directorates**.
- **TN State AIDS Cell** was converted into a Registered Society under the Societies Registration Act. This facilitated a direct fund flow. **Gol** and the **World Bank** mandated the **Tamil Nadu model** for all the States in the **Second National AIDS Control Project (1997–2002)**. **World AIDS Day (December 1)**.
- The **2025 Global TB Report** of the **WHO** shows 25% of the global TB burden (36 million) is in India. 7.5% of the global total number of people living with HIV (40 million) are in India.
- **TB** is the most common **opportunistic infection** in **HIV-infected people**, accounting for **25% of AIDS deaths in India**.
- India has 25–30% of the global total number of people infected with multidrug-resistant tuberculosis (**MDR-TB**).
- **TB** bacteria **Mycobacterium tuberculosis (Mtb)** survive inside **macrophages**, creating a **drug-tolerant niche**, which explains **long TB treatment regimens, poor adherence, and rising drug resistance**.
- The **global target date for elimination of TB** is **2030**. India set a target of achieving **TB elimination by 2025**, five years ahead of the **global target date**. Though, the **2025 target has not been achieved**.
- **Pradhan Mantri TB Mukh Bharat Abhiyaan (PMTBMBA)** supports the treatment of TB patients.
- **UP, Maharashtra, MP, Bihar and Rajasthan** account for 56% of total TB infections reported in India during 2024.

WHO Global Tuberculosis Report 2025

- **India's TB incidence** fell by **21% from 2015 to 2024**, almost **double the global decline of 12%**.
- **Treatment coverage** increased to **over 92% in 2024**, up from **53% in 2015**.
- **No significant increase** was observed in **multidrug-resistant (MDR) TB patients**.
- **Treatment success rate** under **TB Mukh Bharat Abhiyan** rose to **90%**, higher than the **global rate of 88%**.
- **Country-wise share of global TB burden**: India – 25%, Indonesia – 10%, Philippines – 6.8%, China – 6.5%, Pakistan – 6.3%, Nigeria – 4.8%, DR Congo – 3.9%, Bangladesh – 3.6%.
- TB incidence declined from **237 per lakh population (2015)** to **187 per lakh (2024)**.
- **Delhi** recorded the **highest TB infection prevalence rate**.
- **Malnutrition** accounts for nearly **40% of TB cases** in India.

India's Response Measures

- In **2020**, **RNTCP** was renamed the **National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP)**.
- **1.78 lakh Ayushman Arogya Mandirs** strengthened decentralised TB services.
- Under **Ni-kshay Poshan Yojana**, **DBT support** increased from **₹500 to ₹1,000 per month per patient**.
- **ASHA workers** were trained to identify early warning signs and refer patients.

- **TB** is caused by an organism called **mycobacterium tuberculosis**, which mainly affects the **lungs**, but can also impact **other parts of the body**. **TB spreads through air** when an infected individual **coughs, sneezes, or speaks**.
- According to experts, during **recovery from TB**, it is critical to consume a **well-balanced and nutritious diet** to **strengthen the immune system**.
- **BPAL Regimen**: **Pretomanid (Pa)** is used in combination with **bedaquiline (B)**, **linezolid (L)** and **moxifloxacin (M)** to form **BPAL** and **BPALM**. **India** is the **only global supplier of pretomanid**, a **key drug** within the **BPAL regimen**.
- Directorate General of Trade Remedies (DGTR) under the Commerce and Industry Ministry has launched an anti-dumping investigation on imports of tuberculosis drug **Ethambutol Hydrochloride** from China and Thailand.
- **TB elimination**: It is defined as less than one case per million population. The WHO End TB strategy targets an 80% decline in new TB cases and a 90% decline in TB deaths by 2030 compared to 2015.
- **World Tuberculosis Day**: It is observed on **March 24 every year** to increase public awareness. The date marks 1882, when Dr. Robert Koch announced the discovery of the bacterium that causes TB. Theme is “Yes! We Can End TB: Commit, Invest, Deliver”, highlighting the need for stronger commitments and action, especially against drug-resistant TB.

Breast Cancer

- **Higher levels of physical activity** contribute to **lowering the risk of breast cancer**, while **reproductive timing, hormonal exposure, central obesity, and family history** influence occurrence.
- Odds of developing breast cancer were **3 times higher** in **women over 50 years** compared with those **under 35 years**.

- Women reporting **more than 2 induced abortions** had a **higher risk** compared with those with **no abortions**.
- **Breastfeeding duration** and **use of oral contraceptives** showed **no significant association** with **breast cancer risk**.
- In **India**, **breast cancer** accounts for nearly **22.8% of cancers among women**.
- Sleep quality/patterns, sleeping in a lighted room, and elevated stress levels were **contributing risk factors**.

Oral Cancer

- **Alcohol consumption**, even in **small amounts**, significantly increases the risk of **buccal mucosa cancer (BMC)**.
- **Men** who had **ever consumed alcohol** had a **68% higher risk** of developing **buccal mucosa cancer** compared with **non-drinkers**. Locally brewed liquors showed particularly elevated risks.
- **Buccal mucosa cancer** is the **most common form of oral cancer in India**.

Cancer – NAMS Report

Why in news: India records **nearly 2,00,000 new cancer cases annually**, with breast cancer being the most common malignancy among women. NAMS Report on Breast Cancer notes a higher proportion of younger women being diagnosed in India than in high-income countries.

- **Over 60% of Indian breast cancer patients** present at **Stages 3 or 4**, compared to **60% at Stage 0 or 1** in the **U.S.**
- Breast cancer is **treatable if detected early**. **Asia** accounts for **50% of global cancer cases** and **58% of cancer deaths**.
- India ranks **third globally** in total cancer cases, after **China and the U.S.**
- **National Academy of Medical Sciences** is an institution under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare that fosters academic excellence and advises on national health policy. NAMS is recognized as a nodal agency for continuing education of medical and allied health professionals. Conducts research and provides expert reports.

Circulatory System Ailments

- Accounted for **36.4%** of all medically certified deaths in the country, says report released by RGI.
- The **figure was 4% points lower than that of 2022**.
- **Diseases of pulmonary circulation or other heart diseases** were **causing more than half of these deaths**.

Cleft

- **India**, despite recording **highest number of cleft births globally**, has **no national epidemiological data on cleft lip**.
- **Cleft lip/palate** is a **facial birth defect** that occurs when **tissues and structures do not fuse during pregnancy** due to genetics or maternal nutrition deficiencies. It leaves newborns with a gap in the upper lip and the roof of the mouth.
- **WHO** has formally recognised **craniofacial anomaly** in the **Global Burden of Disease initiative**. This recognition has led the **NITI Aayog** to initiate **conversations around birth defects**.
- The **National Birth Defect Awareness Month** was launched in **2024** with the theme **'Breaking Barriers: inclusive support for children with birth defects'**.

Global Burden of Disease initiative

- Led by the Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation (**IHME**) at the University of Washington, funded primarily by the **Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation**.
- **DALYs:** It pioneered use of **Disability-Adjusted Life Years (DALYs)**. 1 DALY represents the loss of the equivalent of 1 year of full health. It combines years of life lost due to premature mortality and years lived with disability.
- **Scope:** It tracks hundreds of diseases, injuries, and risk factors across countries. It categorises health trends by age, sex, and geography over time. **India** has its own **India State-Level Disease Burden Initiative**, a collaboration between **ICMR, PHFI, and IHME**. It provides granular health data for every Indian state.

Innovations, Drugs and Medicines

BioEmu – Protein Structures

Why in news: A new deep learning tool, **BioEmu**, developed by **Microsoft, Rice University, and Freie Universität**, can predict **protein shapes** under biological conditions, offering breakthroughs in **protein flexibility modelling**.

- **BioEmu** predicts the **equilibrium ensemble** – the range of **stable protein conformations**, unlike AlphaFold which shows only one static structure.
- It uses **AI diffusion models** to simulate **protein flexibility at scale**, enabling **fast-cheap predictions** than classical methods like Molecular Dynamics.
- BioEmu provides **quick snapshots of stable structures**, but **not the unfolding process** or **dynamic interactions**.
- Ideal for **hypothesis generation**; MD still needed for **validation** and **fine-grained analysis**.
- **Limitations of BioEmu:** Cannot model Protein interactions, Cell walls, Drug molecules, pH or temperature changes, Reliability scores like AlphaFold. Limited to **single protein chains**.

Google's C2S-Scale

Why in news: Google's Cell2Sentence-Scale 27B is a 27-billion-parameter foundation model built on the Gemma family of open models, designed to understand the language of individual cells.

- **Interferons** are proteins that act as **frontline defenders** against infections and tumours. **Small AI** or traditional **Large Language Models** were unable to learn this.
- The model zeroed in on drug called **silmitasertib**, which seemed to **boost the immune system only when it suspected a tumour**.
- The **novelty** of Google's effort lies not in **rediscovering a drug**, but in its ability to **scan vast literature to identify new therapeutic uses** for existing **drug candidates**.
- Separately, the **Riemann Hypothesis** remains one of the **most challenging unsolved problems in mathematics**, dealing with the **distribution of prime numbers**, and has **remained unproven for over a century**.

T Cells - Foxp3 Gene

Why in news: T cells are immune cells with **T-cell receptors (TCRs)** on their surface that act as **sensors** to detect infected or abnormal cells in the body.

- But sometimes they can also attach to **human tissues**, triggering autoimmune reactions. In **1995**, scientists identified a new class of T cells carrying an extra surface protein called **CD25**, known as **Regulatory T cells (Tregs)**.
- The **Foxp3 gene** controls the development of **Regulatory T cells**, helping prevent other T cells from mistakenly attacking the body's own tissues — a mechanism called **peripheral immune tolerance**.
- **Regulatory T cells** also help the immune system **return to normal** after fighting infections, preventing excessive immune activity and maintaining **immune balance**.

Wound-healing Pad

Why in news: Researchers at JNTBGRI Thiruvananthapuram, have developed an **innovative and multifunctional wound-healing pad** using **nanomaterials like electrospun fibers**.

- It taps into wound-healing properties of the **red ivy plant (Strobilanthes alternata)**, locally known as **murikooti pacha**, belonging to the **Acanthaceae family**. **Red ivy** grows abundantly across **tropical regions including India**.
- **Acteoside** is a **natural compound** known for its **pharmacological activities and therapeutic potential**, but this is the **first time it has been linked to the red ivy plant**.
- **Acteoside molecule** shows **high efficacy even at low concentrations of 0.2%**.
- Includes **electrospun nanofiber layer** made from **biodegradable and non-toxic polymers** and is **extremely thin**.

CEREBO

Why in news: ICMR has developed **CEREBO**, a **portable, non-invasive diagnostic tool for brain injury** using **near-infrared spectroscopy with machine learning**.

- CEREBO is designed for **rural areas and emergency settings** where **CT or MRI scans are inaccessible or delayed**.
- The device can detect intracranial bleeding and edema within a minute providing radiation-free results.
- It is **safe for infants and pregnant women**; requires only **30 minutes of training** for use by **paramedical staff**.
- Developed collaboratively by **ICMR-MDMS, AIIMS Bhopal, NIMHANS Bengaluru, and Bioscan Research**.
- It uses **near-infrared spectroscopy** powered by **machine learning** to provide rapid, reliable diagnostics for Trauma Brain Injury. Particularly useful for **early detection** and for **monitoring** mild TBIs (concussions)..
- India has the **highest incidence of head injuries globally**, with **over 1,00,000 deaths annually** and **1 million serious head injuries**. **Half of deaths occur within the first two hours of injury**.

E-tattoo

Why in news: Scientists have developed an **"e-tattoo"** that detects **brain-waves and eye signals** from the **forehead** to assess **mental workload**. The **graphite electrodes** are coated with a **polymer** that adheres to skin **12-times better than gel pads** and maintains **low electrical resistance**, even during **sweating**.

MRgFUS - Tremors

Why in news: **Essential tremor (ET)** is one of the **most common neurological disorders**, affecting about **1% of the global population**. The **prevalence of ET increases with age**, affecting **approximately 5% of individuals over 60**.

- ET causes **rhythmic shaking**, making **daily activities difficult** and in advanced stages, **speech and swallowing**.
- **MRgFUS** is a **non-surgical procedure** using focused ultrasound waves to target brain tissues causing tremors in ET and Parkinson's disease. MRgFUS serves as an alternative to invasive surgery, providing a one-time medical intervention for tremor relief.

Strokes

Why in news: **World Stroke Day** is observed every **October 29**.

- **Advances in imaging, screening, and stenting techniques** have made it possible to **prevent many strokes**. Nearly 80% of strokes are preventable, as the brain gives early signals like transient weakness, speech issues, or vision loss.
- These warning episodes are known as **Transient Ischemic Attacks (TIAs)** or “**mini strokes**”, which are **temporary**.
- Just as cholesterol deposits can narrow heart arteries, they can also affect vessels supplying the brain.
- Every patient first needs lifestyle modification, blood pressure and sugar control, and antiplatelet therapy.
- If a **significant block remains**, doctors **choose between surgery or stenting**. A **brain stent** is a **tiny mesh tube** that **keeps narrowed or blocked arteries open**, restoring **blood flow to oxygen-starved regions**. **Modern neuroimaging** has transformed stroke diagnosis and prevention.

Deep-brain Stimulation

- It is medical technique where **electrodes** are implanted deep inside specific **brain areas** to treat disorders. These electrodes are connected by wires to a small device like a **pacemaker**, placed under the **skin in the upper chest**.
- It sends **controlled electrical impulses** to targeted brain region to adjust **abnormal brain activity, movement disorders** like **Parkinson’s disease, essential tremor, and dystonia** when medication no longer works.
- It is approved for **obsessive-compulsive disorder** and is being studied for **severe depression and epilepsy**. It modifies how **neurons communicate**, interrupting faulty **electrical signals** in brain to reduce **tremors, muscle stiffness**.
- The **stimulation level and pattern** can be adjusted by **doctors** or sometimes by **patients** using external programmers.
- It is **reversible** — turning off the device stops stimulation, unlike brain surgery that destroys tissue.

Cough Syrup

Why in news: **Gol** has **restricted the use** of a **fixed drug combination (FDC)** — **chlorpheniramine maleate and phenylephrine hydrochloride** — for **children below four years**.

- A warning label is now mandatory on packaging, inserts, and promotional materials.
 - Chlorpheniramine is an antihistamine for symptoms like runny nose, watery eyes, and sneezing.
 - Phenylephrine is a decongestant that narrows blood vessels for temporary relief.
 - **First-generation antihistamines**, like chlorpheniramine, are linked to **respiratory depression and apnoea**.
 - **Second-generation antihistamines** like **cetirizine and fexofenadine** are considered **safer alternatives**.
- **DEG is a toxic chemical substance** typically used in antifreeze solutions for air-conditioners, fridges, and freezers, and as a solvent for products including cosmetics at very low concentrations.
 - **Pharmaceutical-grade solvents**, such as **propylene glycol** and **glycerin** are required for safe human consumption. **DEG is cheaper** and has a colourless, syrupy consistency and sweet taste like glycerin; it is used by manufacturers to **cut costs**. Alleged batch was manufactured using **non-pharmacopoeial grade Propylene Glycol** as an excipient, which might have been contaminated with **DEG and Ethylene Glycol (EG)**.
 - DEG and EG are known **nephrotoxic and poisonous substances (cause serious kidney injuries)**.
 - While the **Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940** and the **Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945** do not explicitly list DEG by name, they **prohibit the use of any substance considered “adulterated” or “substandard.”**
 - **Health is a State subject**. **CDSCO** under the **DGHS**, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, regulates large drug manufacturers, approves new drugs, clinical trials, imports and export approvals in India.
 - **State drug control officers** oversee the regulation, care, manufacture, sale, and distribution of drugs by small- and medium-scale manufacturers.
 - Drugs are licensed in India through a process overseen by the **CDSCO and SDSCO**, following the guidelines of the **Drugs and Cosmetics Act**.
 - The process requires **applications, submitting documents, and inspections** to ensure that the drugs are safe, effective, and manufactured under strict quality standards.
 - **Drugs Controller General (India)** has directed **digital monitoring** on **ONDLS** for tracking supply chain of **high-risk solvents**. Manufacturers of pharma grade solvents must obtain manufacturing licences through **ONDLS portal**.

GLP-1 Drugs

Why in news: **WHO** has **updated its Model List of Essential Medicines** to include the **GLP-1 class of drugs** for **diabetes with associated comorbidities** such as **obesity**.

- Listing medicine on EML helps in lowering costs, improving affordability, and increasing access to essential drugs.
- WHO committee reviewed scientific evidence showing that **glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) receptor agonists** help people with **type 2 diabetes**, especially those with **heart or kidney disease**.
- **WHO’s recommendations** state that GLP-1 therapies may be used by adults, excluding pregnant women, conditionally, for the long-term treatment of obesity. The recommendations also require that intensive behavioural interventions in diet and physical activity must continue alongside the drugs.
- The drugs **semaglutide, dulaglutide, liraglutide, and tirzepatide** have been **added to the EML**.
- These medicines are used as **glucose-lowering therapy** for adults with **type 2 diabetes mellitus, cardiovascular disease, chronic kidney disease, and obesity**.
- The WHO noted that **diabetes and obesity** are among the **most urgent global health challenges**.

- **WHO-ELM "AWaRe" Framework** is classification for antimicrobials within the list: **Access:** First/second-line treatments available at all times. **Watch:** Monitored use to prevent resistance. **Reserve:** Last-resort antibiotics.
- While not mandatory, ELM serves as the **blueprint for India's National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM)**. Drugs listed in India's NLEM automatically fall under price control via the Drug Price Control Order.
- **Separate Child List:** WHO maintains a distinct Model List of EMLc for those up to 12 years old.

GLP-1

- **GLP-1** is both an **incretin hormone** and a **neurotransmitter** secreted from L-cells of the **small intestine** and **hindbrain** after a meal. It travels to the **pancreas** to regulate **blood sugar** by **increasing insulin** and **decreasing glucagon**, known as the **incretin effect**. They function by:
 - **Improving the secretion of insulin**, enabling more glucose to enter cells for energy use.
 - **Inhibiting secretion of glucagon**, reducing liver's release of stored glucose.
 - **Slowing stomach emptying**, preventing sharp spikes in blood glucose levels.
 - **Reducing appetite** by signalling satiety to the brain.
- **"Incretin Effect":** This refers to the observation that oral glucose triggers a significantly higher insulin response than intravenous glucose, a process driven largely by GLP-1. The **incretin effect** is **blood glucose-dependent**, meaning it works only when **blood glucose is elevated**.
- **GLP-1** impacts **brain centres** controlling **hunger** and **satiety**, signalling when to **stop eating**. **GLP-1 receptors** are present in many organs, and GLP-1 has **beneficial effects** on **kidney**, **liver**, and **cardiovascular system**.
- Its effects in the **pancreas** and **brain** are key for **controlling blood glucose** and **body weight**.
- Natural **GLP-1** is short-lived as it is broken down by **DPP-4 enzymes** and cleared by the **kidneys**. The technique called **fatty acid acylation** is used to extend GLP-1's activity, pioneered earlier and now widely adopted.

Semaglutide

- Refusing to grant an **interim injunction** sought by **Novo Nordisk**, the **Delhi High Court** allowed **Dr Reddy's** to continue **manufacturing and exporting** its version of the drug containing **semaglutide**.
- **Novo Nordisk** moved the **Delhi HC** seeking restraint on **using, manufacturing, selling, distributing, advertising, exporting semaglutide API** or any product derived from it.
- **API** is the **chemical in a medicine** that produces the intended **therapeutic effect**. **Semaglutide** is the **API** for a new class of drugs to treat **Type 2 diabetes and obesity**; marketed as **Ozempic** and **Wegovy**.
- Court agreed there was **no novelty** in 2nd **GLP-1 formulation**, amounting to **double patenting & "evergreening"**.
- **GLP-1 drugs** like **semaglutide** and **tirzepatide** have triggered a **global battle** over **manufacturing and selling rights**.
- **Evergreening** involves drugmakers making only **minor changes** to an existing medicine and then seeking **new patents**. It is prohibited by **Section 3(d) of Indian Patents Act, 1970**.

Tirzepatide (Mounjaro)

Why in news: Hormone-mimicking drug by **Eli Lilly**, is the latest entrant in **India's weight-loss and wellness market**. Approved by the **CDSCO**, it is prescribed weekly as an **injectable drug** for **obesity and type 2 diabetes**.

- It works by **activating Glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) and Gastric inhibitory polypeptide (GIP) receptors**, increasing satiety and reducing food intake, and is considered more effective than **semaglutide (Ozempic)**, which acts only on GLP-1. Common side effects include nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, appetite loss, and indigestion.
- **Semaglutide**, used in **Ozempic**, has side effects like **muscle loss and skin sagging** when administered in high doses.
- Use of such drugs requires **medical consultation** due to contraindications like **thyroid cancer risk**.
- As per **NFHS 2019-21**, **40% of women** and **12% of men** in India are **abdominally obese**.

Type 1 Diabetes

Why in news: Clinical trial of a new therapy called **Zimislecel** has shown promising results in restoring **insulin production** in people with **type 1 diabetes**.

- **Zimislecel** involves infusing **stem cell-derived islet cells** into **liver**. These cells started **producing insulin**, improving **blood sugar control** and **preventing severe lows**. It bypasses need for donor pancreas (alternative to islet transplants).
- Traditional transplants require **pancreas extraction, Ricordi chambers**, and skilled teams, with limited yield. **Zimislecel** uses **lab-grown pluripotent stem cells**, removing logistical hurdles.
- However, the need for **life-long immunosuppression** poses risk of **side-effects**.

Traditional Medicine

Why in news: **WHO** reported that **traditional medicine** is practised in **88% of its member-states** (170 out of 194).

- Initiatives include a **dedicated AYUSH department at BIS**. India has developed **global standards in AYUSH systems** through **ISO/TC 249/SC 2**, enabling wider global acceptance.
- Theme of 2nd summit (Delhi) is **"Restoring balance: The science and practice of health and well-being"**.

- The summit mobilised multi-stakeholder action supporting WHO's **10-year Global Traditional Medicine Strategy (2025–34)** adopted at the **78th World Health Assembly**.
- PM highlighted the launch of the **Traditional Medicine Global Library** as an **international platform** aimed at preserving **scientific data and policy documents** related to **traditional medicine** in one place.
- Emphasising India's focus on "**partnerships of healing**" globally, he shared two key collaborations: the establishment of a **Centre of Excellence for BIMSTEC countries**, covering **South and South-East Asia**, and a **collaboration with Japan** aimed at integrating **science, traditional practices, and health**.
- The **global traditional medicine market** is projected to reach **\$583 billion by 2025**, growing at **10–20% annually**.
- **Major contributors include** China, Australia, India. Ayurveda has gained **formal recognition as a medical system** in several nations, enhancing India's **global soft power**.
- **WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine (GCTM)** in **India**, supported by Gol, focuses on **digital health, AI integration, and emerging technologies** for traditional medicine research.

WHO Global Centre for Traditional Medicine (GCTM)

- **Global First:** It is the first and only global outposted centre for traditional medicine established by WHO.
- **Location:** Established in Jamaranagar, Gujarat, under a host country agreement between the Gol. (1st summit).
- **4 Pillars:** Evidence and Learning, Data and Analytics, Sustainability and Equity, and Innovation and Technology.

Snake Bites

- Snake venoms generally cause three types of damage: **blood disorders, muscle paralysis, and tissue death**.
- **Viper bites** cause blood-related disorders, while elapid snakes (like cobras) typically trigger nerve-related paralysis.
- A standard antivenom has been designed against the venom of India's '**Big Four**' species: spectacled cobra, common krait, Russell's viper, and saw-scaled viper. Venom from these snakes is needed for making this antivenom.
- Most of India's requirement of snake venom is met by snakes captured in paddy fields and scrublands of Tamil Nadu by tribals of the **Irula Snake Catcher's Industrial Co-operative Society**.
- A **cocktail of venoms** from the **four species** is injected into **horses in non-lethal doses**. Horses are chosen because they are large animals and are easy to handle. Their immune system reacts, producing antibodies in large quantities.
- **Blood is drawn** from the horses. **Plasma containing the antibodies** is processed to isolate **toxin-binding antibody fragments**, which are then tested, freeze-dried, and distributed in vials. Method has been in practice since 1950s.
- The **camel family** was chosen because it has **unusual antibodies** that yield small, stable fragments called **nanobodies**.

Eroom's Law

- In **2020**, **Google DeepMind** said its **AlphaFold model** had solved the **protein-folding problem**. **Five years later**, the expected **flood of new medicines** has not appeared despite **billions of dollars spent**
- This paradox lies at the heart of **Eroom's Law**, the **inverse of Moore's Law**. **Moore's Law** predicted that **computing power doubles every two years** while costs halve. In medicine, the opposite trend has occurred. **Eroom's Law** observes that the number of **new drugs discovered per billion dollars** has steadily **declined**.

Precision Medicine

- **Precision biotherapeutics** aims to design therapies that identify and rectify the cause of illness; designed and optimised based on a patient's **unique genetic, molecular, or cellular profile**.
- **How:**
 - **Genomic and proteomic analysis:** decoding genetic and protein signatures to identify mutations or dysfunctions.
 - **Gene editing therapies:** directly modifying genes (e.g., **CRISPR-based treatments** for blood disorders).
 - **mRNA and nucleic acid therapeutics:** using RNA to instruct cells to produce/suppress specific proteins.
 - **Monoclonal antibodies and biologics** (complex medicines derived from living organisms (human, animal, or microorganisms) using biotechnology, including vaccines, blood components, and gene therapies) that target precise disease markers such as cancer cells or viral proteins.
 - **AI-driven drug discovery:** leveraging big data and machine learning to predict molecular interactions.
- **Non-communicable diseases** (diabetes, cardiovascular illness, cancers) account for **nearly 65% of deaths** in India. Due to India's **genetic diversity**, foreign-tested pharmaceuticals may not work effectively in the Indian context.
- Leveraging genomic research programmes like **IndiGen** and **GenomeIndia** can help customise therapies.
- DBT has identified precision biotherapeutics as one of six focus areas under the **BioE3** policy.

India's 1st Dengue Vaccine

Why in news: Following an announcement by **ICMR and Panacea Biotec Ltd.**, about **8,000 of the targeted 10,000 participants** have enrolled for the **third phase of dengue vaccine trials** in India.

- India sees circulation or co-circulation of **all four dengue virus serotypes**. There is no licensed vaccine or antiviral treatment for dengue in India currently.
- Will test the **efficacy of India's indigenous tetravalent dengue vaccine, DengiAll**, developed by **Panacea Biotec**.

- **Dengue** remains a **major public health concern in India**, among the **top 30 countries with highest disease incidence**.
- Globally, dengue incidence is rising, with over **129 countries affected by the end of 2023**, according to the **WHO**.
- In India, **75–80% of dengue infections are asymptomatic** but still **transmissible by Aedes mosquitoes**.

Malaria Vaccine

Why in news: ICMR has announced a **candidate malaria vaccine** called **AdFalciVax**.

- AdFalciVax will be **developed, tested, and manufactured** in partnership with **private companies**.
- The vaccine targets **two parts of Plasmodium falciparum**, the most common malaria pathogen in humans, before it enters the bloodstream, thereby **preventing infection and transmission**.
- In India, malaria is mainly caused by **Plasmodium vivax**, against which **AdFalciVax is ineffective**.
- **Anopheles stephensi** is a **mosquito species**, now recognised as an invasive threat due to its ability to thrive in urban environments. It breeds in artificial containers (tanks, tyres) and efficiently transmit the Plasmodium falciparum and P. vivax parasites, challenging current malaria control efforts worldwide.
- **RTS,S and R21** vaccines use only the **CSP protein**, whereas AdFalciVax uses the **full-length CSP protein**.
- AdFalciVax is likely to **produce a stronger immune response** and **better protection** against infection.
- The vaccine is still in **preliminary stages** and has **not yet undergone human trials**.
- AdFalciVax contains **adjuvant called alum**, which boosts immune response. **Alum does not pose risk of inflammation**, unlike **AS01 and Matrix M** used in RTS,S and R21. **Alum is reliable** and used in **childhood immunisation vaccines**.
- **India exited WHO's "High Burden to High Impact" group** in 2024, though 95% of its population resides in malaria-endemic areas. India targets **malaria elimination by 2030**.

ELQs

- Scientists tested **81 known antimalarial compounds** by applying them to Anopheles gambiae mosquitoes. 22 compounds significantly reduced parasite burden, with **endochin-like quinolones (ELQs)-456 completely blocking** infection and **ELQ-331 reducing spread**.
- **ELQ compounds** are **new antimalarial drugs** that can kill malaria parasites at different stages of their life cycle. They are powerful, effective in small doses, and have potential as single-dose cures. ELQ compounds can also help prevent malaria transmission by mosquitoes.

Ivermectin

- Mosquitoes biting people treated with ivermectin died or failed to transmit malaria.
- **BOHEMIA Trial (Kenya and Mozambique):** Villagers were given **ivermectin or albendazole** once a month for three months from 2023, and children aged 5–15 were monitored for six months. **Results: 26% drop in malaria cases** in the ivermectin group, exceeding the **WHO threshold** for a public health tool.
- **Artemisinin-based combination therapies (ACTs)** became the backbone of malaria treatment, but drug resistance emerged in Southeast Asia (2007–2010) due to mutations in the kelch13 gene.

- **Malaria** is a **parasitic infection** transmitted by **mosquitoes**, causing fever, chills, night sweats, nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, seizures, fluid in lungs, organ damage, and death.
- Malaria is **most endemic in Africa**, especially in **Nigeria, Congo, Tanzania, Mozambique, Niger, and Burkina Faso**. These countries account for **more than half of yearly malaria deaths** globally.
- Malaria is also present in **India**, but **deaths have sharply reduced** in recent years. According to **NVBDCP**, malaria deaths in India dropped from **1,151 in 1995** to **93 in 2020** and **83 in 2022**.
- National Center for Vector Borne Diseases Control (NCVBDC) is program for preventing and controlling 6 major vector-borne diseases: Malaria, Dengue, Lymphatic Filariasis, Kala-azar, Japanese Encephalitis, and Chikungunya. It operates under NHM to provide free diagnostics and treatment, aiming to eliminate malaria and other diseases.
- **WHO's World Malaria Report** estimated **5,511 deaths in India in 2022** due to malaria. The discrepancy arises because **WHO provides estimates**, while **NVBDCP counts only confirmed deaths**.
- **Malaria continues to be a significant public health concern in India**, which accounts for **1.4% of global malaria cases** and **66% of cases in the WHO South-East Asia region**.
- Two vaccines — **RTS,S and R21** — were recently approved, but their efficacy is only 75%. AdFalciVax is a chimeric recombinant vaccine using genes of Plasmodium to create proteins that trigger an immune response.
- **Whole-parasite vaccines:** **PfSPZ** (radiation-weakened P. falciparum) showed 79% protection, modified **PfSPZ-LARC2** promises higher efficacy.
- **PfRH5 vaccine:** Targets blood stage, offers cross-strain protection, promising trial results.
- **Pfs230D1:** Prevents parasite fertilisation in mosquitoes, 78% transmission reduction in Mali trial.
- **P. vivax TBVs** like **Pvs230DIM** reduced mosquito transmission by 96% in Thailand trial.

Novel Therapies and Genetic Tools

- **Engineered antibody DID2.v-IgG** blocks parasite immune evasion (RIFIN proteins).
- **CRISPR-based gene drives** disrupted mosquito fertility, eliminating colonies in labs.
- **Alternative:** Editing **FREPI gene** to block parasite development; engineering mosquitoes to die sooner.

World Malaria Day 2025:

- It is observed every year on **25th April** by **WHO** to **raise awareness and drive action against malaria**.
- The **theme for World Malaria Day 2025** is **"Malaria Ends With Us: Reinvest, Reimagine, Reignite."**

- **Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, and UNICEF** announced a new agreement to make the **R21/Matrix-M malaria vaccine accessible and affordable**. The agreement is financed by Gavi through an **advance payment** enabled by the **International Finance Facility for Immunisation (IFFIm)**.
- Gavi facilitates and finances **procurement, logistics, market shaping, and integration of malaria vaccines** into national immunisation programmes.
- Malaria vaccines are now part of **routine immunisation in 24 African countries**, representing **over 70% of the world's malaria burden**. **UNICEF**, the world's **largest vaccine buyer**, delivers nearly **three billion doses** annually.
- WHO has **prequalified 2 malaria vaccines: R21/Matrix-M** (co-developed by University of Oxford and Serum Institute of India, using Novavax's Matrix-M adjuvant); **RTS,S/AS01** (developed by GlaxoSmithKline, PATH, and partners).

Mosquitoes

Why in news: Aedes-borne viral diseases — dengue, Zika, and chikungunya — continue to affect India.

- The **Aedes mosquito** thrives in human environments, feeding indoors during the day and at night under artificial light, making outdoor fogging, vaporizers, and bed nets ineffective.
- **Dengue vaccines** are still under trial and **do not protect** against **Zika or chikungunya**.
- **Ministry of Health's "India Fights Dengue" (2017)** recommends:
 - Removing discarded coconut shells, cleaning air coolers, and not reusing cooler grass.
 - Mobilising ASHA workers for household awareness.
- **U.S. Centres for Disease Control** has called mosquitoes the **"world's deadliest animals"**, responsible for more than **a million deaths each year**.
- **Rising global temperatures** are enabling mosquitoes to thrive in cooler and drier regions once unsuitable for them. Anopheles mosquitoes (malaria carriers) are spreading across new regions in Africa.
- There are over 3,000 mosquito species, but only a few — **Anopheles, Aedes aegypti, Culex** — are **vectors**. Targeting them would cause minimal ecological harm, as they play limited roles in pollination or food chains. However, complete eradication could disrupt certain local ecosystems, as mosquito larvae serve as food for fish.
- The U.S. **eradicated malaria in 1951** through **vector control measures** — drainage improvements, **eliminating breeding grounds**, and **DDT spraying**. However, **mosquito populations rebounded**.
- Over-reliance on **insecticides** has led to **resistance**, similar to antibiotic resistance in bacteria.
- **WHO Malaria Report 2024** shows malaria deaths **stagnated since 2015**, after years of decline, due to **rising resistance** among mosquitoes. **DDT** also caused severe **environmental damage**.

Emerging Mosquito Control Strategies

- 1. Sterile Insect Technique:** Release sterile male mosquitoes into the wild. When they mate with females, no viable offspring are produced, causing a population crash. Traditionally achieved through X-ray irradiation, though this method kills many males.
- 2. Wolbachia Bacteria Method:** Developed by Dr. Scott O'Neill (World Mosquito Program). Involves infecting *Aedes aegypti* mosquitoes with *Wolbachia*, a naturally occurring bacterium that blocks dengue, Zika, chikungunya viruses inside mosquitoes. Implemented in Australia, Brazil, Colombia, with complete dengue elimination in certain regions.
- 3. Bacteria-Based Blocking of Malaria (Plasmodium):** Johns Hopkins University found a bacterium that secretes *harmane*, a compound that blocks *Plasmodium* parasite development in *Anopheles* mosquitoes.
- 4. Drug-Based Mosquito Control:** Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine found that *nitisinone*, an FDA-approved drug, kills *Anopheles gambiae* mosquitoes when they feed on blood containing it.

Ejiao – Donkeys

Why in news: 6 million donkeys are killed annually to produce **Ejiao**, a traditional **Chinese medicine**.

- **Ejiao** is derived from **gelatin in donkey hides**, believed to **cure anaemia and boost immunity**.
- China's donkey population fell from **11 million (1990) → 1.5 million (2023)** (87% decline). Domestic shortage led to **imports from Africa, South America, Asia**. **African countries** supplied **51% of donkey hides (2015–2025)**.
- Loss of donkeys shifts burden to **women and children**; in **Ghana**, girls are pulled out of school to take over work.
- **Donkey prices surged:** Kenya: from £78 (2016) → £156 (2019), **Pakistan:** touched ₹2 lakh (2025).

Cancer Drugs

Why in news: A major investigation by the **Bureau of Investigative Journalism** (nonprofit news organisation based in London), revealed that **chemotherapy drugs exported to over 100 countries failed quality tests**.

- **Cancer** is caused by **uncontrolled cell growth** due to genetic mutations.
- **Chemotherapy drugs** aim to **disrupt cell replication or induce cell death**, thus shrinking or eliminating tumors.

Six Key Drugs Identified in the Investigation

- **Cisplatin:** **Platinum-based** drug discovered in the 1960s. **Mechanism:** Binds to **DNA**, blocking replication. **Treats:** Testicular, ovarian, bladder, and lung cancers. **Side effects:** Kidney damage, immune suppression, hearing loss.
- **Oxaliplatin:** Also platinum-based; similar mechanism to cisplatin. **Treats:** Primarily **advanced colorectal cancer**. **Side effects:** Similar to cisplatin (e.g. nerve damage, immune suppression).

- **Cyclophosphamide:** **DNA-disrupting** agent. **Treats:** Breast cancer, leukaemia, sarcoma, lymphoma. **Side effects:** Bladder inflammation, white blood cell suppression.
- **Doxorubicin:** Known as the "**red devil**" due to its color and potency. **Derived** from **Streptomyces** bacteria. **Treats:** Breast cancer, leukaemia, lymphoma, sarcoma. **Side effects:** Heart damage, hair loss, infection risk.
- **Methotrexate:** **Inhibits DNA synthesis** by blocking folate metabolism. **Treats:** Leukaemia, lymphoma, solid tumors. **Given in high doses**, followed by leucovorin to mitigate toxicity.
- **Leucovorin** (Folinic acid): **Not a chemotherapy drug**, but a **rescue agent**. **Purpose:** Protects healthy cells from methotrexate toxicity. **Introduced in the 1950s**, classified as a **form of Vitamin B9**.
- **Trastuzumab Rezetecan** is a next-generation HER2-targeting Antibody-Drug Conjugate (ADC)/monoclonal antibody used with **pertuzumab** in the treatment of cancers, particularly HER2-positive breast cancers.
- Glenmark starts clinical trials for lung cancer drug **Envafolimab**.

Dopamine

Why in news: Often called the "**feel-good**" neurotransmitter, dopamine drives **motivation, reward, and pleasure**.

- **Dopamine is a chemical signal** that conveys **pleasure** and a sense of **reward**. When something makes us happy — such as **eating chocolate** or **receiving a compliment** — the brain releases dopamine, prompting repeated behaviour. This process depends on the **mesolimbic pathway** from the **ventral tegmental area (VTA)** to the **nucleus accumbens**.
- Addictive drugs like **cocaine, nicotine, or alcohol** can commandeer these processes and induce **massive dopamine surges**. "**Dopamine fasting**" refers to taking a break from habitual pleasure and excitement and retraining the brain to function with a **more moderate and sustainable level of happiness** through slower and deeper experiences.

Ketamine

Why in news: Ketamine is an **anaesthetic** classified as a "**dissociative anaesthetic hallucinogen**" by the **US Drug Enforcement Administration**. It creates a **feeling of detachment from pain and the environment**.

- Ketamine **used as anaesthetic for animals in the 1960s, approved for human use by the US FDA in the 1970s**.
- The **use of ketamine for treating depression and mental illnesses is recent**.
- Ketamine is also used **recreationally**, and is popularly known as **K or Special K**.
- For mental health treatment, it is administered via IV, nasal spray, or tablet, typically once or twice a week for 6–8 weeks. Recreational users snort the white crystalline powder, or may inject or smoke it.
- **General anaesthesia** is a **medically induced state** allowing surgeries without **pain, awareness, or memory**. It works by inducing **loss of consciousness, muscle relaxation, and amnesia**.
- Anaesthesiologists use **intravenous drugs like propofol** for rapid induction, followed by **inhaled gases or continuous infusions** to maintain it. Anaesthetics alter **nerve cell communication in the brain** by enhancing **GABA (inhibitory neurotransmitter)** or blocking **glutamate receptors** to reduce excitatory signalling.

