

Comprehensive Coverage of
**CURRENT
AFFAIRS**

ENTIRE CONTENT OF MAY 2025



- ✓ Polity and Governance
- ✓ International Relations
- ✓ History, Art & Culture
- ✓ Internal Security
- ✓ Science & Technology
- ✓ Economy

- ✓ Indian Society
- ✓ Environment
- ✓ Disaster Management
- ✓ Awards
- ✓ Important Personalities
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Useful for IAS / PCS / HCS / HAS & other Exams.

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HISTORY, ART AND CULTURE

Basava Jayanthi

- Basava Jayanthi was recently observed across India. On this occasion, Prime Minister Narendra Modi remembered the values and ideas of Jagadguru Basaveshwara. Also known as Basavanna, he was a reformer, philosopher, and poet from the 12th century.
- Basaveshwara served as a minister in the Kalachuri kingdom under King Bijjala II. At a time when caste discrimination was rigid, he stood for equality and dignity. He is considered the guiding force behind the Lingayat movement.
- Basaveshwara believed that spiritual wisdom should be available to all. He created the *Anubhava Mantapa*, a platform where men and women from every caste came together and discussed spiritual ideas. His teachings were written as *Vachanas*—short, powerful verses in Kannada. These poems are still read and respected for their clarity and relevance.
- He gave equal space to women in spiritual matters. Akka Mahadevi is a well-known example of a woman poet-saint who found her voice through this movement. Basaveshwara's thoughts continue to inspire those who fight for equality and human dignity.

Thrissur Pooram

Context

The colourful and grand festival of Thrissur Pooram has begun. It started with the ceremonial flag hoisting, a traditional event that marks the beginning of the celebration.

- The festival was started by Shakthan Thampuran, the ruler of Kochi. It brings together ten temples from the Thrissur region. These temples take part in a friendly and spiritual competition.
- The highlight is the procession of richly decorated elephants. Each group carries beautiful parasols, and they change them in rhythm during the Kudamattom ceremony. Alongside, the Ilanjithara Melam, a grand musical performance with drums and other instruments, adds energy to the entire scene.
- The festival is not just about rituals. It is a visual and musical experience that unites people of all backgrounds.

Zojila Pass reopened

Context

Zojila Pass in Jammu and Kashmir has reopened earlier than usual this year. It connects the Kashmir Valley to Ladakh and is one of the highest and most dangerous mountain passes in the world.

- This pass is vital for the military and civilians alike. It sits at over 3,500 metres and faces snow for much of the year.
- During the 1947–48 war, this pass was captured by enemy forces. In a bold move, India launched *Operation Bison* and used tanks at this height for the first time. Lt Col Rajinder Singh led the charge and reopened the route to Leh and Kargil.
- To improve year-round travel, the government is building the Zojila Tunnel. Once completed, it will be the longest bi-directional road tunnel in Asia. It is expected to boost security, tourism, and the local economy.

Veerashaiva-Lingayats Seek Separate Religious Identity

Context

The Veerashaiva-Lingayat community has reignited its long-standing demand for a separate religious identity in the upcoming 2026 census. This issue has been central to debates around religion, identity, and social reform, especially in Karnataka and parts of southern India.

Philosophical Roots

Lingayatism traces its roots to the 12th-century Bhakti reformer Basavanna. Basavanna preached against caste hierarchies, idol worship, and Vedic rituals. He envisioned an egalitarian society grounded in devotion to Shiva and moral living. Lingayats believe in wearing an *ishtha linga*—a personal emblem of Shiva—around their necks, signifying individual spiritual responsibility.

Community Composition and Regional Influence

The community is socially and politically significant in Karnataka and also has a presence in Maharashtra, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Kerala. The term "Veerashaiva" is often debated, with some claiming it to be synonymous with Lingayats and others viewing it as a distinct tradition rooted in Shaivism.

Demand for Separate Religion Status

The community is now pressing for an independent religion code in the census, separate from Hinduism. This demand is based on their unique theological beliefs, social practices, and reformist origin. The issue has political, legal, and administrative implications and is likely to dominate public discourse ahead of the 2026 enumeration.