Oxytocin

- **Oxytocin**, called the **bonding hormone**, rises with **social bonding and physical touch**.
- Studies show **adrenaline and cortisol levels go down** when **laughter is induced**.
- **Adrenaline** is a **rapid-response stress hormone** that raises **blood pressure, heart rate, and blood sugar**.
- When **adrenaline is lowered**, mild social stress reduces and **relaxation** follows.
- **Cortisol** acts **slowly**, and the stress it induces **lasts longer**. Lower **cortisol levels** reduce **feelings of anxiety**.
- **Endogenous opioids** act as **analgesics**, inhibit **pain sensation**, and help keep one **calm**.

Risdiplam

Why in news: **SC dismissed Swiss pharma major Roche's petition** challenging a Delhi High Court order permitting the Hyderabad-based Natco Pharma to launch a **generic version of Roche's SMA drug Risdiplam**. **Natco Pharma** said it had decided to **sell a generic version of the drug with immediate effect** at an **MRP of ₹15,900**.

ORSL

Why in news: Delhi HC granted **interim protection** to **JNTL Consumer Health (India)**, the manufacturer of **ORSL**.

- **Companies** marketing **sugary beverages** under the guise of **medically approved ORS formulations**.
- Delhi HC's **interim order** allowed JNTL to **continue selling its existing stock** until **FSSAI** completes its hearing.
- The **production of new "high-sugar variants"** under the **ORSL label** remains **suspended**.
- **Diarrhoea** is 3rd leading cause of childhood mortality in India (13% of all deaths among children under 5).
- WHO recommends Reduced Osmolarity ORS, which contains sodium, potassium, chloride, citrate, and dextrose needed for human body to rehydrate. It has lower concentrations of glucose and sodium chloride than original solution. When people ask for ORS at pharmacies, they are often given ORSL, which is labelled as an electrolyte drink but is not suitable for rehydration. During diarrhoea, excess sugar can worsen condition.

● In India, **Food Safety and Standard Act, 2006**, provides the **legal framework** for monitoring the **status of food safety**, and **FSSAI** is the **main authority** with **State Food Safety Authorities** for each State.

- FSSAI is an **autonomous statutory body** established under the **Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006**.
- **Ministry of Health & Family Welfare** is the **administrative Ministry** of FSSAI. Its **headquarters** is in **Delhi**.

Health Policies

Licences for New Drugs, Trials

Why in news: Health Ministry has proposed amendments to the **New Drugs and Clinical Trials Rules, 2019**, to **promote ease of doing business** in the **pharmaceutical and clinical research sectors**.

- **Aim:** Simplify procedures for obtaining test licences, streamline applications related to bioavailability (BA) and bioequivalence (BE) studies, reduce regulatory timelines and encourage clinical innovation and research.
- The **processing period** for test licence applications will be **reduced from 90 days to 45 days**.
- **Licence requirements** will be **waived** for certain categories of **bioavailability and bioequivalence studies**.

Bioavailability: It is the fraction of a drug that reaches the systemic circulation (bloodstream) in an unchanged form. Intravenous (IV) drugs have 100% bioavailability. For oral pills, BA is usually lower because the drug must survive stomach acid and the liver's "first-pass metabolism".

Bioequivalence: This is a comparison between two drugs (Generic vs. Brand). 2 drugs are bioequivalent if their rate and extent of absorption are so similar that they are expected to have the same clinical effect. This is the gold standard for CDSCO to approve generic medicines in India.

Biosimilars are medication derived from living organisms (such as microorganisms, plant cells, or animal cells) that are designed to be highly similar to an already approved biological drug for cancer, arthritis, and diabetes.

Drug Quality Norms

Why in news: 18 State drug control authorities across India have adopted the **Online National Drugs Licensing System (ONDLS)** for processing **drug-related licences**. However, no State has fully complied with the Corrective and Preventive Action (CAPA) guidelines.

- Both ONDLS and CAPA are part of **government's revised Schedule M** under the **Drugs and Cosmetics Act, 1940** on **pharmaceutical manufacturing regulations**. Schedule M mandates enhanced quality systems, including **Pharmaceutical Quality System** and **Quality Risk Management**, with a **compliance deadline of December 31, 2025**.
- **CAPA** is vital for ensuring safety and maintaining high-quality standards in regulated industries like pharmaceuticals. It serves as a universal quality management methodology aimed at continuous process improvement & ensures that drug violations are identified, recorded, and corrective measures implemented.
- The **ONDLS** is a digital, single-window platform developed by C-DAC in coordination with the CDSCO to create a uniform, transparent, and accountable process for drug licensing across States and Union Territories. It processes applications for manufacturing and sales licences, blood bank approvals, and certifications such as WHO-GMP.
- WHO operates a **rapid alert system** to notify member states after harmful drugs are identified.
- **Global Benchmarking Tool** assesses national drug regulation capacity on 1 (low) to 4 (high) scale—**70% of countries scored 1 or 2 in 2023**. **Certificate of Pharmaceutical Products** serves as **passport** for internationally approved drugs.

MMR

Why in news: MMR declined to **93 per lakh live births in 2019–21**, from **97 in 2018–20** and **103 in 2017–19**, as per data from **Office of the Registrar-General and Census Commissioner of India**.

- MMR is highest in the 20–29 age group, followed by the 30–34 age group.
- **MMR is defined as the number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births** during a specific time period. **SDG** aims to reduce global MMR to **below 70 per 100,000 live births**.
- **Maternal death** is defined by **WHO** as death of woman **while pregnant or within 42 days of pregnancy termination**, excluding accidental causes. **Major causes** include complications during and after pregnancy, childbirth, or abortion.

State-wise MMR Data

- States are grouped into: **EAG States**, **Southern States**, and **Other States/UTs**.
- In **Southern States**, Kerala has the lowest MMR (20) and Karnataka the highest (63). Other MMRs: Andhra Pradesh (46), Telangana (45), Tamil Nadu (49).
- In **EAG States**, Assam has a high MMR (167) and Madhya Pradesh the highest (175). Other EAG data: Jharkhand (51), and Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Rajasthan, UP, Uttarakhand in 100–151 range.
- In **Other States**, Maharashtra is 38, Gujarat 53, Punjab 98, Haryana 106, and West Bengal 109.
- **States with high MMRs** include MP (175), Assam (167), UP (151), Odisha (135), Chhattisgarh (132), West Bengal (109), and Haryana (106). Sample Registration System is used by RGI to estimate fertility and mortality.
- **Best States:** Kerala – 20, Telangana – 45, Tamil Nadu – 49.

Causes

- **Postpartum bleeding** due to **uterine atony** is the **biggest killer**, especially with untreated **anaemia**.
- **Obstructed labour** in stunted/malnourished mothers can lead to **foetal distress** and **uterine rupture**.
- In EAG states, comorbidities like **malaria, UTI, TB** increase risks.

Ayushman Bharat–Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB–PMJAY)

Why in news: Women account for 49% of total hospital admissions under the **AB–PMJAY**, according to the **2024–25 annual report** of the National Health Authority.

- **AB–PMJAY**, launched in **2018**, provides a **health cover of ₹5 lakh per family per year**.
- Recently, **Odisha and Delhi** were onboarded for the scheme's implementation. Except **West Bengal, 35 States and Union Territories** are now under the **AB–PMJAY** umbrella.
- **Aapke Dwar Ayushman (ADA 3.0)** enabled outreach through technology-led, community-based, self-registration campaigns. The **2023 interim Budget** announced inclusion of **37 lakh families of frontline workers** — ASHAs, Anganwadi workers, and Anganwadi helpers — into AB–PMJAY.
- In **2024**, the scheme included **all citizens aged 70 and above**, irrespective of income or socio-economic status.

Pandemic Agreement

Why in news: **WHO adopted the world's first Pandemic Agreement** to strengthen global collaboration and response to future pandemics. **Agreement was approved by World Health Assembly.**

- To **make the world safer and more equitable** in facing future pandemics. Outlines **principles, approaches, and tools for international coordination** in pandemic **prevention, preparedness, response**. Key elements include **equitable and timely access to vaccines, therapeutics, and diagnostics** to avoid disparities witnessed during past health crises.

World Health Assembly:

- **Decision-making body of WHO**, comprising representatives from **all 194 member states**.
- It meets **annually, usually in May in Geneva**, to **set global health policies, approve budgets, appoint the WHO Director-General, and review WHO's work**.
- The WHA shapes global health priorities and strategies to promote worldwide health and well-being.

WHA's Resolution on Skin Diseases

Why in news: **78th World Health Assembly** adopted a resolution titled '**Skin diseases as a global public health priority**'.

- It redefines **skin health not as cosmetic**, but as integral to **global public health, social equity, human dignity**.
- Sponsored by **Côte d'Ivoire, Nigeria, Togo, Micronesia**, and supported by the **International League of Dermatologic Societies** (global umbrella organization representing over 200,000 dermatologists from more than 190 member societies across 90+ countries, promoting skin health worldwide, **founded in 1935**, works closely with **WHO**).
 - Its mission is to enhance **dermatological education, clinical care, research, and innovation**, raising **awareness** and fostering **international cooperation**.
 - ILDS supports initiatives in **underserved regions**, such as the **Regional Dermatology Training Centre in Tanzania**, to improve **skin health education and services**.
 - It organizes the **World Congress of Dermatology every four years**, facilitating **global collaboration** and advancing **dermatological science and practice**.
- **The resolution urges global action on:** Expanding dermatology training in frontline health systems, Addressing untreated common skin conditions, Promoting culturally competent care for diverse skin types.

Polio Surveillance Network

Why in news: Government has **proposed wind-down** of the **WHO-established National Polio Surveillance Network**.

- **Polio surveillance will be integrated** into the **Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP)**.
- India was declared **polio-free in 2014**, after sustained oral polio campaigns and **multi-agency coordination**.
- It is recommended that **India shift from oral polio vaccine (OPV) to injectable polio vaccine (IPV)**.

National Polio Surveillance Network:

- It tracks and monitors acute flaccid paralysis cases to detect and eliminate poliovirus transmission in India. Played a key role in India achieving polio-free status through detection, investigation, and immunization response.

Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme:

- It was launched in 2004 with World Bank assistance, is a decentralized, state-based surveillance system.
- **IDSP uses IT-enabled laboratory data** to monitor **epidemic-prone diseases** and enables **early detection and response** through **trained Rapid Response Teams**.

Breastfeeding

Why in news: India's **first State-led pilot** to combine **DBT with Social and Behavior Change Communication**, implemented to **augment PM Matru Vandana Yojana** by offering counselling and health sessions. **Rajasthan Model:**

- Includes **second-time mothers**, unlike PMMVY which is for the first child.
- Started in **late 2020** as a **pilot in 5 districts**: Udaipur, Banswara, Dungarpur, Pratapgarh, and Baran.
- Statewide scale-up in **2022**. Offers **home-based and group counselling** on **maternal and child nutrition and health**. Incorporates **community engagement, digital media**, and focuses on **male and youth participation**.

PM Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY):

- It is a centrally sponsored maternity benefit scheme, launched in 2017 to provide financial assistance to pregnant and lactating women for their first live birth.
- The scheme offers a cash incentive of Rs. 5,000, paid in three installments linked to early registration, at least one antenatal check-up, and child immunization.
- It aims to partially compensate for wage loss during pregnancy and promote safe delivery, maternal nutrition, and institutional healthcare, reducing maternal and infant mortality.
- Eligibility: women aged 19 and above, having their first live birth, excluding those in regular government employment or receiving similar benefits under other laws.
- The scheme supports improving maternal and child health indicators and aligns with SDGs.

Euthanasia

Why in news: U.K. introduced the **Terminally Ill Adults (End of Life) Bill**, also known as the **Assisted Dying Bill**.

- Allows **terminally ill adults in England and Wales** with less than **six months to live** to choose **assisted death** under strict safeguards. It would require validation by **two doctors, a psychiatrist, a senior lawyer, and a social worker**.

- **Ministry of Health** released **draft Guidelines for Withdrawal of Life Support in Terminally Ill Patients** to operationalise the Supreme Court's 2018 and 2023 orders on **right to die with dignity for all Indians**.
- **Guidelines include:**
 - Setting up of **Primary and Secondary Medical Boards** at level of hospital, which will determine when further medical treatment may not be beneficial to a terminally ill patient;
 - Nomination of doctors by district CMO or equivalent to hospital-level Secondary Medical Boards, which will confirm or reject opinion of Primary Medical Boards. **Secondary Medical Board** members must be different from those on the Primary Medical Board.
- There is **no dedicated legislation** in India on withholding/withdrawing life-sustaining treatment. But SC's judgment and these guidelines make it clear that **withholding/withdrawing life-sustaining treatment is legal**.
- SC in **Common Cause vs Union of India (2018)** recognised **right to die with dignity under Article 21**.
- Withdrawal of life-sustaining treatment takes place either through informed refusal by a patient with decision-making capacity or through an advance medical directive ('living will'). **SC in its 2018 judgment** also laid down **framework** for making advance medical directives or living wills and simplified it in 2023.
- Living wills are written documents made **by a person of age 18 years or older** with decision-making capacity, expressing their will on how they would wish to be treated if they lose such capacity.
- It should detail **at least two surrogate decision-makers** — anyone whom the person trusts, from family to neighbours, who can make decisions on behalf of the person if they lose decision-making capacity. It becomes legal when it is signed in presence of executor and 2 witnesses, and attested before a notary or gazetted officer.
- Hospital must notify decisions on withdrawing life-sustaining treatment to the local judicial magistrate.
- **Government Medical College Hospital in Kerala's Kollam** district opened a '**Living Will Information Counter**' to spread awareness & became the **first hospital** in the country to establish such a counter.

Rare-blood Donor Registry

Why in news: Health Ministry aims to integrate the **Rare Donor Registry** with **e-Rakt Kosh**, enabling real-time access to rare blood groups across India. Developed by **ICMR-NIIH**, the registry includes **4,000+ screened donors** and covers **300+ rare blood markers**, such as **Bombay, P-Null, and Rh-null** groups.

- Integration will help patients find **specially matched donors quickly**, reducing complications for those with **thalassemia, sickle cell disease**, and other haemoglobinopathies.
- A **multiplex PCR-based DNA kit** tailored for Indian patients allows rapid identification of rare blood types.
- India-developed testing kits for **Haemophilia A and Von Willebrand Disease** are gaining global attention.
- Over **1.4 lakh haemophilia patients** in India will benefit from this low-cost, **visual card-based POC test**, commercialised by **Bhat Biotech** under the brand **BioScan**.

Rare Donor Registry of India (RDRI):

- **Database** developed by **ICMR-NIIH**, maintaining a **screened list of over 4,000 donors with rare blood types**.
- Its integration with **e-Rakt Kosh** enables **real-time access and coordination of rare blood groups nationwide**.

About e-Rakt Kosh:

- It is an **online blood bank management system** under the **National Health Mission**, providing data on **blood availability, blood banks, and donor management** across India. Integration with the **Rare Donor Registry** strengthens **blood transfusion services** by providing **faster, safer access to rare blood groups**.

Organ Transplants

Why in News: The **National Organ & Tissue Transplant Organisation (NOTTO)** has issued a **10-point advisory** giving **priority to women patients and relatives of deceased donors** in organ allocation to correct gender imbalance. **World Organ Donation Day (August 13)** highlighted the severe shortage of donor organs despite medical advances.

- **2013–23 data:** Women were the **majority of donors**, but far fewer recipients.

- **Priority:** Women patients awaiting transplant. Relatives of deceased donors get preferential consideration.
- **Existing allocation criteria remain:** disease duration, waiting time, illness severity, children, living donors now needing transplant, biological matching (blood group, age, size).
- **Digital national registry:** Donor-recipient records maintained by NOTTO; patients register through hospitals.
- **Mandatory reporting:** Hospitals must submit donor/recipient data; non-compliance invites legal action.
- States to appoint **permanent transplant coordinators** at hospitals. Expand **organ retrieval facilities** in trauma centres.
- **Legal Framework** governed by the **Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act (THOTA), 1994**, amended in 2011. **Commercial trade in organs banned**, with strict penalties. **Goal: equity and transparency** in allocation.
- **Donation rate:** 0.8 per million population (vs 45+ per million in Spain & U.S.).

NOTTO

- **Apex body** under the Ministry of Health overseeing the **National Organ Transplant Programme**.
- Operates under the Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act (THOTA), 1994.
- Maintains the central **database** for all donors and recipients to ensure transparent, criteria-based allocation.

Cornea Transplant

- **Ministry of Health** has amended the **Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues (Amendment) Rules, 2025** to boost **cornea donation and transplant services** across the country. The **mandatory requirement of clinical specular equipment** in corneal transplantation centres has been **removed** under this amendment.
- **Clinical specular microscopes** are used to assess the **health and density of corneal endothelial cells**.
- The amendment **strengthens the National Organ Transplant Programme (NOTP)** and **streamlines functioning** of corneal transplantation centres by **easing infrastructure and operational challenges**.
- A **corneal transplant** replaces a **damaged or diseased cornea** to **restore vision and reduce pain**. The **cornea** is the clear front part of the eye that helps **focus light**; when cloudy or scarred, vision becomes significantly impaired.
- A transplant can involve replacing **the entire cornea** or only the **affected layers**.
- Corneal blindness is the **second-leading cause of blindness** in the over-50 age group in India. India has an estimated **1.2 million corneal blind persons**. Cataract is the leading cause.

Organ Transplants Laws

- It is governed by the **Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues Act, 1994**. **Transplants are of two types:**
 - First, **transplants from deceased persons**. Organs have to be removed from a person whose brainstem is irreversibly damaged but vital organs are functioning. This Act makes Brainstem Death (BSD) a legal entity, and lays down procedures to identify and certify such deaths.
 - Second, **live donations**.
- By 2023, Spain was recording 49.38 deceased donations per million population. For India, it was 0.77.
- The Act defines **"brain-stem death"** as the stage at which all functions of the brain-stem have permanently and irreversibly ceased and is so certified. A **"deceased person"** is a person in whom permanent disappearance of all evidence of life occurs. **Death** is defined in the **Registration of Birth and Death Act, 1969** as the permanent disappearance of all evidence of life after live-birth. Both the 1969 Act and the 1994 Act emphasise permanent disappearance of all evidence of life as the core criterion. Since this can occur through BSD, a certificate under the 1994 Act is a legal document sufficient to register death under the 1969 Act.
- **BSD** is basically a **respiratory failure** due to **damage to the respiratory centre in the brainstem**.
- **India** belongs to a **small cluster of nations** where **living organ donations** vastly outnumber **deceased organ donations**.
- **Women** continue to **shoulder the burden of donations**. **Men** significantly outnumber **women among organ recipients**.
- **India** ranks **20th globally** for **living donors (10.8 per mn)**. **India** ranks **67th** for **deceased donors (0.8 per mn)**.

Stunting

Why in news: POSHAN Abhiyaan (2018) set a target of reducing **child stunting by 2% annually**, aiming for **25% stunting by 2022**. However, **POSHAN Tracker** shows **37% children under five are stunted**, barely 1% lower than 2016 (38.4%).

Reasons:

- **Maternal:** Nearly half of stunted children are small at birth; linked to teen pregnancies, anaemia, maternal diet.
- **Childbearing Among Teens:** As of 2019-21, 7% of women aged 15-19 had begun childbearing.
- **Mother's Education:** No schooling → 46% children stunted. 12+ years of schooling → 26% children stunted.
- **C-sections:** Rose from 9% (2005-06) to 22% (2021); can delay or disrupt early breastfeeding.
- **Breastfeeding:** 64% of infants <6 months exclusively breastfed; inequalities in maternity leave widen class divides.
- **Diet** carbohydrate-heavy, poor in protein/micronutrients.
- **Anaemia:** 57% of women (15-49 yrs) and 67% of children under 5 anaemic.
- **Sanitation:** 19% households practice open defecation; unsafe water and infections worsen malnutrition cycle.
- Based on analysing records of around **2 lakh children** in **Bangladesh, India, and Nepal**, researchers linked **exposure to hot and humid weather** to around **4x larger drops in children's height-for-age scores** than **hot weather alone**.

About POSHAN Abhiyaan:

- **Prime Minister's Overarching Scheme for Holistic Nutrition** is India's flagship nutrition mission, launched in 2018.

- It aims to improve nutritional outcomes for **children (0–6 years), pregnant women, and lactating mothers**.
- The mission **targets** to reduce stunting, under-nutrition, anemia, and low birth weight through convergence of schemes, technology-enabled monitoring, and community mobilization.

Functional Foods

- **Functional foods:** Enriched foods that promote health or prevent disease, such as **vitamin-enriched rice** or **omega-3-fortified milk**. Technologies involved: **nutrigenomics, bio-fortification, 3D food printing, bioprocessing**.
- **Smart proteins:** Proteins sourced using biotechnology to reduce reliance on conventional production.
 - **Plant-based proteins** (restructured extracts from legumes, cereals, oilseeds)
 - **Fermentation-derived proteins** (produced by **microbial systems**)
 - **Cultivated meat** (animal cells grown in **bioreactors** without slaughter)
- Recognised under **BioE3 policy** (Biotechnology for Economy, Environment, and Employment).
- **Examples:** Zinc-enriched rice (IIRR, Hyderabad), Iron-rich pearl millet (ICRISAT), Private players: Tata Consumer Products, ITC, Marico.
- **Smart gaps:** 377 products (meat, eggs, dairy alternatives) in 2023 by 70+ smart protein brands.
- **Key gap:** Lack of regulatory clarity; FSSAI yet to issue guidance on novel foods (cultivated meat).
- **Functional foods** provide health benefits beyond basic nutrition. They contain essential nutrients and may help promote optimal health and reduce disease risk.
- **Conventional Functional Foods:** Natural, whole foods with inherent health-promoting properties. Blueberries – high in antioxidants; Garlic – support heart health; Oats – contain beta-glucan that can help lower cholesterol.
- **Modified Functional Foods:** Fortified, enriched, or enhanced to improve nutritional value and health benefits.
- **Probiotic yogurt** – contains live bacteria supporting gut health; **Calcium-fortified orange juice** – supports bone health; **Vitamin D** – fortified milk; **Plant sterol-enriched margarine** – may help reduce cholesterol
- **Health benefits of functional foods include:**
 - Immune function, Improving digestive health, Lowering cholesterol and blood pressure, Supporting bone health, Reducing inflammation, Preventing chronic diseases like heart disease, diabetes, and metabolic disorders.

Benchmarks for Yoga Practice

Why in news: WHO & GoI to bring in **standardisation of training practices in yoga**.

- **Union Ayush Ministry** is the **nodal centre** for the programme. The **standardisation** aims at creating **guidelines for yoga practice, training, and application**, defining global **benchmarks** for **professional competency and knowledge**, and ensuring diverse traditions of yoga can coexist under **uniform quality standards**.

SHRESTH

Why in news: Health Ministry has launched **SHRESTH – State Health Regulatory Excellence Index**, the first-of-its-kind national initiative to benchmark and strengthen state drug regulatory systems.

- Provides a transparent, data-driven framework for assessing state drug regulatory performance to **improve drug safety and quality standards** across India.
- For **Manufacturing States**, SHRESTH will assess **27 indices** under 5 themes: Human Resources, Infra, Licensing Activities, Surveillance Activities, Responsiveness. For **Primarily Distribution States**, SHRESTH will assess **23 indices**.

State of Food Security and Nutrition Report

Why in news: SOFI 2025 Report – a **joint initiative of FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP, and WHO** – assessing global progress toward **SDG 2 (Zero Hunger)** targets 2.1 and 2.2 on ending hunger, food insecurity, and malnutrition.

- **Global hunger decreased** to an estimated **8.2% in 2024**. However, **hunger continues to rise** in several **subregions of Africa and Western Asia**. Moderate or severe food insecurity has declined gradually since 2021.
- **Food prices rose** throughout **2023 and 2024**, increasing the **average cost of a healthy diet** globally. The **COVID-19 pandemic** and the **war in Ukraine** have **intensified food price inflation** worldwide.
- Still, the **number of people unable to afford a healthy diet** fell from **2.76 billion (2019)** to **2.60 billion (2024)**.
- **Anaemia among women (aged 15–49)** and **adult obesity** are both **rising globally**.
- **Excluding India**, lower-middle-income countries show an **increasing trend** in people **unable to afford a healthy diet**.

Oil, Sugar Content

Why in news: Health Ministry has directed all **government departments** to display **oil, sugar, and trans-fat content** in popular Indian snacks like **samosa, pakora, chai biscuit, jalebi, vada pav, kachori, pizza, burger**.

- Ministry proposed **“Sugar and Oil Boards”** to promote **healthier dietary habits** in **schools, offices, and public institutions**. **CBSE** directed schools to display boards with **daily sugar limits, sugar content in foods, and health risks**.
- **NFHS data:** Obesity rose from **15% (2005–06)** to **24% (2019–21)** in men, and from **12% to 23%** in women.
- **Non-communicable diseases (NCDs)** like **cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, respiratory diseases, cancers** now cause **66% of deaths in India**, especially after age 30.

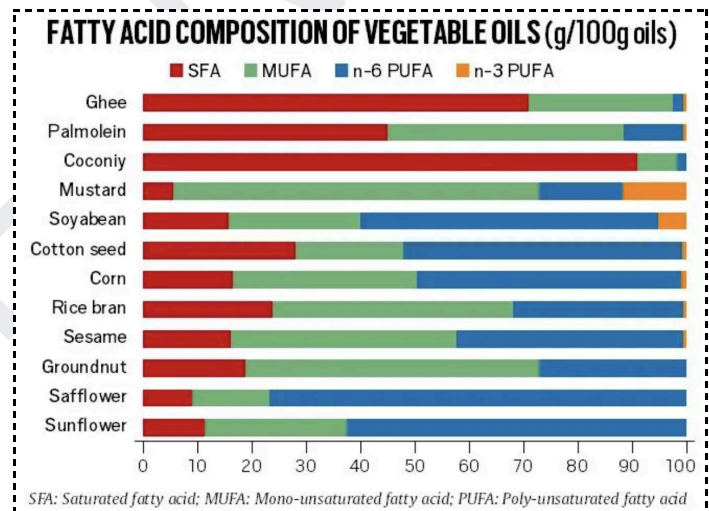
- **High Fat, Sugar, Salt (HFSS) foods** are ultra-processed, low in nutrients, and linked to **obesity and NCDs**.
- **WHO dietary recommendations** for adults: Fat: **<65g/day**, Added sugar: **<25g/day**, Salt: **<5g/day**.
- **FSSAI** designed boards advising that a person should consume only **27–30 g of fat per day**.
- **Sugar boards** recommend adults not consume more than **25 g of sugar/day** and children not more than **20 g/day**.
- **The Lancet’s Global Burden of Disease study** projects obese and overweight adults in India to rise from **18 crore (2021) to 44.9 crore by 2050**, making India the **second-highest globally**.
- **Fats** are not inherently bad; **ICMR guidelines** suggest sourcing fats from **seeds, nuts, pulses, and beans**.

Palm Oil

- According to the **Indian Dietary Guidelines** by the **ICMR**, **coconut oil** and **ghee** have the **highest SFA content** — around **90g** and **70g** per **100g** of oil respectively.
- **Palmolein** (the liquid part of palm oil) contains about **40g SFA**, **40g MUFA**, and rest as **PUFA**.
- **Mustard, safflower, sunflower oils** have **lowest SFA content**, less than **10g per 100g** of oil.
- **Trans fatty acids (TFA)** are produced during the **hydrogenation** of liquid vegetable oils.
- Adding **hydrogen atoms** converts liquid oil into **semi-solid** form and **increases shelf-life**.
- **ICMR** recommend using a **mix of oils** that are **low in SFA** and **high in PUFA**, implying **palm oil should be avoided** as much as possible.
- Guidelines suggest **oil consumption** should be limited to **20–50g** per person per day. Those with **sedentary lifestyles** should stick to the **lower end** of the range (**20–30g**).

Why in news: **Indian Food and Beverage Association** stated that **palm oil** has been consumed in **India** since the **19th century** and has a **well-rounded fatty acid profile**. It is valued for its **long shelf-life** and **neutral taste**. Most **packaged foods** like **potato chips, biscuits, ice cream, and chocolates** use **palm oil**.

- All oils contain **three types of fatty acids**: **saturated fatty acid (SFA)**, **mono-unsaturated fatty acid (MUFA)**, and **poly-unsaturated fatty acid (PUFA)**.
- Oils with **high SFAs** increase **bad cholesterol (LDL)**, causing **inflammation, reduced insulin sensitivity**, and higher **clot formation**. Consuming such oils raises the **risk of heart attacks, strokes, and type-2 diabetes**.
- **Fats solid or semi-solid at room temperature** — like **palm oil, coconut oil, ghee, butter, and lard** — are **high in saturated fatty acids**.
- Global **palm oil supply** faces a slowdown as **Malaysia and Indonesia**, which account for **85% of world output**, struggle with **ageing plantations, replanting delays, and biodiesel diversion policies**.
- **Indonesia** diverting more palm oil into **biodiesel production**, reducing export availability.
- Palm oil makes up **50%+ of global vegetable oil supply**.



Out-of-pocket Expenditure

- Why in news:** Decline in India’s Out-of-Pocket Expenditure as shown in the National Health Accounts estimates.
- **NHA 2017–18** (based on **NSS 75th Round**) reported a **steep decline** in OOPE: From **64% (2013–14)** to **49% (2017–18)** of total health expenditure. **LASI data** (Longitudinal Ageing Study in India) show **higher hospitalisation rates among the elderly**, contradicting NHA trends.
 - The **Consumer Expenditure Survey (CES) 2022–23** shows OOPE as a share of **household consumption expenditure (HCE)** has **risen**, not declined.
 - **Insurance penetration** remains low (15%–18%). **Ayushman Bharat (PM-JAY)** PM-JAY covers **500 million people** with **₹5 lakh per family** for advanced care, enabling **cashless treatments**.

Medical Education Scheme

- Why in news:** Cabinet approved Phase 3 of a **CSS** to add 5,000 PG and 5,023 UG medical seats by 2028–29.
- Will upgrade existing medical colleges, PG institutes, and Union/State-run hospitals at an enhanced cost ceiling of **₹1.5 crore per seat**. The initiative aims to **expand MBBS and PG capacity, increase specialist doctors, and introduce new medical specialties** across government institutions.
 - Govt has approved 22 AIIMS under Pradhan Mantri Swasthya Suraksha Yojana (PMSSY). It is a central scheme aimed at correcting regional imbalances in the availability of affordable tertiary healthcare and medical education.
 - These changes aim to **address the shortage of medical teaching personnel** while maintaining **high academic and professional standards**.

Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021

Why in news: The **Supreme Court** ruled that **age limits under the Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021 do not apply to couples** who had **frozen embryos** and **initiated the surrogacy process** before **January 25, 2022**.

- SC observed that **concerns over parenting abilities** cannot be used **retrospectively to restrict reproductive choice**.
- Under the **Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021**, an **intending woman** must be **between 23 and 50 years**, and the **man** must be **between 26 and 55 years** to be **eligible for surrogacy**.
- The **petitioners contended** that these **age limits** could not **retrospectively disqualify** those who had already **completed medical procedures** like **embryo freezing**. The Court held that the **exemption** applies even when **embryos were created and frozen before the Act, regardless of implantation** in the **surrogate's womb**.
- (SC decided to examine the legality of a provision that bans married couples with secondary infertility from using surrogacy to have a **second child**. The question before the court is whether this restriction violates citizens' reproductive rights. The Union government defended **Section 4(iii)(C)(II) of the Surrogacy (Regulation) Act, 2021**, stating that surrogacy is not a fundamental right).

Drugs and Magic Remedies Act

Why in news: India addresses the **issue of misleading drug advertisements** through the **Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act (DMRA), 1954**.

- **DMRA Act, 1954** prohibits **advertisement of any drug**, approved or not, for a list of **54 specified medical conditions**, including **Cancer, Diabetes, Heart Disease, Leprosy, Obesity etc**, irrespective of its proven efficacy.

World Health Summit 2025

Why in news: The **World Health Summit 2025** took place in **Berlin, Germany**, and online under the theme **"Taking Responsibility for Health in a Fragmenting World."**

- The annual World Health Summit brings together **global health stakeholders from all sectors and regions** to find solutions to pressing health challenges. **WHS was founded in 2009** on the occasion of the **300th anniversary of Berlin's Charité**. It is supported by the **WHS Academic Alliance**.

Patient Safety

Why in news: **World Patient Safety Day** was observed on September 17.

- Globally, 1 in 10 hospitalized patients & 4 in 10 outpatients experience harm while receiving care. 2025 theme **"Safe Care for Every Newborn and Every Child"** underscores the need to ensure **safety from the first breath of life**.
- **Patient Harm causes include:** Hospital-acquired infections, unsafe transfusion or injection practices, blood clots. Inappropriate drug combinations, delayed diagnoses, preventable falls.

Key initiatives

- **National Patient Safety Implementation Framework (2018–25)** — a roadmap for adverse event reporting and integrating safety in clinical programmes.
- **Society of Pharmacovigilance, India** — monitors and reports adverse drug reactions nationwide.
- **National Accreditation Board for Hospitals & Healthcare Providers (NABH)** — promotes standards for infection control, patient rights, and medication management.
- **WHO Global Patient Safety Action Plan** provides a **blueprint** to integrate safety across all health system levels.

GLASS AMR

- WHO released its **Global antibiotic resistance surveillance report 2025 (GLASS)**, confirming that **antimicrobial resistance in India is a serious and escalating threat**, with resistance rates among the **highest in the world**.
- In **2023**, **one in three bacterial infections** in India were resistant to commonly used antibiotics. Globally, **one in six** confirmed infections were resistant.
- India is **affected due to** high infectious disease burden, overuse and misuse of antibiotics, gaps in surveillance, self-medication, incomplete courses, environmental contamination, uneven enforcement etc.
- High resistance rates noted in **E.coli, Klebsiella pneumoniae, Staphylococcus aureus**, especially in **ICUs**.
- Implementation of **National Action Plan on AMR** has been **slow**, with only a few States operationalising their plans.
- **2019 ban on colistin** (used as growth promoter in animal husbandry) is considered a **significant intervention**.
- World AMR Awareness Week (18–24 Nov) urges world to **"Act Now: Protect Our Present, Secure Our Future."**
- India's new National Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance (**NAP-AMR 2.0 2025–29**) has been released when **AMR** is affecting **human, veterinary practices, aqua-agriculture, waste systems and the entire food chain**. Antibiotic residues, resistant organisms and environmental discharge connect these sectors in powerful ways.
- **First National Action Plan on AMR (2017)** placed **AMR firmly within a One Health framework**, recognising the links between **human health, animal health and the environment**.
- An important advancement in 2nd plan is the recognition that India cannot address AMR without **meaningful participation from the private sector**. **NAP-AMR 2.0** introduces a **higher level of national oversight** as **intersectoral supervision** is placed under **NITI Aayog**.

- The plan stresses that States must develop **AMR Action Plans** and **establish AMR Cells**, but there is **no statutory requirement** for States to notify or implement their plans.

Misc

SDG 3

Why in news: India secured its **best-ever position** in the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Index** but India is **not on track** in most SDG 3 targets.

- **MMR:** 93 deaths per 100,000 live births vs target of 70.
- **Under-five mortality rate:** 32 per 1,000 live births vs target of 25.
- **Life expectancy:** 70 years vs target of 73.63 years.
- **Out-of-pocket expenditure:** 13% of total consumption vs target of 7.83%.
- **Immunisation coverage:** 93.23% vs target of 100%.

Progress

- In the last **11 years**, the number of **medical colleges** in the country has increased from **387 to 819**. **Undergraduate medical seats** have risen from **51,000 to 1,29,000**. **Postgraduate medical seats** have increased from **31,000 to 78,000**.

Global Tobacco Epidemic 2025

Why in News: World Health Organization (WHO) released the **tenth report on the Global Tobacco Epidemic 2025**.

- **MPOWER Initiative:** Set of six **cost-effective tobacco control measures** launched by WHO: **M:** Monitoring tobacco use and policies. **P:** Protecting people from tobacco smoke. **O:** Offering help to quit tobacco. **W:** Warning about the dangers of tobacco. **E:** Enforcing bans on advertising, promotion, and sponsorship. **R:** Raising taxes on tobacco.
- **India** became the **first country** to apply **tobacco control regulations** to **digital streaming content**.
- **Taxation:** Least adopted MPOWER measure. Over 7 million annually from tobacco-related diseases.
- **WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control** adopted in 2003, ratified by 180+. India joined in 2005.
- **3 by 35 Initiative (WHO):** Increase prices of tobacco, alcohol, sugary drinks by $\geq 50\%$ by 2035.
- **COTPA, 2003:** Prohibits smoking in public places, bans sale to minors.
- **COTPA (Packaging & Labelling) Amendment Rules, 2022:** Mandated health warning images on packages.
- **National Tobacco Control Programme (NTCP):** Awareness, reducing production & supply.
- **Prohibition of Electronic Cigarettes Act, 2019.**

Sex Ratio

Why in news: Bihar recorded the **lowest sex ratio at birth (SRB) in 2022** among all States and UTs with **891 girls per 1,000 boys**.

- Bihar's SRB has **declined consistently** since 2020. Other States with low SRB in 2022 were **Maharashtra (906), Telangana (907), and Gujarat (908)**.

| TOTAL FERTILITY RATE | | |
|----------------------|-----|-----|
| NFHS 5 vs NFHS 4 | | |
| LOWEST | | |
| Punjab | 1.6 | 1.6 |
| West Bengal | 1.6 | 1.8 |
| Maharashtra | 1.7 | 1.9 |
| Karnataka | 1.7 | 1.8 |
| Andhra | 1.7 | 1.8 |
| HIGHEST | | |
| Bihar | 3.0 | 3.4 |
| Meghalaya | 2.9 | 3.0 |
| UP | 2.4 | 2.7 |
| Jharkhand | 2.3 | 2.6 |
| Manipur | 2.2 | 2.6 |

- **Nagaland reported the highest SRB at 1,068**, followed by Arunachal Pradesh (1,036), Ladakh (1,027), Meghalaya (972), and Kerala (971). Assam, which had the lowest SRB in 2021 (863), improved to 933 in 2022.

- **SRS** has been a **key source of demographic data in India since 1971**.

- States like Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Telangana, and Uttarakhand showed a **general rise in registered births since 2013**, despite occasional dips. States/UTs like Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, and Delhi showed a **general decline in registered births** despite fluctuations.

- Of the total registered births in 2022, **males accounted for 52.4% and females 47.6%**, with **43% in rural and 56.5% in urban areas**. The number of **still births in 2022 reduced to 1.15 lakh from 1.24 lakh in 2021**.

- Of the total registered deaths in 2022, **men accounted for 60.4% and women 39.6%**, with **59.5% deaths in rural areas and 40.5% in urban areas**.

Other SRS Data

- **Highest CBR:** Bihar (25.8); **Lowest CBR:** Tamil Nadu (12). **Highest TFR:** Bihar (2.8); **Lowest TFR:** Delhi (1.2). **18 States/UTs reported TFR below 2.1**. **Above replacement level TFR:** Bihar (2.8), Uttar Pradesh (2.6), Madhya Pradesh (2.4), Rajasthan (2.3), Chhattisgarh (2.2).
- **Lowest TFR States/UTs:** Delhi (1.2), West Bengal (1.3), Tamil Nadu (1.3), Maharashtra (1.4). **Highest elderly share:** Kerala (15%). **Lowest:** Assam (7.6%), Delhi (7.7%), Jharkhand (7.6%).

Demographic Indicators

| India (Year 2025) | |
|---|------|
| Population (Billion) | 1.46 |
| Population aged 0-14, per cent | 24 |
| Population aged 10-19, per cent | 17 |
| Population aged 10-24, per cent | 26 |
| Population aged 15-64, per cent | 68 |
| Population aged 65 and older, per cent | 7 |
| Fertility (Total fertility rate, per woman) | 1.9 |
| Life Expectancy (Male) | 71 |
| Life Expectancy (Female) | 74 |

Source: UNFPA 2025

WHO's GNAFCC Membership

Why in News: Kozhikode city has been honoured with a membership in the WHO's Global Network for Age-friendly Cities and Communities (GNAFCC).

- **Established:** 2010. **Members:** 1300 members from 51 countries to connect cities, communities & organizations worldwide with the vision of making communities great places to grow older in.
- **Objectives:** Inspire change by showing what can be done and how, Connect cities & communities worldwide to facilitate the exchange of information, knowledge & experience, Support cities & communities to find innovative and evidence-based solutions.

Endocrine Disruptors in Plastic

Why in news: A 2024 study found microplastics (<5mm) in 89% of Indian blood samples.

- They are **biologically active**; found in blood, lungs, heart, placenta, breast milk, semen, ovarian fluid, testicular tissue.
- Plastics contain **Endocrine-Disrupting Chemicals** such as BPA, BPS, phthalates (DEHP, DBP), and PFAS, which mimic/block hormones like estrogen, testosterone, thyroid hormones, cortisol & cause receptor interference, gene disruption, oxidative stress, inflammation, and apoptosis.
- They disrupt **testosterone, sperm production, blood-testis barrier, lower sperm count, concentration, motility, and higher LH levels**. Sperm count in India has declined by 30% in the last 20 years.
- Microplastics linked to **poor egg quality, irregular menstruation, lower estradiol, miscarriage, PCOS, endometriosis, spontaneous abortions. Probable carcinogens** (breast, prostate, uterine, and testicular cancers).
- Also contribute to **obesity, type 2 diabetes, cardiovascular disease, thyroid dysfunction**.
- India produces **9.3 million tonnes of plastic waste** annually. 5.8 million tonnes incinerated, 3.5 million tonnes pollute the environment.

Microcrystalline Cellulose

Why in news: A blast at Sigachi Industries' pharma unit in Hyderabad, which manufactures MCC, resulted in 36 deaths.

- **Microcrystalline Cellulose (MCC)** is a **chemically inert, non-absorbable** substance with **no known skin reactivity**.
- MCC is widely used in the **pharma, food, and cosmetics industries** due to its **binding and texturising properties**. In pharma, MCC adds **bulk to drugs**, helps meet **weight specifications**, enhances the **function of active ingredients**.
- Despite MCC being **safe as a substance**, its **production involves hazardous processes**.

Uranium in Breast Milk

● **Study from Bihar** revealed **uranium (U238)** in the **breast milk of lactating mothers** across **six districts**.

- **All samples contained uranium**, with concentrations between **0 microgram/L and 5.25 microgram/L**. The **highest U238 concentration** was observed in **Katihar district**.
- The presence of uranium was linked to **groundwater contamination**, based on earlier studies.
- There is **no permissible limit** for uranium in breast milk. **WHO** has set a **provisional guideline of 30 microgram/L** for uranium in **drinking water**.
- The isotope detected was **uranium-238 (U238)**, which makes up **over 99% of natural uranium**. U238 is a **weakly radioactive**. It occurs naturally in **rock, soil and water**, including oceans, at **low concentrations**. External exposure is less dangerous, but **ingestion of high concentrations** can cause **health effects such as cancer of the bone or liver**.
- Exposure occurs through **inhalation of dust** or **ingestion of contaminated water and food**.
- Uranium was found in all samples but **remained under permissible limits**, implying **low expected health impact**. The study concludes that **most uranium absorbed by mothers is excreted through urine**, not concentrated in breast milk.
- **Long-term exposure** in infants may affect **kidney development** and **cognitive and mental health outcomes**, including **low IQ and neurodevelopmental delay**.

Healthy Ageing

Why in news: Ageing is driven by **molecular-cellular processes, environment, lifestyle and socio-economic conditions**.

- **Chronological age** often does not reflect **biological age**.

BHARAT Study by IISc

- **Launched by** Indian Institute of Science, Bengaluru, under the Longevity India Program.
- **Full form:** Biomarkers of Healthy Aging, Resilience, Adversity, and Transitions.
- Aims to map **physiological, molecular, and environmental indicators** that drive ageing in Indians.
- The study aims to define the **Bharat Baseline** — a **context-specific reference** for Indian biomarkers.
- Will include **genomic, proteomic, metabolic, environmental, and lifestyle** indicators.
- Focus on **early warning signs** and **proactive markers** for timely intervention and prevention.
- **AI and machine learning** are used to **integrate, simulate, and detect signals** in complex datasets.
- **Mediterranean Diet**, rich in vegetables, fruits, legumes, and natural oils, and low in red meat, is associated with healthier lives. Traditional **Indian food** with wheat/rice, dal, greens, curd/buttermilk, eggs, and fish is essentially

Mediterranean in nature. A **plant-based diet** with **moderate healthy animal foods** was found to be **highly associated with healthy ageing**.

AYUSH Practitioners

Why in news: A dispute on X between a **hepatologist** and a **chess Grand Master** reignited the debate on whether **traditional medicine practitioners** can call themselves doctors.

- **Indian Medicine Central Council Act (1970)** recognized Ayurveda, Siddha, and Unani practitioners, later replaced by the **National Commission for Indian System of Medicine Act (2020)**.
- Ayurveda syllabus mixes **doshas, prakriti, atmas** with **modern medical concepts**, creating irreconcilable theories.
- Disputes arise over **Ayurvedic practitioners prescribing modern medicines** under **Rule 2(ee) of Drugs and Cosmetics Rules, 1945**, which allows states to classify practitioners.
- **Supreme Court (1998):** Ayurvedic practitioners **cannot prescribe modern medicine**, yet many states still permit it.
- **Government has** allowed Ayurvedic postgraduates to perform **58 surgeries** (gall bladder, appendix, benign tumours).
- Government plans to include **AYUSH treatments** under **Ayushman Bharat**.

Ayurveda Ahara

Why in news: FSSAI, in consultation with the **Ayush Ministry**, released a **list of Ayurvedic food preparations**.

- **Ayurveda Ahara** refers to foods based on **Ayurvedic dietary guidelines**, focusing on **balance, seasonal suitability, natural ingredients, and herbs with therapeutic benefits**.
- This follows the **Food Safety and Standards (Ayurveda Ahara) Regulations, 2022**, which recognise foods from **authoritative Ayurvedic texts**. The new list brings **clarity and confidence** to consumers and businesses.
- The list is issued under **Note (1) of Schedule B**, drawing directly from texts listed in **Schedule A**.
- **FSSAI has set a process** for food business operators (FBOs) to request inclusion of new **Category A products** with references from **authoritative texts**.

Ayurvedic Doctors

- **Minister for Health, Medical Education and Family Welfare** granted approval for **Ayurvedic doctors** with **PG courses in surgical studies** and **proper training** to perform **operations independently**.
- The approval is in line with the **Indian Medicine Central Council (PG Ayurveda Education) Amendment Regulations, 2020** and guidelines issued by the **National Commission for Indian Systems of Medicine**.
- As per the permission, **Ayurvedic students** can perform **39 Shalya Tantra (general surgery) procedures** and **19 Shalaky Tantra procedures** covering **eye, ear, nose, throat, head, orodentistry**.

AMRIT Pharmacy

- **10th anniversary celebrations** of **AMRIT (Affordable Medicines and Reliable Implants for Treatment) Pharmacy**.
- **AMRIT pharmacies** provide **life-saving and essential medicines** at **discounts of 50% to 90%**.

National Convention on Health Rights

- **National Convention on Health Rights** is being convened in **Delhi**, timed between **Human Rights Day (December 10)** and **Universal Health Coverage Day (December 12)**.
- It is organised by **Jan Swasthya Abhiyan**, comprising **civil society organisations from over 20 States**.
- It will draw lessons from the **COVID-19 crisis**. It aims to **strengthen right to health initiatives**.

NMR ID

Why in news: Obtaining an **NMR Identification (ID)** is **voluntary**. The clarification came amid protests by **doctors** against the **cumbersome registration process** with the **National Medical Register (NMR)**.

- Less than **1% of doctors** had registered with NMR, eight months after its launch. **NMR** is a **centralised database** of registered medical practitioners in **modern medicine**, maintained by **National Medical Commission (NMC)**.
- It includes details of practitioners such as qualification, area of specialisation, registration status, date of registration.
- Every MBBS doctor in the NMR is assigned a **unique identification number** called the **NMR ID**.
- It facilitates a "one nation, one registration" system. Established under Section 31 of the NMC Act, 2019, it replaces old Indian Medical Register with digital database maintained by the Ethics and Medical Registration Board (EMRB).

NMC:

- Constituted by an act of Parliament known as NMC Act, 2019, replacing the Medical Council of India.
- **Aim:** (i) improve access to quality and affordable medical education, (ii) ensure availability of adequate and high quality medical professionals; (iii) promote equitable and universal healthcare; (iv) encourages medical professionals to adopt latest medical research; (v) objectively assess medical institutions; (vi) maintain a medical register; (vi) enforce high ethical standards; (vii) effective grievance redressal mechanism.
- Total **33 members, including a chairperson** (One medical professional), **10 ex-officio members** (10 members, including Presidents of the four Autonomous Boards, the Director General of Health Services, the Director General of the Indian

Council of Medical Research, and others), and **22 part-time members** (appointed from individuals with expertise in areas like management, law, medical ethics, and more).

Kombucha – Gut Ecosystem

Why in news: Kombucha, a fizzy fermented tea, has gained popularity among India's health-conscious consumers, promoted for its supposed benefits to **digestion, immunity, and metabolism**.

• Scientific evidence remains limited, with most studies focusing on **biochemistry or animal models**, not humans.

- The standard method of determining **obesity** uses **BMI cut-offs** as the sole determinant.
- **BMI < 18.5** is **underweight**, **18.5–24.9** is **normal**, **25–29.9** is **overweight**, and **> 30** is **obese**.
- India's **obesity epidemic** is compounded by **existing healthcare challenges**.
- The **government plans to establish Day Care Cancer Centres** in all **district hospitals** over the next **three years**. **200 centres are planned for 2025–26** as part of this commitment.
- **Obesity prevention programmes** should target **entire households** with focus on **healthy shopping, home-cooked meals, and family physical activity**.

Key Microbial Shifts Observed

- **Akkermansiaceae** increased in obese participants, previously linked to **better insulin sensitivity**.
- **Prevotellaceae** abundance rose in the obese group, associated with **improved glucose metabolism and reduced inflammation**. Both groups saw increased **Bacteroidota**, aiding **complex carbohydrate digestion**.
- Decline in harmful bacteria like **Ruminococcus gnavus** (linked to IBD and liver fat) and **Dorea** (linked to high BMI and cholesterol).
- In normal-weight participants, **Parabacteroides goldsteinii**, associated with **reduced inflammation**, increased modestly.
- Fungi **Exophiala** and **Rhodotorula**, associated with **cystic fibrosis and obesity**, respectively, decreased.

- Despite microbial changes, no improvements were seen in **blood glucose, insulin, or inflammation markers**.
- **Indian gut microbiota** differs significantly from Western populations, influenced by **traditional plant-based diets** and **regional diversity**. Gut diversity is higher among **rural women in high-altitude regions** and **ethnic tribes** like those in **Ladakh, Jaisalmer, and Khargone**.

Schemes and Policies

Orange Economy

Why in news: Aka **Creative Economy**, it is **economic activity based on creativity, culture, and intellectual property**.

- It **transforms ideas, talents, and cultural heritage into goods and services**.
- Industries under the Orange Economy include **arts, media, design, film, music, gaming, and digital content**.
- India's creative economy is valued at **\$35 billion**, employing **8% of its workforce**, second only to agriculture.
- India has over **300 universities** and **3,000 colleges** offering courses in **design, arts, and architecture**. Six of India's top 10 creative hubs are located in **non-metro regions**, showcasing cultural diversity.
- **Royal Enfield**, a U.K.-India brand, with **UNESCO**, launched **The Himalayan Knot project** to protect **intangible cultural heritage** and support **580+ artisans** in the Himalayas.

Safe Harbour

Why in news: The **government plans to revise guidelines for intermediary platforms to disincentivise fake news**.

- **Due diligence norms for intermediaries** may be **revisited to require proactive removal of fake news**.
- Under **Section 79 of the IT Act, 2000**, intermediary platforms enjoy **safe harbour** from liability for **user-generated content**, if they comply with government guidelines.
- **Ministry of Electronics and IT** is filing a **special leave petition** against the **Bombay High Court judgment** that **struck down the Fact Check Unit's authority** to eliminate safe harbour for content deemed **misinformation**.

Road Accident Victims

Why in news: Road accident victims across India will now be **entitled to cashless treatment up to ₹1.5 lakh for the first seven days at designated hospitals**. The **Ministry of Road Transport and Highways** issued a **Gazette notification** announcing the **Cashless Treatment of Road Accident Victims Scheme, 2025**.

- It aims to **reduce deaths from road accidents** by ensuring **timely medical intervention**.
- The **National Health Authority** has been designated as the **implementing agency** for the scheme.
- It aims to ensure timely emergency care during the critical 'golden hour' without financial burden.

Pradhan Mantri Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana (PMVBRY)

Why in news: PM announced **Pradhan Mantri Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana (PMVBRY)** to boost **youth employment**, promote **job creation**, and enhance **employability and social security** across sectors, particularly **manufacturing**.

- To **facilitate employment and skilling opportunities** for youth.
- To **promote job creation, enhance employability, and expand social security coverage**.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Labour & Employment. **Implementation:** Through EPFO, statutory body under **Employees' Provident Funds & Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952**.

- **Target:** Creation of **3.5 crore jobs**, including first-time employees, over **two years**.

Structure of the Scheme

Part A – Support to First-Time Employees

- **Objective:** Targets first-time employees registered with EPFO.
- **Incentive:** One-month EPF wage up to ₹15,000, given in two instalments.
 - First instalment after 6 months of service.
 - Second instalment after 12 months and completion of a financial literacy programme.
- **Eligibility:** Employees earning up to ₹1 lakh per month.
- **Encouraging Savings:** A portion of the incentive will be kept in a fixed savings deposit account.
- **Payment Mechanism:** DBT through the Aadhaar Bridge Payment System (ABPS).
- **Employee Benefits:** Job **formalisation** through social security coverage, **On-the-job training** and **skill enhancement**, Improved **financial literacy** and **employability**.

Part B – Incentives for Employers

- **Eligibility:** Employers hiring new employees with salaries up to ₹1 lakh per month.
- **Incentive:** Up to ₹3,000 per month, for **two years**, for each **additional employment sustained for at least six months**.
- For the **manufacturing sector**, incentives extend to the **3rd and 4th years**.
- **Incentive Mechanism:** Direct transfer to **PAN-linked accounts** of employers.
- **Employer Benefits:** Offsetting additional job creation costs, Enhancing productivity and workforce stability, Encouraging expansion of social security coverage.

Digital India

Why in news: In **2014**, India had **limited Internet penetration**, **low digital literacy**, and **scarce online access to government services**.

- Under **SVAMITVA scheme**, **2.4 crore+ property cards** have been issued. **Survey of Villages and Mapping with Improved Technology in Village Areas scheme** was launched in **2020** to provide **'Record of Rights'** using **drone surveys**. The scheme aims to **monetize properties**, **enable bank loans**, **reduce property disputes**, **improve tax assessment**, and **support village-level planning**. **Bhu-Aadhaar system** has issued **23 crore land identification numbers** to simplify land plot identification.
- India is managing **Global DPI Repository** to provide **access to countries in the Global South**. MeitY has developed the **GDPIR**, which is a comprehensive resource from G20 members and guest nations. Its primary aim is to bridge the knowledge gap for DPs. It showcases the information in a standardized format from countries and organizations that have developed DPs at scale, incorporating elements such as maturity scales, source codes (where available), and governance frameworks. Currently, the GDPIR features 54 DPs from 16 countries.

PM Vishwakarma Scheme

Why in news: **PM Vishwakarma Scheme** has **disbursed loans exceeding ₹290 crore** to **over 32,000 artisans in Gujarat**.

- **Artisan enrolment** is facilitated through **Common Service Centres (CSCs)**, with **verification** at three levels — **local gram panchayats**, **district committees**, **State-level committee** chaired by MSME Development and Facilitation Office.

About PM Vishwakarma Scheme:

- **Central Sector scheme (100% Union-funded)** launched in **2023** to support **traditional artisans and craftspeople** in 18 identified trades in rural and urban areas. The scheme covers 18 traditional trades, including carpentry, blacksmithing, pottery, tailoring, masonry, toy making, and basket weaving.
- **Objective:** strengthen family-based traditional occupations through skill upgradation, modern tools, formal recognition, and integration into the formal MSME and value chains.
- **Benefits:** PM Vishwakarma **certificate & ID**, training with **₹500/day stipend**, **toolkit grant up to ₹15,000**, and **collateral-free loans up to ₹3 lakh at 5% interest** (in two tranches of ₹1 lakh and ₹2 lakh).
- **Nodal ministry:** **Ministry of MSME**; duration **2023–24 to 2027–28**.
- **Enrolment:** via **CSCs** with **Aadhaar-based verification** and **Udyam Assist registration**.

FCRA Renewal

Why in news: MHA directed NGOs to **submit FCRA renewal applications at least four months before expiry**.

- **FCRA registration** is **mandatory for NGOs and associations** to **receive foreign funds**.
- The **FCRA registration** must be **renewed every five years**.
- FCRA (originally 1976, replaced by FCRA 2010) **regulates acceptance and use of foreign contribution/foreign hospitality** so that such funds are not used in a manner detrimental to national interest and India's sovereignty.
- Administered by the **MHA**, it applies to **individuals, associations and companies**.
- **Political parties, election candidates, judges, government servants, media houses, and organisations of political nature** are broadly **prohibited** from receiving foreign contribution.
- **NGOs/associations** with definite **cultural, economic, educational, religious or social programmes** can receive foreign contribution only after **registration or prior permission**, maintaining a **separate designated FCRA bank account** and filing **annual returns**. Registration is generally **valid for 5 years** and requires **renewal**.

- Key **2010 and 2020 changes** tightened compliance: **centralised FCRA account (SBI New Delhi)**, increased **reporting obligations, caps/conditions on transfer of foreign funds** to other NGOs, **Aadhaar requirement** for office-bearers, and **enhanced powers** to suspend/cancel registration.

Zoho's Suite

Why in news: Over the past year, all **12 lakh official email addresses** of **Union govt employees**, including those of the **PMO**, have been **migrated from the National Informatics Centre (NIC) system to a Zoho-developed platform**.

- **Zoho, based in Tamil Nadu**, now provides the **email and office suite platform** for the Government of India.
- The **Zoho Office Suite** has been activated to **discourage government employees from using open-source applications** for creating text files, spreadsheets, and presentations due to **security concerns**.

Visakhapatnam Declaration

Why in news: The **28th National Conference on e-Governance (NCeG)** was held at **Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh**.

- It concluded with the adoption of the **"Visakhapatnam Declaration"** which called for **whole-of-government approach** to strengthen **civil services** with **digital competencies** and **agile, data-driven frameworks**
- It was **co-hosted** by the **DARPG, the MeitY, and the Government of Andhra Pradesh**.
- The **theme** of the conference was **"Viksit Bharat: Civil Service and Digital Transformation."**
- It proposed scaling up **AI-driven platforms** such as **Digital India BHASHINI, Digi Yatra, and NADRES V2** to deliver **multilingual, real-time, and sector-specific citizen services**.
- The **Visakhapatnam Declaration** sets the direction for **India's digital governance strategy** with emphasis on **inclusivity, security, and innovation** to **empower citizens and strengthen service delivery**.

International Institute of Administrative Sciences

Why in news: As the current **president of the IIAS**, India has **proposed a new international governance index**.

- India won the presidency of the **Brussels-based IIAS for the first time in its 100-year history**.
- IIAS released a list of achievements that included **advancing research on establishing the international governance index**. The committee would **establish a working group to develop the index**. The topic would be **incorporated into the agenda for the IIAS annual conference in 2026**.
- The **V-Dem Institute** has listed India as an **electoral autocracy since 2017**. The **2025 V-Dem report** ranked India **100 out of 179 countries** on the **"liberal democracy index"**.
- In **2022**, the **Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister** published a working paper on the **Freedom in the World Index, the V-Dem indices and the EIU Democracy Index**.
- In **2023**, **CEA** called for **greater transparency** in the **Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI)**. He said the **WGI is a composite of several sub-indices based on subjective opinions of expert institutions**.
- The **WGI covers over 200 economies** and includes six indicators: **voice and accountability; political stability and absence of violence/terrorism; government effectiveness; regulatory quality; rule of law; and control of corruption**.
- The **IIAS, established in 1930**, has **31 member countries**, including **India, Japan, China, Germany and Saudi Arabia**. While **not affiliated with the UN**, it **actively works with it**.
- IIAS is an **international non-profit** that **organises events for public servants and academics** and **produces research on public governance**.
- India **won the presidency for 2025–2028** after the **first-ever election for the post**, defeating **Austria**.
- India has been represented by the **Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances since 1998**.

Dumpsite Remediation Accelerator Programme

- The **Dumpsite Remediation Accelerator Programme** comes when one year is left in the five-year **Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban 2.0**, launched in 2021 to clear all legacy landfills in cities.
- **49% of the area** of legacy landfills was **yet to be reclaimed** and **41% of the waste** was **yet to be remediated**.
- Launched at the **National Urban Conclave**, the programme will focus on **214 sites** accounting for about **80% of the waste** at the **1,428 legacy landfills** yet to be remediated.
- Cities would be offered **additional financial support** for **remediation and waste processing projects**.
- **Corporate and public sector undertakings** would be **roped in** to support the projects. **Urban Invest Window**, a project of **HUDCO**, to enable **local bodies to raise private funds**. The **Urban Invest Window** will help cities **identify projects, mobilise capital, and implement projects**, with **HUDCO repurposing its regional offices**.
- **Launched in 2021**, **SBM Urban 2.0** targets clearing around **2,400 legacy landfill sites** by **2025–2026**.
- To receive **SBM Urban 2.0 funding**, cities must submit **action plans** to the **MoHUA**.
- The process involves **sifting waste into categories**, producing **refuse derived fuel (RDF)** for **waste-to-energy plants**, **recycling construction and demolition waste**, and **bio-soil** for **road construction**.
- **Waste remediation** involves **cleaning and rehabilitating contaminated land**, while **waste-to-energy technologies** convert **non-recyclable waste** into **electricity or heat**.

- **Waste-to-energy systems** cater to **different kinds of waste** and align with **SDG 7** and **SDG 11**.
- These technologies can **reduce waste, minimise environmental impacts**, and support a **circular economy**.

Pension Reforms

- **Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme** was an informal sector social assistance programme launched in 1995 for persons aged over 65, living BPL. Formal sector govt employees were covered under **Old Pension Scheme**.
- Announced in Budget 2015-16, **Atal Pension Yojana** is a contributory pension scheme for individuals aged 18-40. Taking into consideration the seasonal nature of informal sector income, especially agriculture, the APY allows for monthly, quarterly and half-yearly instalments.
- For the formal sector, OPS was replaced by the contributory-model **New Pension Scheme** in 2004.
- The **NPS** also has a **corporate sector model** which extends to **all corporate sector employees** with a **savings account**.
- Recently, **NPS 2.0** was launched allowing total allotment to 100% equity and a flexible multiple scheme framework (MSF) — an attractive change for younger high-risk, high-reward investors.
- **Labour Codes** introduced a uniform definition of 'wages', requiring basic pay to make up at least 50% of total earnings. This closes a long-standing loophole that allowed employers to shrink basic pay by inflating allowances. With pension, gratuity, and social security benefits now calculated on a higher base, workers stand to gain stronger financial protection.
- To tackle limited awareness and fragmented access, the **e-SHRAM portal** was launched **for informal sector workers**. Through this, workers can register and obtain information about social security schemes for which they are eligible.

PLI Schemes

- **PLI schemes** have resulted in **actual investment of over ₹1.88 lakh crore** across **14 sectors** as of **June**.
- PLI scheme is a central industrial strategy launched in March 2020 to transform India into a global manufacturing hub by offering financial rewards to companies based on their incremental sales from products manufactured in domestic units. Financial rewards ranging from 4% to 6% are provided on incremental sales.
- **Output-Oriented:** Unlike traditional input-based subsidies, incentives are only disbursed after production-sales.
- **Time-Bound:** The scheme generally spans 5 to 6 years, depending on the sector, with a defined sunset clause.
- **Broad Eligibility:** Both domestic and foreign companies registered in India can participate, provided they meet specific investment and production thresholds.
- **Sectoral Coverage (14 Sectors):** Mobile Manufacturing & Specified Electronic Components; Critical Key Starting Materials (KSMs)/APIs; Medical Devices; Automobiles & Auto Components; Pharmaceutical Drugs; Specialty Steel; Telecom & Networking Products; Electronic/Technology Products; White Goods (ACs and LEDs); Food Products; Textile Products (MMF segment and technical textiles); High-Efficiency Solar PV Modules; Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC) Battery; Drones and Drone Components.
- Govt has reopened application window for PLI Scheme for **white goods**. The scheme covers ACs and LED lights. Cabinet had approved the PLI scheme for white goods in 2021 to promote self-reliance and value chain development in the electronics and appliance sector.

Cover doctors deputed for COVID-19 duty under PMGKY

- SC observed that the **nation must not forget the sacrifice and heroism of doctors and health workers** during the **pandemic**, while holding that **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKY) insurance package benefits** would apply to **public and private medical professionals** drafted into **COVID-19 duties** who **lost their lives in service**.
- The **PMGKY package** offered a **personal accident cover of ₹50 lakh for 90 days** to around **22.12 lakh public healthcare providers**, including **community health workers**.

PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY):

- **Extension:** Govt has extended PMGKAY for five years, effective from January 1, 2024, until December 2028.
- **Merger with NFSA:** Since January 2023, the PMGKAY has been integrated. All foodgrains provided under NFSA are now distributed entirely free of cost to beneficiaries.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution.
- **Beneficiaries:** Covers approximately 81.35 crore people, including Antyodaya households and Priority Households.
- **Entitlement:** AAY Households: 35 kg of foodgrains per month per household. Priority Households (PHH): 5 kg of foodgrains per person per month.
- Supported by **One Nation One Ration Card** scheme, allowing migrants to access their quota anywhere in India.

Reports

Global Gender Gap Report 2025

Why in news: India ranks 131 out of 148 countries in the **Global Gender Gap Index 2025** by WEF, slipping **two places**.

- India's **gender parity score** stands at **64.1%**, making it **one of the lowest in South Asia**.
- India's **global position declined**, while the **worldwide gender gap closed to 68.8%**, but **full parity is still 123 years away** at current pace.

● **Iceland** topped the Index for **16th consecutive year**, followed by **Finland, Norway, the U.K., and New Zealand.**

● **Bangladesh** emerged as **South Asia's best performer**, jumping **75 places to 24th rank**, due to significant **progress in political empowerment and economic participation.**

● **Index evaluates gender parity in 4 categories:** Economic Participation and Opportunity, Educational Attainment, Health and Survival, Political Empowerment.

Economic Participation and Opportunity

● India improved by **+0.9 percentage points** in this category.

● **Estimated earned income parity** rose from **28.6% to 29.9%.**

● **Labour force participation rate** held steady at **45.9%**, India's **highest so far.**

● **India's economic score improved by 0.3 points.**

Educational Attainment

● India achieved a score of **97.1%**, showing **positive shifts in female**

India's performance across the components of the Global Gender Gap Index

| Components | 2025 | | 2024 | |
|--|-------------|------|-------------|------|
| | Score (0-1) | Rank | Score (0-1) | Rank |
| Global Gap Gender Index | 0.644 | 131 | 0.641 | 129 |
| Economic Participation and Opportunity | 0.407 | 144 | 0.398 | 142 |
| Educational Attainment | 0.971 | 110 | 0.964 | 112 |
| Health and survival | 0.954 | 143 | 0.951 | 142 |
| Political Empowerment | 0.245 | 69 | 0.251 | 65 |

literacy and tertiary education enrollment.

● Indicates near **full parity** in access to education.

Health and Survival

● India recorded **improvements in sex ratio at birth and healthy life expectancy**, leading to a **higher parity score.**

Political Empowerment

● India **declined in political empowerment.** **Female representation in Parliament** dropped from **14.7% to 13.8%.**

● **Women in ministerial roles** fell from **6.5% to 5.6%.**

● **Gender Inequality Index (GII)** is published by UNDP and measures reproductive health, empowerment, and labour market inequality; India's GI score is 0.403, ranking 102 out of 172 countries (2023).

● **Gender Development Index (GDI)** by UNDP compares female and male HDI values in health, education, and income; India's GDI is 0.874, with female HDI at 0.631 and male HDI at 0.722 (2023).

● **Global Gender Parity Index (GGPI)** is developed by UNDP and UN Women, covering life & health, education & skills, financial inclusion & labour, and decision-making participation.

● **Women's Empowerment Index (WEI)** by UNDP and UN Women, measures empowerment in health, education, inclusion, decision-making, and violence against women; India scores 0.52, indicating moderate empowerment.

Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI):

● Inequality-adjusted Human Development Index (IHDI) adjusts HDI by accounting for inequality in health, education, and income. Provides a more realistic measure of human development.

● **IHDI = HDI** when there is **no inequality.**

● **IHDI < HDI** when **inequality rises**, showing **actual level of human development** after disparities.

● India faced a **30.7% loss in human development** due to inequality. In India, the **poorest 40% population** holds only **20.2% income share.** The **richest 10% population** holds **25.5% income share.**

| Rank 2025 | Country | Score 2025 (0-1, 1 = parity) |
|-----------|----------------|------------------------------|
| 1 | Iceland | 0.926 |
| 2 | Finland | 0.879 |
| 3 | Norway | 0.863 |
| 4 | United Kingdom | 0.838 |
| 5 | New Zealand | 0.827 |

Global SDG Rankings

Why in news: India has secured **99th rank** out of 167 nations in the **2025 SDG Index**, its **first time** in the **top 100.** (India scored **67**).

● The **SDG Index** is part of the **Sustainable Development Report (SDR)** released by the **UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network.** The index measures **progress on 17 SDGs** adopted by **UN member states in 2015**, with **100** as the target score for full achievement.

● **China** ranked **49th** and the **United States** ranked **44th.**

● **Among neighbours:** Bhutan ranked 74th (70.5), Nepal 85th (68.6), Bangladesh 114th (63.9), Pakistan 140th (57), Maldives 53rd, and Sri Lanka 93rd.

● India's ranking has improved consistently: **112th in 2023, 121st in 2022, and 120th in 2021.**

● Despite gains, the report warns that **only 17% of SDG targets** are on track globally for achievement by **2030.**

● The slow progress is attributed to **conflicts, structural vulnerabilities, and limited fiscal space** in many regions.

● The **SDR is authored by economist Jeffrey Sachs** and highlights **European dominance**, with **Finland, Sweden, and Denmark** holding the top three spots. **19 of the top 20 countries** on the SDG Index are located in **Europe.**

| Rank 2025 | Country | Score 2025 |
|-----------|---------|------------|
| 1 | Finland | 87.0 |
| 2 | Sweden | 85.7 |
| 3 | Denmark | 85.3 |
| 4 | Germany | 83.7 |
| 5 | France | 83.1 |

World Happiness Report

● The **World Happiness Report 2025** ranks **Finland** as the happiest country for the **eighth consecutive year**, while **India** stands at **118** and **Pakistan** at **109.**

- The report uses the **Gallup World Poll's Cantril Ladder**, where people rate their lives from **0–10**. Rankings are based on **GDP per capita, social support, life expectancy, freedom, generosity, and corruption perception**.
- India's rank fluctuated between **94 and 144** over the decade; strongest performance in **2022** during post-COVID recovery and welfare schemes such as **PM Garib Kalyan Yojana**.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Neighbourhood

Pakistan

Indus Water Treaty

Why in news: Following the **Pahalgam terror attack** by TRF killing 26 tourists, the **Cabinet Committee on Security** decided to hold the **IWT of 1960 in abeyance**. IWT has **no exit clause** or provision for unilateral abrogation.

- **Article XII (4):** The treaty can only end with a **"duly ratified treaty"** between both governments.
- **Articles 60 and 62 of the Vienna Convention on the Law of Treaties (VCLT)** justify revocation, though **India is not a party** and **Pakistan hasn't ratified** it. **"Abeyance"** is not recognised legal term under **VCLT**, which only allows for **"suspension"** if there's a **"fundamental change of circumstances"** (**Article 62**).
- **Legal Precedent:** In **1997 Gabčíkovo–Nagymaros case**, ICJ rejected **Hungary's** termination of a treaty on the basis of political, economic, environmental shifts as not constituting fundamental changes.

India's leverage and limitations:

- India may stop sharing **water flow data, flush reservoirs, alter hydro project operations**.
- **Baglihar dam's sluice spillway gates** have been **lowered to restrict water flow** to Pakistan's Punjab as a **short-term punitive action**.
- **Baglihar dam**, built on the **Chenab river**, is a **run-of-the-river hydro power project**.
- **Salal Dam**, also called the **Salal Hydroelectric Power Station**, is a **run-of-the-river project** on the **Chenab River** in **Reasi district, Jammu and Kashmir**. It is the **first hydropower project** built by India in **Jammu and Kashmir under the Indus Water Treaty**.
- **Run-of-the-river hydroelectricity** involves **little or no water storage**, relying on natural river flow.
- Such plants may have **no storage or limited pondage**, used to manage short-term variations in water flow.
- **India uses only ~1 MAF of permitted 3.60 MAF storage** on western rivers. Has developed irrigation on only **0.642 million acres**, though permitted for **1.34 million acres** in **J&K and Ladakh**.
- On **eastern rivers**, India uses **90%+ of the 33 MAF** allocation, aided by **Bhakra (Satluj), Pong (Beas), and Ranjit Sagar/Thein dams (Ravi)**.
- Major hydroelectric projects on **western rivers** include: **Kishanganga** (Kishanganga River (a tributary of the Jhelum)), **Chenab Dams (Ratle, Salal, Baglihar)**. **Upcoming: Kiru, Pakal Dul (Marusudar River (a tributary of the Chenab)), and Ratle.**

Impacts on Pakistan:

- **Over 80% of Pak's agriculture and 33% of**

hydropower rely on Indus basin waters.

- Disruption may cause **tensions**, particularly b/w **Punjab vs. Sindh** over canals like **Cholistan**.
- India released water from **Baglihar and Salal dams** in **J&K**. The activity, termed **"flushing the reservoir"**, clears silt and is a routine practice, but **Pakistan was not notified**, contrary to IWT norms.

Hydropower Disputes:

- **Kishanganga & Ratle** have drawn objections from Pak.
- In **2013**, the **Court of Arbitration** permitted diversion by India under strict conditions (e.g., minimum flow).
- In the **Ratle case**, India sought a **neutral expert**, Pakistan preferred the **Court of Arbitration**; the **World Bank allowed both**, causing India to boycott proceedings.

Regional and International Ramifications

- During the **2017 Doklam standoff**, China withheld data from India but not Bangladesh.
- As **India and Bangladesh** prepare to **renew the Ganga Water Treaty in 2026**, the IWT episode may **strain talks**.

IMPACT ON PAKISTAN

WITH the IWT in abeyance, India is no longer required to share water-flow data with Pakistan. It can flush its reservoirs, which can result in a sudden release of water.

UNSCHEDULED closing or opening of dam gates will cause disruptions downstream.

PADDY is the main kharif crop in Pakistani Punjab. Farmers start cultivating paddy in nurseries in May, and planting takes place in June.

Indus River system:

- It consists of **six rivers: Indus, Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej**.
- **Indus and Sutlej** are **antecedent rivers**, originating in **Tibet** and cutting **deep gorges** through the **Himalayas**.
- **Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, and Beas** originate in **India**.
- The **Indus Basin** spans **China, India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan**.
- In India, it covers **Ladakh, J&K, Chandigarh, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, and Rajasthan**.
- **Drainage area** of Indus in India is **approx 3,21,289 sq. km**, accounting for **9.8% of India's geographical area**.

Indus Water Treaty:

- It was signed in **1960** in **Karachi** by **Nehru** and **Ayub Khan**. **Broker & Signatory**: World Bank.
- **India controls 3 eastern rivers (Ravi, Beas, Sutlej)**. **Pak controls 3 western rivers (Indus, Jhelum, Chenab)**.
- About **80% of the water volume** is allocated to **Pakistan** and **20% to India**. **India's rights on western rivers**: Limited to **non-consumptive uses** such as **hydropower, navigation, irrigation**, without substantially altering the flow.
- The treaty established a **Permanent Indus Commission** with representatives from both countries to **exchange data and resolve routine issues**.
- A **3-tier dispute resolution mechanism**: **Commission** → **Neutral Expert** → **Court of Arbitration**.

About Court of Arbitration:

- **International tribunal** to resolve disputes between parties (usually **states**) through **binding arbitral process** instead of traditional court litigation. It assists in appointing arbitrators, supervises arbitral proceedings, and ensures arbitral awards are enforceable under international law. **Permanent Court of Arbitration** was **established in 1899**.
- **HQ**: Hague. Facilitates arbitration in **territorial, maritime, and investment disputes**.

Response to Pahalgam Attack

Why in news: India **froze all imports from Pakistan**, banning "**direct or indirect**" imports of goods **originating in or exported by Pakistan**. All **postal links** were suspended, and **Pak-flagged ships** are barred from docking at **Indian ports**.

- **Kartarpur Corridor** was shut, halting visa-free pilgrimage to **Gurdwara Sri Kartarpur Sahib**.
- **Operation Sindoor**: 24 **precision strikes** on **nine targets** in Pakistan and PoK within 25 minutes, targeting only **terrorist infrastructure**, not military or civilian facilities. At least **100 terrorists were neutralised**.
- **Pakistan's airbases** (Bholari (near Karachi/Jamshoro), Chunian (Punjab province), Jacobabad (Sindh province), Murid (Chakwal district), Nur Khan (Chaklala) (Rawalpindi), Pasrur (Sialkot district), Rafiqui (Shorkot, Jhang district), Rahim Yar Khan (Punjab province), Sargodha (Mushaf) (Punjab province), Sialkot (Punjab province), Sukkur (Sindh province)) were struck using precision-guided munitions like BrahMos and SCALP missiles.
- **Kamikaze drones (Byker YIHA III)** were **intercepted and neutralised** by India's **Army Air Defence (AAD)**.
- **OTT platforms** were asked to **remove Pakistani content**, under **IT Rules, 2021, Part III**.
- (**NOTAM** stands for Notice to Airmen).

India's Stand:

- Response invokes **Article 51 of UN Charter (right to self-defence)**. Actions must be **reported to the UNSC**.
- India refers to the "**unwilling or unable**" doctrine, targeting **non-state actors (NSAs)** harboured by Pakistan.

Treaties India and Pakistan are party to:

- **SAARC Convention on Suppression of Terrorism**.
- **ICSFT and Terrorist Bombing Convention** — mandate terror criminalisation, prohibit state sponsorship.

Way Forward

- **Renew pressure** on Pakistan via: **FATF grey listing**: India will present a dossier for Pakistan's **re-inclusion** in FATF grey list. **World Bank funding blocks** for non-compliance on anti-terror laws.

• The last **ceasefire** between **India and Pakistan** was established in **December 1971**. It followed the **Karachi Agreement (1949)**, which created the **Ceasefire Line** after the **1948-49 war**. The **Simla Agreement (1972)** renamed it **LoC**. The **LoC is not an international border**, but a **holding line for both militaries**. It stretches for about **740 km**, from **Sangam in Kashmir to Point NJ-9842 near the Siachen Glacier**.