The Great Philosopher Adi Shankaracharya

Context

Adi Shankaracharya Jayanti was recently celebrated, honoring the life and contributions of one of India's foremost spiritual philosophers. He played a crucial role in the revival and unification of Hindu thought during a time of doctrinal fragmentation.

Early Life and Spiritual Growth

Shankara was born in 788 AD in Kalady, Kerala. He exhibited exceptional intellect and spiritual inclination from a young age. At the age of six, he wrote devotional compositions and soon became a disciple of Govindapadacharya, a follower of Gaudapada.

Philosophical Contributions

Shankara is known as the principal exponent of *Advaita Vedanta*—a non-dualistic school of Indian philosophy. He argued that the individual soul (*Atman*) and the universal soul (*Brahman*) are identical and that the world of multiplicity is merely an illusion (*Maya*).

Major Works

He wrote commentaries on the Upanishads, Bhagavad Gita, and Brahmasutras—collectively called *Prasthanas Traya*. His independent works such as *Vivekachudamani*, *Atmabodha*, and *Bhaja Govindam* combined rigorous logic with deep devotion.

Institutional Legacy

He established four mathas (monastic centers) in the four cardinal directions of India—Sringeri, Dwaraka, Puri, and Badrinath—ensuring the continuity of Advaita Vedanta. His disciples like Padmapada, Totaka, and Sureshvaracharya carried forward his teachings.

Impact and Relevance

Though he lived only 32 years, Shankara's legacy transformed Hinduism. He brought doctrinal coherence, revived spiritual institutions, and created a pan-Indian identity rooted in Vedic knowledge and inclusive wisdom.

Vikramaditya I Inscription Unearthed in Davangere

Context

A rare 7th-century inscription from the reign of Chalukya king Vikramaditya I has been unearthed near Madapura Lake in Davangere, Karnataka. The inscription is etched on a five-foot-tall stone slab with 17 lines in old Kannada script.

Content and Interpretation

The inscription records a land donation by Singhavenna, a royal officer, who waived taxes to benefit local villagers. It also references a unit named *Ballavi*, consisting of 70 villages, indicating a well-organized local administration.

Historical Importance

Vikramaditya I ruled from 644–681 CE and is credited with restoring Chalukya dominance after the fall of Pulakesin II. He successfully led campaigns against the Pallavas and captured Kanchipuram in 668 CE, though his further expansion was checked at the Battle of Peruvalanallur.

Chalukyan Legacy

The Chalukya dynasty, founded by Pulakesin I in 543 CE with Vatapi (Badami) as the capital, played a pivotal role in shaping Deccan history. Vikramaditya's efforts marked a resurgence of the dynasty, leading to cultural and administrative advancements.

Lakkundi Temples Move Toward UNESCO Recognition

Context

The temples of Lakkundi, Karnataka, have been proposed for inclusion in UNESCO's tentative list of World Heritage Sites. This reflects recognition of their architectural brilliance and cultural richness.

Historical Significance

Lakkundi, once known as Lokkigundi, was a prominent religious center under the Western Chalukyas. Kings such as Tailapa II and Satyashraya built many temples here. The site also flourished under later rulers including the Kalachuris, Yadavas, and Hoysalas.

Architectural Features

Lakkundi is known for its unique *Vesara* style—a fusion of Nagara (northern) and Dravida (southern) styles. Its temples have elevated platforms (*jagatis*), pillared halls (*mandapas*), sanctums (*garbhagrihas*), and intricately carved *shikharas* (towers). The site also has Jain temples and elaborate stepwells.

Decline and Revival

In the 14th century, Delhi Sultanate invasions led to the decline of Lakkundi. However, its cultural value remained, and it has become a subject of architectural and religious studies in recent decades. Its inclusion in UNESCO's list would enhance global awareness and preservation efforts.

Gundaram Inscriptions Reveal Satavahana-era History

Context

The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) discovered 11 inscriptions in the Gundaram Reserve Forest near Peddapalli, Telangana. These inscriptions range from the 1st century BCE to 6th century CE and are written in Brahmi script using the Prakrit language.

Notable Inscriptions

One inscription mentions a Haritiputra lineage figure—possibly connected to the Chutu dynasty—who excavated a cave for Buddhist monks. Another mentions a Satavahana prince, Kumāra Hakusiri, indicating regional alliances and patronage.

Religious and Administrative Insights

The inscriptions reflect a multi-religious environment with Buddhist and Shaiva symbols. They also reveal administrative structures, land grants, and the role of royal officers in managing temple lands and monastic endowments.

Satavahana Background

The Satavahanas ruled the Deccan from around 1st century BCE to 3rd century CE. Their reign extended across Maharashtra, Telangana, and Andhra Pradesh, with capitals at Pratishthana (Paithan) and Amaravati. Gautamiputra Satakarni is considered their most powerful ruler.

Piprahwa Relics Auction Halted by Culture Ministry

Context

The Ministry of Culture intervened to halt the auction of sacred Piprahwa relics associated with Lord Buddha. These relics were scheduled for auction by Sotheby's in Hong Kong, sparking national and international concern.

Historical Background

The Piprahwa Stupa, located in Siddharthnagar district of Uttar Pradesh, is believed to be the ancient city of Kapilavastu—home of the Shakya clan and birthplace of Prince Siddhartha (later Gautama Buddha). In 1898, British landowner William Claxton Peppé excavated the stupa and discovered several reliquaries containing human bone fragments, semi-precious stones, and gold items.

Significance of the Inscription

A Brahmi inscription on one of the stone caskets clearly states that the relics were of the Buddha and had been enshrined by the Shakyas. This epigraphical evidence firmly connects the site to early Buddhist history and confirms its authenticity as a major pilgrimage destination.

Legal and Spiritual Implications

These relics were moved to the Indian Museum in Kolkata in 1899 and are considered "AA-category antiquities" under Indian law, which prohibits their export or sale. However, some fragments retained by the Peppé family have surfaced in international auction houses. The government's action reaffirms the relics' sacred status and India's commitment to heritage protection.

Ahilyabai Holkar: Celebrating 300 Years of the Philosopher Queen

Context

The Maharashtra government announced a biopic and a series of events to mark the 300th birth anniversary of Ahilyabai Holkar, one of the most revered female rulers in Indian history. Her reign symbolized just governance, architectural patronage, and inclusive leadership.

Early Life and Rise to Power

Born on 31 May 1725 in Chondi village, Maharashtra, Ahilyabai came from a modest background. She married Khanderao Holkar, the son of Malhar Rao Holkar—founder of the Holkar dynasty under the Maratha Empire. After the deaths of her husband, father-in-law, and son, she assumed power in 1767 and ruled till her death in 1795.

Governance and Reforms

Ahilyabai made Maheshwar the capital and turned it into a vibrant center of trade, textile production (e.g., Maheshwari sarees), and spiritual learning. She was a progressive administrator who abolished exploitative practices, ensured fair justice, and promoted agriculture.

Religious and Cultural Patronage

A devout Shaivite, she renovated and built numerous temples across India including the famous Kashi Vishwanath Temple in Varanasi. She also established dharmashalas (rest houses) and wells for pilgrims, supporting both infrastructure and spiritual heritage.

Legacy

Ahilyabai is remembered as a “Philosopher Queen”—a rare example of enlightened leadership, blending devotion, dignity, and development. Her legacy endures through monuments, public respect, and modern-day governance ideals inspired by her example.

Maharana Pratap

Context

On his birth anniversary, tributes poured in for Maharana Pratap—one of the most iconic warrior-kings in Indian history. A symbol of Rajput valor and defiance, he stood firm against Mughal expansion under Emperor Akbar.

Early Life and Ascension

Born in 1540 in Kumbhalgarh Fort, Mewar, Maharana Pratap was the eldest son of Udai Singh II and succeeded him as the ruler of Mewar. From the beginning, he resisted all overtures by the Mughals for submission.

Battle of Haldighati (1576)

This pivotal battle saw Maharana Pratap face a massive Mughal force led by Raja Man Singh of Amber. Although outnumbered and ultimately forced to retreat to the Aravallis, his bravery became legendary—particularly the tale of his horse Chetak who died protecting him.