- **Hyphenation** refers to the practice of **linking two countries**, like **India and Pakistan**, in policy decisions, treating them as a **single entity**.
- **De-hyphenation** is a foreign policy approach where a country maintains **independent diplomatic ties** with **rival or hostile nations** without prioritising one over the other.
- **Red teaming** involves embedding experts who think like adversaries to **challenge military plans**. Indian Army's **REDFOR unit**, under **ARTRAC (Shimla)**, handles **wargame plan vetting** and **simulation oversight** using **paper-based or sand model exercises**. Term '**red team**' comes from wargames, where **red simulates enemy forces** and **blue represents the home side**. In India, the model is named '**Vidur Vakta**', inspired by **Mahabharat**.

Various Operations:

- **Operation Riddle (1965)** was India's military response to Pakistan's **Operation Gibraltar and Grand Slam**, targeting **Lahore and Kasur** in 1965.
- **Operation Ablaze (1965)** was a **pre-emptive mobilisation** plan by the Indian Army in 1965.
- **Operation Cactus Lily (1971)** was an **air assault during the Bangladesh Liberation War**, enabling Indian forces to **cross the Meghna River** and bypass Pakistani positions.
- **Operations Trident and Python (1971)** were **Indian Navy offensives on Karachi**, with **Trident** marking the **first use of anti-ship missiles** in the region.
- **Operation Meghdoot (1984)** was launched to **secure the Siachen Glacier**.
- **Operation Vijay (1999)** was India's operation during the **Kargil War** to **evict Pakistani intruders**.
- **Operation Safed Sagar (1999)** was the **IAF's air campaign** during the **Kargil War**, marking the **first major use of air power** in the region since 1971.
- **Operation Bandar (2019)** was India's **air strike on Balakot**, targeting **JeM camp** after the **Pulwama terror attack**.

- **Operation Brahma (2025)** was launched by India to assist **Myanmar and Thailand** after **earthquake**.
 - **Operation Sadbhav (2024)** following **Typhoon Yagi**, sending **aid to Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar** via **INS Satpura**.
 - **Operation Ajay (2023)** to **repatriate Indian citizens** from **Israel and Palestine** amid the **Israel-Hamas conflict**.
- FATF:**
- Formed in 1989 as a **G7 initiative**, It is a global watchdog for money laundering and terrorist financing, with its mandate expanded in **2001 to include terror funding**.
 - Demanding a 'grey list' status for Pakistan requires a member-led nomination and **Plenary approval**.
 - The plenary is the **decision-making body of the FATF**, which meets **three times** a year.
 - The FATF has **40 members**. **Pakistan is not a member of FATF**, but of Asia Pacific Group on Money Laundering (APG), the largest FATF-Style Regional Body. **India is a member of APG as well as of the FATF**.
 - Although **GCC is a full Member of the FATF**, five of the individual Member countries of the GCC (**Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates**) are not. **Saudi Arabia** is an FATF member since 2019.
- Misc**
- TRF designated **FTO & SDGT** by the U.S.; also named by **UN Monitoring Team**.
 - EU sanctioned **Vadinar Refinery** (with Rosneft stake), even while importing Russian oil itself.
 - China held **Pakistan-Bangladesh trilateral** in Kunming. **Lalmonirhat WW-2 airbase, Bangladesh** near Siliguri.

Sir Creek

Why in news: The **Sir Creek dispute** between **India and Pakistan** has resurfaced following reports of **Pakistani drone incursions** and increased **military activity** near the region.

- Sir Creek is a **96-km-long estuary** located between **Kutch in Gujarat (India)** and **Sindh province (Pakistan)**.
- It is a **muddy, uninhabited marshland** in the **Rann of Kutch**, flowing into the **Arabian Sea**.
- Originally called **Ban Ganga**, it was renamed Sir Creek after a British officer during the colonial period.
- During the **British period**, the region was part of the Bombay Presidency (comprising present-day Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Sindh). **Pakistan's claim:** Entire creek belongs to it, citing the 1914 Bombay Government Resolution marking the eastern bank (Green Line) as the boundary.
- **India's claim:** The boundary should follow the mid-channel (**Thalweg**) principle, supported by a 1925 map, stating that navigable waterways are divided along their deepest channel. India argues **Sir Creek is navigable during high tide**, while Pakistan disputes its navigability.
- The **boundary definition** directly affects the EEZs of both nations, maritime boundary delimitation and continental shelf rights (crucial for oil and gas exploration), Fishing rights.
- The Gulf of Kutch houses **two major Indian ports** — **Mundra and Kandla** — adding to its strategic value.
- Under the **1972 Simla Agreement**, **third-party intervention** in the dispute is **not permitted**.

ADB's Funding to Pakistan

Why in news: ADB approved **\$800 million** to Pakistan under its **Resource Mobilisation Reform Programme**.

- India pointed out that **Pakistan's tax-to-GDP ratio** fell from **13% in 2017-18 to 9.2% in 2022-23**, much lower than the **Asia-Pacific average of about 19%**. Despite this, there is **"significant increase" in Pakistan's defence spending**.
- The Asian Development Bank (ADB) was founded in 1966** and is headquartered in **Manila, Philippines**.
- Its **primary mission** is to **foster economic growth and cooperation** in the **Asia-Pacific region**.
 - ADB supports member countries through **loans, technical assistance, grants, and equity investments** to promote **social and economic development**. It funds operations through **international bond markets, member contributions, retained earnings, and loan repayments**.
 - ADB aids **developing member countries**, the **private sector**, and **public-private partnerships**, and regularly facilitates **policy dialogues** and **advisory services**.
 - It also engages in **co-financing operations** using **official, commercial, and export credit sources**.
- IMF:**
- **Established:** In **1944** at **United Nations Monetary and Financial Conference (Bretton Woods Conference)**, along with World Bank. **Bretton Woods Institutions:** IMF and World Bank are collectively referred to as such.
 - **Mandate:** Promote **global macroeconomic and financial stability**, provide **short- and medium-term loans** for balance of payments issues, and extend **technical assistance and training** for better economic policies.
 - **Membership:** **191 countries** (India is a member).
 - **Condition:** To join the **World Bank**, a country must first be a member of the **IMF**.
 - **Board of Governors:** Highest decision-making body, with **1 governor & 1 alternate governor** from each member country. **Executive Board:** 25 members oversee daily work; decisions normally by **consensus**, sometimes by vote.
 - **Voting system:** Based on **basic votes** (equally distributed) + **quota-based votes** (dependent on country's quota). **India's quota: 2.75%** (8th largest). **US quota: About 17%**.
 - **International Monetary and Financial Committee:** 25-member advisory body representing countries or groups.
 - **Headquarters:** Washington, D.C., USA. **Key Reports:** World Economic Outlook, Global Financial Stability Report.

27th Constitutional Amendment

- **27th Constitutional Amendment (2024)** creates a **Federal Constitutional Court (FCC)** and curtails the **Supreme Court’s original jurisdiction**, weakening **judicial independence** and the **separation of powers**.
- It introduced a **Chief of Defence Forces**, elevating **Field Marshal Asim Munir** as **military supremo** and **commander-in-chief of all three services**. The amendment gives him **sole control over Pakistan’s nuclear assets**.
- **IMF team**, joined by experts from the **World Bank**, initiated the **GCD in 2025**.
- **Governance and Corruption Diagnostic** was conducted at the request and with the support of the Pakistan to identify governance weaknesses and corruption vulnerabilities undermining economic performance.
- GCD took place within a 37-month \$7-billion IMF Extended Fund Facility (for countries facing serious Balance of Payments (BoP) problems due to structural economic weaknesses) approved in 2024.
- Publication of the GCD report is a precondition for the IMF executive board’s approval of disbursement.

EFF vs. Stand-By Arrangement (SBA)

| Feature | Stand-By Arrangement (SBA) | Extended Fund Facility (EFF) |
|------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Problem Type | Short-term/temporary BoP issues | Medium-term/structural BoP issues |
| Program Duration | Usually 12–24 months | Usually 3–4 years |
| Repayment Period | 3.25–5 years | 4.5–10 years |
| Focus | Macroeconomic stabilisation | Comprehensive structural reforms |

Sikh Pilgrims Visa

Nankana Sahib

- City in **Punjab, Pak**. Birthplace of **Guru Nanak Dev Ji**, the founder of Sikhism, born in **1469**.
- The city houses **Gurdwara Janam Asthan**, the main shrine built over **Guru Nanak’s birth site**.
- It was the site of **1921 massacre of Akali Sikhs** by **Mahant’s forces** at the gurdwara. This became a key moment in the **Sikh Gurdwara Reform Movement**, which sought to end **corrupt Mahant control** of Sikh shrines and led to the **Sikh Gurdwaras Act of 1925** and formal control of gurdwaras by **SGPC**.

Kartarpur Sahib Corridor

- It is a **visa-free border crossing** and religious corridor connecting **Dera Baba Nanak (India)** to **Gurdwara Darbar Sahib, Kartarpur (Pakistan)**, where **Guru Nanak Dev Ji** spent his last 18 years.
- It was inaugurated in **2019**, coinciding with the **550th birth anniversary of Guru Nanak**.
- **Kartarpur was founded by Guru Nanak in 1504**, and the gurdwara marks his **final resting place**.

Muridke – Place in News

Why in news: The **banned terror outfit LeT** is **raising funds through online and offline campaigns** to rebuild its headquarters in **Muridke**, which was **destroyed** during **Operation Sindoor**.

Operation Mahadev

- Why in news:** **Three terrorists** were killed in **Lidwas area of Srinagar** during **“Operation Mahadev”**.
- The **likely role** of these terrorists in **Pahalgam attack**, which left **26 civilians dead** is being **probed**.
 - Lidwas is situated in **upper reaches of Dachigam forest area** and is **surrounded by dense forests** on two sides.

Saudi-Pakistan Pact (SMDA)

- Why in news:** **Saudi Arabia and nuclear-armed Pakistan** have signed a **mutual defence pact** defining any attack on either nation as an **attack on both**. The pact comes in the wake of **Israel’s strike on Qatar**.
- The kingdom reportedly provided **funding for Islamabad’s nuclear weapons programme** as it developed.
 - **Pakistan’s Defence Minister** announced that the country’s **nuclear programme “will be made available” to Saudi Arabia if needed** under their **new defence pact**.
 - During **1979–1989**, **20000 Pakistani troops** were stationed in Saudi Arabia to **counter Iran and Yemen**.
 - **India** remains **Saudi Arabia’s second-largest trading partner** and a **major crude oil buyer**.
 - The **Indian diaspora** is the **largest in the Kingdom**, valued for **competence and neutrality**.

Bangladesh

Water Sharing

- Why in news:** The **India-Bangladesh Joint River Commission (JRC)** is scheduled to **meet**.
- **Bangladesh** will send a **10-member delegation** to raise concerns over **water sharing of 14 cross-border rivers**.
 - India and Bangladesh share **54 transboundary rivers**. 14 cross-border rivers here are **Raymangal, Ichamati–Kalindi, Betna–Kodialia, Bhairab–Kobadak, Mathavanga, Ganges, Pagla, Atrai, Punarbhaba, Tentulia, Tangon, Kulik (Kokil), Nagar, and Mahananda**.

- **Ganga Waters Agreement (1996) is due for renewal in 2026.** The **Ganga Waters Treaty** was signed during **Sheikh Hasina's first term in 1996**, with a **30-year validity period**. **Bangladesh** will seek **India's support** to establish a **joint flood forecasting system** for better **disaster preparedness and river management**.

India Restricts Bangladeshi Exports via Land Ports

● Seaports Permitted for Import (Bangladeshi Garments):

- **WB:** Kolkata Port (Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port)
- **Maharashtra:** Nhava Sheva Port (JNPT)

● Major Land Ports (Now Prohibited/Restricted):

- **WB:** Changrabandha, Fulbari
- **Tripura:** Agartala (Ram Nagar/Akhaura), Srimantapur, Muhurighat
- **Assam:** Sutarkandi, Dhubri, Mankachar
- **Meghalaya:** Dawki, Borsora, Gasuapara
- **Mizoram:** Kawrpuchhuah, Zorinpui, Zokhawthar

- **Key Rule:** All Bangladeshi garment imports now allowed only via Kolkata and Nhava Sheva seaports, with mandatory inspections.



Why in news: India has prohibited import of

Bangladeshi garments via all **land ports**. Exports through **land ports** in **Tripura, Assam, Meghalaya, and Mizoram** have also been **restricted** for specified goods. **Imports allowed only via Kolkata and Nhava Sheva seaports**, subject to **inspections**.

- The **Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT)** issued the directive.
- **Banned:** **Ready-made garments, fruit, juices, fruit-flavoured drinks, processed food** (baked goods, snacks). **Plastic-PVC finished goods** (except pigments, dyes, granules). **Wooden furniture, cotton yarn, and dyes**.
- **Exempted Items:** Imports of **fish, LPG, edible oil, and crushed stone**.
- **Bangladesh's reciprocal restrictions** led to action: **Banned Indian rice exports** via **Hili and Benapole ICPs** in **WB**.
- India's restrictions deny Bangladeshi goods access to **northeastern markets** & may hurt its **\$700 million exports**.
- **Bangladesh's trade with Nepal-Bhutan** via Indian transit routes remains **unaffected**.

- **Bangladesh is India's largest trade partner in South Asia**, while **India is Bangladesh's 2nd-largest trade partner in Asia**. Total bilateral trade at **USD 14.01 billion**. India has **surplus**.
- **Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Transport Project**, linking **Mizoram (Zorinpui at Myanmar border, Lawngtlai, Aizwal)-Kolkata (Kolkata/Haldia Port)-Myanmar**, has gained importance.

Restrictions on Jute from Bangladesh

Why in news: India has **banned jute imports** from Bangladesh through **land ports** on the **India-Bangladesh border**.

- **Jute from Bangladesh enjoys duty-free access** to India, but Indian jute industry has **suffered due to dumped and subsidised imports**. Indian jute sector is adversely impacted by **imports of yarn, fibre, bags** from Bangladesh.
- India had earlier imposed **anti-dumping duties** on jute from Bangladesh, but **subsidies continued**.
- **Jute is produced** in West Bengal, Bihar, Assam, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Tripura, and Meghalaya.
- **Bangladesh's exports to Nepal and Bhutan unaffected**, but **re-exports from to India will not be allowed**.
- DGFT order listed **bleached/unbleached woven fabrics of jute, twine, rope, sacks, bags of jute** as restricted items.
- (**Violent unrest** erupted in **Mymensingh, Bangladesh** following the **death of a youth leader**).

Afghanistan

Russia & Taliban

Why in news: **Russia** became the **first country to officially recognise the Taliban government** since it took power in **2021**. **China** has **not officially recognised the Taliban**, but hosts a Taliban Ambassador in Beijing.

- Contrasts sharply with **1996-2001 stance**, when Russia opposed the Taliban, aided the Northern Alliance, and backed **UN sanctions**. Taliban's support for **Chechen separatists** in 2000 deepened hostility.
- India likely to **maintain engagement without formal recognition** — trade, aid, and dialogue to continue.

Afghanistan - Malnutrition

Why in news: **Afghanistan** is witnessing **child malnutrition**, according to the **World Food Program (WFP)**. About **WFP**:

- It was **established in 1961** by the **UNGA (UN Body)** and **FAO**, with **HQ in Rome**, and won the **Nobel Peace Prize 2020** for **combating hunger as a weapon of war**.
- It is the **world's largest humanitarian agency**, aiding **120+ countries** with **emergency food, school meals, and nutrition** for **150M+ people annually**, focusing on **SDG 2 (Zero Hunger)**.
- The organisation is governed by a **36-member Executive Board** (elected (12 each by the FAO Council and ECOSOC) from five lists (A-E) representing different regions and donor statuses. India is member for 2025-27 term), relies on **voluntary funding**, partners with **FAO and IFAD**, and leads **Logistics and Food Security Clusters** in crises.

- About **two-thirds of operations** are in **conflict zones**; in the **India context**, it supports **nutrition** and **disaster response**, with links to **food security schemes like NFSA**.

India–Taliban Engagement

Why in news: Taliban's Acting Foreign Minister visited India. He is on the UN Security Council's list of banned terrorists but was granted **special travel permission**. He will be accorded **full protocol** as a visiting **Foreign Minister**.

- **India's Ambassador to Russia** attended the **Moscow Format Consultations**. It is a regional platform established by Russia in 2017 to facilitate peace & security in Afghanistan. As of 2026, there are **11 member countries** (Russia, Afghanistan (Participated as a full member for the first time at the 7th meeting in 2025), China, India, Iran, Pak, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan) and guests such as Belarus which joined as a guest in the 7th meeting.
- India will upgrade its **technical mission in Kabul** to a **full Embassy**. Both sides will **exchange diplomats**, taking India a step closer to **recognising the Taliban government**. India had **closed its Embassy in 2021** after the **U.S.-led withdrawal**.
- **India–Afghanistan trade** crossed **\$1 billion**. It was assured that **Afghan territory will not be used against India**. India has announced **1,000 e-scholarships** for students through the **Indian Council of Cultural Relations**.
- India raised the need for **effective use of Iran's Chabahar port**, establishing **dry ports in Nimruz** (Afghan province situated at a tri-junction, bordering Iran (west) and Pakistan (south)) and **facilitating import and export processes at Nhava Sheva port** in Mumbai.
- Nimruz known for Helmand River, Hamun-e Saberi Lake and Kamal Khan Dam.
- **Delaram–Zaranj Highway:** Built by **BRO** in 2009. Connects the capital Zaranj to Delaram. Gateway for Indian trade to Central Asia. Links Chabahar to Afghanistan's Garland Highway, allowing trade to bypass Pakistan.

Afghanistan–Pakistan Tensions

- **Pakistan conducted airstrikes** on targets in **Kabul**, prompting **Afghan retaliation across the Durand Line**.
- **Kabul may be the first city in the world to completely run dry by 2030**. **Years of war** have taken their toll on projects.
- India's reiteration of an earlier offer to build the **Shahtoot dam on the Kabul river** will cause **alarm in Pakistan**, given a **reported drop of 16% in flows**. **Kabul river is a part of the Indus river system**.

China

Border History

- The border was the product of **Manchu and British empires** and was not precise.
- After Independence, India insisted for border based on **British-era maps**, without actual control on the ground.
- China built a **highway through Aksai Chin** to connect Xinjiang with Tibet and occupied it.
- India established control over **Tawang** based on the **1914 McMahon Line** agreement with Tibet.
- In 1959, China proposed LAC; in 1960, Zhou Enlai proposed a **territorial swap** (Aksai Chin for Arunachal Pradesh). India refused, leading to the **1962 war**. China withdrew in the east but **retained areas in Ladakh**.
- Clashes occurred at **Nathu La and Cho La (1967)**, and Chinese protests followed India's **integration of Sikkim (1975)**.
- In 1986, the **Wangdung crisis** led to **Operation Falcon**, with India forward-deploying forces, surprising China.
- **Trade Relations:** India emphasised reducing the **\$100 billion trade deficit**.
- Beijing's **Tiananmen Square** hosted **Chinese Military Parade** recently marking **80 years since the end of WW2**.
- The parade displayed **advanced Chinese weaponry**, including the **DF-5C ICBM with a 20,000 km range and DF-61 or Weapon-61**, along with drones and missiles, showcasing rapid weapons development.

Border Wing Home Guards

Why in news: MHA is considering raising BWHG along **China border**, similar to those deployed along **Pakistan border**.

- BWHGs are **drawn from the civilian population** living in **border areas** and act as **ancillary forces** to **border guarding forces** and the **Indian Army** during **emergencies**.
- **Seven States** are authorised to have BWHGs — **Meghalaya, Tripura, Assam, West Bengal, Punjab, Rajasthan, and Gujarat**. Currently, BWHGs are **operational only in Rajasthan**, where their **utility was realised during Operation Sindoor** for **information collection and dissemination** among border residents.
- **25% of training and financial costs** are borne by the **Government of India**.
- **Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP)** guards the **3,488-km border with China**. **26 out of 65 patrolling points in eastern Ladakh** have **not been patrolled by Indian troops since 2020**. These **unpatrolled areas** have been converted into **"buffer zones"**, with both **Indian and Chinese troops refraining from entering**.

Mansarovar Yatra

Why in news: In 2025, India and China mark **75 years of diplomatic engagement**. Mount Kailash and Mansarovar Lake lie in the **Tibet**.

- The **pilgrimage marks first resumption** since the **2020 LAC standoff**.
- The **yatra happens for only three months**.

- In 2015, the **Nathu La Pass (Sikkim)** route was added to the **Lipulekh Pass (Uttarakhand)** route.

About Mansarovar Lake:

- Located at **~4,600 meters elevation** near **Mount Kailash** in **Tibet**.
- It is one of the **world's highest freshwater lakes**.
- Believed to be created by **Lord Brahma**; considered **sacred for rituals and pilgrimages**.
- **Associated with the origins of major rivers:** Indus, Sutlej, Brahmaputra, Karnali.

More

- India to **restart issuing tourist visas for Chinese nationals**.
- **China's export restrictions** on fertilizers and critical minerals are affecting India's **technology sector** and worrying **Japanese and S.Korean automotive firms** in India over supply chain disruptions.

- There are **two primary routes** to reach **Lake Mansarovar** – **Lipulekh Pass route** and **Nathu La Pass route**.
- **Lipulekh Pass** lies at **5,115m** on the **Uttarakhand–Tibet border**, near the **trijunction with Nepal**, and has been an **ancient passageway** for **traders and pilgrims**. It is the **most direct**, with the lake about **50 km** from the border, but involves **200 km of hard trekking**; operational since **1981**. **Lipulekh** lies in the **contested Kalapani–Lipulekh–Limpiyadhura region claimed by Nepal**.
- **Nathu La Pass** lies at **4,310m** on the **Sikkim–Tibet border** and is one of two ancient passes (the other being **Jelep La**) connecting **Sikkim and Tibet**. It is around **1,500 km** long but **fully motorable**, requiring only **35–40 km** trekking for Mount Kailash circumambulation; it became operational in 2015.
- **No private operators** run services on the two official routes, but a **third route through Nepal** exists where private companies operate. Nepal route has been accessible to Indians since 2023 after China reopened its border, but visa and permit hurdles and high China-imposed fees mean few pilgrims use it.

Highest Freshwater Lakes by Elevation:

- **Ojos del Salado Crater Lake (Argentina/Chile):** 6,390 m (20,965 ft), on the eastern face of the world's highest active volcano, this small crater lake (approx. 100m in diameter). While the mountain's name means "Salty Eyes," the summit pool is often described as fresh or meltwater-fed.
- **Lhagba Pool (Tibet, China):** 6,368 m (20,892 ft), north of Mount Everest. However, satellite data in the last decade has indicated it may have dried out, leading some sources to classify it as extinct.
- **Changtse Pool (Tibet, China):** 6,216 m (20,394 ft), formed from meltwater of the Changtse Glacier near Mount Everest, its existence is often temporary and subject to seasonal changes.

China – Pak

Why in news: 81% of Pakistan's military hardware in last 5 years came from China.

Dalai Lama Succession

Why in news: The **14th Dalai Lama** in Dharamshala asserted that the succession plan will be decided by a **trust**, not by the **Chinese government**.

- **Gaden Phodrang Trust**, set up in **2011**, will have **exclusive authority** over succession. It will follow **traditional procedures**, consulting Tibetan Buddhist heads and **oath-bound Dharma Protectors**, tracing back to **1411**.
- The term **Gaden Phodrang Labrang** originates from the **5th Dalai Lama**, who established it as Tibet's government.
- **Gaden Phodrang Trust:** Based in Dharamshala, India. **The Dalai Lama Trust:** Headquartered in New Delhi, India. This is a charitable organization founded in 2009 to support the welfare of the Tibetan people. **Gaden Phodrang Foundation of the Dalai Lama:** Headquartered in Zurich, Switzerland & supports the spiritual duties of the Dalai Lama.
- The successor is believed to be **reborn** from the current Dalai Lama, recognised through **traditional methods**. In *Voice for the Voiceless*, he wrote the next Dalai Lama should be born in the **"free world"**, i.e., outside **China**.
- China insists that any succession must be **approved by Beijing**, citing its **2007 Tibetan law** and the **Qing dynasty Golden Urn** tradition. India has hosted the Dalai Lama and the **Tibetan Government-in-Exile** since 1959.
- China uses cultural claims, like over **Tawang** (birthplace of the **6th Dalai Lama**), to strengthen **territorial claims**.
- Investments in **Lumbini (Nepal)** and influence in **Bhutan** expand Beijing's Buddhist footprint.

- **Dalai Lama institution** is part of the **tulku concept** in **Tibetan Buddhism**, where spiritual masters are **reincarnated** to continue their teachings. The **first Dalai Lama, Gedun Drupa**, was born in **1391**.
- From **Lobsang Gyatso (1617–82)**, the **fifth Dalai Lama**, the role combined **spiritual and political leadership**.
- The **14th Dalai Lama** was found in **1939**, six years after the **13th Dalai Lama Thupten Gyatso** died in **1933**.
- In **1940**, the young reincarnation was taken to **Potala Palace in Lhasa** and **enthroned**.
- The **"Golden Urn method"**, a **draw of lots**, was institutionalised to select the Dalai Lama.

Panchsheel Agreement:

- The **Panchsheel Agreement**, formally known as **The Agreement on Trade and Intercourse with Tibet Region**, was signed in **1954** & laid 5 guiding principles: Mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty, Mutual non-aggression, Mutual non-interference, Equality and mutual benefit, and Peaceful co-existence.
- Importantly, India for the **first time recognised Tibet** as the **Tibet Region of China**.

India–Taiwan:

- India has relations with Taiwan focusing on **economic, technological, and cultural ties**.

- India acknowledges the "One China" policy but does not explicitly reaffirm it since 2010 and maintains unofficial ties with Taiwan via representative offices. There are no formal diplomatic ties with Taiwan.

China Population

Why in news: China will offer **subsidies of \$500 per child per year** for children under the age of three.

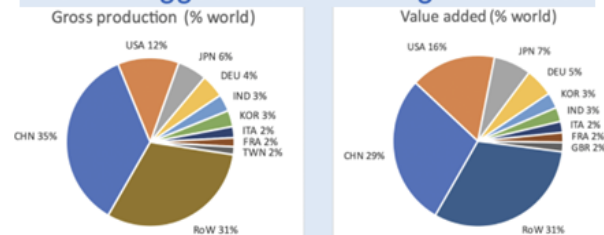
- China's **population** has declined for **three consecutive years**.
- UN models** predict China's population could fall from **1.4 billion** today to **800 million by 2100**.
- There were only **9.54 million births** in China last year, half the number recorded in **2016** when the **one-child policy** ended. China's population **declined by 1.39 million** last year.

China Trade Barriers

Why in news: Over **300 Chinese engineers** exited Foxconn's iPhone 17 plants in **Tamil Nadu and Karnataka**, seen as **Chinese ploy** to stall India's **electronics manufacturing**.

- Export curbs** on **rare earths (gallium, germanium, graphite, magnets)** and **capital equipment** → slows India's EV, solar, electronics sectors.
- U.S. imposed **50% tariffs on India**, while giving China a **90-day exemption** despite higher Russian oil purchases.

World's biggest manufacturing economies



China Policing Network

Why in news: China announced the deployment of an **eight-member police team to Croatia** for a "joint patrol mission".

- Joint patrols also with **Serbia, Italy, and Hungary**. (Serbia: patrols in **2019, 2023, 2024**. Hungary: **Chinese police service centres** established. Italy: **suspended joint patrols** due to concerns over "service centres".)

Debt Trap – Chequebook Diplomacy

- China lent more than \$2 trillion in loans and grants to over 80% of countries and regions in 2000–23.
- U.S. was the biggest beneficiary**. Entities in **Russia and Australia** were **second and third biggest**.
- China is **moving away from its role as an aid provider to relatively poorer nations**, as its focus has shifted towards **commercial lending for developed countries**. China's initial focus was on infrastructural development projects in economically disadvantaged nations via BRI (2013).
- BRI once made up 75% of China's lending operations, it now makes up about 25%**.
- China is one of the **top three trading partners for 157 countries and regions**, including India.
- Contributing approx **30% to global economic growth**, China remains an **engine for the world economy**.
- In **2024**, **bilateral trade** reached **\$138.46 billion**. Indian entities have borrowed or were granted **\$11.1 billion** from China, with a large amount of this dedicated to the **energy sector** and **banking and financial services**.
- China Merchants Port Holdings** holds an **85% stake in Hambantota International Port Group (HIPG)** and secured a **99-year lease on Hambantota Port in 2017**.

Colombia Joins BRI

Why in news: Colombia formally joined China's BRI.

- China has surpassed the **U.S.** as the **largest trading partner** of **Brazil, Peru, Chile**, and other Latin American nations. Currently, **two-thirds of Latin American countries** have signed up for **China's BRI**.

Xinjiang to Tibet Railway

Why in news: China established Xinjiang–Xizang Railway Co Ltd.

- Will connect **Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region** (northwest) with **Tibet/Xizang Autonomous Region**(south).
- To run close to the **LAC**. Route: **Hotan (Xinjiang) → Shigatse → Lhasa (Xizang)**. Part of **five planned railway corridors** into Tibet.
- Military mobility:** facilitates **troop mobilisation & movement of defence equipment**, esp. in **Xinjiang deserts**.
- Linked to China's "**Go West**" strategy (2000) for western region development. Populations: **Muslim Uyghurs** (Xinjiang) & **Buddhist Tibetans** (Tibet).
- Railway may pass through **Aksai Chin** (disputed territory with India).

- Xinjiang** is an **autonomous region within China**, the **largest region**, rich in **minerals**, and shares borders with **eight countries** (Afghanistan, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, Russia, Tajikistan). Xinjiang's **Uighurs** are **Muslim**, do not speak **Mandarin** as their native language, and have a **distinct ethnicity and culture**.
- China has begun construction of a **massive dam** on the **Brahmaputra** near **Arunachal Pradesh**. The dam on

Yarlung Zangbo is being built at the "Great Bend" in Medog county, before the river enters India at Gelling, Arunachal Pradesh, where it is called the Siang.

Maldives

SAGAR & MAHASAGAR

Why in news: India–Maldives economic and maritime security partnership was reviewed.

- PM Modi's attendance at Maldives' 60th Independence Day marks a major shift after ties soured since 2023.
- \$750 million currency swap agreement (valid till 2027) signed. FTA negotiations launched.
- UPI-based digital payments cooperation expanded to Maldives. Rupee–Rufiyaa digital payments system introduced.

MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions):

- India's expanded strategic vision, launched in 2025. Builds on the SAGAR policy.
- Focus: Security, trade, development cooperation, maritime partnerships.
- Scope: Across the Global South, including Africa, Latin America, Indo-Pacific.
- Aim: Promote India-led cooperation and counterbalance China's influence.

SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region):

- Launched in 2015 as India's maritime policy. Focused on the Indian Ocean Region.
- Emphasizes maritime security, economic integration, sustainable development, regional stability.
- Aim: Ensure safe seas and foster blue economy among littoral states.

- Maldives' proximity to the west coast of India (barely 70 nautical miles from Minicoy and 300 nautical miles from India's West coast) imbues it with significant strategic importance to India.
- Its location at the hub of commercial sea-lanes running through the Indian Ocean (particularly the 8° N and 1 ½° N channels) increases its strategic value.
- New terminal inaugurated at Velana International Airport on Independence Day.
- Tourism contribution: ~21% of GDP. Top source markets: China, Europe. External debt exceeds \$8 billion.

Sri Lanka

Starlink – Third in South Asia

Why in news: Starlink, SpaceX-operated satellite Internet, is now available in Sri Lanka after Bhutan and Bangladesh.

- In India, Starlink has received GMPCS authorisation. However, it still requires orbital slot assignments from IN-SPACE and spectrum allocation from the Department of Telecommunications.

Sri Lankan Tamil Refugees

Why in news: MHA exempted Sri Lankan Tamil refugees who entered India before January 9, 2015 from penal provisions under the Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025.

- Exemption applies to lack of valid passport, visa, or travel documents.
- Registered Sri Lankan Tamils will not be treated as illegal migrants.

Legal Background

- India does not officially recognise refugees, but extends administrative protection to select groups.
- Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025 penalises undocumented entry or stay with fine up to ₹5 lakh, imprisonment up to 5 years, or both. In immigration and Foreigners (Exemption) Order, 2025 Section 3 (1), (2), (3) requirements relating to passport, visa, travel documents will not apply.
- Covers Indian citizens (specified categories), Nepalese, Bhutanese, Tibetan refugees, six minorities, Sri Lankan Tamils.

Extension to Other Groups

- Order also exempts undocumented 6 minority communities: Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, Christians.
- Applies to migrants from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan who entered before December 31, 2024.
- Intended to facilitate Long-Term Visas (LTVs), a precursor to citizenship.

Clarification on Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019

- Government clarified CAA cut-off date (December 31, 2014) is not extended to December 31, 2024.
- CAA, 2019 grants citizenship only to eligible minorities who entered on or before December 31, 2014.
- 2025 exemption prevents penal action or deportation but does not grant citizenship.

Citizenship by Naturalisation

- Under Citizenship Act, 1955, citizenship by naturalisation requires 11 years of residence in total.
- Exempted migrants may apply later through normal naturalisation route.
- 2021 MHA: Any foreigner, including Sri Lankan citizens, may acquire citizenship by registration or naturalisation under Citizenship Act, 1955 and Rules.

Ineligibility of Sri Lankan Tamils for Long-Term Visas

- Sri Lankan Tamil refugees are not eligible for Long-Term Visas (LTVs).
- Order removes "illegal migrant" label but does not create a citizenship pathway. LTVs are issued for 1–5 years and considered a precursor to citizenship. Sri Lankan Tamils remain excluded despite exemption.

Fishing Troubles

- The practice involves **bottom trawling**, which **damages coral beds**, shrimps' habitats, and **depletes fish stocks**.
- **IMBL (International Maritime Boundary Line)**
- Defined by two bilateral agreements in 1974 (Palk Bay) and 1976 (Gulf of Mannar & Bay of Bengal).
- **Katchatheevu**: A 285-acre uninhabited island near **Delft Island (Sri Lanka)** ceded by India to Sri Lanka in 1974.
- Agreements placed **Katchatheevu under Sri Lankan sovereignty** through the IMBL. In return, India secured rights over **Wadge Bank** near **Kanniyakumari**, rich in **marine resources**.
- **Rights**: While the 1974 pact allowed Indian fishermen to dry nets on Katchatheevu, the 1976 agreement prohibits fishing in each other's EEZ. Core issue is **bottom trawling** by **Tamil Nadu fishermen**, viewed as **destructive**.

Palk Bay

- **Semi-enclosed** shallow water body between Tamil Nadu (India) and the Northern Province (Sri Lanka).
- Connects to the Gulf of Mannar via Adam's Bridge (**Rama Setu**).
- **Major Ports**: Rameswaram (India), Kankesanthurai (Sri Lanka).



Operation Sagar Bandhu

- India launched "**Operation Sagar Bandhu**" to assist **Sri Lanka** in its hour of crisis, with the first tranche of relief materials transported by **INS Vikrant**, **INS Sukanya** and **INS Udaygiri**.
- **INS Vikrant**, India's first indigenous aircraft carrier, and **INS Udaygiri**, the latest indigenous stealth frigate, are in Sri Lanka to participate in a **three-day International Fleet Review**.
- **Navy** has deployed **four additional ships**: **INS Gharial**, **LCU 54**, **LCU 51** and **LCU 57** to deliver **relief material**.

Bhutan

GPPF Visit

- **Punatsangchu II hydroelectric project** (Sankosh River) inaugurated. Was constructed as a venture between the G and Bhutan, with **India providing the initial capital**. The capital is **paid off by the project** through income generated from the **sale of electricity to India**, with rates competitive but **adjusted periodically**.
- India is grateful to Bhutan for **Operation All Clear** in 2003, where the **RBA drove out several hundred Indian insurgent group cadres** sheltering in Bhutan.

Bhutan-India Rail Link

Why in news: The Centre announced **two new rail links** between **India and Bhutan** with a **total distance of 89 km**.

- The routes are **Kokrajhar-Gelephu (Assam)** and **Banarhat-Samtse (West Bengal)**.
- These are the **first rail connectivity projects** between **India and Bhutan**.
- **India is Bhutan's largest trading partner**, and most of **Bhutan's EXIM trade** passes through **Indian ports**.
- **Bhutan** will also benefit from the **Jogighopha Inland Waterways Transport Terminal (Assam)**. The two nations have collaborated on **five major hydropower projects** — Chukha, Tala, Mangdechhu, Kurichhu, and Punatsangchu II.

Nepal

Transit Treaty

- **India and Nepal** have amended the **Treaty of Transit** to facilitate **rail-based freight movement** between **Jogbani (India)** and **Biratnagar (Nepal)**. The amendment covers the movement of **bulk cargo**.

Gen Z Protests

Why in news: **Gen Z protests** erupted in Nepal followed by the **resignation of PM K.P. Oli**. Protesters torched **Parliament**, releasing prisoners from **Nakkhu Central Jail**.

- Since **1990**, Nepal has seen **30 government changes** and **13 Prime Ministers**, none completing a full term.
- Classified as a **least developed country** by the UN. Economy heavily **dependent on remittances**.
- **Unemployment**: Overall 12.5%. **Male out-migration**: 56% of absentees are Youth.
- **Households receiving remittances**: 23.4% (1995-96) → 76.8% (2022-23).
- **Share of income**: 26.6% → 33% in same period. **Destinations**: Qatar (10%), Saudi (9%), Malaysia (8.6%), UAE (7.1%).
- **Remittances as % of GDP**: 1% (1990) → 33% (2024). Nepal is **4th most remittance-dependent country** globally.

Related News 1: The government of French PM François Bayrou collapsed after just **nine months in office**, reflecting **chronic political instability** in France. Bayrou called to push for austerity measures to tackle **France's ballooning debt and deficit**. France has now seen **four prime ministers in 20 months**, with a fifth expected soon.

Related news 2: Nepal President appointed former Chief Justice Sushila Karki as the country's **new PM**, announcing **fresh elections on March 5, 2026**. Sushila Karki is **Nepal's first woman Chief Justice** and now its **first woman PM**.

South Asia

SAFTA & NAFTA

- **SAFTA intraregional trade** is **5–7%** of total international trade, compared to **EU (45%), ASEAN (22%), NAFTA (25%)**.
- Current **SAARC trade (\$23 billion)** falls far short of its **\$67 billion estimated potential**.
- **GDP of South Asia (\$5 trillion)** is underwhelming compared to **EU (\$18 trillion)** and **NAFTA (\$24.8 trillion)** despite having **25% of the world's population**.
- **India–Pakistan trade** declined from **\$2.41 billion (2018)** to **\$1.2 billion (2024)**.
- **South Asia's trade-to-GDP ratio** fell from **47.3% (2022)** to **42.94% (2024)**.
- **Intraregional trade cost: 114% of the value of goods** – higher than trade with the U.S. (109%) or Brazil (despite 22x distance). **Intra-ASEAN trade costs (76%)** show more efficient frameworks.

SAFTA (South Asian Free Trade Area)

- **2026 Members:** Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka. Afghanistan joined in 2017. All others are **founding** members.
- **Observers:** Australia, China, European Union, Iran, Japan, Mauritius, Myanmar, Republic of Korea, USA.
- A **trade agreement** among **SAARC countries. Signed in 2004, effective from 2006**.
- The **first SAARC summit** was held in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on December 7–8, 1985. The **last SAARC summit** to date was the 18th summit, held in Kathmandu, Nepal, on November 26–27, 2014.

NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement)

- A **trade pact** between **United States, Canada, and Mexico. Established in 1994. Replaced by USMCA in 2020**.
- Objective: **eliminate tariffs & trade barriers, enhance economic integration in North America**.

East and South East Asia

Mongolia

India – Security Programme

Why in news: India will start a new programme to build capacity for the border security forces of Mongolia. The announcement was made during the visit of **Mongolian President** to India.