Later Victories and Reclamation

Refusing to surrender, Maharana Pratap continued guerrilla warfare and eventually reclaimed most of Mewar, except Chittorgarh. He reorganized administration in the hills and maintained independent rule till his death in 1597.

Legacy of Resistance

Maharana Pratap is celebrated for his fierce independence, love for his motherland, and moral high ground. His resistance is not only political but also deeply ethical—a refusal to compromise dignity for expedience.

164th Birth Anniversary of Rabindranath Tagore

Context

Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid tribute to Rabindranath Tagore on his 164th birth anniversary, acknowledging his towering contribution to Indian and world literature, nationalism, and humanism.

Cultural and Literary Contributions

Tagore was a Bengali polymath—a poet, playwright, painter, philosopher, and educationist. He reshaped Bengali literature and music in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. His Nobel Prize-winning collection *Gitanjali* introduced Indian thought to the global stage.

Political and Philosophical Influence

Though deeply spiritual, Tagore was also a critic of aggressive nationalism. His works such as *Gora*, *Ghare Baire*, and *Chaturanga* grapple with themes of identity, nationalism, and social reform. He returned his knighthood in protest against the Jallianwala Bagh massacre.

Legacy

- He composed both India's (*Jana Gana Mana*) and Bangladesh's (*Amar Shonar Bangla*) national anthems. West Bengal's state anthem (*Banglar Mati Banglar Jol*) is also his creation. In 1921, he founded Visva-Bharati University at Santiniketan to merge Eastern and Western philosophies.
- Tagore's messages of universalism, tolerance, and artistic freedom remain profoundly relevant today, especially in the face of rising cultural divisions and political intolerance.

Santhara Ritual Sparks Legal and Ethical Controversy

Context

The death of a 3-year-old girl, who was initiated into the Jain ritual of Santhara (Sallekhana), has sparked outrage and revived national debates over religious freedoms versus child rights. Diagnosed with a brain tumor, the child was reportedly put on a ritual fast-unto-death by her parents, invoking ancient spiritual traditions.

What is Santhara?

Santhara is a Jain religious practice of voluntarily embracing death by gradually fasting in cases of old age, terminal illness, or spiritual resolve. The act symbolizes ultimate detachment, non-violence (Ahimsa), and karmic purification. It is seen by practitioners as a form of liberation (moksha) rather than suicide.

Religious Context and Scriptural Basis

Santhara finds support in Jain scriptures like the Uttaradhyayana Sutra, which extols the practice as noble when undertaken by a spiritually mature individual with full awareness. The ritual is to be performed with the consent of the monk or community, and not as an escape from suffering alone.

Controversy: Ethics and Consent

Critics argue that in the case of minors, Santhara amounts to a violation of human rights, particularly the right to life and bodily autonomy. Child rights activists and medical professionals have emphasized that a child cannot give informed consent to such a decision.

Legal Status and Court Proceedings

In 2015, the Rajasthan High Court ruled Santhara as equivalent to abetment of suicide, criminalizing it under Sections 306 and 309 of the Indian Penal Code. However, the Supreme Court stayed the decision, upholding the Jain community's right to religious freedom under Article 25 of the Constitution. The matter remains sub-judice and highly sensitive.

Socio-Legal Balance

This case emphasizes the delicate balance between religious liberty and constitutional safeguards. It brings into focus the need for clearer guidelines on practices involving minors and vulnerable individuals within the framework of Indian law and ethics.

Mangar Bani: A Prehistoric Treasure on Delhi-Haryana Border

Context

Recent archaeological excavations in Mangar Bani—a sacred grove in the Aravalli Hills near the Delhi-Haryana border—have uncovered tools, rock shelters, and cave art dating back to the Lower Paleolithic era, nearly 500,000 years ago.

Archaeological Significance

These findings place Mangar Bani among the oldest human habitations in the Indian subcontinent. The tools include hand axes, scrapers, and blades made of quartzite, indicating early hominid activity. The cave art, though limited in quantity, reflects symbolic expression and proto-ritualistic behavior.