- Holy relics of Lord Buddha's two leading disciples — **Sariputra and Maudgalyayana** — **will be sent to Mongolia**.
- India announced the **introduction of free e-visas for Mongolian citizens** to enhance bilateral exchanges.
- **India and Mongolia already conduct joint defence exercises (Nomadic Elephant)** is the flagship bilateral exercise between the two nations, held annually since 2004. 17th edition was conducted in 2025, in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, focusing on counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency operations in semi-urban and mountainous terrain under a UN mandate. India participates in **Khaan Quest** multinational peacekeeping exercise hosted by Mongolia. The 22nd edition took place in 2025, with Indian Army personnel participating alongside over 20 other nations).

Myanmar

Chin

Why in news: A **battle between two ethnic armed groups in Myanmar** has forced around **4,000 Chin people** to take refuge in **Mizoram**. The **Tiau river demarcates part of the 510-km India–Myanmar border**.

- The **Chins of Myanmar** and the **Mizos of Mizoram** belong to the **greater Zo community**, which also includes **Kukis, Zomis, Hmars, and Kuki-Chins (Bangladesh)**.

About Tiau River:

- **Tiau River (Tyao/Tio River)** originates in the **Mizo Hills** and forms an **international boundary** between **Mizoram and Myanmar (Chin State)** for about **159 km**.
- It **flows southward** through **forests and Mizo villages**, merging with the **Tuipui River**, vital for **agriculture, fishing, and biodiversity** including **hornbills and gibbons**.
- The river features a **border crossing** at **Zokhawthar–Rikhawdar** with a **bridge**, enabling **trade and connectivity**.

Policy on Myanmar

Why in News: Myanmar's military junta has **ended the state of emergency** imposed since the **2021 coup**, announcing elections in **December 2025**.

- **Since 2021 coup:** Junta seized power from Aung San Suu Kyi's elected government.
 - **Resistance** led by **pro-democracy fighters, ethnic armed groups, civilian militias**.
 - **China's position:** Welcomed junta's announcement.
 - **India** maintains **formal ties with the junta**, with limited outreach to pro-democracy forces.
 - Reports show Indian state firms supplying **equipment, navigation parts, diesel** to junta.
 - In India, the **Citizenship Act, 1955** defines an **illegal immigrant**, but there is **no definition of refugee**.
 - The **UN Refugee Convention, 1951** defines refugees as those fleeing due to well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, social group, or political opinion. The Convention obligates states to protect refugees and provide minimum standards of care. It has 149 signatories, but India is not a signatory.
 - India has **no national refugee law** and does not legally **distinguish refugees from other foreign nationals**.
 - **Illegal immigrant (Citizenship Act, 1955):** Foreigner entering without valid documents or overstaying beyond expiry → ineligible for **citizenship**.
 - **Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019** excluded **Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis, Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan** (entered before **Dec 31, 2014**) from being illegal migrants.
 - **Rohingya** are treated as **illegal migrants** and cannot apply for **Indian citizenship**.
 - **World Refugee Day** observed on **20 June**, first marked in **2001** on the **50th anniversary of 1951 Refugee Convention**. Originally **Africa Refugee Day**, renamed by **UNGA in 2000**. **Theme 2025: "Solidarity with Refugees"**, calling for **meaningful action beyond words**.
- About Junta:**
- The word **junta** originates from **Spanish**, meaning **"meeting" or "committee"**, used in **16th-Century Spain** for government advisory committees.
- Karen National Union (KNU):**
- **Myanmar's military government** designated ethnic group **KNU a terrorist organisation**.

Stakeholders Involved

- After the **2021 coup**, the **Myanmar military (Tatmadaw/Junta)** promised to hold **elections**.
- The coup prompted **resistance movement** led by the **People's Defence Forces** and **Ethnic Armed Organisation**.
- In **Rakhine**, **Arakan Army** controls **large areas**. **Tatmadaw** holds **urban centres** such as the **Sittwe port**.
- **Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project** connects Kolkata to Sittwe by sea, and then to Mizoram by river and road & provides an alternative route to India's North-East, bypassing the narrow Siliguri Corridor.
- **Route: Sea:** Kolkata to Sittwe Port. **Inland Waterway:** Sittwe to Paletwa via the Kaladan River. **Road:** Paletwa to Zorinpui (Indo-Myanmar border in Mizoram).
- Operationally inaugurated in May 2023 with the first cargo ship from Kolkata. Fully financed by Gol.
- **Kaladan River** (originates in Mizoram as the Chhimtui pui). Links the Bay of Bengal with landlocked North-East. Acts as a counter to China's **Kyaukpyu Port** located further south in Rakhine State.

Philippines

Strategic Partnership

- Why in News:** Philippines President paid his **first state visit to India** since taking office in **2022**, leading to the elevation of **India-Philippines ties to a Strategic Partnership**. The visit also marked the first by a Philippine President since **1976**.
- Signed **Strategic Partnership Agreement**. Cooperation expanded across **all 3 armed services and Coast Guard**.
 - Only **fifth country** (after Japan, Vietnam, Australia, South Korea) to become Philippines's **Strategic Partner**.
 - **BrahMos missile:** Philippines was the **first export destination**.
 - **Naval cooperation:** Three Indian naval ships + hydrography vessel joined first-ever **naval exercise in Philippines (maritime partnership exercise)**.
 - Philippines to chair **ASEAN in 2026**; currently coordinator for **ASEAN-India Comprehensive Strategic Partnership**.
 - Announcement of **Preferential Trade Agreement** negotiations. **Direct flights** to be launched.

Indonesia

Indonesia Protests

Why in news: What started as a **peaceful protest** against **Parliament members** turned into **violent riots**.

- **Trigger:** Opposition to the **housing allowance** for legislators.
- **Oxfam report:** Indonesia ranks **sixth globally** in wealth inequality.

BrahMos Deal

- Defence Ministers co-chaired the **third India-Indonesia Defence Ministers' Dialogue** in New Delhi.

- Both sides made **notable progress on the proposed BrahMos supersonic missile deal**.
- Ministers recalled Indonesian President’s visit as **Chief Guest for Republic Day**, noting the **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership** & alignment between the **ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific** and **India’s Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative**, agreeing to intensify collaboration through **IORA**, where India holds the chair.

- **BrahMos** is ‘**fire-and-forget**’ type supersonic cruise missile that has proved its capabilities in **land-based, ship-based, air launched and submarine-based versions**.
- The versions of the **BrahMos** that are currently being tested at an **extended range** can hit targets at upto **350 kilometres**, as compared to its **original range of 290 kilometres**. Even higher ranges of upto **800 kilometres**, and **hypersonic speed** or **five times the speed of sound**, are said to be on the cards.
- It is built by **BrahMos Aerospace**, a **joint venture** between **DRDO** and Russia’s **NPO Mashinostroyeniya**.
- **Cruise missiles**, like the **BrahMos**, come under the category known as the “**stand-off range weapons**”, which are fired from a range sufficient to allow the attacker to **evade defensive fire from the adversary**.
- **Ballistic missiles** use **projectile motion** to deliver warheads to a target. They are powered for a **relatively brief time**, after which they let the **laws of physics** take them to their target.
- The **cruise missiles** fly at a **low distance from the ground** while the **ballistic missiles** follow a **parabolic trajectory**.
- **Ballistic missiles** are **easier to track** since they have a **standard parabolic trajectory**, as compared to **cruise missiles** which can **fox air defence systems** due to their **manoeuvrability**.

IPOI

- Announced by PM Modi at the 14th East Asia Summit (Bangkok) in 2019.
- Extension of India’s SAGAR. **7 Pillars:** Maritime Security by India. Maritime Ecology by Australia. Maritime Resources by France and Indonesia. Capacity Building & Resource Sharing by Germany. Disaster Risk Reduction by Bangladesh & India. Science, Tech & Academic Cooperation: Open for leadership. Trade, Connectivity & Maritime Transport by Japan and Italy.

IORA (Indian Ocean Rim Association)

- **Established:** 1997 (via the Mauritius Declaration). **HQ:** Ebene, Mauritius. **Members:** 23 countries bordering the Indian Ocean. **France** joined in 2020 (via its territory Réunion), making it the first non-coastal but resident nation. **Dialogue Partners:** 12 countries (including USA, China, Japan, and most recently Saudi Arabia in 2023).

Singapore

Singapore PM Visits India

Why in news: **60th anniversary** of diplomatic relations between **India-Singapore** marked with celebratory activities.

- **Singapore** is **India’s largest trading partner within ASEAN** and **sixth-largest globally**.
- Since **2000**, **Singapore** has emerged as a **leading source of FDI** into India. It has contributed a **cumulative FDI inflow of USD 160 billion** to India.
- Both leaders will inaugurate **Phase 2 of PSA Mumbai (Bharat Mumbai Container Terminal)**.
- **In 2024**, ties upgraded to **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership**.
- Visit follows **3rd India-Singapore Ministerial Roundtable** held in Delhi. **ISMR structured along 6 pillars:** advanced manufacturing, connectivity, digitisation, healthcare & medicine, skill development, and sustainability.

- **Singapore** acknowledged India’s plans to patrol the strategic **Malacca Straits** during talks between **both the PM’s**. The **Malacca Straits** are currently patrolled by **Malaysia, Indonesia, Thailand, and Singapore**.

Japan

Japan-China-Taiwan

- **Japan’s post-war Constitution** forbids using **force** to settle **international disputes**, but a **2015 law** permits **collective self-defence** in certain situations.
- Japan faces a **long-term fertility crisis**, with **population growth turning negative since 2011**.

• **China** is **Japan’s largest trading partner**. **China** accounted for **20%** of **Japan’s imports and exports** each between **2018 and 2024**.

• **Japanese manufacturers** rely heavily on **Chinese critical materials**. **China** provides **60%** of **Japan’s rare earths**.
• **Taiwan** is a **vital trading partner** for **Japan**, especially for **critical technology**.

Rare earth oxides are used as tracers to determine which parts of a watershed are eroding. WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

- Develop technologies, bolster investments into equipment that could cut the use of rare earths
- Work on technologies to use alternative materials

- Push the recycling of rare earths through investment support in recycling facilities, as well as through development of more efficient recycling technologies

- Develop mines and acquire interests in rare earth mines in Australia and other places. The capacity of providing loan guarantees and equity investments by government-affiliated organ-

isations for such activities was beefed up

- Commence stockpiling rare earths, in addition to the policy framework to ensure reserves of critical minerals.

- **Rare earths** are a subset of **critical minerals**, comprising **17 metallic elements** from **lanthanum (57)** to **lutetium (71)**, plus **scandium (21)** and **yttrium (39)**.
- These elements have **high density, high melting point, high conductivity, and high thermal conductance**, and are classified as **heavy or light** based on **atomic weight**.

- They are crucial inputs, often in **trace volumes**, across products ranging from **weapons platforms** and **electronics** (flat screen TVs, smartphones) to **wind turbines, robotics, EVs, MRI scanners, and cancer treatment devices**.
- **India imported 2,270 tonnes of rare earth elements in 2023–24**, up **23%** from **1,848 tonnes in 2019–20**. Imports from **China** accounted for **65%**, and **10%** came from **Hong Kong**.

India–Japan Ties

Why in News: PM Modi visited Japan for the 15th Annual Summit.

- Japan is India's **5th-largest FDI source**.
- MoC on **semiconductor supply chain partnership** reaffirmed. **Aim:** Build robust, resilient, and trusted supply chains.
- **Shinkansen project (2017):** Transfer of **E10 high-speed rail technology** for Mumbai–Ahmedabad corridor.
- **2035 Vision Statement** released, updating the 2025 Modi–Abe Vision.
- **Indian diaspora in Japan** (approx. 54,000 members).
- **Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) with Japan** for the **Joint Crediting Mechanism (JCM)**, an initiative aimed at promoting **low-carbon technologies** and reducing **greenhouse gas emissions**.

Joint Crediting Mechanism (JCM)

- Allows Japan to invest in **low-carbon technologies** in **developing countries**, with the resulting **emission savings** credited to **Japan's account** as **carbon credits** to meet its **emissions-reduction targets** under the **Paris Agreement**.
- The **JCM** will encourage **investment flow, technology assistance**, contribute to **GHG reduction** in India.
- It also allows for the **international trading of carbon credits** under **Article 6.2 of the Paris Agreement**, with Japan and potentially other countries, **without affecting India's NDCs**.
- **Ministry of Environment** has established the **National Designated Authority** as the nodal agency for approving JCM projects and evaluating **emission reductions**.

India's NDC Commitments

- Reduce **emission intensity by 45%** by 2030 (compared to 2005 levels).
- Achieve **50% of total electricity capacity** from **non-fossil fuel sources** by 2030.
- Create an additional **carbon sink of 2.5–3 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent** through **afforestation** by 2030.

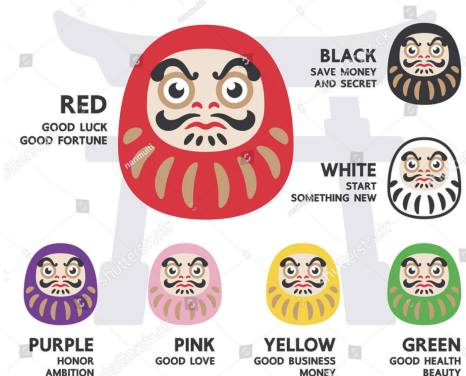
India–Japan Mobility Ties

- Japan ranks **34th** among countries where **Indian students** pursue higher education. Only about **1,500 Indian students** are currently registered in Japan, a small fraction of the **more than 3.3 lakh foreign students** in the country.
- Only about **54,000 Indians** work in Japan, compared to **2.3 lakh Nepali citizens** among **23 lakh foreign workers**.

Daruma Doll:

- **PM Modi** was presented with a **traditional Daruma doll** during his visit to the **Shorinzan Daruma–Ji Temple** in **Kitakatsuragi, Japan**.
- **Daruma** is a **traditional Japanese wish doll**, typically made of **papier-mâché**, modelled after **Bodhidharma**, the 5th-century **founder of Zen Buddhism**.
- The doll is a **symbol of perseverance and good luck**.
- Its **rounded bottom** allows it to **pop back up when tipped**, reflecting proverb **'Nana korobi ya oki'**—"fall seven times, get up eight."
- **Daruma** symbolises **meditation of Bodhidharma**, an **Indian monk from Kanchipuram**, known in Japan as **Daruma Daishi**, who meditated in a cave in **Henan Province, China**, after travelling from India.
- **"Daruma"** is derived from the **Sanskrit word Dharma**, with **no direct equivalent in Japanese or Chinese**.
- **Shorinzan Darumaji Temple** in **Takasaki, Gunma**, built in **1697**, is considered the **place of origin of Daruma**.

THE COLOURS OF DARUMA DOLL



- India's **Act East Policy** and **Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI)** align with Japan's **Free and Open Indo-Pacific (FOIP)** vision. Japan leads the **connectivity pillar** of the IPOI and is India's **largest ODA donor**.

- Cooperation spans several plurilateral platforms: **Quad, ISA, CDRI, and Supply Chain Resilience Initiative**.
- **Key defence and security agreements include:** Reciprocal Provision of Supplies and Services Agreement (2020), Co-development of the UNICORN naval mast (2024)
- **Bilateral trade:**
 - **\$22.8 billion in 2023–24. \$21 billion in Apr–Jan 2024–25.** Imports from Japan exceed exports.
 - **India's exports:** chemicals, vehicles, aluminium, seafood.
 - **Imports from Japan:** machinery, steel, copper, reactors.
- Japan is India's **5th-largest FDI source** at **\$43.2 billion total**. **Quad** includes **India, Japan, Australia, US**.

CDRI

- Launched by India at the 2019 UN Climate Action Summit; headquartered in New Delhi, India.
- **Mandate:** Global partnership promoting disaster-resilient infrastructure.
- Includes 39 members as of 2026, comprising 31 countries and 8 international/private organizations.
- Led by a **Governing Council** and **Executive Committee**; co-chaired by India and rotating member. France, rotating

member, co-hosted 7th Conference in June 2025, which was 1st time the event was held in Europe.

- **Key Initiative:** "Infrastructure for Resilient Island States" (IRIS) specifically supports sustainable infrastructure in Small Island Developing States.

Supply Chain Resilience Initiative (SCRI)

- Launched in April 2021 by Trade Ministers of India, Japan, and Australia following Japan's 2020 proposal.
- Aims to reduce global supply chain dependence on China by diversifying sourcing partners.
- Focuses on de-risking critical supply chains in pharmaceuticals, electronics, semiconductors, and renewable.

International Solar Alliance (ISA)

- Jointly launched by India and France at COP21 (Paris, 2015); headquartered in Gurugram.
- **Membership:** Open to all UN members since 2020; currently has 125 member.
- **Leadership:** India holds the Presidency and France the Co-Presidency for the 2024–2026 term.
- **Targets:** Guided by the "Towards 1000" strategy to mobilize \$1 trillion for 1,000 GW capacity by 2030.
- **Status:** Granted Observer Status by the UN General Assembly in 2021 to enhance global energy cooperation.

Central Asia

Forums

- At the **India–Central Asia Business Council meeting**, EAM expressed support for mutual settlement of trade in national currencies, mentioned the opening of Special Rupee Vostro Accounts and discussions on UPI. The issue is being discussed under the **Joint Working Group on Chabahar Port** within the **India–Central Asia platform**.
- **India–Central Asia Dialogue:**
 - **Foreign Ministers–level dialogue** initiated in **2019** at **Samarkand, Uzbekistan**.
 - **Objective:** boost India's engagement with five Central Asian Republics – Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan. **4th and latest meeting** held in New Delhi, 2025 after a gap of over three years.
 - **Focus areas:** trade, connectivity, security, regional stability.
- **First India–Central Asia Summit** held **virtually** in **2022**. Marks **engagement** between **India and Central Asian leaders**. Summit **institutionalized a biennial summit mechanism**. **Second summit** planned in **New Delhi, 2026**.

- **INSTC** is a **multi-modal transportation project** initiated by **Russia, India, and Iran**.
- Connects **Indian Ocean–Persian Gulf** to **Caspian Sea via Iran**, and to **northern Europe via St. Petersburg, Russia**.
- The corridor aims to **reduce transit time by 20 days** (to **about 25 days**) compared to the **Suez Canal route**.
- It is expected to **cut freight costs by 30%**.
- **The route includes:** Movement of goods from **Mumbai to Bandar Abbas (Iran)** by **sea**. From **Bandar Abbas to Bandar-e-Anzali** (on the Caspian Sea) by **road**. From **Bandar-e-Anzali to Astrakhan (Russia)** by **ship across the Caspian Sea**. Further transport to **Russia and Europe by rail**.

India–Kyrgyzstan BIT

Why in news: **Bilateral Investment Treaty** signed in **2019**, entered into force in **2025**. It replaces the earlier **2000 agreement**, ensuring **continuity in investment protection** and balances **investor rights** with **sovereign powers**.

- **Removes MFN clause:** Prevents investors from importing favorable provisions from other treaties.
- Investors must first exhaust **local remedies** before international arbitration, encouraging **alternative dispute resolution**.

West Asia

Turkey and Azerbaijan

Pahalgam

Why in news: After **Turkiye–Azerbaijan backed Pakistan** post-Pahalgam attack, India saw a **spike in tour cancellations**.

- The number of **Indian students** in **Turkiye and Azerbaijan** rose from **<100 in 2017 to 777 in 2024**. Prominent Indian institutions like **IIT Bombay, IIT Roorkee, and JNU** suspended **MoUs with Turkish universities**.
- **Turkiye backs Pakistan on Kashmir**; **Pakistan supports Turkiye on Cyprus**. In the **2020 Armenia–Azerbaijan conflict**, **Turkiye backed Azerbaijan**. **Turkiye exported artillery, armoured vehicles, and tanks** to Pakistan.
- India, in contrast, has **supplied arms to Armenia**, including **surface-to-air missiles** and **multiple rocket launchers**.

Economic Impact: Limited for India, Higher for Azerbaijan

- **Crude oil** is the main import from both, but:
 - Their combined share is **<1% of India's total crude imports**.
 - **India was Azerbaijan's 3rd largest crude oil buyer** in 2023 – impact higher for Azerbaijan.
- **Turkish machinery** (incl. reactors/boilers) accounts for **only ~1% of India's total imports**.
- **Indian tourists** make up **<1% of total tourists to Turkiye (2024)**, though rising steadily.
- **Indian share of Azerbaijan tourism** rose from **<6% (2023) to ~10% (2024)**.

Syria

HTS - Kurds

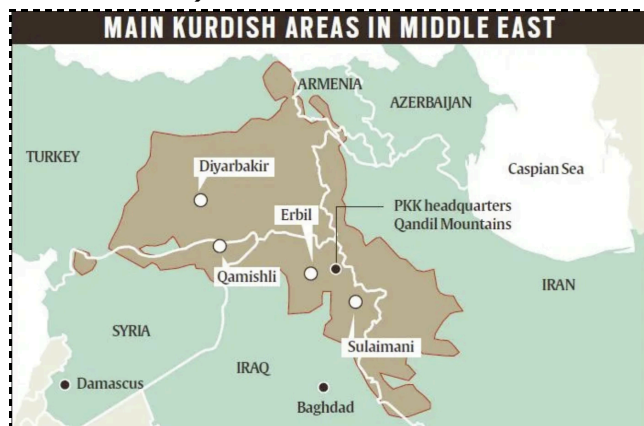
Why in news: Jolani, a former al-Qaeda leader and founder of Jabhat al-Nusra, was until recently a designated global terrorist. Now known as al-Sharaa, he met U.S. President in Riyadh after the U.S. lifted sanctions on Syria.

● Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), led by Sharaa, captured Damascus in 2024, overthrowing Bashar al-Assad's regime. Sharaa enjoys strong regional support (Qatar, France, Türkiye and Saudi Arabia).

- Kurds are ethnic group inhabiting Kurdistan mountainous region spanning southeastern Turkey, N.Iraq, northeastern Syria, northwestern Iran, parts of Armenia.
- They are minority in each country they live, with smaller communities in Georgia, Kazakhstan, Lebanon, East Iran.
- Though the Kurds trace their roots back 2,500 years, they became a distinct community in the 7th century after adopting Islam. The majority of Kurds are Sunni Muslims, while some follow Sufism and other mystical traditions.
- Turkey has largest Kurdish population at approximately 43% of the global Kurdish population. Iran follows with about 31%, Iraq with 18%, and Syria with 6%.

Levant Region

- Subregion bordering the Eastern Mediterranean Sea and central West Asia (Middle East).
- It includes Israel, Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, and sometimes parts of Iraq, Turkey, and Cyprus.



● Kurds in northeast Syria demand a decentralised system.

Israel-Iran

Conflict's Comprehensive Analysis

Why in news: Israel launched a blistering attack.

- The attack specifically targeted the Natanz nuclear enrichment facility.
- Iran's programme has enriched uranium to 60% purity, well beyond civilian requirements. In 2015, Iran restricted its programme under the JCPOA in exchange for sanctions relief.
- Israel initiated Operation "Rising Lion", while Iran responded with Operation "True Promise 3". Iran targeted cities like Haifa and Rehovot.
- U.S. used B-2 bombers and Tomahawk missiles to hit Fordow, Natanz, and Isfahan. Iran launched missiles at U.S. bases in Qatar and Iraq, targeting al-Udeid airbase, the largest American base in the region.



Fordow: Iran's most heavily fortified nuclear site used for uranium enrichment, which is built deep beneath a mountain

Natanz: Largest uranium enrichment facility in Iran

Isfahan: Iran's largest nuclear research site, which was targeted by Israel 2 times since the crisis began on June 13

● Iranian parliament voted to close the Strait of Hormuz in response.

● Article 2(4) of UN Charter prohibits force, except u/a 51 self-defence in case of an actual attack. Pre-emptive self-defence is controversial, and Caroline doctrine allows it only when threat is imminent and overwhelming.

● Restrictive interpretation: Self-defence is permissible only when an armed attack is underway. Permissive interpretation: Allows for anticipatory self-defence.

● Iran's nuclear infrastructure is deeply buried (e.g., Fordow under mountains), requiring GBU-57 MOP bombs that only U.S. B-2 bombers can deliver. Israel lacks capacity to destroy these bunkers.

Impact on India

- Israel-Iran conflict caused Brent crude to surge by 8-9%.
- Strait of Hormuz, through which 20% of global oil passes, is under threat. Rerouting via Cape of Good Hope adds 15-20 days and \$500-1,000 per container, increasing export costs by 40-50%.
- India imports 80% of its oil, with 40% of crude & 54% of LNG flowing via Hormuz.
- Gold prices rose above ₹1 lakh per 10 grams due to market volatility.
- Disruptions at UAE, Singapore hubs may create opportunities for Indian refiners, especially in aviation fuel exports to Europe. Basmati rice and tea exports to Iran halted, prices dropped, and exporters face rising logistics costs.
- Conflict threatens IMEC, Chabahar Port, and regional outreach.
- India launched Operation Sindhu, evacuating 110 students from Iran via Armenia.

IAEA:

- Established in 1957 in response to concerns regarding the increased use of nuclear technology.
- IAEA was a result of U.S. President Eisenhower's "Atoms for Peace" address to the UN in 1953. In 2005, IAEA and its DG Mohamed ElBaradei were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for promoting a safer and more peaceful world.
- IAEA safeguards are embedded in legally binding agreements accepted by states after concluding such

agreements with the agency. **Prevents proliferation of nuclear weapons through independent verification of States' compliance** with non-proliferation obligations.

- In 2014, India ratified **Additional Protocol**, granting **greater access to IAEA over India's civil nuclear programme**.
- **India, Pakistan, and Israel** have signed item-specific safeguards agreements under the IAEA, despite being nuclear-power states **not part of the Nuclear Suppliers Group**. Iran is a **NPT** signatory. Israel, a non-signatory.

Additional information:

- **Enrichment** is the process of extracting uranium-235 from naturally occurring uranium-238, enabling its use in nuclear weapons production.
- **Iran has two underground nuclear sites at Fordo and Natanz**, and is building tunnels near Natanz.
- Under **NPT**, Iran is **legally bound to declare all nuclear activities** and permit **IAEA inspections**.
- The authority to reimpose sanctions under the 2015 nuclear deal expires in October 2025, prompting the West to increase pressure on Tehran.

Begin Doctrine:

- Even the **potential of an enemy acquiring WMDs**, particularly **nuclear**, can **justify preventive strikes** by Israel.
- A **nuclear bomb** is fundamentally different from **traditional chemical explosives** used in warfare. **Traditional bombs** use **chemicals** that **explode on impact**, heat, or friction, and can cause **accidental blasts** even during storage.
- In contrast, **nuclear weapons** cause damage by **releasing extremely high energy** in a **very short time**, not by chemical explosion. **Nuclear weapons** are typically **designed to detonate mid-air**, unlike conventional bombs that **explode on impact**. They release energy in **milliseconds**, heating air to **millions of degrees Celsius**, which creates **blast waves** — bubbles of **extremely hot, expanding air**. **Major damage** from nuclear weapons is caused by these **blast waves**, not initial explosion.

Bordering areas:

- **44-km-long Iran-Armenia border** is the **most viable evacuation route** for Indians, due to connectivity via **Tehran-Nurduz-Agarak highway**.
- With **Turkey and Pakistan backing Azerbaijan**, India has supported **Armenia** in its **conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh**.
- **Zangezur Corridor:** Türkiye urged Armenia and Azerbaijan to take steps to open the Zangezur Corridor.
 - Proposed **43-km transport route** through **Armenia's Syunik Province**.
 - **Objective:** Connect **Azerbaijan's Baku Port (Caspian Sea borders Azerbaijan, Iran, Kazakhstan, Russia, Turkmenistan)** to **Nakhchivan Autonomous Region (Azerbaijan's western exclave)** and further to **Turkey**.
 - **India's concerns:** May **undermine India's investments in Chabahar Port and INSTC** by offering a **competing pathway**, reducing India's **regional leverage**.



- **Armenia**, located in the **southern Caucasus**, is a **key node in the INSTC**.

- **INSTC aims to connect India to Europe via Iran and Armenia**. India has friendly ties with **Turkmenistan and Iraq**.

Red sea and Suez Canal:

- The **Red Sea spans nearly 2,000 km** and connects the **Mediterranean Sea to the Indian Ocean via the Suez Canal**.
- Before **Suez Canal**, ships had to **navigate around Cape of Good Hope in South Africa** to travel b/w **Europe-Asia**.
- The **Suez Canal, a 193-km artificial waterway**, officially **opened in 1869**, connects the **Red Sea to the Mediterranean Sea through the Isthmus of Suez**. Britain relinquished control to Egypt in 1956.
- The canal **reduces the sea route between Asia and Europe by up to 7,000 km**.
- It is one of the **world's busiest and most strategic maritime routes**.



Strait of Hormuz:

- Maritime channel (55–95 km wide) that connects the **Persian Gulf with the Gulf of Oman and Arabian Sea**.
- It lies between **Iran and the Arabian Peninsula** and facilitates oil and gas exports from **Persian Gulf nations**.
- Around **20 million barrels of oil per day** (a quarter of global supply) passed through it in 2024.

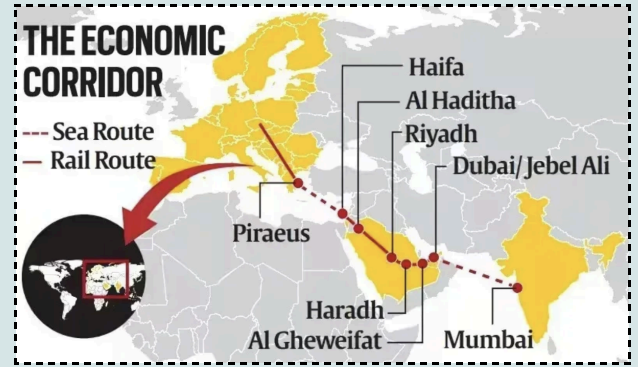
- Over **80% of oil passing through** is destined for **Asian markets**.

Chabahar Port:

- **Deep water port** in Iran’s **Sistan–Baluchistan province**.
- It is the **closest Iranian port to India**, located in the **open sea**, enabling **easy and secure access for large cargo ships**.
- **Chabahar port** is part of the proposed **INSTC**.
- It allows **India access to Afghanistan and Central Asia**, as **Pakistan does not permit Indian land access** for this trade.

IMEC:

- **India–Middle East–Europe Economic Corridor** announced during the **G20 Leaders’ event in New Delhi, 2023**.
- To **stimulate economic development** through **connectivity and integration** between **Asia, the Middle East, and Europe**.
- IMEC consists of **two corridors**:
 - The **East Corridor** connecting **India to the Arabian Gulf**
 - The **Northern Corridor** connecting the **Arabian Gulf to Europe**, including a **railway route** to boost trade between **India, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israel, and Europe**.
- An **MoU for IMEC’s development** was signed by **India, Saudi Arabia, UAE, France, Germany, Italy, EU, USA**.
- IMEC is linked to the **Partnership for Global Infrastructure and Investment (PGII)**, first announced during the **G7 Summit (UK, 2021)**. PGII is considered an **alternative to China’s BRI**.
- **Israel and Greece** are two important **nodal sites** in IMEC and have **expressed interest in joining the project**.
- **Ports:** India – **Mundra, Kandla, JNPT**; UAE – **Fujairah, Jebel Ali, Abu Dhabi**; Saudi – **Dammam, Ras Al Khair**; Israel – **Haifa**; Greece – **Piraeus**; Italy – **Messina**; France – **Marseille**



Indian community in Qatar:

- **Largest expatriate group** in **Qatar**, a country with one of the **highest per capita incomes** in the world.
- Over **20,000 Indian companies** (wholly-owned or joint ventures) operate in Qatar.
- The **Indian diaspora** in Qatar is over **8.3 lakh strong**. Over **60,000 Indian students** are enrolled.

Geneva Convention:

- **Article 56 of the 1977 Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions** prohibits attacks on **“works and installations containing dangerous forces”**, such as **nuclear plants**, if **civilian harm** may result.
- **India aims for 100 GW of nuclear capacity by 2047**, up from the current **~8 GW**.

Houthis:

- The Houthis have been involved in a **civil war in Yemen** for **over a decade**, with the **balance shifting in their favour** recently. They currently **control Yemen’s capital, Sanaa**.
- **Iran**, a **Shia-majority** nation, is believed to **support the Houthis**.
- **Saudi Arabia** (a **Sunni-majority** nation) and **Western allies like the US** support the **Yemeni government**.

B-2 Spirit Stealth Bomber

- **Only fully stealth bomber** in USAF fleet; **21 built**, only **19 operational**.
- Each B-2 costs **over \$2 billion**; dual-capable, long-range heavy bomber.
- **Range:** 6,000 miles (un-refuelled). Features: **low radar, acoustic, infrared visibility**, capable of **deep-strike missions**.
- Known for **longest combat mission** (44 hours, Afghanistan, 2001).
- Requires **100 hours of maintenance per flight hour**, needs **climate-controlled hangars**.

GBU-57 Massive Ordnance Penetrator (MOP)

- Designed to destroy **deeply buried nuclear facilities** like **Fordow**.
- **GPS-guided**, Can **penetrate up to 200 ft** underground or **25 ft of 10,000 psi reinforced concrete**.
- **B-2 is the only aircraft** capable of deploying MOP bombs (can carry two at a time).
- **20 MOPs produced**, more powerful than **GBU-28 and BLU-109**.

Next Generation: B-21 Raider

- Currently under development. **Smaller, more efficient**, with **open systems architecture** for quick upgrades.

B-2 BOMBER
 2 Person crew, 18,144 Kilograms payload, 17 Feet height

Bunker buster: GBU-57/B
 Length: 6.2m, Payload: 13,600kg

Fordo fuel enrichment plant: Deep inside a mountain, Fordo is said to contain close to 3,000 sophisticated centrifuges in two enrichment halls.

Nuclear Restrictions

Why in news: E3 nations (Britain, France, and Germany) triggered the “snapback” clause of the 2015 nuclear deal, citing **Iran’s violations** (unilaterally reimposing prior U.N. sanctions on Iran in event of significant breach of the deal.)

- **Sanctions:** Halt uranium enrichment, Tighten arms and shipping controls, Restrict finance and trade, Re-impose sanctions on individuals linked to Iran's nuclear and missile programmes.
- Iran said that it is **no longer bound by restrictions on its nuclear programme** as the **10-year deal expired**.
- The **2015 deal**, signed in **Vienna** by **Iran, China, Britain, France, Germany, Russia and US**, lifted **international sanctions** in exchange for **restrictions on Iran's nuclear programme**. **US withdrew** from pact during **Trump's first term**.

U.S. - Chabahar

Why in news: US will **revoke the U.S. waiver of sanctions** over **Chabahar**, ending **special waiver given to India in 2018**.

- India secured a six-month **extension** for waiver, allowing continued humanitarian trade with Afghanistan via port.
- The move is part of U.S.'s "**maximum pressure on Iran**" policy.
- The decision will affect India's plans to develop the **Shahid Beheshti terminal at Chabahar port**. **Chabahar** was envisioned as an **alternative trade route for India** to reach **Afghanistan and Central Asia, circumventing Pakistan**.
- **India has spent ₹200 crore out of ₹400 crore allocated** for **Chabahar project since 2016**.
- In 2017-18, India ended all oil imports from **Iran and Venezuela** under **U.S. pressure**.

UN Convention Against Terror Finance

Why in news: Iran ratified a law joining **UN convention against terror financing**. Iran hopes this move will lead to **access to global banking, easing of trade, and relief for its sanctions-hit economy**.

- International Convention for the Suppression of the Financing of Terrorism was adopted by the UN in 1999.
- The convention requires countries to criminalize providing or collecting funds for terrorist acts, regardless of whether the act occurs. It defines funds broadly to include various asset types.
- It stipulates that bank secrecy cannot be used to obstruct mutual legal assistance or information exchange, and terrorist financing cannot be justified or treated as a political offense to avoid extradition.
- India signed the convention in 2000, ratified it in 2003.

Israel-Palestine

Two-state Solution

Why in news: The original idea stems from **UNGA Resolution 181 (1947)**, calling for **two states**.

- **King David Hotel** in Jerusalem, built in 1931 by Ezra Mosseri, became a landmark during the British Mandate.
- On **July 22, 1946**, Irgun militia bombed the hotel's southern wing.
- In **1947**, **UNSCOP** proposed partition of Palestine into a Jewish state, Arab state, and Jerusalem. Jewish Agency accepted, Arab nations rejected. On May 14, 1948, David Ben-Gurion declared the establishment of Israel.
- **First Arab-Israeli War** (1948-49) led Israel to control more territory than allocated in the UN plan.
- After **1967 Six-Day War**, Israel occupied Sinai, Gaza, West Bank, East Jerusalem, Golan Heights.
- Palestinians demand a state on 1967 borders (Green Line) — West Bank, Gaza, East Jerusalem.
- **1978 Camp David Agreement:** Israel withdrew from Sinai, recognised limited Palestinian self-rule.
- **1988 Algiers Declaration:** Yasser Arafat proclaimed the State of Palestine.
- **1993 Oslo Accord I:** Rabin and Arafat signed mutual recognition with U.S. mediation. Oslo II (1995): Divided West Bank into Areas A (18%), B (22%), C (60%). Oslo Accords saw Palestinians agree to just 22% of historic Palestine, though UN Resolution 181 had allotted 46%.

Statehood Recognition

Why in news: **Spain, Ireland, Norway, Slovenia, France, U.K. and Canada** have recognized Palestine. Over **140 countries**, including **India**, have **recognised Palestine** as a state.

- The **Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States (1933)** identified four conditions of a state: **permanent population, defined territory, government, and capacity to enter into relations with other states**.
- Formal recognition of independent states depends on **how the rest of the world views them**.
- UN has a broad criterion for accepting states as Members under **Article 4**. It states that **membership is open to peace-loving states** which accept the Charter's obligations and are able and willing to carry them out.
- **Admission to the UN** as a Member State requires a **two-thirds majority vote** in the **UNGA**.
- The **UNGA** considers candidature **only upon recommendation** of **UNSC**. **UNSC** has **five permanent members** — US, UK, Russia, China, and France — and **10 temporary members** chosen on a rotational basis.
- For UNSC recommendation to pass, there must be **at least nine members in favour** and **no veto** from any permanent member. The **P5** essentially determine the fate of an issue in the **UNSC**.
- **Palestine** is a **Permanent Observer State** at the UN, not a **Member State**. The other **Permanent Observer State** is the **Holy See** (Vatican City). **Palestine** can participate in all UN proceedings **except voting**.

Famine

Why in news: Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC) has confirmed a "man-made famine" in Gaza, first officially declared famine in W. Asia. The famine is linked to Israel's blockade and control of aid distribution.

- IPC is global initiative partnering with 21 aid groups, international organizations, UN agencies (Not a UN body).
• The IPC has classified famine four times: Somalia (2011), South Sudan (2017, 2020), and Sudan (2024).
• Criteria of the IPC Report: One in five households faces extreme food shortages; Over one-third of children are acutely malnourished; Two deaths per 10,000 people daily due to starvation or malnutrition-linked diseases.
• In 2025, after ceasefire collapse, Israel imposed a total three-month blockade on all goods. Food distribution shifted from UN-led system to Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) backed by U.S. and Israel.
• An Israeli military operation launched in northern West Bank has displaced tens of thousands of Palestinians. The Israeli operation, named "Iron Wall", has left about 30,000 Palestinians forcibly displaced.

- UNRWA is not banned from operating in Gaza, as laws prohibit operations only in Israel's sovereign territories. UNRWA is the largest humanitarian agency in Gaza.

Voyage of Madleen:

- Ship with 12 international activists, including Sweden's Greta Thunberg, set sail from Catania, Italy for Gaza.
• Ship, named Madleen, is backed by Freedom Flotilla Coalition (FFC) to deliver humanitarian aid to Gaza.
• FFC, established in 2010, is an international movement aiming to end the illegal Israeli blockade of Gaza.

Genocide

Why in news: In 2024, South Africa filed a case against Israel at the ICJ, accusing it of genocide in Gaza.

- Coined by Raphael Lemkin (1944), genocide was recognised under international law by the Genocide Convention (1948). Defined as acts with intent to destroy, in whole or part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group.
• ICJ's strict evidentiary standard requires intent to be the only reasonable inference, limiting genocide findings.
• Article 6 of UN Charter allows expulsion of members violating core principles. However, key Western powers limited responses to diplomatic criticism, while U.S. continues to veto UNSC ceasefire resolutions.
• Brazil has finalised its submission to join South Africa's genocide case against Israel at the ICJ.

Table comparing ICJ (International Court of Justice) and ICC (International Criminal Court) across various points like Establishment, UN Relationship, Jurisdiction, Parties Tried, Composition, Membership, Location, Enforcement, and Funding.

Israel - Microsoft Azure

Why in news: Israel's military intelligence unit built a cloud-based surveillance system using Microsoft's Azure.

- Israel has control over Palestinian telecommunications infra. Virtually every Palestinian call and data packet passes through Israeli-controlled switches. This enabled interception of phone calls in the occupied territories.
• Azure was not the only cloud used; Israel also tapped Amazon Web Services (AWS).
• The IDF's Project Nimbus (\$1.2 billion deal) involves Google Cloud and Amazon for computing and AI.
• IBM's Red Hat and Palantir also provide cloud and AI targeting tools to Israel.

Israel-Hamas Ceasefire

Why in news: Signed by the U.S. President and leaders of Egypt, Qatar, and Turkiye as guarantors.

- The Witkoff Ceasefire Proposal was an initial framework, proposed by US Envoy Witkoff, that led to the current, official "Comprehensive Plan to End the Gaza Conflict".
• India was represented by the Minister of State for External Affairs at the Peace Summit on Gaza in Sharm el-Sheikh. The summit is co-hosted by Egypt and the United States.

India-Egypt Diplomatic Engagement

- The Egyptian Foreign Minister is expected to visit Delhi for the India-Egypt Strategic Dialogue. This will be his first visit since his appointment in 2024. The visit follows the Sisi-Modi Strategic Partnership Agreement (2023).
• Discussions will explore alignments for IMEC through Sharm el-Sheikh due to security challenges at Israel's Haifa.

Gaza Peace Plan

- **U.S. resolution**, passed by the **UNSC**, authorises an **international stabilisation force** to provide **security in Gaza**.
- It also approves a **transitional authority** to be overseen by **President Trump** and envisions a **possible future path to an independent Palestinian state**.
- The vote endorsed **Mr. Trump’s 20-point ceasefire plan**. **Russia** and **China** abstained at **UNSC**.
- From **Trump’s 20-point peace plan for Gaza** to the **on-and-off ceasefire**, an unmarked boundary called the **Yellow Line** has gained attention. The **Yellow Line** is set out in the **agreement between Israel and Hamas**.
- It is an **unmarked boundary** dividing the **Israeli-held part of Gaza** from the **rest**, described as a **“new border”**.
- The **Yellow Line** has remained a **flashpoint**, with **violence and ceasefire violations** reported along the demarcation.

Bilateral Investment Treaty

Why in news: Israel signed a **new Bilateral Investment Agreement** with **Finance Minister** in **New Delhi**.

- **BIT** aims to **strengthen trade and investment ties** and **replace the 1996 agreement**.
- **Israel is the first OECD member** with which India has signed such an agreement based on **India’s model BIT**.
- Israel is **opening new sectors** – particularly **construction sector** – to attract **investment and Indian workers**.

Qatar

FTA

Why in news: India is likely to **finalise the terms of reference** for **FTA** with **Qatar**.

- The idea of **CEPA** with **Doha** was **first announced in 2025** during the visit of the **Emir of Qatar to India**.
- Both countries have agreed to **double bilateral trade by 2030**. **Qatar accounts for 1.22%** of **India’s total trade**. In **FY 2024–25**, **India’s exports to Qatar** were **\$1.68 billion**, while **imports** stood at **\$12.47 billion**.
- **Qatar’s key exports to India** include **LNG, LPG, chemicals, petrochemicals, and aluminium products**.
- The **U.S. accounts for 11.4%** of **India’s overall trade** in **FY 2024–25**.

Israeli Air Strike on Qatar

Why in news: Israel carried out an **air strike** on **Al Udeid Air Base**, **America’s largest military base in West Asia**.

- As an **observer state at the ICC**, **Qatar cannot directly refer cases** to the court.

UAE

UAE’s Golden Visa Scheme

- **UAE** has launched a **pilot nomination-based golden visa programme** for **Indian and Bangladeshi residents** seeking **lifetime residency** by paying **AED 100,000** (about ₹23.3 lakh).
- This removes the existing requirement of **investing in property or a business** in the **Emirates**.
- Some countries also offer a **‘golden passport’**, granting **citizenship by investment**, which is rarer.
- The visa is issued for either **5 or 10 years** & can be renewed.

Oman

FTA

Top items exported & imported

| | Exports | | Imports | |
|---------------------|------------------|-----------------------|------------------|--|
| | 2024–2025 (\$mn) | | 2024–2025 (\$mn) | |
| Mineral Fuel | 1,571.72 | Bituminous Substances | 2,940.06 | |
| Inorganic chemicals | 379.91 | Fertilisers | 1,069.35 | |
| Machinery & parts | 231.81 | Rare earth metals | 407.75 | |
| Inorganic chemicals | 379.91 | Fertilisers | 1,069.35 | |
| Aircraft & parts | 174.72 | Organic chemicals | 608.74 | |

- The visit of **PM Modi to Oman** marks **70 years of diplomatic relations** between **India and Oman**.
- India signed a strategic partnership agreement **with Oman in 2008**. **Oman was invited as a guest nation** during **India’s G-20 Presidency in 2023**.
- Defence and security engagement are governed by a **MoU on military cooperation** signed in 2005. **Oman is the first Gulf country** with which all three wings of **India’s defence forces** hold joint **exercises**. **Army:** Al Najah; **Navy:** Naseem Al Bahr; **Air Force:** Eastern Bridge. **Oman was 1st Gulf country** to purchase the **INSAS rifle** in 2010.
- The logistics agreement on **Duqm Port** (in close proximity to the **Strait of Hormuz** and the **Bab al-Mandab strait**, but

- crucially lies outside the volatile Persian Gulf, important for **INSTC**), signed during **PM’s visit** in 2018.
- **Bilateral trade** has increased to **\$10.613 billion** for **FY 2024–25**.
- **Oman-India Joint Investment Fund** is a **50–50 JV** between the **SBI** and the **Oman Investment Authority**.

- The **Rupay debit card** was launched in **Oman**.
- Oman became the **second country in the region after the UAE** to sign FTA with India.

• India and Oman signed a **FTA/CEPA**. Oman will provide India duty-free access to 98.08% of its tariff lines, covering 99.38% of India's exports to Oman. The deal also includes several concessions to India's service sector, including mobility of workers.

- India **export** of merchandise to Oman in 2024-25 made up 0.93% of India's total exports that financial year.
- India **imported** \$6.5 billion worth of goods from Oman, comprising 0.91% of India's total imports.

GCC:

- The **Cooperation Council for the Arab Gulf States**, often called **GCC**, includes **Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE**. Came together in **1981**. It was formed in the light of **tumultuous politics** to develop **collective mechanisms** to deal with **political, security and economic challenges** facing the **member states**.

3-Nation Tour to Jordan, Ethiopia, and Oman

- With **Jordan**, India launched agreements on **renewable & water management**. IMEC will pass through here.
- The visit to **Addis Ababa** marked the launch of a **strategic partnership** with **Ethiopia**. Talks with **Ethiopia** focused on **trade and knowledge and technology exchanges**. Discussions included scheduling the **Africa-India Summit** to be held in **India**. **Ethiopia** is the **headquarters of the African Union** and a **new member of BRICS**.

Jordan

PM Visit to Amman

- **Full-fledged bilateral visit** to **Jordan** is taking place after **37 years**, coinciding with the **75th anniversary** of the **establishment of diplomatic relations** between the **two countries**.
- To visit **Petra**, the **historic city** that shares **ancient trade linkages** with **India**.
- New Delhi is Amman's **third-largest trading partner**. India imports **fertiliser from Jordan** and has invested in the **potash and phosphate sectors**. It is a **major source of phosphoric acid** for India.
- **India and Jordan** signed an **MoU on defence cooperation in 2018**.
- **Jordan is home to Indian community of around 17,500**, mostly in garment, construction and manufacturing.

Bahrain

Defence-Trade

- **India and Bahrain** expressed optimism about **enhancing future collaboration in defence and security**.
- The two sides noted that **India is among the top five trading partners** of the **Kingdom of Bahrain**.

Iraq

Iraqi Oil

- The **Iraqi oil and gas sector** has remained largely **unaffected by political and security flux**.
- **China and India** as the top two customers in **2024**. **Reducing gas flaring** is a priority so that gas can be used.
- India had **close ties with Iraq during the 1980s**, with nearly **\$10 billion** worth of construction projects and oil exploration blocks. In **2024-25**, **bilateral trade was \$33.35 billion**, making Iraq **India's 8th largest trade partner**.
- The trade balance is **9:1 in Iraq's favour** due to India's dependence on crude.

Saudi Arabia

U.S. - Saudi Arabia

- **Trump** who brokered the **2020 Abraham Accords**, has been keen to deepen America's traditional ties with Arab partners. Accords mediated by US to normalize relations between Israel and various Arab/Muslim nations. **Original Signatories:** Israel, UAE, and Bahrain. **Subsequent Joiners:** Sudan (2021) and Morocco (2020). Kazakhstan joined in November 2025, becoming the first Central Asian nation to accede. Somaliland: Pledged to join in December 2025 following formal recognition by Israel. (Kazakhstan to announce it will join Abraham Accords, said one U.S. official).
- **Israel does not have formal diplomatic ties** with Saudi Arabia. Saudi Arabia remains open to joining the **Abraham Accords**, but only if there is a **credible, time-bound path** towards a **two-state solution**.

- **India is 2nd largest trade partner of Saudi Arabia**, while **Saudi Arabia is the 5th largest trading partner of India**.
- India has trade deficit.

Russia and Ukraine

Minerals Deal

Why in news: Washington and Kyiv have signed an agreement granting U.S. access to Ukraine’s critical mineral and oil and gas resources through a joint investment fund. Pact is known as United States–Ukraine Reinvestment Fund.

- Ukraine’s critical minerals; lithium, graphite, uranium, titanium, REE; in exchange for continued USA military support.
- Fund will finance extraction projects, and Kyiv will share 50% of revenues toward the fund.

- Minerals are defined as ‘critical’ by countries based on their needs, broadly using two parameters:
 - Their importance for economic development and national security.
 - Their lack of availability.
- India identified 30 critical minerals: antimony, beryllium, bismuth, cobalt, copper, gallium, germanium, graphite, hafnium, indium, lithium, molybdenum, niobium, nickel, phosphorus, potash, REE, rhenium, silicon, strontium, tantalum, tellurium, tin, titanium, tungsten, vanadium, zirconium, selenium, and cadmium. (Not Uranium).
- Ukraine holds 22 of the 50 strategic materials.

A prolonged invasion

Russia’s Defence Ministry has claimed that its troops have captured Pokrovsk, a strategically important city in Donetsk, which had been under sustained Russian attack for over a year. The capture of Pokrovsk could clear the way for further Russian battlefield gains

- Russian control before February 24, 2022
- Front line on June 1, 2025
- Russian control and advances to December 1, 2025



Russia’s Demands & Treaties

Why in news: Ukraine executed drone strikes on Russian bases under Operation Spiderweb, ahead of NATO’s Vilnius summit.

Trump’s Diplomatic Push

- Ukraine will not join NATO but get security guarantees akin to NATO’s Article 5.
- Sanctions on Russia to be gradually eased after peace.

Russia’s Key Demands

- Ukrainian NATO-membership ban. Demilitarisation and denazification.
- Guarantees that Ukraine won’t regroup or receive further Western arms.
- U.S. President and Russian President met at the Alaska Summit 2025 at Joint Base Elmendorf–Richardson, Anchorage, Alaska. Russia open to freezing war along southern frontlines (Zaporizhzhia, Kherson), Retaining full control of Donbas (Donetsk & Luhansk), Possible withdrawal from Kharkiv (northeast).
- US drafted 28-point plan, largely favouring Russia.

US–Russia Treaties

- INF Treaty (Intermediate–Range Nuclear Forces Treaty): Signed in 1987 between the USA and USSR to eliminate land-based missiles with ranges between 500–5,500 km. U.S. withdrew in 2019, citing Russian violations.
- ABM Treaty (Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty): Signed in 1972 between the USA and USSR, it limited ABM systems to one site per country to maintain nuclear deterrence. The USA exited the treaty in 2002.
- New START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty): Signed in 2010 between the USA and Russia, it limits each to 1,550 deployed nuclear warheads and 700 delivery systems. It is the

last remaining nuclear arms control treaty between the two; extended till 2026 despite rising tensions. In 2023, Russia suspended participation in the New START Treaty citing US support for Ukraine.

- PMDA: Russia’s lower house of parliament approved a move to withdraw from Plutonium Management and Disposition Agreement with US. PMDA aimed at reducing stockpiles of weapons-grade plutonium from Cold War-era nuclear warheads. The agreement came into force in 2011.

Poland will join NATO’s fuel pipeline network nearly 25 years after becoming a NATO member. NATO operates a 10,000-km European pipeline network supplying fuel and lubricants for tanks and aircraft in wartime. The system was established during the Cold War, when Poland was part of the Warsaw Pact, and NATO pipelines still do not reach bases near Russia and Belarus.

India–Russia

BRICS Grain Exchange Plan

Why in news: Proposed to boost agriculture trade among BRICS countries.

- India is facing rising trade frictions with the US and rhetoric against a BRICS currency. RBI unveiled measures to

deepen financial markets and move towards **internationalising the rupee**.

- Banks will now be allowed to **finance corporate takeovers**, a domain they were previously barred from.
- Indian banks and their overseas branches can now **extend rupee-denominated loans** to residents of **Nepal, Bhutan, and Sri Lanka**.
- The RBI expanded the list of currencies benchmarked by **FBIL** beyond the US dollar, euro, pound, and yen.
- Surplus balances in **Special Rupee Vostro Accounts (SRVAs)** can now be invested in **corporate bonds** and **commercial papers**, instead of only government securities. This move gives foreign participants more investment options and boosts **liquidity** in India's corporate bond market.
- These steps aim to make the **rupee** a preferred **settlement and investment currency**.

India-Russia Forums

Why in news: In Kazan, where the **Volga meets the Kama river**, two student-led teams, **Team Russia and Team India**, played a **T20 match** as part of soft diplomacy.

- Kazan hosted the **first Tatarstan Initiative Mutual Efficiency (TIME): Russia-India Business Forum**. The forum is part of a plan to move from cooperation between capitals to **cooperation between regions**.
- Tatarstan's exports include **oil and petroleum products, fertilisers, fats and oils, and agro goods**. Indian exports include **electrical machinery and rubber products**.
- **Agra** signed a **sister-city memorandum** with the **Tatarstan district of Spassky**, known for its **White Mosque in Bolgar**.
- **Indian Business Alliance (IBA)** was **born in 1994** and is **organization for all Indian companies in Russia**. It was established by a **team of Indian businessmen** under **patronage of Embassy of India in Russia**.
- It is **exclusively devoted** to the promotion of all the interests of the Indian business community in Russia.

Russian Oil

- Figures show a **reduction in energy imports from Russia** in previous months compared with 2024.
- India has known that its **dependence on Russian oil imports had grown too high** and was already **working on a plan to reduce this**.

- **Russia is India's largest source of crude**, accounting for **over 35% of India's overall oil imports** so far in 2025.
- **Majority of Russian crude oil** flowing to **India** was imported by **private sector refiners RIL and Nayara Energy**.
- Under **international law**, **secondary sanctions** are viewed as coercive measures that penalise third states or their entities for maintaining relations with a sanctioned actor. Unlike **primary sanctions**, which regulate a state's own nationals and territory, secondary sanctions target external actors to influence dealings with the primary target.
- Following talks with **Chinese President**, **US President** said the issue of **Russian oil did not come up**, even though **China is the largest purchaser of Russian oil** and has set up a **domestic payment mechanism** against sanctions.

Putin's Visit to India

- Trade expansion is expected through the **Eastern Maritime Corridor from Chennai to Vladivostok**.
- Both sides reaffirmed the goal of achieving **\$100 billion bilateral trade by 2030**.
- India's Russian oil purchases rose from **less than 2% before the Ukraine conflict to 40% last year**. This pushed **India-Russia trade** from an annual average of **\$10 billion to \$68.7 billion in 2024-25**.
- The visit was closely watched for **defence deals**, given past U.S. threats of sanctions under **CAATSA** after India's **S-400 air defence system** deal. India gave a **tepid response** to Russia's push for **Su-57 fighter jets**. Indian manufacturers showed **no interest** in Russia's **Geran drones**, used extensively in Ukraine.
- With the **Russian Duma clearing the RELOS military logistics pact**, more **military exercises** could be expected.

Europe



Cyprus and Croatia

Why in news: PM Modi's visit to Nicosia, Cyprus.

- The visit serves as a **political signal to Turkiye**, which supported **Pakistan during Operation Sindoor**. **Cyprus supports India on Kashmir** etc.
 - **Cyprus is set to assume the Presidency of the EU Council in early 2026**.
 - **Cyprus has been divided since 1974** into **Republic of Cyprus & Northern Cyprus**, the latter supported by **Turkey**.
 - PM received **Cyprus's highest civilian honour, the Grand Cross of the Order of Makarios III**, dedicating it to **India-Cyprus friendship**.
 - Cyprus is also seen as a **potential participant and investor in the IMEC**.
- Zagreb, Croatia Visit**
- **First-ever Indian PM visit to Croatia** since its **independence in 1991**.
 - Croatia's **Adriatic Sea ports and maritime facilities** are seen as **strategically important for IMEC**, enhancing India's **connectivity with Europe**.
 - **Adriatic Sea: a northern arm of the Mediterranean Sea**.

- Location b/w eastern coast of Italy & western Balkans.
- Northern part: shallowest | Southern part: deepest.
- Contains 1,300+ islands, mainly along eastern Croatian coast. Connects to Ionian Sea through the Strait of Otranto.
- Countries bordering Adriatic Sea:
 - West & North: Italy.
 - East (Balkan Peninsula): Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Montenegro, Albania.
 - Lies between eastern coast of Italy and western Balkan Peninsula.

EU-India Partnership

Why in news: EU has unveiled 'A New Strategic EU-India Agenda', outlining plans to upgrade strategic ties with India across trade, technology, security, defence, and climate.

- The strategy aims for a joint roadmap adoption at the next EU-India Summit in early 2026.
- The EU flagged India's participation in Russia-led military exercises (Zapad-2025) and continued Russian oil imports as "risks to deeper strategic engagement."
- Trade between India and the EU has grown by over 90% in the last decade.

Issues Highlighted by the EU

- Agricultural tariffs — the EU wants "commercially meaningful" offers.
- Non-tariff barriers such as India's Quality Control Orders (QCOs) were cited as impediments.
- Sensitive areas such as services, agriculture, dairy, pharmaceuticals, automobiles, and wines & spirits have been set aside from ongoing trade negotiations.

Other

- India has raised strong objections to the EU's CBAM — a carbon tax on imported goods based on emissions released during production — which will come into full effect from January 1, 2026, after a two-year transition phase.
- India-EU bilateral trade in goods reached €120 billion (\$139 billion) in 2024.
- Global Gateway Forum, the EU's flagship strategy for infrastructure and investment partnerships, was held alongside a steering ('Sherpa') meeting for the IMEC that aims to establish fibre-optic, and energy connectivity routes, clean hydrogen pipeline, electricity cable, high-speed undersea digital cable, and consolidation of port infrastructure.

Euro

- EU Ministers gave final approval for Bulgaria to adopt the euro on January 1, 2026.
- Bulgaria will become the 21st member of the euro single currency area.
- The transition marks nearly 19 years since Bulgaria joined the EU.
- Denmark, Sweden, Poland, Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, United Kingdom, Norway, Switzerland, Iceland have not accepted Euro.

EFTA - TEPA

Why in news: The four countries of the European Free Trade Association will meet the target of investing \$100 billion in India well before the 15-year deadline in the trade deal.

- TEPA b/w India and Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland was signed in 2024 and came into force in 2025.
- The dedicated EFTA desk set up by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry to reduce regulatory friction for companies from EFTA countries.

Norway-India

Why in news: India and Norway have strengthened their partnership in the maritime and blue economy sectors, highlighted during India Maritime Week 2025 held in Mumbai.

- In 2019, both countries launched a formal ocean dialogue and established the India-Norway Task Force on Blue Economy to promote sustainable ocean management, mitigation of marine pollution, and green shipping.
- At Norway's flagship maritime event, Nor-Shipping 2024, held in Oslo, India participated with its first-ever India Pavilion, showcasing its growing maritime capabilities.
- Around 10% of ships ordered by members of the Norwegian Shipowners' Association are currently built in India.
- Norway aims to reduce emissions from domestic shipping and fisheries by 50% by 2030, compared to 2005 levels.
- Norway supports stricter international regulations to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from shipping, under the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) Net-Zero Framework.
- Norwegian maritime sector is pioneering alternative fuels such as ammonia & hydrogen. It has launched autonomous and fully electric vessels, including Yara Birkeland, world's first 0 emission autonomous container ship.

Digital Services Act

Why in news: The European Commission is developing an age verification app under the Digital Services Act (DSA) to prevent children from accessing harmful online content while claiming to protect adult user privacy.

Germany-India

Why in news: India and Germany are celebrating **25 years of strategic partnership**.

- **Defence cooperation** has expanded significantly, highlighted by the **Tarang Shakti Exercise (2024)**. Joint military exercises and port calls by the **German Navy** have anchored the **Indo-Pacific in Germany's strategic thinking**.
- **Delhi-Meerut Rapid Rail**, operated in partnership with **Deutsche Bahn** and staffed by young Indian professionals.

UK

U.K. India Infra Bridge

Why in news: **U.K.-India Infrastructure Financing Bridge**, a joint initiative launched by India and the U.K. in 2024.

- The initiative targets India's **\$2 trillion infrastructure investment requirement by 2030**.
- In its **second year**, the UKIIFB will place **special focus on the renewable energy sector**.
- **The UKIIFB report's recommendations include:**
 - Aligning India's procurement processes with recognized frameworks, such as U.K.'s Five Case Model.
 - Adopting global **Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG)** standards.

Free Trade Agreement

Why in news: India and the U.K. concluded **FTA** eliminating duties on **99% of Indian exports** to the U.K.

- India will allow **tariff cuts on £400 million worth of U.K. goods**, including **gin, whisky, cars**. Tariffs on U.K. **alcohol** will drop from **150% to 75% to 40% over 10 years**. Tariffs on **automobiles** will reduce from **100%+ to 10%**, subject to quotas
- Total trade stood at **\$19.3 billion in 2024-25**, a **60% increase since 2016-17**. (surplus for India).
- India's top exports: **electrical machinery, nuclear boilers, mineral fuels, precious stones, and pharmaceuticals**.
- India's top imports: **precious stones, nuclear machinery, electrical equipment, iron and steel, aluminium**.
- Indian **textiles, leather, footwear, auto parts, engineering, and gems & jewellery** are expected to benefit significantly.
- FTA will **take over a year** to come into effect due to **legal vetting, TAC reviews, and U.K. parliamentary ratification**.
- **TEPA with EFTA countries** (Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland) will also be delayed until after **Switzerland's public consultation ends in late 2025**.

- **EU's CBAM** will come into force in **January 2026** (while 2026 remains a reporting year for emissions, the actual financial obligation for these emissions is delayed until 2027).
- This is crucial for India, which **exports over 15% of its total goods** to the **EU**, worth **\$75 billion in 2022-23**.
- **China, Russia, Brazil, and South Africa** have challenged **CBAM at the WTO**. India hasn't.
- **India-UK trade** amounted to **£42.6 billion in 2024**, with India being **Britain's 11th largest trading partner**.
- **CBDR** is a principle under the **UNFCCC**. It acknowledges that **all countries are responsible** for addressing climate change, but **their obligations vary** based on **capacities and circumstances**.

Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement

Why in news: India and UK signed the **CETA** in **2025** and may not be **implemented before early 2026**.

- **India-UK Vision 2035** includes growth and jobs in the UK and India. It includes an education and skills partnership.
- **Defence Industrial Roadmap** for joint development and co-production of advanced defence platforms.
- **Technology Security Initiative (2024):** Joint effort by NSAs of both nations. Collaboration in AI, quantum, semiconductors, critical minerals, advanced materials.
- **Double Contributions Convention:** Exempts Indian professionals in the U.K. from double social security contributions for up to 3 years. Facilitates mobility and reduces costs for businesses in services sectors.
- **BIT (ongoing negotiations):** Expected to boost U.K. investments in India. U.K. is the 6th largest investor, contributing nearly 5% of India's FDI. **India is the U.K.'s 11th largest trade partner**.
- **Programme of Cultural Cooperation (POCC)** was signed aiming to deepen cultural ties. **POCC focuses on five thematic areas:** Digital technologies for culture, Exhibitions and collections, Performances and events, Cultural property and Sustainability. The creative economy is projected to contribute **10% of global GDP by 2030**. The **World Audio Visual & Entertainment Summit (WAVES)** hosted in Mumbai showcased India's cultural commitment. POCC builds on G20 consensus (New Delhi, 2023) for investment in creative industries.

India's Expanding Trade Partnerships

- **TEPA (Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement)** with **EFTA** came into effect recently. First agreement linking **market access to investment commitments**. **\$100 billion investment** pledged over **15 years**.
- **Negotiations with EU** advancing; EU is India's **2nd-largest trading partner** with **\$136.5 billion trade (2024-25)**.
 - Despite being the **fourth-largest economy** and one of the **world's biggest markets**, **India accounts for less than 2%** of the **U.K.'s total merchandise exports**, while the **U.K. contributes about 3%** to **India's exports**.
 - The **Indian-origin population** forms the **largest ethnic minority in the U.K.**
 - On his visit to **Mumbai**, **U.K. PM** visited **YRF** which committed to **shoot three films in the U.K.**

CETA Analysis:

| Dimension | Pros (Gains) | Risks (Concerns) |
|-----------|--------------|------------------|
|-----------|--------------|------------------|

| | | |
|---|--|--|
| <p>Goods Trade & Tariff Reductions</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - U.K. removes tariffs on 99% of product lines, covering \$6.5B Indian exports (textiles, footwear, carpets, seafood, autos, fruits). - India reduces/eliminates duties on 90% of tariff lines, covering 92% of U.K. exports (whiskey, cars, engineering goods, cosmetics, medical devices). - Automobiles: first-time inclusion; luxury cars duty cut 110% → 10% over 15 yrs under quotas; mid-sized cars 50% initially, then 10% by yr 5; no EV/hybrid concessions for 5 yrs. - Indian exports of footwear, jewellery, seafood, engineering, agriculture to expand; farm exports projected +20% in 3 yrs. - Tariffs on 99.7% processed food lines cut (70% → zero), giving India advantage over U.S. & China. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sensitive sectors excluded: dairy, apples, oats, edible oils → reflects India's defensive stance. |
| <p>Services & Professional Mobility</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - India opens accounting, auditing, financial, telecom, environmental services to U.K. firms without local presence. - India to recognise U.K. qualifications in law & accounting (excluding practice). - U.K. grants commercial presence rights to Indian IT, consultancy, environment firms. - Double Contribution Convention (DCC): 75,000 Indian workers on short stints exempt from dual social security. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - U.K. allows 1,800 visas annually for niche roles. - Broader categories (IT professionals, business visitors) excluded, limiting benefits for India. |
| <p>GCCs & Digital Economy</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Global Capacity Centres recognised as key collaboration; India hosts 1,500+ GCCs, 1.9M employees. - Digital trade chapter avoids source code disclosure, ensuring tech firm confidence. - India retains flexibility on data localisation. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Misalignment between India's localisation norms & U.K.'s preference for free data flows may create friction. |
| <p>Investment, Procurement & Rules of Origin</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local sourcing norms (RoO): goods must be significantly transformed in India/U.K. → prevents Chinese rerouting. - Encourages FDI in Indian manufacturing. - U.K. firms gain access to 40,000 Indian central govt contracts (transport, green energy, infrastructure). - U.K. clean energy sector gets procurement access. - India's MSMEs retain Class-I supplier status; U.K. firms treated as Class-II suppliers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - U.K. access to procurement may challenge Indian firms. - FDI may concentrate in stronger states. |
| <p>Public Health Concerns</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Economic survey & Dietary Guidelines (2024) recommend tighter food regulations. - SC (2025) directed govt to act on warning labels (FOPNL). | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tariff-free entry for U.K. chocolates, soft drinks → risks HFSS |
| <p>Intellectual Property & Pharma</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Zero-duty access for 99% Indian pharma & med-device exports. - India's generics exports to U.K. already \$910M (FY24). - U.K. pharma market projected to grow \$45B → \$73B by 2033, opening opportunities. - Boost for high-quality niche Indian manufacturers. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - IP provisions favour patent owners. - Evergreening concerns. - Voluntary licences. |

- EU is group of **27 countries in Europe**. India established **diplomatic relations** with the **European Economic Community** (precursor to the EU) in **1962**.
- The **Joint Political Statement (1993)** and the **Cooperation Agreement (1994)** strengthened **India-EU ties**.

Deport Now, Appeal Later

Why in news: Indian citizens in U.K. prisons with active asylum appeals will now be eligible for **deportation before adjudication** under the expanded '**deport now, appeal later**' policy. A second policy allows the **immediate removal of foreign nationals after conviction**, without serving 30% of their sentence in the U.K.

- The policy aims to **address overcrowding in U.K. prisons**.
- **Exemptions:** Those convicted of **terrorism, murder, and life sentences** must serve their term in the U.K.
- According to the **UK Home Office**, many Indians crossed the **English Channel on small boats** from **2020 to 2025**

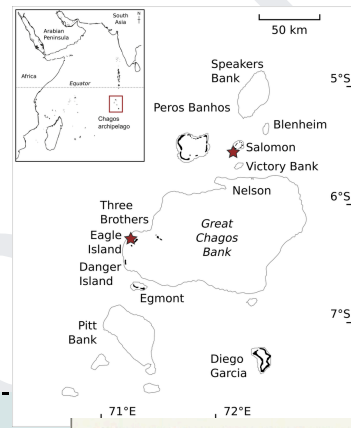
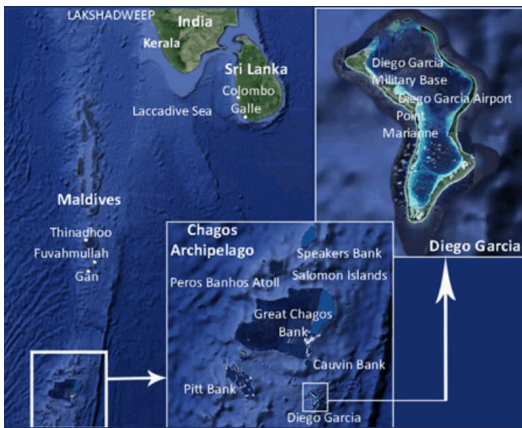
About English Channel:

- Narrow arm of the **Atlantic Ocean**. Separates **southern England** from **northern France**.
- Connects **Atlantic Ocean** to **North Sea** via **Strait of Dover**. One of the **world's busiest shipping routes**.
- Served as a **natural barrier & route**. Includes the **Channel Tunnel**, linking **England and France by rail**.

Chagos Islands

Why in news: U.K.–Mauritius deal on Chagos may “entrench” exile of Chagossians from Diego Garcia, largest island.

- **UK signed an agreement in 2025 to transfer sovereignty of Chagos Islands to Mauritius, ending decades of British control. UK retained 99-year lease on the strategic military base on Diego Garcia, which is vital for US-UK.**
- **The deal allows Mauritius to resettle Chagossians on all islands of the archipelago except Diego Garcia.**
- **Chagos Archipelago comprises over 60 low-lying islands in Indian Ocean, located 1,600 km northeast of Mauritius. Total land area is 56.1 sq km, with Diego Garcia covering 32.5 sq km, similar to Lakshadweep. Including lagoons, Chagos spans 15,000+ sq km; Great Chagos Bank is world’s largest atoll structure at 12,642 sq km.**
- **Uninhabited until late 18th century, French brought in enslaved African-Indian labourers for coconut plantations.**
- **Under the 1814 Treaty of Paris, France ceded Mauritius and Chagos to Britain.**
- **In 1965, UK created British Indian Ocean Territory with Chagos at its core for strategic military use. In 1966, UK-US defence pact allowed BIOT for military use; land was acquired in 1967, and plantations were closed by 1971. Though Chagos was linked administratively with Mauritius, it remained with UK post-Mauritian independence (1968).**
- **Diego Garcia became a fully operational by 1986, supporting operations in Afghanistan, Gaza, Yemen.**
- **It hosts a joint US-UK military facility, playing a critical role in regional and global security.**
- **Diego Garcia is a coral atoll, the southernmost island of the Chagos, and lies 7° south of the equator.**



India-Mauritius

- **Signing of agreements in Varanasi to deepen bilateral ties.**
- **Mauritius is an integral part of India’s “Neighbourhood First” policy.**
- **1st Jan Aushadhi Kendra outside India established in Mauritius.**
- **India will assist in establishing an AYUSH Centre of Excellence, a 500-bed Sir Seewoosagar Ramgoolam National Hospital, and a veterinary school and animal hospital in Mauritius.**
- **IIT Madras and the Indian Institute of Plantation Management have signed agreements with the University of Mauritius to enhance research, education, and innovation cooperation.**
- **People of Indian origin make up nearly 70% of Mauritius’s 1.2 million population.**
- **India’s main exports include pharmaceuticals, cereals, cotton, prawns, and meat. Mauritius’s exports include vanilla, medical devices, aluminium alloys, and refined copper.**
- **Mauritius has been a major FDI source for India, about 25% of total FDI inflows.**
- **Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement (CECPA) signed in 2021. CECPA is India’s first trade agreement with an African country.**

Chagos Marine Protected Area

- **Species:** Protects 220 coral species, 800+ fish types, and globally significant populations of the endangered **Green and Hawksbill turtles.**
- **Home to the Great Chagos Bank, the world’s largest living coral atoll, and critical nesting sites for seabirds.**

\$25 MN BUDGETARY ASSISTANCE TO MAURITIUS

STRATEGIC COOPERATION

- **Redevelopment and restructuring of the Mauritius port**
- **Development and surveillance of Chagos Marine Protected Area**

MoUs INKED: 7

From cooperation in the field of science and technology to cooperation in power sector. The two countries also signed an MoU Cooperation for Establishment of Telemetry, Tracking, and Telecommunications Station for Satellites and Launch Vehicles, and for cooperation in the fields of space research, science and application.

US

India-U.S. Energy Future

Why in news: Nuclear energy and critical minerals are central to strengthening India-U.S. energy partnership.

Critical minerals compact

- **China controls nearly 90% of global rare earth processing, often leveraging it strategically.**
- **In 2024, India and U.S. signed an MoU to diversify critical mineral supply chains. India, now a non-G7 member of the Mineral Security Partnership, will host the Quad summit in 2025 to advance these ideas.**

- **MSP** is a **US-led high-level initiative** formed in **2022** to strengthen **global cooperation** for **secure, resilient, and sustainable critical mineral supply chains**.
- **Members:** 30 countries, with India joining in 2023. **Focus minerals:** Lithium, cobalt, rare earth elements.
- Promotes **responsible sourcing** under **high environmental and social governance (ESG) standards** to reduce reliance on **high-risk jurisdictions**. Also fosters **strategic investment and collaboration**.

Nuclear Energy

- India targets **100 GW of nuclear capacity by 2047** (current ~8 GW). Meeting this will require **commissioning 5–6 GW annually from 2030s**. **CEEW** projects over **200 GW** may be needed by 2070 to achieve **net-zero**.
- **10CFR810** authorisation, under the **US Atomic Energy Act of 1954**, restricted **US firms from manufacturing or conducting nuclear design work in India**, despite permitting exports under safeguards. This clause was a **major hurdle for India**, which sought **domestic manufacturing and co-production of SMRs**.
- **Gol** launched the **Nuclear Energy Mission for Viksit Bharat** to **boost domestic nuclear capabilities, promote private sector participation, and deploy advanced technologies like SMRs**.

U.S.–India Subsea Cable Agenda

Why in news: Both nations are working to **diversify and de-risk tech supply chains**, especially via the **Technology for Resilient, Open and Unified Security and Trust (TRUST)** framework, the successor to **iCET**.

- **Subsea cables** carry over **95% of global internet traffic**, forming the **backbone of digital infrastructure**.
- China's growing network through the **Digital Silk Road Initiative** highlights the need for **trusted alternatives**.
- India currently hosts **17 subsea cables**, less than **Singapore's 26**, despite its larger size and **11,098 km coastline**. Most cables land in **Mumbai**, with others in **Chennai, Kochi, Tuticorin, and Thiruvananthapuram**. Events like the **Red Sea cable sabotage** in 2024 underscore the need for **diversification and redundancy** in infrastructure.

TRUST (Technology for Resilient, Open and Unified Security and Trust) framework:

- It is a **strategic U.S.–India initiative** to build **trusted, secure, and interoperable digital ecosystems**.
- Focus on **reducing reliance on untrusted vendors & strengthening technology supply chains**.
- Promotes **India's role as a regional digital hub and net security provider** in the **Indo-Pacific**.
- Supports **secure subsea cable infrastructure and broader digital cooperation**.
- Facilitates **U.S. investment and technical collaboration**.
- Enhances **resilient, unified cybersecurity in critical areas**.

Digital Silk Road Initiative (DSR):

- It is a key component of **China's BRI** to build **digital infrastructure – cellular networks, undersea cables, data centers, smart city technologies**. Enhances **digital connectivity across Asia, Africa, and beyond**.
- Promotes **Chinese digital standards, technologies, and digital economy investments** in partner countries.
- Includes cooperation on **innovation in AI, IoT, big data, quantum computing**.

Rice to U.S.

- Only about **3% of India's rice exports** go to the **United States**, whereas **Indian rice** makes up **more than one-fourth of the quantity imported** into the **U.S.**.

India – U.S. FTA

Why in news: India and the U.S. are working towards negotiating.

- On India's side, a major issue is the **tariffs imposed by the U.S. on steel and aluminium**. Trump signed an executive order **doubling tariffs on steel and aluminium imports to 50%**.
- Fears among **Himachal apple growers** of tariff cuts on **American apples**, especially **Red Delicious**.
- The U.S. has already secured tariff cuts on **almonds, pistachios, and walnuts** from **100% to 30%**, boosting U.S. exports but hurting Indian farmers. U.S. **walnut exports to India** rose by **25% in 2023** after tariff concessions.
- India refuses to open its **agriculture sector** to imports, aiming to **protect farmers**.
- For the U.S., a key sticking point is its **reluctance to cut import duties on auto components** to zero.

- Tariffs are taxes or duties imposed by govt on **imported goods and services**. Objective of tariffs is to **make foreign products more expensive compared to domestic goods**, encouraging consumption of local products.
- It is a **protective measure for domestic industries** against foreign competition. Tariffs also serve as a **source of revenue for the government**.
- **US is India's largest trading partner**, with **bilateral trade in 2023 crossing \$117 billion**. The **US is the only country (in top 10 trade-wise) with which India has a trade surplus**, making it a **source of US dollar earnings**.
- **Top 10:** US, China, UAE, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Singapore, Iraq, Germany, Indonesia, Netherlands.

Trade Deficit Argument

- U.S. calculations **excluded services trade (digital, financial, education) & arms trade**. With these included, **GTRI estimated U.S. has a \$35–40 billion surplus with India**.
- U.S. enhanced tariffs on India's **steel (25% to 50%) and aluminium (10% to 50%)**.