Geographical and Ecological Features

Mangar Bani is one of the last remaining patches of primary forest in the National Capital Region. It hosts unique flora and fauna and is sacred to the local Gujjar community. Despite its ecological and historical importance, it remains unnotified under the Forest Conservation Act, making it vulnerable to encroachments and urban expansion.

Conservation Urgency

Environmentalists and historians alike have demanded legal protection and conservation of Mangar Bani. They advocate for its declaration as a heritage forest and inclusion in the list of protected archaeological sites under the ASI.

Cultural Continuity

The sacredness of Mangar Bani continues to influence local beliefs. The site houses the ancient temple of Gudariya Baba, and oral traditions link the forest to divine presence and nature worship. This blend of archaeological depth and living tradition makes it a vital site for integrated heritage conservation.

Ajrakh of Kutch Awarded GI Tag for Cultural Significance

Context

Ajrakh, a centuries-old textile craft from Kutch, Gujarat, has been granted the Geographical Indication (GI) tag by the Office of the Controller General of Patents, Designs and Trademarks. The recognition protects the craft's identity and boosts artisans' livelihood.

Artistic Process

Ajrakh involves a complex 14–16 step hand-block printing process using natural dyes. The process includes resist dyeing, multiple washings, and dyeing stages using indigo, madder, turmeric, and pomegranate. The result is a richly colored and intricately patterned textile.

Cultural and Religious Context

The word "Ajrakh" derives from the Arabic "Azrak" meaning blue, reflecting the dominant color in the fabric. Traditionally produced by Muslim Khattris, Ajrakh is worn by pastoral communities like the Rabaris and Maldharis, symbolizing both functional utility and cultural pride.

Motifs and Symbolism

The motifs often represent cosmic elements such as stars, suns, and moons. Symmetry and geometric precision are key features, reflecting deep philosophical and mathematical understanding. These patterns also carry spiritual meanings for the wearers.

Economic and Social Impact

With the GI tag, Ajrakh artisans can market their products globally with authenticity. It deters counterfeit production and ensures economic justice for craftsmen through fair pricing and cultural appreciation.

Buddha Purnima 2025

Context

Buddha Purnima, the most sacred festival for Buddhists across the world, was celebrated on 23rd May 2025. The day marks the birth, enlightenment (nirvana), and death (parinirvana) of Gautama Buddha, all of which are believed to have occurred on the same day.

Historical Background

Buddha Purnima, also known as Vesak or Buddha Jayanti, is observed on the full moon day in the month of Vaishakha (April-May). It commemorates the life and teachings of Siddhartha Gautama, who became the Buddha, or “The Enlightened One”. He was born in Lumbini, attained enlightenment in Bodh Gaya, delivered his first sermon in Sarnath, and attained Mahaparinirvana in Kushinagar.

Teachings of Buddha

Buddha’s core teachings are encapsulated in the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path:

- The Four Noble Truths outline the nature of suffering, its cause, its cessation, and the path leading to its cessation.
- The Eightfold Path includes Right Understanding, Right Thought, Right Speech, Right Action, Right Livelihood, Right Effort, Right Mindfulness, and Right Concentration.

Global Significance

In 1999, the United Nations recognized Vesak as an international day of observance. Buddha’s message of peace, compassion, and non-violence has global resonance, especially in times of conflict and moral crisis.

Indian Observances

India, being the land of Buddha’s birth and enlightenment, celebrates Buddha Purnima with ceremonies at Sarnath, Bodh Gaya, and Kushinagar. It is a gazetted holiday and observed by lighting lamps, offering prayers, and reciting scriptures. The President and Prime Minister often pay tributes, reflecting India’s civilizational heritage.

Way Ahead

Buddha Purnima continues to serve as a reminder of India’s philosophical depth and its role in the global dissemination of spiritual ideas. The promotion of Buddhist tourism circuits by the Government of India also underscores the cultural and economic potential of India’s Buddhist legacy.

Revamp of National Manuscripts Mission – Gyan Bharatam

Context

The Prime Minister of India launched the restructured National Manuscripts Mission as part of a renewed commitment to preserve India’s vast literary heritage.