- India should seek exemption from the proposed **OBDD Act's 1% remittance tax** on Indian citizens. (The draft **exempts remittances** made from **bank accounts** and other **financial institutions**, or made using **debit or credit cards**. The **1% tax** will now apply only on remittances made in **cash**, a **money order**, or a **cashier's cheque**.)

India-U.S. Tariffs Row

Why in News: The U.S. has imposed **50% tariffs** on Indian imports (25% earlier + **Executive Order 14066 adding 25%**), citing India's **Russia oil and defence ties** and **trade barriers**.

- Russian oil now **35-40%** of India's crude.
- **Exempt from Tariffs:** Pharma (India supplies **40%** of U.S. generics), ICT goods (chips, smartphones, SSDs, PCs), crude/LNG/refined fuels, coal, electricity. **No penalty yet** on Russian oil imports (despite threats).
- **Comparisons:**
 - **EU** = largest Russian LNG buyer (**51%**), pipeline gas (**37%**), crude (**6%**).
 - **China** = top crude buyer (**47%**). India = **38%**.
 - **EU** contributed **€212B** (22%) of Russia's fossil revenues since Feb 2022.
 - **U.S.** imported **\$800M Russian fertilisers** in 2025.
 - U.S. deficit with India **\$49.5B** (10th-highest), but higher deficits with **9 other countries** (Mexico, Vietnam, Germany, Japan, etc.) carry **lower tariffs**.

● **U.S. share of India's exports:** ~18-20%.

Worst-Hit Sectors

- **Shrimp:** \$2.4B exports (32% of total); tariffs now ~60%.
- **Diamonds/Gems/Jewellery:** \$10B exports; tariff **2.1%→52.1%**; **Surge in 2025 exports:** 16% increase in **gems and jewellery**, driven by **lab-grown diamonds** (27.6% increase). U.S. still has **no alternative** to India's cutting/polishing.
- **Textiles/Apparel:** \$10.8B exports; tariff **13.9%→63.9%**.
- **Carpets:** \$1.2B exports; tariff **2.9%→52.9%**.
- **Handicrafts, leather/footwear, furniture, basmati, spices, tea, pulses, sesame** also hit.

Moderately Affected

- **Organic chemicals:** \$2.7B exports; tariff **4%→54%**; **Metals** (steel, aluminium, copper): \$4.7B exports;
- **Machinery/mechanical appliances:** \$6.7B exports.

Macro Impact

- **GDP** could fall **0.2-1%** (6.6→5.9%); **CAD:** 0.6→**1.15%** of GDP (FY25); **Trade deficit:** Could widen to **7.84% of GDP**.
- **Buffers:** UK/EU FTAs, competitor tariffs elsewhere, rupee depreciation.
- **U.S.** mandated **pre-paid duty + advance customs data**. **India Post** suspended all high-value parcels to U.S. (only letters/docs/gifts ≤ \$100 allowed). **Implication:** Hurts MSMEs dependent on low-value duty-free access.
- **India-Russia trade:** \$13B (2021) → **\$68B (2024-25)**, mostly hydrocarbons.
- As of February 2026, the case regarding Trump's use of the **International Emergency Economic Powers Act (IEEPA)** to impose tariffs is currently pending a final decision from the U.S. Supreme Court.

| GOODS SUBJECT TO 50% U.S. TARIFF | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Product Group | Exports to US in 2024-25 |
| Textiles and apparel | \$ 10.9 bn |
| Diamonds, gold and jewellery | \$ 10 bn |
| Machinery and mechanical appliances | \$ 6.7 bn |
| Agriculture, meat and processed food | \$ 6.0 bn |
| Steel, aluminium, copper | \$ 4.7 bn |
| Organic chemicals | \$ 2.7 bn |
| Shrimps | \$ 2.4 bn |
| Handicrafts | \$ 1.6 bn |
| Carpets | \$ 1.2 bn |
| Leather and footwear | \$ 1.2 bn |
| Furniture, bedding, mattresses | \$ 1.1 bn |

Source: Ministry of Commerce & Industry, GTRI analysis

- **Prisoner's Dilemma:** Illustrates why two rational actors may not cooperate even when cooperation is in their best interest, showing conflict between **individual rationality** and **collective well-being**.
- **Game of Chicken:** Scenario where two parties must choose between **driving forward or swerving**, and if neither backs down, the result is **catastrophic**.
- **Hobson's Choice:** Situation where there seems to be a free choice but in reality, there is **no alternative**.

2+2 dialogue:

- Format where **foreign and defence ministers** of India and its allies meet to discuss **strategic and security issues**.
- **India has 2+2 dialogues with four key strategic partners: US, Australia, Japan, UK, Brazil and Russia** (India engages in a specific **"3+3" dialogue format with Singapore**. This format involves the foreign, finance, and trade ministers of both countries).

Related news:

- **Indian diamond and jewellery exporters** are shifting focus to **West Asia**, particularly Saudi Arabia. The first-ever Saudi Arabia Jewellery Exposition (SAJEX) 2025 will be held at the Jeddah Superdome.
- India remains the **world's largest exporter of cut and polished diamonds**, with 14 out of every 15 diamonds globally cut and polished in India.
- The **U.S. is the largest importer of diamonds from India**. The **U.S. accounts for 30%** of India's **gem and jewellery exports**, largely fulfilled by **MSMEs**.
- **85% of exporters** are **MSMEs**, which **cannot absorb the loss** of the U.S. market in the short term.
- The **worst-hit States** are **Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Maharashtra**.

Key Policy Reliefs Sought

- **Extension of export obligation period** for exports to the U.S. **from 90 days to 270 days**. Currently, jewellery exporters must **export within 90 days of importing gold**; otherwise, they pay **6% import duty + 3% GST**.

Related news:

- India's exports to the United States stand at **\$86.5 billion**, with **Uttar Pradesh's Bhadohi carpet industry** contributing **nearly 60% of India's carpet exports** to the U.S.
- **Up's share in India's total exports** is around **4.89%**.
- **One District One Product (ODOP) scheme**, launched in **2018**, promotes the **unique products of all 75 districts of Uttar Pradesh**, such as **Banarasi sarees, Moradabad brassware, and Bhadohi carpets** & provides **financial assistance, tools, and skill support** to artisans and small businesses.

Eurasian Economic Union (EAEU):

- **India and the Russia-led EAEU** have kick-started **trade deal negotiations** after talks with the **US broke down**.
- **EAEU has a combined GDP of \$6.5 trillion**. **Trade talks with EAEU** were **stalled** in early 2022 after the **Ukraine war**.
EAEU members: Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, and Russia.

H-1B & Student Visa

Why in news: Indian students, vocational students, and exchange visitors applying for **U.S. F, M, or J visas** must now **make their social media profiles public** to verify **identity and admissibility** under U.S. law.

- Embassy stated that **visa issuance is a privilege, not a right**, and emphasized **national security and public safety**.
- The policy applies to **F visas (academic students), M visas (vocational students), and J visas (exchange visitors)**.
- **\$100,000 fee on H-1B visas** will **not apply** to applications for a **change of status** or an **extension of stay** in the U.S. The **proclamation does not prevent** any holder of a **current H-1B visa** from **travelling to and from the U.S.** Indians are notably affected since they are the **largest beneficiaries** of this visa programme.
- The **U.S. government** does not share data on the **number of H-1B visa holders** currently located in the U.S.
- **H-1B visa** program was **started in 1990** to help employers who cannot otherwise obtain needed business skills and abilities from the US workforce by authorising **temporary employment of qualified foreign individuals**.
- The **initial validity** of the **H-1B visa** is **up to three years**, and it can be **extended once for another three years**, giving a total validity of **up to six years** in most cases.
- There is an **annual numerical limit (regular cap)** of **65,000 new visas** each fiscal year, with an **additional 20,000 visas** available for those with a **master's degree or higher** from a **US university**.

(The State Council of the People's Republic of China has revised the 'Regulations on the Administration of the Entry and Exit of Foreigners', introducing a new K visa category. The K visa is aimed at foreign science and technology talents who meet specific conditions and requirements).

US - UNHRC

Why in news: The **U.S. imposed sanctions** on **Francesca Albanese**, UN Special Rapporteur on human rights in **occupied Palestinian Territories**, for her **criticism of Israel's war in Gaza** drawing condemnation from the **UNHRC**.

- USA designated **The Resistance Front** as a **Foreign Terrorist Organisation** and **Specially Designated Global Terrorist**.
TRF is backed by Lashkar-e-Taiba and claimed responsibility for the **Pahalgam terror attack**.

About UNHRC:

- **UNHRC**, established in **2006** by **UNGA Resolution 60/251**, replaced the **UN Commission on Human Rights** as the **primary intergovernmental body** for **promoting and protecting human rights** globally.
- It has **47 members** elected for **3-year terms** by the **UNGA** through **secret ballot**, with **equitable geographic representation: 13 Africa, 13 Asia-Pacific, 8 Latin America-Caribbean, 7 Western Europe-Other, 6 Eastern Europe**.
- **Key mechanisms** include **Universal Periodic Review** for **periodic assessment** of all **UN members' human rights records**, **special procedures** (rapporteurs/experts) on **thematic and country issues**, and **complaint procedures**.

US - Diwali

Why in news: **California** has become the **third US state** to designate **Diwali** as an official state holiday.

- The bill titled '**AB268**' designates Diwali as a state holiday.
- The **first US state** to declare Diwali as a state holiday was **Pennsylvania in 2024**, followed by **Connecticut**.

US - HIRE Bill

Why in news: **HIRE (Halting International Relocation of Employment) Act of 2025**, aims to **discourage** outsourcing of jobs overseas & proposes a **25% excise tax** on **payments made by U.S. entities to foreign service providers** and **denies tax deductibility** for these payments.

- The move poses a **major threat to India's \$260 billion IT and ITeS sectors**, and **Global Capability Centres (GCCs)**.
- The Bill could **accelerate nearshoring**, shifting work to **Canada, Colombia, and Mexico** to stay close to U.S. clients.

US - Latin America

Why in news: **U.S. strikes on boats in Caribbean waters** threatening to destabilise the region.

- **Historical pattern of CIA interventions** — 1954 coup in Guatemala, Bay of Pigs disaster in Cuba, the 1973 coup in Chile resulting in President Salvador Allende's death, and the Contra wars in Nicaragua in the 1980s.
- Millions of Venezuelans **flee**, many crossing **Colombia**, the **Darién Gap** (jungle region connecting Panama and Colombia, the only break in the Pan-American Highway), and **Mexico** to reach the U.S.
- True motive of Trump is to **control Venezuela's massive petroleum reserves** and **substantial natural gas deposits**.

US – Venezuela

- **Puerto Rico**, a U.S. territory, hosts **F-35 fighter jets** and **MQ-9 Reaper drones**, close to Venezuela's coast. The U.S. flew **supersonic B-1 Lancer bombers** along Venezuela's coastline.
- Venezuela used as a **transit route** for drug traffickers from **Colombia**, the source of most of the world's **cocaine**.
- Overt U.S. moves to engineer **regime change in Venezuela** recall the **Monroe Doctrine era** in Latin America (The Monroe Doctrine (1823) warned European powers against further colonization or intervention in the Americas, establishing the U.S. as the region's dominant, protective power)..
- Before the seizure of **Skipper Vessel**, the U.S. conducted **strikes in Caribbean waters** on boats alleged to be used by **drug traffickers**. The U.S. alleged that oil was shipped at **subsidised rates to Cuba**, which has been helping the Venezuelan government. The U.S. had earlier sanctioned the ship for trading **Iranian oil**.
- Venezuela has the **largest proven crude oil reserves** globally at **303 billion barrels**. But, it ranks low in **oil production and refining**. Most reserves are **extra-heavy crude**, requiring **specialised technology and refineries**.
- Venezuela's share of **global oil exports** fell from **over 4% in the 1990s** to about **0.35% in 2023**.

OPEC

- Founded during Baghdad Conference in 1960 by Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia & Venezuela.
- **HQ**: Initially in Geneva, Switzerland; moved to Vienna, Austria, in 1965.
- **Objective**: To coordinate petroleum policies and ensure the stabilization of oil prices in international markets.
- **Membership Rule**: Any new member requires the unanimous approval of all five founding members plus three-quarters of the total membership.
- **OPEC+**: Formed in 2016 between the 12 OPEC members and 10 non-OPEC oil-producing countries (including Russia, Mexico, and Oman). **Angola** withdrew from the organization effective January 1, 2024, leaving the group with 12 current member nations. **12 Members**: Algeria, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Nigeria, Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Venezuela.

Cashless Bail

Why in news: Trump signed an **executive order** targeting **cashless bail** in the **United States**.

- **Furlough and parole** are both conditional releases, **subject to good behavior and not committing specific offences**, as per **jail manuals and prison rules**.
 - In **furlough**, the **sentence continues to run** even while the convict is **released from prison** for a specified period (e.g., a 10-year sentence with 30 days furlough results in **9 years 11 months in prison**). **Furlough** is typically granted to **long-term prisoners** after they have spent a certain period incarcerated, aiming to **prevent solitude**, allow **family and social ties**, and motivate prisoners to maintain **good conduct and discipline**.
 - **Paroles** are granted for **short-term imprisonment**, often due to **specific exigencies** like **illness, crop-related duties**, or to **pursue an appeal against conviction**.
- Historically, **cash deposits** have been used to secure bail. This amount is typically **returned at the end of the trial**, but failure to provide it means the accused stays in prison.
 - **Bond**: By signing a bond, the accused agrees to **bail terms** and assures the court of their **trial attendance**. This is often accompanied by a **cash deposit** based on the crime's nature and the accused's financial status.
 - If the accused cannot afford the cash, courts may allow release on a **personal recognisance bond (PR bond)**, where the accused arranges the cash within a set time after release.
 - **Bail bond**: A **surety** from a third party, who guarantees the accused's presence at the trial. The court verifies the third party's documents and may question them to ensure their capability to guarantee the accused's attendance.

Fentanyl

Why in news: In the latest **Major's List U.S. identified 23 countries** as **significant sources or transit sites of illicit drugs**.

- The list includes **India, Pakistan, China, Bolivia, Myanmar, Colombia, Venezuela and Afghanistan** among others. Compiled **annually**, list highlights **regions contributing to narcotics flow** through geography, commerce, or industry.
- **Fentanyl** is a **synthetic opioid**, first developed in the **1960s** for **medical pain management**.
- It is **50 times more potent than heroin** — **just 2 mg** can be **fatal**.
- It acts on nerve cells, suppressing brainstem functions that **control breathing**. Excessive binding leads to **hypoventilation and respiratory depression**, causing death within minutes.
- **Naloxone**, a **mu-opioid receptor antagonist**, can **reverse overdose effects** if administered **quickly**.
- Unlike **heroin or cocaine** (plant-derived), fentanyl is **synthetic**, made in **laboratories** using **precursor chemicals**.
- **Key precursors**: N-phenethyl-4-piperidone (NPP), 4-anilino-N-phenethylpiperidine (4-ANPP).

- These precursors have **legitimate industrial and pharmaceutical uses**, making regulation difficult.

G-2

Why in news: The **G-2**, or the idea of creating an **exclusive U.S.–China club** was floated as a concept **about 15 years ago** around the **2009 summit** between **Obama** and **Chinese President Hu Jintao**.

- **G2** was first coined in **2005** by **C. Fred Bergsten**. He wrote that amid **changing power equations**, the **US** needed to cultivate key **bilateral relationships**, calling them the “**G-2**”. These included **EU** (for **macroeconomic and monetary issues**), **China** (for **global growth, exchange rates, and energy**), **Japan** (for **trade and countering China’s rise**), and **Saudi Arabia** (for **energy**).

Defence Ties

- **India and US** have **unveiled a 10-year defence framework** in **Kuala Lumpur (Malaysia)** which was the venue of **12th ASEAN Defence Ministers’ Meeting – Plus (ADMM-Plus)**.
- that builds on the **2013 Joint Principles for Defence Cooperation** and the **2016 recognition of India as a Major Defence Partner (MDP)**.
- Both sides had already launched the **COMPACT initiative** (Catalysing Opportunities for Military Partnership, Accelerated Commerce and Technology) to drive transformative changes in defence cooperation.

- **Security of Supply Arrangement (SOSA):** Reciprocal priority support for goods and services that promote national defence. India is the 18th SOSA partner of the US. It is legally non-binding.
- **MoU on Liaison Officers:** MoU regarding Assignment of Liaison Officers to increase information-sharing.
- **ADMM-Plus** is a platform for **ASEAN member states** (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Timor Leste & Vietnam) and **eight Dialogue Partners** (India, US, China, Russia, Japan, South Korea, Australia & New Zealand). **India** became the **dialogue partner of ASEAN** in **1992**. The **inaugural ADMM-Plus** was convened in **Hanoi, Vietnam** in **2010**. Since **2017**, **ADMM-Plus** is held **annually**.

Related news:

- **Indian public sector refiners** have signed a **one-year deal** for **American LPG**. **LPG** is used as a **cooking fuel**, with much of India’s requirement imported from **Saudi Arabia, UAE, Qatar, and Kuwait**.
- **India** is the **world’s third-largest consumer of crude oil** with an **import dependency of around 88%**. India is among the **largest importers of LNG**, with **about half of natural gas demand met through imports**.
- The **US** has been the **fifth-largest supplier of crude oil** and the **second-largest supplier of LNG** to India in recent years. Over **60% of India’s LPG requirement** is met through **imports**.

Related news:

- **US approved the sale** of **Excalibur guided artillery projectiles** and the **anti-tank Javelin missile system** to **India**.
- **Javelin** is a **medium-range, fire-and-forget missile** for targets including **armoured vehicles, bunkers and caves**. The missile can be fired from a **remote launcher mounted on an unmanned ground vehicle**.
- Between **2016 and 2020**, India and the US signed **LEMOA (2016)**, **COMCASA (2018)** and **BECA (2020)**.

Nuclear Weapons Testing

- **U.S. President** announced that the **United States would resume nuclear weapons testing**.
- Major nuclear powers, including the **U.S., China, and Russia**, have observed a **moratorium on nuclear weapon detonation tests since the 1990s**, except **North Korea**.
- The last nuclear weapon tests were: **Russia – 1990, U.S. – 1992 and China – 1996**.
- Since the **1963 Partial Test Ban Treaty**, nuclear tests were banned in the atmosphere, outer space, and underwater, pushing most tests underground, which still caused severe environmental damage.
- **Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)** was adopted in **1996**, banning all nuclear tests, but **never entered into force** due to lack of required ratifications. The **U.S. and China** signed but **never ratified** the CTBT. **Russia ratified** the CTBT but **withdrew its ratification in 2023**. **India, Pakistan, and North Korea** have **neither signed nor ratified** the CTBT.
- The **New START Treaty** will **expire in February 2026**.
- Under **NPT**, nuclear-armed states committed to **disarmament** and non-nuclear states agreed **not to acquire nuclear weapons**.
- Reports suggested **China** may have prepared test infrastructure at **Lop Nur**, the site of its **first nuclear test in 1964**. A **domino effect** is feared, with **Russia and China** likely to follow if the **U.S. resumes testing**.
- **Russia** possesses about **4,309 nuclear warheads**, **U.S.** has around **3,700 warheads**, **China** has **over 1,000 warheads**. **U.S.** has conducted **most nuclear tests (1,030)**.
- **Subcritical tests** involve compressing **Plutonium-239** using conventional explosives **without triggering a nuclear chain reaction**.
- **Unarmed Minuteman III ICBM** was launched during a **developmental test** in **California**.

U.S. Travel Ban

- U.S. signed a new **travel ban** targeting **12 countries**, citing **national security concerns**. The ban applies to nationals of Afghanistan, Myanmar, Chad, DRC, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Haiti, Iran, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, and Yemen.
- **Partial ban** was imposed on Burundi, Cuba, Laos, Sierra Leone, Togo, Turkmenistan, and Venezuela, allowing some temporary work visas. Ban does **not apply** to **athletes** participating in **2026 FIFA WC** or **2028 LA Olympics**.

Canada**EPTA**

- **Bilateral trade in goods in 2024** between India and Canada stood at **USD 8.6 billion**, with India exporting **USD 4.2 billion**.
- **Bilateral trade in services in 2024** was **USD 14.3 billion**, where India exported **USD 2.5 billion** and imported **USD 11.8 billion**.
- **Ten rounds of EPTA negotiations** have been held so far.
- Discussions resumed on **Early Progress Trade Agreement & proposed Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement**.
- **Canada hosts one of largest Indian diasporas**, numbering **16 lakh people of Indian origin**. Indian diaspora accounts for **3% of Canada's population**.
- **4.27 lakh Indian students** studying there in **2023**.
- **Major Indian exports to Canada** include pharma, nuclear reactors, boilers, and parts (**USD 195.46 million**).
- **Preliminary talks have begun on SMR nuclear technology** and other areas of **civil nuclear energy cooperation**.

Digital Services Tax

Why in news: Canada scrapped its **Digital Services Tax**, aiming to **restart trade talks with the United States**.

- The **DST was a 3% levy** on digital services revenue earned from **Canadian users above \$20 million/year**. **US tech giants like Google, Meta, Apple, Amazon** would have had to pay around **\$2.7 billion** to Canadian government.
- **Canada is the second-largest trading partner of the US** after Mexico and the **largest buyer of US exports**.

C-3 Bill

- **Canada has moved to modernise citizenship-by-descent laws** after **Bill C-3** received **royal assent**, affecting many **Indian-origin families**. The amendment relaxes the **first-generation limit (introduced in 2009)**, which barred citizenship for children born abroad if their Canadian parent was also born or adopted outside Canada. New law allows **Canadian parents born/adopted abroad** to pass citizenship to children born abroad **after the law takes effect**, provided there is a **substantial connection to Canada**.

Paraguay**President's Visit to India**

Why in news: PM welcomed **Paraguayan President** and highlighted **MERCOSUR** as a key platform for cooperation.

- India and MERCOSUR have a **Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA)** signed in **2004**.
- **India-Paraguay diplomatic ties** date back to **1961**, and India opened its **embassy in Asuncion in 2022**.
- India sees strategic value in **Paraguay's natural resources and minerals**, making it a **reliable regional partner**.
- Mercosur is an economic and political bloc consisting of **Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay**.
- **Venezuela was suspended** indefinitely in 2016, while **Bolivia became a full member in 2024**.
- Founded in **1991**, Mercosur aims to **create a common market, spur development, and bolster democracy**.
- In **2024**, Mercosur made significant progress towards a **trade agreement with the European Union**. **Trade deals with the United States and China** remain elusive.
- Mercosur is one of the **world's largest economic blocs**, larger than **Latin America's second-largest trade group, the Pacific Alliance**, with a **GDP of \$2.8 trillion**.

Australia**Aus-India Clean Energy Partnership**

Why in news: The **India-Australia Renewable Energy Partnership (REP)** was **launched in 2024**.

- **India has pledged to reach 500 GW of non-fossil electricity capacity by 2030**, with about **280 GW from solar energy**. India is five years ahead and as of July 2025, half of its installed electricity capacity comes from non-fossil sources.
- **Australia has set a target to reduce emissions by 62%–70% below 2005 levels by 2035**.
- The **global clean energy transition** depends heavily on **critical minerals, solar components, batteries, and hydrogen technologies**. China dominates this value chain, **refining over 90% of rare earth elements** and **producing nearly 80% of global solar modules**, making it pivotal to the world's renewable energy supply.
- **Australia is a leading producer of lithium** and has **large reserves of cobalt and rare earths**.
- **Australia's Net Zero Jobs Plan** focuses on **building a skilled workforce for the clean energy transition**.

"Welcome to Country" Smoke Ceremony

- Defence Minister was welcomed to the **Australian Parliament** with a traditional Aboriginal **ceremony**.
- By **Elder, Traditional Owner or an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person**.
- It **welcomes an outsider to Country** and grants **permission for the visitor to enter their land**.
- The visit included the **inaugural Australia–India Defence Ministers' Dialogue**.
- Australia complements India with **advanced maritime and undersea technologies**, including **P-8A Poseidon, MQ-4C Triton, and Ghost Shark autonomous submarine**. The relationship was upgraded from a **Strategic Partnership (2009)** to a **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (2020)**.

Ind–Aus Defence Ties

- The **Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (2020)** and **2+2 Dialogue (2021)** foster **strategic coordination**.
- **Mutual Logistics Support Agreement (MLSA) & Air-to-Air refuelling (2024)** increase interoperability.
- Joint exercises like **AUSTRAHIND, AUSINDEX, Pitch Black, and Malabar** show growing military convergence.

Social Media Ban

- **Australia became the first country to ban social media access for users under 16**, implementing the **Online Safety Amendment (Social Media Minimum Age) Act, 2024**.

New Zealand**FTA**

- New Zealand will levy **zero duty on 100% of India's exports**. India will relax **tariffs on 95% of imports** from New Zealand. **57% of these products** will become **duty-free from day one**.
- New Zealand has committed to invest **\$20 billion in India by 2030**. The investment includes **firm clawback mechanisms** if timelines are not met.
- The FDI is aimed at **skill mobility and services**. It seeks to create **employment**.
- For the first time, New Zealand has agreed to facilitate trade in **Ayurveda, yoga, and traditional medicine services**. The deal includes provisions for **support and mobility of Indian skilled workers**.
- The agreement builds on **MSMEs and employment opportunities**. It focuses on **labour-intensive sectors**.
- India has refused to give market access to **dairy and agricultural products** (milk, cheese, cream, butter, yogurt, onions, sugar, edible oils, spices, and rubber).
- New Zealand will develop **focused action plans** for Indian fruit growers. The focus is on **productivity, quality, and sectoral capabilities**. Special emphasis is on **exotic fruits** like **kiwifruit, apples, and honey**. Cooperation includes centres of excellence, improved planting material, capacity building, technical support, post-harvest practices, supply chains, and food safety.
- New Zealand is a **higher-income economy**, with per capita income of **\$49,380**. India's bilateral merchandise trade with New Zealand stands at **\$1.3 billion**. The deal aims to **double this trade in five years**.
- The **Indian diaspora** in New Zealand constitutes **5% of its population**.
- This is one of the **first FTAs** negotiated entirely by a **women-led and women-driven team**.

Easing access

The proposed deal will give duty-free access to a range of domestic goods and includes an FDI commitment of **\$20 billion over 15 years**

New Zealand to get

■ Duty-free access to goods such as sheep meat, wool, coal and over **95%** of forestry and wood articles

■ Duty concessions on items such as kiwi fruit, wine, seafood, cherries, avocados, persimmons, bulk infant formula, Manuka honey, and milk albumins

■ No concessions in dairy sector

Indian professionals in skilled occupations to get temporary employment entry visa pathway and stay of up to **3 years**

Pacific Islands**India–Fiji**

- Fijian PM visited India.
- **PICs (Pacific Island Countries)** is a cluster of **14 island nations** in the **Southwestern Pacific**: Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, Nauru, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.
- **FIPIC (Forum for India–Pacific Islands Cooperation)** is a grouping of **India and 14 PICs**, launched under the **Act East Policy**. Of the 14 PICs, **Fiji and PNG** have **largest populations and influence**.
- India's engagement with PICs has focused on **Fiji and PNG** due to the **Indian diaspora** (about **37% of Fiji's population** and around **3,000 Indians in PNG**). **First FIPIC Summit** was hosted by **PM Modi in Suva, Fiji in 2014**, with participation of all 14 PICs.

Africa

DRC

Why in news: Conflict in eastern DRC has seen two major developments — a U.S.-brokered peace agreement in Washington, DC and a Doha ceasefire deal mediated by Qatar. However, M23 resumed its offensive in Kivu.

- Rwanda, under international pressure over its alleged support to M23.
- U.S. seeks access to DRC’s \$24 trillion worth of critical mineral reserves. DRC holds 70% of global cobalt reserves, and is the world’s largest producer. Produces 80% of global cobalt, with China controlling ~80% via deals like Sicominex (mining rights for infrastructure). The region is rich in Tantalum, coltan, copper, diamond, gold, and tin.
- U.S. presence aims to end Chinese monopoly in the DRC’s mineral sector.
- The crisis traces back to the 1994 Rwandan genocide, in which about 8,00,000 people, mostly Tutsis, were killed by ethnic Hutu militias. After the fall of the genocidal regime in Kigali, thousands of Hutus fled to Congo in the mid-1990s. Rwanda claims that some genocidal militias continue to operate from Congolese territory.
- M23 is named after a failed peace agreement of March 23, 2009, between a Tutsi-led rebel group and the Congolese government. M23 says it is fighting to protect the rights of Congo’s Tutsi ethnic minority.
- The Congolese government and UN experts allege that Rwanda backs M23, which Rwanda denies.
- M23 resumed rebellion in 2021, again capturing Goma and expanding its reach.
- Great Lakes region has been plagued by decades of conflict and militia activity.
 - Group of large lakes in the East African Rift Valley. Spans about ten countries including DRC, Rwanda, Burundi, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya and others.
 - Holds nearly 25% of world’s unfrozen surface freshwater. Rich in biodiversity, supports 50+ million people.
 - The region is a global hub for iron ore (Mesabi Range) and copper. It also yields significant deposits of nickel, gold, silver, zinc, and industrial minerals like salt, limestone, and potash.

Morocco

Why in news: Defence Minister made his maiden visit to Morocco to inaugurate India’s first overseas defence manufacturing facility. The facility was established by Tata Advanced Systems Limited (TASL) in Berrechid, Morocco.

- The plant will produce India’s indigenously developed Wheeled Armoured Platform (WhAP).
- Russia has traditionally been Africa’s main defence supplier.

Solar Schemes in Africa

Why in news: Gol plans to showcase PM-KUSUM (Pradhan Mantri Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthan Mahabhiyan) to African countries and island nations.

- The initiative will be promoted along with the PM Surya Ghar programme for rooftop solar installations.
- These programmes will be showcased through the International Solar Alliance (ISA) platform.
- PM-KUSUM scheme, launched in 2019, aims to boost solar energy infrastructure in agriculture by setting up 100 GW of solar power plants on farmer-owned land.

PM Modi’s Five-Nation Tour

| Country | Key Outcomes / Highlights |
|-------------------|---|
| Brazil | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Talks on defence: Scorpene submarine maintenance, Akash air defence, Garuda artillery guns. - Attended BRICS Summit (Rio De Janeiro) with agenda: "Strengthening Global South Cooperation for More Inclusive and Sustainable Governance". India to chair BRICS in 2026. - Awarded PM Grand Collar of the National Order of the Southern Cross, the highest state honour. - A target was set to raise bilateral trade to \$20 billion in the next five years. - Both sides are working together on adoption of UPI in Brazil. |
| Argentina | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Focus areas: defence, rare earths, agriculture, energy, trade. |
| Ghana | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussions: agriculture, vaccine hub in West Africa, critical minerals, DPI. - Modi awarded Companion of the Order of the Star of Ghana (highest state honour). - Ghana aspires to be Africa’s vaccine hub. - Important role in African Union & ECOWAS. |
| Trinidad & Tobago | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - First PM-level visit since 1999. OCI cards announced for sixth-generation Indian-origin citizens. - Strong ties with Girmitiya community (Bihar, UP). - Trinidad joined CDRI and Global Biofuel Alliance. - In 1998, UNESCO declared August 23 as the International Day for Remembrance of the Slave Trade & Abolition. UNESCO launched 'The Slave Route' Project to document cultural interactions arising from slavery and migration across Africa, Europe, Americas, and the Caribbean. - Indentured servitude from India began in 1834, officially banned in 1917 after pressure from leaders like Gandhi, but lasted till 1922. Between 1830–1860, British, French, and Portuguese banned slavery in colonies but replaced it with indentured labour. - This practice created large Indo-Caribbean, Indo-African, and Indo-Malaysian diasporas across |

| | |
|----------------|--|
| | Caribbean, Fiji, Réunion, Natal, Mauritius, Malaysia, Sri Lanka. |
| Namibia | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Modi paid tribute to Sam Nujoma; recalled India's support to SWAPO since 1946. - Conferred Order of the Most Ancient Welwitschia Mirabilis (highest civilian award). - Adopted India's UPI digital payments system (first African country). - Friendship compared to Welwitschia mirabilis (enduring strength). - PM Modi's visit to Namibia marked the first by an Indian head of government in nearly three decades. - Politically stable, rich in mineral resources (notably uranium), and with a growing technological base. - Namibia joined the Global Biofuels Alliance and the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure. - Gap: No major deal on Namibia's critical mineral reserves. |

African Union

- AU—the successor to the Organization of African Unity (OAU)—represents all internationally recognised countries on the African continent.
- **Founding Members (OAU-1963)**: In 1963, **32** nations signed the original OAU Charter in Addis Ababa, becoming the founding members of the organization. AU currently comprises **55** member states.
- Burkina Faso, Gabon, Guinea, Mali, Niger, Sudan are currently **suspended** from AU.
- Historically, only one country **exited** the organization and later rejoined the AU: Morocco. Morocco withdrew in 1984 in protest and officially rejoined in 2017.

Global Biofuel Alliance

- Launched in **2023**, during the G20 Summit, Delhi to create a global marketplace for biofuels, facilitate technology transfer, develop international standards/certifications, and reduce global reliance on fossil fuels.
- **Founders**: The alliance was spearheaded by India, Brazil, and US (three largest biofuel producers/consumers).
- **Current Membership**: 26 member countries (India, Brazil, United States, Argentina, Italy, South Africa, United Arab Emirates, Mauritius, Bangladesh, Singapore, Finland, Canada, Tanzania, Guyana, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Uganda, Kenya) and 15 international organizations (including the World Bank, IEA, and WEF).
- 2024 **Theme** under the Brazilian: "Building a Just World and a Sustainable Planet".

CARICOM:

- Caribbean Community is a **regional political and economic union of 15 states and five associated members**.
- The **Second India-CARICOM Summit** was held in 2024, in Georgetown, Guyana — the first summit hosted in a CARICOM member country. **India-CARICOM relations** rest on **seven key pillars**: Capacity Building, Agriculture and Food Security, Renewable Energy and Climate Change, Innovation, Technology, and Trade, Cricket and Culture, Ocean Economy, Medicine and Healthcare.

India-Ethiopia

- **PM Modi** was **conferred with** Ethiopia's highest award 'The Great Honour Nishan of Ethiopia'.
- It is the **HQ of AU** and a potential **renewable-energy powerhouse**, especially in **hydropower**.
- As **landlocked**, it has traditionally relied on **Djibouti** for Red Sea access.
- It was the **pilot country** for the **Pan-African e-Network project (2007)** and has long-term cooperation with **IIT Delhi** for **tele-education**.
- Current opportunities lie in **mining**, especially **gold, critical minerals and rare earth elements**, with Ethiopia having **vast underexplored potential**.

Malnourishment - Nigeria - MSF

Why in news: Doctors Without Borders (MSF) reported a **208% rise** in **severe child malnutrition**.

- **Aid cuts** from the **U.S., U.K., and EU**, combined with **insecurity** and **rising costs**, intensified the **crisis**.

About Doctors Without Borders

- **Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)**, also called **Doctors Without Borders**, is an **international humanitarian medical NGO**.
- **Founded in 1971 in France** by **physicians**; awarded the **Nobel Peace Prize (1999)** for **impartial aid in crises**.
- Provides **emergency medical care** in **conflicts, epidemics, and disasters**.
- Holds **UN ECOSOC consultative status** and advocates on **human rights** at **UN forums**, including **UNHRC**.
- **In India (since 1999)**: works on **TB, HIV, hepatitis, mental health, COVID-19 response**, and support for **marginalised**.

India-Africa Digital Compact

Why in news: Africa Day (**May 25**) marks the founding of the **Organisation of African Unity in 1963**.

- **Ghana** integrating its system with **India's UPI** for **faster transactions**.
- First **overseas IIT campus** launched in **Zanzibar**. Offers courses in **Data Science and AI**.
- **Proposed India-Africa digital compact should be anchored in:** Mutual respect, Co-development.

India–Africa

- Delhi hosted the **India–Africa Forum Summit (IAFS–III)** in 2015 — where representatives from all **54 African states** participated. Trade crossed \$100 billion in 2024–25; India is Africa's 3rd largest trading partner.
- **Bilateral trade** has reached **nearly \$100 billion**. In FY24, India exported **\$38.17 billion** worth of goods to Africa.
- Key exports were **petroleum products, engineering goods, pharmaceuticals, rice and textiles**.
- In **2024**, Africa's imports from India were around **6% of total imports**.
- **China–Africa trade** exceeded **\$200 billion**, accounting for **21% of Africa's imports**.
- India has set a target of **doubling trade with Africa by 2030**.

Opportunities and Challenges

- By **2050**, one in four people on earth will be in **Africa**, while India will be the **world's third largest economy**.
- India is among Africa's **top five investors**, with **\$75 billion** in cumulative investments.

India–Africa Forum Summit

- **Established:** 2008 in Delhi. Originally planned every three years, alternating between India and Africa.
- **"Banjul Formula":** A rule previously used (IAFS–I 2008 Delhi & II 2011 Addis Ababa) where India only invited AU chair and 14 countries chosen by the AU. This was scrapped in 2015 to invite all 54 African heads of state.

Pan–African e–Network project

- **Launch:** 2009 (proposed by Dr. Kalam in 2004) to bridge the digital divide in Africa by providing Tele–education and Tele–medicine services. **Funding** entirely funded by Gol. **Nodal Agency:** Telecommunications Consultants India Ltd. (TCIL). The original project has now evolved into the **e–VidyaBharati** and **e–ArogyaBharati (e–VBAB)** Network Project, launched in 2018.

AfCFTA (African Continental Free Trade Area)

- **Secretariat:** Based in Accra, Ghana. **Membership:** Signed by 54 of the 55 AU states (Eritrea is the only non–signatory).
- **Ratification:** As of early 2026, 48 countries have formally ratified the agreement.

Treaties, Regional and International Groupings**G–7 Summit 2025**

Why in news: PM Modi's visited to **Kananaskis, Alberta** as a **special invitee to the 2025 G–7 Summit**.

- The **2025 G–7 Summit** marks the **50th anniversary** of the group and is being hosted by **Canada** in **Kananaskis, Alberta**. Canada has hosted **six previous summits** in **1981, 1988, 1995, 2002, 2010, and 2018**.
- G–7 is an **informal forum** of **7 major economies: U.S., Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, and the U.K.**
- Together, G–7 countries account for **40% of global GDP** and **10% of global population**.
- The group has **no legal status, secretariat, or binding authority**; its decisions require **independent ratification**.
- The G–7 originated in **1973** with finance ministers' meetings in Paris and held its first summit in **1975 in Rambouillet, France**. **Canada joined in 1976**, and the **European Union** has participated since **1977**.
- **Russia joined in 1998**, forming the **G8**, but was **expelled in 2014** after the **Crimea annexation**.
- Canada holds the **2025 presidency** and invited **Ukraine** and **Australia** as **guest nations**.
- G7 issued statements on **AI, quantum, critical minerals, wildfire prevention, and transnational repression**, but **not on terrorism**, which India had expected.

BIMSTEC

Why in news: In **April 2025**, India withdrew transshipment access for **Bangladeshi exports via Indian ports**.

- **BIMSTEC Maritime Transport Cooperation Agreement** signed to reduce regulatory barriers and port costs.
- **BIMSTEC integration efforts** risk being undermined by **perceived politicisation of trade routes**.

- **BIMSTEC** = Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi–Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation. **Established: 1997** via **Bangkok Declaration**. **BIST–EC** with **four founding members** – Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand.
- **Myanmar joined in 1997** → renamed **BIMST–EC**. **Nepal–Bhutan joined in 2004** → renamed **BIMSTEC** (7 members).
- **Current members:** Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand.
- **Headquarters:** Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- Acts as a **bridge between South Asia & Southeast Asia**. Supports India's **Neighborhood First & Act East Policy**.
- **What is the Act East Policy?**
- Launched in **2014** by **PM Modi**, building on **1991 Look East Policy** to make **Northeast India gateway to ASEAN**.
- Achievements: **10,000+ km highways, 800 km railway tracks, 8 airports, inland waterways**.
- Key projects: **Dimapur–Zubza (Nagaland), Imphal–Moreh (Manipur), Asian Highway 1**.
- **Agartala–Akhaura railway (Tripura–Bangladesh)** and **Kaladan Multi–Modal Project (Myanmar)** delayed.