About the Mission

Originally launched in 2003, the National Manuscripts Mission aims to locate, document, conserve, digitize, and publish Indian manuscripts, which are estimated to be over 10 million in number. In the Union Budget 2024, the mission was revitalized under the new title:

Gyan Bharatam Mission.

Key Objectives

- Conduct a nationwide survey and create a national repository of manuscripts.
- Undertake scientific conservation and preventive preservation.
- Large-scale digitization to create a National Digital Manuscripts Library.
- Encourage publication, translation, and research on rare manuscripts.
- Build capacity in manuscriptology and palaeography.

Cultural Relevance

India's ancient texts—ranging from Vedas and Upanishads to regional literary traditions—are not just historical artefacts but repositories of indigenous knowledge systems. Preserving them strengthens India's cultural sovereignty.

Significance

This mission aligns with the emphasis on Indian Knowledge Systems in the NEP 2020 and revitalizes India's soft power globally. It reflects continuity in civilizational values and state policy toward heritage conservation.

Nalanda University – Revival of Ancient Knowledge Hub

Context

In June 2025, Nalanda University welcomed its new academic session, marking another step in its modern revival as a global centre of knowledge.

Historical Background

Founded in the 5th century CE in present-day Bihar, Nalanda University was a premier ancient institution of higher learning that attracted scholars from China, Tibet, Korea, and Central Asia. It flourished under Gupta patronage and was a centre of Buddhist, philosophical, and scientific education.

Destruction and Decline

The university was destroyed in the 12th century by Bakhtiyar Khilji, marking a symbolic end to India's ancient learning centres during the medieval period.

Modern Revival

In 2010, the Government of India initiated the modern revival of Nalanda University through an act of Parliament. Supported by 17 countries including ASEAN nations and Japan, the university seeks to replicate the spirit of its ancient predecessor in the modern context.

Academic Focus

The new Nalanda focuses on ecology, sustainable development, Buddhist studies, historical research, and language and literature. Its curriculum integrates traditional knowledge with modern research.

Significance

Nalanda's revival is emblematic of India reclaiming its intellectual legacy. It also strengthens India's engagement with East Asia through cultural diplomacy and academic collaboration.

Saraswati Pushkaralu 2025

Context

Saraswati Pushkaralu, a river festival dedicated to the mythical Saraswati river, was observed with great religious fervour in May 2025.

About the Festival

Pushkaralu is a 12-day river festival celebrated once every 12 years when Jupiter (Brihaspati) enters a particular zodiac sign associated with a river. For Saraswati Pushkaralu, it is associated with Aries (Mesha Rashi).

Religious and Cultural Importance

Though the Saraswati river no longer flows visibly, its presence is venerated through belief, scripture, and archaeological significance. The river is considered sacred in Hindu tradition and is associated with learning, wisdom, and purity.

Celebrations and Rituals

Devotees gather at sites believed to be the convergence of Saraswati with the Ganga and Yamuna (such as Triveni Sangam in Prayagraj). Rituals include holy dips, religious discourses, spiritual performances, and charitable donations.

Significance in Indian Culture

The celebration reflects the continued reverence of rivers in Indian civilisation. It also showcases the integration of astronomy with ritual tradition, forming part of India's unique sacred geography.

Hampi's Virupaksha Temple: A Living Heritage Site

Context

The Virupaksha Temple at Hampi has been gaining prominence for its continued ritual use and heritage tourism value.

About the Temple

Located in Karnataka, Virupaksha Temple is one of the oldest functioning temples in India. It is dedicated to Lord Shiva and forms part of the Hampi Group of Monuments, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

Architectural Features

- Built in Dravidian style with a massive gopuram (gateway tower).
- The sanctum houses a Shiva lingam, and the temple also features ornate mandapas, mural paintings, and pillared halls.
- A key attraction is the usage of pinhole camera technique in projecting the inverted shadow of the gopuram inside the temple.

Cultural and Historical Importance

Hampi was the capital of the Vijayanagara Empire, and the temple stands as a testimony to its patronage of art, architecture, and religion. Even after the empire's fall, the temple continued to function, preserving ritual continuity.

Current Developments

Efforts have been made to integrate heritage conservation with tourism. The temple is part of India's national heritage circuits and receives support from ASI and state authorities.

Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed - Remembering the 5th President of India

Context

May 2025 marked the remembrance of Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, India's 5th President, known for his constitutional role during a critical period in Indian politics.

Background

Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed served as President from 1974 until his death in 1977. He was the second Muslim President of India after Zakir Hussain and a senior Congress leader.

Key Events during His Tenure

- His presidency coincided with the declaration of Emergency in 1975.
- He controversially signed ordinances recommended by the Indira Gandhi government, raising debates about the discretionary role of the President.
- He was criticised for not resisting constitutional overreach during the Emergency, sparking discussions on executive accountability and constitutional morality.

Legacy and Relevance

His tenure is often referenced in discussions about the role of the President in safeguarding the Constitution. It serves as a key case study in constitutional ethics, particularly regarding the limits of presidential discretion.

Pushkar Kumbh

Context

After a 12-year interval, the Pushkar Kumbh Mela is being held at Keshav Prayag in Mana village, Uttarakhand.

About Pushkar Kumbh

Pushkar Kumbh is a sacred Vaishnavite pilgrimage that takes place once every 12 years. It is observed at Keshav Prayag, located at the confluence of the Alaknanda and Saraswati rivers in Mana village, near the Badrinath shrine in Uttarakhand.

The event is astrologically timed to coincide with Jupiter's transit into the Gemini zodiac sign. Though smaller in scale compared to the four principal Kumbh Melas held at Haridwar, Prayagraj, Ujjain, and Nashik, Pushkar Kumbh holds immense religious importance, especially among Vaishnavite devotees from South India.

Religious and Cultural Significance

The site is believed to be where Ved Vyas composed the Mahabharata. It is also associated with saints such as Ramanujacharya and Madhvacharya, who are believed to have received divine knowledge from Goddess Saraswati at this location.

Pushkar Kumbh is a unique symbol of India's spiritual and cultural diversity, bridging the northern and southern traditions through shared reverence and devotion.

Discovery of Three Tombs in Luxor

Context

Egyptian archaeologists have discovered three ancient tombs in Luxor's Dra Abu al-Naga necropolis. These tombs date back to the New Kingdom period (1550–1070 BC). The discovery provides valuable insights into Egypt's administrative, social, and religious life during that era.

About Luxor

Luxor is situated on the east bank of the Nile River in southern Egypt. It is known as the world's greatest open-air museum. The city is home to renowned archaeological sites such as the Luxor Temple, Karnak Temple Complex, Valley of the Kings, Valley of the Queens, and various tombs of nobles and pharaohs.

Details of the Discovery

The newly unearthed tombs belong to high-ranking officials of ancient Egypt.

- **Amum-em-Ipet** served in the estate of Amun during the Ramesside period.
- **Baki** was a grain silo supervisor from the 18th Dynasty.
- The third tomb belonged to an official referred to as "S", who was a mayor of the northern oases.

Each tomb includes architectural features like courtyards, burial shafts, and halls. However, some are damaged or incomplete due to time and environmental effects. The tombs also contain various artifacts and statues, some of which are still under examination.

Significance

This discovery deepens our understanding of Egypt's New Kingdom elite and their burial practices. Ongoing excavations and research are expected to shed more light on the lives, duties, and beliefs of these ancient officials.



INDIAN SOCIETY

CBSE Promotes Use of Mother Tongue in Early Education

Context

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has urged affiliated schools to incorporate the mother tongue of students into foundational stage learning, in alignment with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009.

Legal and Constitutional Framework

Article 350A of the Constitution mandates that states provide facilities for instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups. Article 29(1) also protects the rights of linguistic minorities to conserve their distinct language and culture.

Educational Benefits

Numerous studies have shown that early education in a child's first language improves comprehension, retention, and conceptual clarity. It enhances cognitive development, boosts confidence, and fosters stronger parent-child academic engagement.

Social and Emotional Impact

Learning in one's mother tongue nurtures cultural roots, enhances emotional security, and reduces dropout rates—especially among marginalized and tribal communities. It also facilitates social inclusivity and linguistic diversity within the broader educational system.