25th SCO Summit 2025

Why in news: PM arrived in **Tianjin**, his **first visit to China since 2018**. **First in–person SCO attendance in three years**.

- **Theme:** Upholding the Shanghai Spirit: SCO on the Move.

- **Tianjin Declaration:** Condemned the **cross-border movement of terrorists** and equally addressed attacks in **Pahalgam** (India) and **Balochistan** (Pakistan). Announced establishment of **4 security centres**, including SCO Universal Center for Countering Security Challenges & Threats, SCO Anti-drug Center. Approved creation of **SCO Development Bank**.
- India continued its opposition to the **BRI**, although the initiative was highlighted in the SCO discussions.
- India suggested starting a "**Civilisational Dialogue**" among SCO members to foster deeper cultural exchanges.
- 2014 was declared as the **Year of China-India Friendly Exchanges. Focus on Development:**
 - Adoption of the **SCO's development strategy for the next decade**.
 - China announced **three major cooperation platforms** in **energy, green industry, and the digital economy**.
 - Proposed **three cooperation centres** for **scientific innovation, higher education, and vocational training**.
- Highlight of the **Tianjin summit** was the **Global Governance Initiative (GGI)** based on **five basic principles**.
 - First, **stay committed to sovereign equality**. Second, **stay committed to international rule of law**.
 - Third, **stay committed to multilateralism**. Fourth, **stay committed to the people-centered approach**.
 - Fifth, **stay committed to real results**, as effective global governance resolves real problems.
- With aim of addressing **deficit of global governance**, GGI stems from **purposes and principles of UN Charter**.
 - **SCO established in 2001 in Shanghai** by **Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan**.
 - **Charter signed in 2002 at St. Petersburg**, came into force on **19 September 2003**.
 - **Goals:** strengthen trust, friendship, good-neighbourliness; promote cooperation in politics, trade, economy, science & technology, culture, education, energy, transport, tourism, environment; ensure peace, security, stability; promote a fair, democratic, rational international order.
 - **Member States (10):** Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, India (since 2017), Pakistan (since 2017), Iran (joined 2023), Belarus (joined 2024). **Observer States (2):** Mongolia, Afghanistan (inactive).
 - **Dialogue Partners (14):** Sri Lanka, Turkey, Cambodia, Azerbaijan, Nepal, Armenia, Egypt, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, Myanmar, Maldives, UAE. India held the **Chairmanship in 2023**.

19th NAM Mid-term Ministerial Meeting

Why in news: Held in **Kampala, Uganda**. Theme: "Deepening Cooperation for Shared Global Affluence". Uganda serving as NAM Chair for the 2024–2027 period. **NAM:**

- **Founders:** In 1961 by five key figures: Jawaharlal Nehru (India), Gamal Abdel Nasser (Egypt), Josip Broz Tito (Yugoslavia), Sukarno (Indonesia), and Kwame Nkrumah (Ghana).
- **Current Members:** NAM consists of 121 member states (including newly joined South Sudan as of 2024), representing nearly two-thirds of the UN membership.
- **Observers:** There are currently 18 observer countries (including China, Ukraine, Mexico), 10 observer organisations.
- **19th NAM Summit:** January 19–20, 2024, Kampala, Uganda. **Theme:** "Deepening Cooperation for Shared Global Affluence". Kampala declaration **emphasized Global South solidarity**. **20th NAM Summit:** 2027, Uzbekistan.

ASEAN Summit

Why in news: **ASEAN Summit** welcomed **East Timor (Timor Leste)** as the **11th member** of the bloc.

- This is the **first new admission in 26 years**. East Timor had applied for **ASEAN membership in 2011**. Last country to join was **Cambodia in 1999**.
- **Dialogue partners** include Australia, Canada, China, EU, India, Japan, New Zealand, S. Korea, Russia, UK, US.
- **India-ASEAN Strategic Partnership (Theme: Inclusivity and Sustainability)**
- PM Modi addressed **22nd ASEAN-India Summit** virtually from Kuala Lumpur.
- **India became an ASEAN dialogue partner in 1995**. The partnership was upgraded to the **Summit level in 2002**.
- **2026** will be celebrated as **ASEAN-India Year of Maritime Cooperation**. Focus areas include humanitarian assistance and disaster response (HADR), maritime security, and the blue economy.
- Both sides agreed to **expedite the review of ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA)**.
- **East Asia Summit** includes ASEAN countries, US, China, Russia, Australia, New Zealand, Japan, S. Korea, and India.
- Malaysia handed over the ASEAN chairmanship to the **Philippines**.

China-ASEAN Economic Engagement

- China and ASEAN signed an upgrade to their FTA.
- The 11-member ASEAN bloc is China's largest trading partner, with \$771 billion in bilateral trade last year.
- The ASEAN-China FTA 3.0 was signed at a summit in Malaysia. The original FTA came into force in 2010.

RCEP & Regional Trade Architecture

- Both **China and ASEAN** are members of the **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP: ASEAN + Australia, China, Japan, New Zealand, S. Korea)**.
- **RCEP** covers **one-third of the global population** and about **30% of global GDP**.
- **Malaysia hosted an RCEP summit in Kuala Lumpur, the first in five years**.

- **ASEAN** = Association of Southeast Asian Nations. **Headquarters:** Jakarta, Indonesia.
- **Established:** 1967 via ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration) in Bangkok, Thailand.
- **Founding members:** Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand.
- **New:** Brunei (1984), Vietnam (1995), Laos & Myanmar (1997), Cambodia (1999), Timor Leste (2025).

AITIGA

- The agreement was signed in 2009 (Bangkok) and officially entered into force on January 1, 2010.
- Current Status: A formal review began in February 2024 and is currently ongoing.

- **ASEAN is India's 4th largest trading partner**, accounting for over **11% of India's global trade**, with **\$120 billion in bilateral trade** and **18% of total FDI inflows since 2000**.
- **AITIGA Issue:** Under 2009 AITIGA, India opened 71% of its tariff lines to ASEAN, while ASEAN countries like Indonesia opened 41%, Vietnam 66.5%, and Thailand 67%. Over past 15 years, India's exports to ASEAN have doubled, but imports have tripled, creating trade imbalances. Some ASEAN nations receive subsidised Chinese raw materials, process them, and re-export to India, harming the domestic manufacturing sector.

RCEP minus China

- The RCEP countries are the **10 ASEAN members** (Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, Vietnam), **Australia, China, Japan, South Korea and New Zealand**.
- The fear was this would **provide China virtually duty-free access** to the Indian market. '**RCEP minus China**' strategy is a **far superior one to joining RCEP itself**.
- **India and China** are currently **signatories to the Asia Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA)**, which is a **preferential trade pact** that provides **lower tariffs on a few items** rather than an **FTA**, which typically **lowers most tariffs to zero**. Joining RCEP would have even been worse for India than signing a direct FTA with China.
- **RCEP complements and builds upon Australia's existing FTAs with 14 other Indo-Pacific countries.**
- **RCEP entered into force in 2022 for ten parties:** Australia, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Japan, Laos, New Zealand, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. Others ratified too.
- **In 2019, India decided to exit.**

32nd APEC Summit

- **APEC summit** was held in **Gyeongju, South Korea**. The **permanent secretariat of APEC** is located in **Singapore**.
- **China** proposed establishment of **World AI Cooperation Organization** to govern the technology's development, set international rules, and foster collaboration among nations.
- Adopted **declaration** emphasising resilience and shared benefits in trade, APEC AI Initiative (2026-2030) and a framework addressing regional demographic changes, such as aging populations.
- **Theme:** "Building a Sustainable Tomorrow: Connect, Innovate, Prosper".
- **China** would host (its 3rd) the **next year's APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting in 2026**.
- APEC is a regional economic forum established in **1989**. Its stated aim was to "leverage the growing interdependence of the Asia-Pacific" and create greater prosperity through regional economic integration.
- The **21 members** of APEC are termed "economies" rather than countries or member states.
- **Taiwan and Hong Kong** attend APEC meetings as distinct entities, even though China says they are parts of China and not independent entities.
- **APEC economies are:** Australia, Brunei, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Indonesia, Malaysia, Vietnam, Singapore, Thailand, Chinese Taipei (Taiwan), China, Japan, South Korea, Russia, Canada, the United States, Mexico, Peru, and Chile, located around the Pacific Ocean.
- According to the US State Department, in the 1991 Seoul Declaration, APEC member economies proclaimed the creation of a liberalized free trade area around the Pacific Rim as the principle objective of the organization.

Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting

Why in news: Held in **Washington, D.C.**, marking the **second meet of 2025** and the **first since Operation Sindoor**, with statements on security, critical minerals, and Indo-Pacific cooperation.

- **Minilaterals**, or "**clubs**", are **small groupings** of like-minded partners.
- **Quad (India, Australia, Japan, US)** has launched an initiative to **secure supply chains of critical minerals**.
- **Rare earth magnets** like **neodymium-iron-boron (NdFeB)** are essential for **EV motors, power steering, wipers, and braking systems**. **China holds a near monopoly** over the production of **rare earth magnets**, despite global availability of raw materials. China leads in **efficient processing** of rare earths.
- **Quad was formed informally in 2004** after the Indian Ocean tsunami and **formalised in 2007** by **Shinzo Abe**. **Australia** withdrew in 2008 due to Chinese pressure. Revival in **2017** on the sidelines of the ASEAN Summit in Manila. Upgraded in 2021 from official-level talks to a Leader-level summit format. 1st summit 2021 virtually, 6th in Wilmington, USA in 2024.
- **IPMDA** was announced by **Quad at Tokyo summit in 2022** to **track "dark shipping"** (vessels intentionally disable or manipulate their Automatic Identification System transponders to "go dark" and evade monitoring by maritime authorities) and create a **near-real-time maritime picture**. The system aims to integrate **the Pacific Islands, Southeast Asia, and IOR** for maritime surveillance.
- India is heavily dependent on **China for synthetic and natural graphite**. **Mozambique, Madagascar, Brazil, and Tanzania** — top **graphite-producing nations**.

- Announced the **first Quad Indo-Pacific Logistics Network field training exercise** to be held this year.
- Unveiled plans for the **Quad Ports of the Future Partnership** in Mumbai.

Pax Silica

- A **new US-led strategic initiative, Pax Silica**, which aims to build a **secure supply chain** ranging from **critical minerals and energy inputs** to **advanced manufacturing and semiconductors**, does **not include India**.
- **Inaugural Pax Silica Washington D.C. Summit** convenes Japan, S. Korea, Singapore, Netherlands, UK, Israel, UAE, and Australia, alongside guest contributions from Taiwan, the EU, Canada, and OECD to build a **“secure, prosperous, and innovation-driven silicon supply chain”**.
- The initiative aims at building **trusted technology ecosystems**, including **semiconductors, ICT systems, fibre-optic cables, data centres, foundational models and applications**.
- **Netherlands is essential for lithography machines**, which are used for **printing chips**.
- In 2023, India was inducted into the **MSP**, a US-led collaboration aimed to catalyse public and private investment in critical mineral supply chains globally.
- **MSP partners** include Australia, Canada, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, India, Italy, Japan, Norway, the Republic of Korea, Sweden, the United Kingdom, the United States, and the European Union.
- MSP is focused on the supply chains of minerals such as **Cobalt, Nickel, Lithium, and the 17 ‘rare earth’ minerals**.

17th BRICS Summit 2025

Why in news: PM Modi at the **BRICS Summit in Rio de Janeiro**.

- BRICS called for early finalisation of the **Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism**, India proposed CCIT at the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in 1996.
- **New Members: Indonesia** was welcomed as a new member. 17th Summit was the first to include **Egypt, Ethiopia, UAE, Iran, and Indonesia**; Saudi Arabia is **yet to join**.
- **India’s 2026 Presidency:** India will take over from Brazil and give a **new form** to BRICS, redefined as **Building Resilience and Innovation for Cooperation and Sustainability**.
- **Theme:** Strengthening Global South Cooperation for More Inclusive and Sustainable Governance.
- BRICS now represents **half the global population, 40% of global GDP, and 25% of global trade**.
- At the **7th BRICS Media and Think Tank Forum** in Rio, over **250 representatives from 36 countries** pushed for equitable sharing of **AI benefits**. The forum called for **open-source AI development**, Global South involvement in **AI governance**, and creation of **multilingual corpora** for journalism and research.

BRICS Financial Independence

- The process began at the **2014 Fortaleza Summit**, when BRICS established its own financial institutions — the **New Development Bank (NDB)** and the **Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA)**.
- By **2017**, BRICS agreed to enhance **currency cooperation** through **currency swaps, local currency settlements, and direct investments** in national currencies.
- **BRICS Cross-Border Payments Initiative (BRICS Pay)** and **BRICS banknote** during the **2024 Kazan Summit**.
- **BRICS Pay** aims to reduce reliance on SWIFT network, the global interbank messaging system controlled by G-10 central banks to promote financial sovereignty and protect members from U.S. sanctions.
- **Russian SPFS (System for Transfer of Financial Messages)**, the **Chinese CIPS (Cross-Border Interbank Payment System)**, **India’s UPI**, **Brazil’s Pix system** together provide the **technological foundation** for BRICS Pay. **Interoperability** among these systems will be crucial to creating a **reliable and cohesive alternative** to SWIFT, albeit limited to BRICS and its partners.

Current Reach

- **India’s UPI** is currently **accepted in about nine countries** (Bhutan (first to accept), Singapore, Qatar, Mauritius, Nepal, UAE, Sri Lanka, France (first in Europe), and Bahrain), though it has **not integrated with BRICS**.
- **China’s CIPS** enjoys broad acceptance, operating in **over 120 countries**, and has gained prominence after the **Renminbi (RMB)** was included in the **IMF’s Special Drawing Rights basket**.
- **Brazil’s Pix system**, launched in **2020** and operated by its **central bank**, is used across **Latin America**.

New Development Bank

- Established in **2015** by **Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa (BRICS)**.
- Multilateral development bank to **mobilise resources** for **infrastructure and sustainable development projects** in **emerging markets and developing countries (EMDCs)**.
- **Members:** Original BRICS + Bangladesh, UAE, Egypt, Algeria, Colombia, and Uzbekistan), with Uruguay also approved and pending official accession. Founding members’ combined voting power must be at least **55%**.
- Membership open to all **UN members** (borrowing & non-borrowing) under **Article 2** of NDB.

India-Argentina Relations:

- This is the **first Indian bilateral visit** to Argentina at the level of the **Prime Minister in 57 years**. It is PM’s **second visit** to the country as Prime Minister – his first was in **2018 for the G20 Summit**.
- **Strategic partner** of India since **2019**, and the two countries celebrated **75 years of diplomatic relations** last year.

- Argentina holds the **world's second largest shale gas reserves** and the **fourth largest shale oil reserves**.
- Argentina has **rich reserves** of critical minerals like **lithium, copper, and rare earth elements**.
- India's public sector joint venture **KABIL** has already won a few **concessions** in Argentina since **2024**.

Related news:

- **Leaders' Framework Declaration on Climate Finance** emerged from discussions by a new BRICS contact group on climate change and sustainable development under Russia's chairmanship. The declaration said CBAMs and similar measures violate the 1994 UNFCCC provisions.
- **Article 3(5) of UNFCCC** urges countries to promote an open international economic system for sustainable growth, especially for developing countries. It says measures to combat climate change should not become arbitrary discrimination or a disguised restriction on international trade.

SWIFT:

- The **US weaponised the global financial infrastructure** by excluding **Iran (2012)** and **Russia (2022)** from the **Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT)**.
- **SWIFT** is a **secure platform** for **financial institutions** to exchange information on global monetary transactions such as money transfers, providing secure messaging services to 11,000+ banks in 200+ countries.
- SWIFT is **based in Belgium** and overseen by the **central banks of 11 industrial countries** – Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Sweden, Switzerland, UK, US, and Belgium.

High Seas Treaty

- The **High Seas Treaty** formally known as the **Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ) Agreement** was **ratified by over 60 countries** and will **come into force in January 2026**.
- The treaty aims to **preserve and sustainably use marine biodiversity** in areas **beyond national jurisdictions**, addressing threats such as **climate change, overfishing, and pollution**.
- The **BBNJ Treaty** establishes a **global framework** to govern **marine biodiversity in international waters**, i.e., areas **beyond national control** (the "high seas"). It builds upon **UNCLOS, 1982**, which lacked specific provisions for **biodiversity protection** in the high seas.

Four Major Components:

1. **Marine Genetic Resources (MGRs)** recognised as the common heritage of humankind, ensuring fair and equitable sharing of benefits.
 2. **Area-Based Management Tools (ABMTs)** including Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) to safeguard biodiversity, enhance climate resilience, and ensure food security, incorporating both scientific and indigenous knowledge.
 3. **EIAs** mandatory for activities potentially impacting high seas ecosystems.
 4. **Capacity Building and Technology Transfer** to help developing countries participate equitably in marine research and conservation.
- **March 2023:** Consensus was reached, **June 2023:** Treaty officially **adopted**.
 - **September 2025:** Ratified by 60+ nations, enabling it to **enter into force in January 2026**.
 - India launched the **'SAHAV' digital ocean data portal**, underscoring its leadership in marine conservation.
 - French Polynesia to establish the **world's largest marine protected area** (approx. **5 million sq. km**).
 - 37 countries, led by Panama and Canada, formed a **High Ambition Coalition for a Quiet Ocean** to address marine noise pollution. UN agencies launched **'One Ocean Finance' platform** to mobilize funds from ocean-based industries.

World Summit for Social Development

- **2nd** summit convened by the **UN** and hosted by Doha, **Qatar** to accelerate implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, address persistent gaps from the 1995 Copenhagen Declaration, and foster global solidarity on poverty eradication, decent work, and social inclusion.
- **Objectives:** Recommit to the 10 core principles of the **1995 Copenhagen Declaration**, address new challenges (climate change, technology, demographics), and promote inclusive, equitable policies.
- A key outcome was the adoption of the **Doha Political Declaration** through **UNGA Resolution A/RES/80/5**. The declaration renewed global solidarity for **equity, justice**, and alignment with the **2030 Agenda and SDGs**.

World Summit for Social Development (WSSD):

- It was held in **1995**, in **Copenhagen, Denmark**.
- It focused on three pillars – **eradicating poverty, achieving full employment and decent work, and promoting social integration** – as overriding goals of sustainable development.
- It adopted **Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action**. Summit established a **holistic framework** linking **social justice, economic growth, peace**, with emphasis on enabling environments and follow-up mechanisms.
- The summit forms the **foundation for SDGs and social policy**, with **India highlighting inclusive growth** and influencing national schemes on poverty alleviation and employment.

G-20

- **G-20 leaders' summit in Johannesburg** was the **first ever held in an African country**. AU became a G-20 member during India's 2023 Presidency.

- The **theme of this year's G20** is 'Solidarity, Equality and Sustainability'.
- The deliberations and declaration reflected the spirit of the "**Global South**", highlighting global challenges such as **conflicts, deepening inequality, and economic uncertainty**.
- The nations called for a "**just, comprehensive, and lasting peace**" in **Sudan, DRC, Palestine and Ukraine**.
- PM addressed all three sessions of the G-20 and suggested **six initiatives**:
 - Traditional Knowledge Repository
 - G20-Africa Skills Multiplier Initiative (India proposes to train 1 million across Africa)
 - Global Healthcare Response Team
 - Initiative on Countering the Drug-Terror Nexus
 - Open Satellite Data Partnership for sharing agriculture, fishing, and disaster-related data
 - G20 Critical Minerals Circularity
- **U.S. government boycotted it**, sending only a diplomat as an observer.
- The declaration referenced the African philosophy of '**Ubuntu**' — "**I am because we are**".
- **G20 is an informal grouping of 19 countries**: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, United Kingdom, and the United States along with the **European Union** and the **African Union**.
- G20 members represent around **85% of global GDP, over 75% of global trade, and about 66% of population**.
- **G20 has no permanent secretariat or staff**, and its **presidency rotates annually** among members.
- The **G20 presidency** is supported by a "**troika**" of **previous, current, and incoming presidencies**; during **South Africa's Presidency**, the troika consists of **Brazil, South Africa, and the United States**.
- The **Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty** was launched at the **G20 Leaders' Summit in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil)**. It aims to **accelerate efforts to eradicate hunger and poverty** while promoting **SDGs**.
- Leaders adopted the **G-20 declaration** calling for **strong measures to counter climate change**.
- PM announced the **Australia-Canada-India Technology and Innovation (ACITI) Partnership**. It will deepen cooperation on critical and emerging technologies, resilient supply chains, clean energy, artificial intelligence.
- **AI** is classified into **Artificial Narrow Intelligence** or **weak AI**, and **Artificial General Intelligence (AGI)** or **strong AI**.
 - ANI is designed for specific tasks and excels within a narrow domain.
 - AGI aims to replicate human cognitive abilities and perform any intellectual task a human can do.

International Solar Alliance

- The **President of India** inaugurated the **opening plenary** of the **Eighth Session of ISA** in **New Delhi**. **Theme was "One Sun, One World, One Grid"**.
 - The **Assembly** witnessed the launch of **five ISA knowledge products/reports**: Ease of Doing Solar 2025, Solar PV Skills and Jobs in Africa, Solar Compass: Special Issue on Integrated Photovoltaics, Global Floating Solar Framework, and Global Solar Trends & Outlook 2025.
 - **ISA** is a **joint initiative of France and India**, launched during **COP21 in Paris in 2015** to promote **solar energy**.
 - **Headquartered in New Delhi**, the **ISA** brings together **over 120 member countries** to improve **energy access and security** and promote **solar power** for a **clean energy future**.
- New Initiatives Launched:**
- **SUNRISE** (Solar Upcycling Network for Recycling, Innovation & Stakeholder Engagement): For a circular solar economy, managing solar waste sustainably.
 - **SIDS Solar Procurement Platform**: Helping Small Island Developing States access affordable energy.
 - **One Sun One World One Grid (OSOWOG)**: To build regional solar interconnections across continents. The plan identifies key transmission links between Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and Africa.
 - **Global Capability Centre and ISA Academy**: ISA announced the Global Capability Centre in India as a "Silicon Valley for Solar," connecting global centres of excellence.

World Toilet Summit 2025

- An **annual event** organized by the **World Toilet Organization (WTO)** to address the **global sanitation crisis**.
- This year, the **World Toilet Summit (WTS)** was held in **New Delhi**, hosted by **Sulabh International & MoHUA**.
- It is **coinciding with the United Nations-designated World Toilet Day (19 November)**.
- **Theme**: "Sanitation: Collective Responsibility for Dignity and Planet"
- **Focus**: Circular economy practices,, and transforming from open-defecation-free (ODF) to ODF++ status.
- **Key Campaigns**: Launch of the "Toilet Paas Hai" (Toilet is nearby) and "Main Saaf Hi Achha Hoon" campaigns.

The Indian Ocean

- The **Indian Ocean** is home to **one-third of humanity**. **India's Blue Ocean Strategy** should rest on **three pillars: stewardship of the commons, resilience, and inclusive growth**.
- At the **Blue Economy and Finance Forum (BEFF)** in Monaco, stakeholders highlighted a \$25 billion pipeline of ocean investments and announced \$8.7 billion in new commitments.

- At **COP30 in Belém**, the **One Ocean Partnership** committed to mobilise \$20 billion for ocean action by 2030.
- **Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing**, coral reef degradation, and intensifying storm surges erode livelihoods and undermine social stability.
- **3rd United Nations Ocean Conference (UNOC3)** held in Nice, France, co-hosted by France and Costa Rica. Focused on accelerating action for SDG 14, this summit aims to bolster marine protection, enhance blue economy sustainability, and address climate impacts on oceans.

Colombo Security Conclave

- Established in **2011**, comprising India, Sri Lanka, Maldives, Mauritius, Bangladesh, and **Seychelles (2025)**. Originally formed as a trilateral in 2011 (India, Sri Lanka, Maldives), it was reconstituted as the CSC in 2020.
- At **7th NSA-level meeting** of the Conclave, member states focused on **five pillars of cooperation**; maritime safety and security, countering terrorism and radicalisation, combating trafficking and transnational organised crime, cyber security and protection of critical infrastructure and technology, and HADR.
- **Malaysia** participated as a **guest country** for the **first time**.

BRIDGE

- As the **UAE** accelerates **diversification away from oil**, **media, culture and technology** are emerging as a **strategic frontier**. This ambition was showcased when **Abu Dhabi** hosted the **BRIDGE Summit** billed as the **largest debut media event**.
- The **three-day summit**, held by the **BRIDGE Alliance** under the **aegis of the UAE government**, brought together voices from **journalism, cinema, music, technology and communications**.
- Idea for **BRIDGE** emerged from growing **fragmentation of media conversations** amid **shared global pressures**. **Misinformation, fact-checking challenges**, and **uncertainty about truth** were described as **global problems**.
- This led to the creation of **BRIDGE Alliance** as a **firm**, not a **government initiative**. **Abu Dhabi** will be the **permanent home** of the annual summit, with **pop-up engagements** in the **U.S., Europe, Asia and Africa**.

Kimberley Process

- Through a **consensus**, the **Kimberley Process (KP) Plenary** selected **India** as **chairperson from January 1, 2026**.
- This is the **third time** India will chair the **Kimberley Process**, a tripartite initiative involving governments, the international diamond industry, and civil society.
- The initiative aims to prevent the trade in **"conflict diamonds"**, defined as rough diamonds used to finance conflicts undermining legitimate governments, as per UN Security Council resolutions.
- **GJEPC** is the **nodal agency** for the **KP in India**.

UN

UN Security Council

- Why in news:** Pakistan assumed the **Presidency of the UNSC** for the **month of July**. The presidency is part of **Pakistan's two-year term as a non-permanent member** of the **UNSC**, which **began in January 2025**.
- 10 non-permanent members of UNSC with two-year, rotating terms, are: **Term ending 2026:** Denmark, Greece, Pakistan, Panama, Somalia. **Term ending 2027:** Bahrain, Colombia, DRC, Latvia, and Liberia.
 - **United Nations** was established in **1945**, ratified by **51 nations**, including the **five permanent members (P5)**.
 - The first **UN General Assembly** meeting took place in **1946**. **UN has 193 member countries**.
 - The **UN Charter** created **six main organs**, including the **UNSC**. The **UNSC** held its **first session in 1946** in **London**, and now operates from **New York**. The **UNSC has 15 members** — **5 permanent (China, France, Russia, US, UK)**.

UNSC's Counter-Terrorism Committee

Why in news: Pakistan appointed as vice-chair of the UNSC's Counter-Terrorism Committee and head of the Taliban Sanctions Committee for 2025.

Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC):

- Established in 2001 via **Resolution 1373** after 9/11 attacks. Comprises all 15 Security Council members.
- **Mandate:** Ensure States criminalize terrorism, deny funding & safe haven, and enhance counter-terrorism capacities. Functions through monitoring, assessment, and information-sharing.
- Technical support provided by Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate.

Taliban Sanctions Committee (1267 Committee):

- A Security Council body monitoring sanctions against Taliban members, affiliates, and entities.
- Implements asset freezes, travel bans, and arms embargoes. Maintains a list of sanctioned individuals and entities.
- Conducts periodic reviews and ensures member states enforce measures.
- Aims to curb Taliban-linked terrorism and support peace efforts.

UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

Why in news: India elected to ECOSOC for the 2026–2028 term.

- **Membership** is region-based, divided among Africa, Asia-Pacific, Eastern European, Latin American & Caribbean, Western European and other States.
- **India elected under Asia-Pacific group**, alongside China, Lebanon, Turkmenistan (4 seats available).
- **Headquarters:** New York, USA. **Established in 1945** as one of the six main organs of the UN.
- **Members:** 54, elected by the UN General Assembly for a 3-year term; 18 elected each year.
- **Key roles:** Advance economic, social, environmental dimensions of sustainable development; coordinate work of UN bodies & specialized agencies; issue policy recommendations to UN system & member states.

Abstentions All-time High

Why in news: An increasingly polarised world has led India to alter its voting strategy at the United Nations, increasing its abstentions and reducing 'yes' votes.

- India's 'yes' vote share has fallen to 56%, the lowest since 1955. The abstention rate has risen to 44%.

Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4)

Why in news: The 4th International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4) was held in Seville, Spain. It builds upon the previous three: Monterrey (2002), Doha (2008), and Addis Ababa (2015).

- **Sevilla Commitment** was adopted to close \$4 trillion annual SDG financing gap in developing countries.
- The USA skipped the Conference, despite being one of the largest economies.
- Supported by UN DESA, the Financing for Sustainable Development Office, and ECOSOC.
- A new global platform, the **Sevilla Forum on Debt**, was launched at the 16th UNCTAD16 in Geneva. Forum is a Spanish-led initiative supported by UNCTAD and the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). It aims to serve as an open and inclusive space for dialogue and action on sovereign debt reform.

US - UNESCO

Why in news: The United States announced it will pull out of UNESCO again.

- The decision comes two years after rejoining UNESCO, following the U.S. exit in 2018.
- UNESCO's decision to admit the 'State of Palestine' as a Member State was problematic.
- The withdrawal will take effect at the end of December 2026. This marks the third time.
- The withdrawal is expected to impact UNESCO financially, as the U.S. contributes significantly to its budget.

Global South

India - IDEAS

Why in news: India's development cooperation with the Global South is around \$7 billion in 2023–24.

- Key modalities include capacity building, technology transfer, market access, grants, and concessional finance under the Indian Development and Economic Assistance Scheme (IDEAS). Lines of Credit have been primary instrument.
- At the Voice of Global South Summit (2024), India proposed a Global Development Compact (GDC) to balance engagement modalities.
- **Triangular Cooperation (TrC)** brings together a donor from the Global North, a pivotal South country, and a third partner country for shared, tailored development.

Global South Meet

Why in news: High-level meeting of like-minded Global South countries in New York, hosted by India.

- The participating countries included 9 from Asia, 5 from the Americas (North, South, and Caribbean), and 6 from Africa. From India's neighbourhood, only Sri Lanka, Maldives, and Mauritius took part in the meeting.
- Asian participants included Bahrain, Indonesia, Qatar, Singapore, Vietnam; from Americas — St. Lucia, Trinidad and Tobago, Cuba, Jamaica, and Suriname; and from Africa — Chad, Ghana, Lesotho, Morocco, Nigeria, and Somalia.
- The meeting was the first of its kind, held on the sidelines of the UNGA.
- India has hosted Voice of Global South Summit, inviting about 125 countries annually over the past three years.

Misc

India's Arctic Outlook

Why in news: Arctic is becoming a zone of military and geopolitical contestation.

- The shift is driven by climate change which has opened new maritime routes and resource frontiers. Northern Sea Route (NSR), previously seasonal, is now virtually open year-round. NSR:

- Shortest shipping route connecting western Eurasia to the Asia-Pacific region. About **5,600 km** long, located entirely within the Russian Arctic EEZ, stretching from the Barents Sea (near Novaya Zemlya) to the Bering Strait.
- The route runs along the Siberian coast through the Kara, Laptev, East Siberian, and Chukchi seas.
- Offers up to **50% distance savings** compared to the Suez Canal route.
- India's **Arctic Policy (2022)** emphasises **climate science, environmental protection, and sustainable development**. It draws links between the **Arctic** and the **Himalayan "Third Pole"**. India operates a **research station in Svalbard**, takes part in **polar expeditions**, and holds **observer status** in the **Arctic Council**.
- **Himadri Station**: India's first permanent Arctic research base. **Inaugurated in 2008** at **Ny-Ålesund, Svalbard**.

María Machado

Why in news: Venezuelan Opposition leader **María Corina Machado** won the **2025 Nobel Peace Prize**.

- Machado was barred from contesting the 2024 presidential election by the Maduro government.
- 20th woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, highlighting her role in advocating democracy.

Diaspora

Why in news: The **Indian diaspora** has been in the spotlight in various countries in recent weeks.

- **India does not allow dual citizenship, but the U.S. does.** India gave partial citizenship rights to PIOs through the **Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2003**, by adding **Sections 7A-7D** to the Citizenship Act, 1955.
- This amendment introduced **OCI**, offering **lifetime visa-free entry**, exemption from police registration, and rights similar to NRIs in **economic, educational, and financial fields**. In **2015, PIO and OCI** were merged as **OCI**.
- India describes this arrangement as **"dual citizenship in spirit, but not in law."**
- U.S. citizens **can hold passports of more than one country**.

Necropolitics

Why in news: The concept of **Necropolitics**, coined by **Achille Mbembe**.

- Refers to **use of political power to decide who may live and who must die**.
- **Example: Gaza** bombing of hospitals, aid centres, children dismissed as collateral damage.

Healthocide

Why in news: Researchers from the **American University of Beirut, Lebanon** coined a new word **healthocide**.

- **Healthocide** refers to the **deliberate destruction of whole health ecosystems** in conflict zones such as **Gaza**.

Henley Passport Index

Why in news: In the **Henley Passport Index**, India **climbed eight spots** to **rank 77th**, up from **85th** last year.

- **Indian passport holders** can now visit **59 destinations** visa-free or with visa-on-arrival, up from **57**.
- **Singapore** holds the **number one spot**, offering visa-free travel to **193 destinations**.
- **Japan and South Korea** share **second place**, each granting access to **190 countries**.
- **7 European countries; Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Spain;** share **3rd spot** with **189 destinations**.
- The **Henley Passport Index** ranks passports based on **visa-free travel access**.
- The index uses **IATA data** and is **updated quarterly**.

Global Peace Index 2025

Why in news: There are **59 active state-based conflicts** in 2025, the **highest since WWII**, according to the **Global Peace Index (GPI) 2025** by the **Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP)**.

- GPI 2025 covers **163 countries**, representing **99.7% of world's population**.
- There was a **0.36% deterioration** in **global peacefulness**, marking the **13th deterioration in 17 years**.

● The GPI uses **23 indicators** across **three domains: Societal Safety and Security, Ongoing Conflict, and Militarisation**.

● Only **9% of conflicts** result in **decisive military victory**, and just **4% end with negotiated settlements**, showing a trend toward **'forever wars'**.

● **Iceland** is **most peaceful country** since 2008, followed by **Austria, New Zealand, Switzerland**.

● **India ranks 115th** in GPI 2025 with a **score of 2.229**, showing a **0.58% improvement**.

● India's ranking improved gradually: **116 in 2024, 126 in 2023, 139 in 2020, 141 in 2019**.

● **South Asia** showed **largest regional deterioration**, especially **Bangladesh and Pakistan**.

| GPI Rank 2025 | Country | Region | GPI Score 2025 |
|---------------|-------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| 1 | Iceland | Europe | 1.095 |
| 2 | Ireland | Europe | 1.260 |
| 3 | New Zealand | Oceania | 1.282 |
| 4 | Austria | Europe | 1.294 |
| 115 | India | South Asia | 2.229 |
| 162 | Ukraine | Europe | 3.434 |
| 163 | Russia | Europe/Asia (Eurasia) | 3.441 |

| Rank | Country | Score |
|------|--------------|-------|
| 1. | Burkina Faso | 8.581 |
| 2. | Pakistan | 8.374 |
| 3. | Syria | 8.006 |
| 4. | Mali | 7.907 |
| 14. | India | 6.411 |
| 49. | China | 1.863 |

- **Afghanistan** remains the **least peaceful country** in **South Asia**, which is the **second least peaceful region globally**.
- The **Global Terrorism Index (GTI) 2025** is published by the **Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP)**, founded in **2007** by **Steve Killelea AM**.
- IEP publishes key global reports including the **Global Peace Index**, **Global Terrorism Index**, and **Ecological Threat Report**.
- **Terrorism remains a persistent global threat**, according to the **GTI 2025**.
- The number of countries experiencing at least **one terrorist incident** rose from **58 to 66**, the **highest since 2018**. **Pakistan** is identified as one of the countries where **terrorist activity has increased since 2007**.

E-Passport

Why in news: Ministry of External Affairs rolled out **e-Passport** and **Passport Seva Programme 2.0**.

- An **ePassport** is a combined **paper and electronic passport** with an **RFID chip** and **antenna** embedded in the passport inlay. Contains **personal particulars** and **biometric information** of the passport holder.
- Supported by **Public Key Infrastructure (PKI) solution** for security. **Safeguards against forgery** and fraudulent activities like **fake passports**, ensuring genuineness at **border controls**.

ACLED Report

- According to a **new report** from **ACLED**, an estimated **10% of the world's population** were **exposed to conflict** this year. **Nearly three out of four** such events **directly involved state forces**.
- **Europe** recorded the **greatest increase in violence**, largely driven by the **Russia-Ukraine conflict**.
- **End of Syria's civil war** and **ceasefires in Lebanon and Gaza** reduced **violent events** in West Asia.
- **Israel and Russia** were responsible for about **90% of violent incidents targeting civilians outside their borders**.
- The **Myanmar military** accounted for **nearly a third of violence by state forces against civilians**.
- In terms of **fatalities**, about **60%** were caused by **non-state armed groups and mobs**.
- The **Rapid Support Forces (RSF)**, **Sudan's paramilitary group**, were a major contributor.
- The **Allied Democratic Forces**, linked to the **Islamic State**, were responsible for at least **1,370 civilian fatalities**.
- The **March 23 Movement (M23)** was also cited.

Radio Ceylon

- **Radio Ceylon**, one of the **world's oldest radio broadcasters**, turned **100**.
- **Radio Ceylon** officially began broadcasting in **1925**, when **radio was a novelty** and decades before **television**.
- It was the **first radio broadcaster in Asia**.
- In **India**, **private radio broadcasting** started in **1927**, while **All India Radio** began operations in **1936**.
- The **Netherlands** was the **first country** to begin **public broadcasts** in **1919**, followed by the **US** in **1920**.
- The **BBC** followed in **1922**, and **Radio Ceylon** entered the airwaves **soon after**.
- **Ceylon (Sri Lanka)** was under **British rule** when **Edward Harper**, an **English engineer** at the **Ceylon Telegraph Department**, founded the **Ceylon Wireless Club** in **1923** with local and British enthusiasts.

Gen Z Protests

- **Mexico** witnessed **Gen Z protests** over **rampant crime**, **government corruption**, and **lack of security**.
- Other Gen Z protests include in **Bangladesh**, **Nepal**, **Indonesia**, **Philippines**, **Timor-Leste**, **Madagascar**, **Maldives**.
- Generation Z (Gen Z) refers to people born between **1997** and **2012**.
- Across **Gen Z protests**, except the **2024 protests in Bangladesh**, a unique feature has been the use of the **Straw Hat Pirates' Jolly Roger flag** from **One Piece**. The flag was first used in truck drivers' protests in Indonesia. The flag was later adopted by similar protests across the world.

New Caledonia

- **New Caledonia**, a **French island territory** with **~2.71 lakh people**, has long grappled with its **colonial legacy**.
- **1998 Nouméa Accord** acknowledged the **trauma of the indigenous Kanak people** and granted **significant autonomy**.
- **Three referendums (2018, 2020, 2021)** rejected independence.
- **France colonised New Caledonia in 1853** as a **penal colony**. **Nouméa Accord** granted a **sui generis status** within France but failed to resolve **long-term questions of sovereignty**.

Malta's 'Golden Passports'

Why in news: Recently, the **European Court of Justice (ECJ)** struck down '**golden passports**' scheme of **2020**.

- Allowed foreigners to obtain **Maltese citizenship (by extension EU)** in exchange for **financial investments**.
- **Citizenship by Investment** or **golden passports**: Grant nationality to 3rd-country nationals in return for investments.
- **Residency by Investment (RBI)** or **golden visas**: Allow residence & work rights in exchange for financial investments.
- The **European Parliament and Commission** had called for abolition of both schemes due to security risks.

- Though **nationality laws** fall under **individual country jurisdiction**, the **1992 Maastricht Treaty** created **EU citizenship**, binding nationality to broader EU rights.

DECODECIVILS