Implementation Challenges

Challenges include the availability of multilingual teachers, development of learning materials in local languages, and administrative coordination across states. Yet states like Odisha, Jharkhand, and Chhattisgarh—supported by UNICEF—have pioneered multilingual primary education with notable success.

Conclusion

The CBSE's directive is a step towards democratizing education, preserving linguistic heritage, and achieving equitable learning outcomes. Strengthening teacher training, resource availability, and community participation is vital for successful implementation.

Kozhikode Joins WHO Network of Age-Friendly Cities

Context

Kozhikode in Kerala has been inducted into the World Health Organization's (WHO) Global Network for Age-Friendly Cities and Communities (GNAFCC), making it one of the few Indian cities to receive this distinction.

Criteria for Age-Friendliness

An age-friendly city ensures accessible public transport, barrier-free infrastructure, affordable healthcare, inclusive housing, social participation, and elder-specific safety measures. It empowers senior citizens to live independently and with dignity.

Kozhikode's Initiatives

Kozhikode has implemented elder care programs, dedicated health clinics, walking-friendly urban spaces, and digital literacy campaigns for senior citizens. It has also focused on community inclusion and inter-generational bonding.

Global Network and Its Purpose

The GNAFCC, launched in 2010, connects over 1,000 cities and communities in 41 countries. It provides a platform for cities to share best practices, assess gaps, and adopt policies that support active ageing.

Complementary Recognitions

In 2022, Kozhikode was designated a "City of Literature" under UNESCO's Creative Cities Network, highlighting its dual focus on cultural enrichment and social wellbeing.

Conclusion

Kozhikode's membership in the GNAFCC reflects its commitment to inclusive urban development. It sets a precedent for other Indian cities to adopt age-sensitive planning in response to India's rapidly ageing population.

Gut Microbiota Vulnerability in a Changing Climate

Context

A study has shown that climate change-induced food insecurity may significantly affect the gut microbiota of vulnerable populations. The gut microbiome—comprising trillions of microorganisms—plays a crucial role in digestion, immunity, and mental health.

Climate Link to Nutrition

Elevated CO₂ levels reduce essential nutrients in staple crops like wheat and rice. In areas with low dietary diversity, such nutrient loss can disrupt the microbial balance in the gut, leading to "dysbiosis"—an unhealthy microbiome state.

At-Risk Populations

Communities with high food insecurity—such as Indigenous tribes, urban slums, and disaster-affected regions—are particularly vulnerable. Malnutrition among children in these areas often corresponds with reduced microbial diversity and higher disease susceptibility.

Health Consequences

Disrupted gut microbiota is linked to inflammatory bowel diseases, metabolic disorders, impaired immunity, and even mental health issues. For pregnant women and young children, the risks are more *acute and long-term*.

Call for Policy Action

Experts recommend integrating nutritional security with climate resilience. Promoting diverse, climate-resilient crops, improving access to micronutrients, and investing in healthcare for vulnerable groups are essential steps.

Conclusion

Climate change is not only an environmental crisis but also a public health and social equity issue. Strengthening nutrition through sustainable agriculture and social safety nets is key to protecting India's most at-risk communities.

NAMASTE Scheme Expands to Support Waste Pickers

Context

The Government of India has extended the scope of the National Action for Mechanised Sanitation Ecosystem (NAMASTE) scheme to include informal waste pickers, in addition to sanitation workers. This expansion aims to address the occupational hazards and social stigma associated with manual waste collection.

Original Objectives

Launched in July 2023 by the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment in collaboration with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs, the NAMASTE scheme aims to:

- Eliminate manual scavenging.
- Promote mechanised sanitation.
- Ensure the dignity, safety, and health of sanitation workers.

Key Features

- **Health Insurance:** Sanitation workers and waste pickers are covered under Ayushman Bharat-PMJAY.
- **PPE and Safety Equipment:** Provision of protective gear and tools.
- **Skill Training:** Workers are offered training in mechanised cleaning technologies.
- **Capital Subsidy:** Financial aid to purchase sanitation equipment.
- **Livelihood Diversification:** Training and placement for alternative jobs if they opt out of sanitation work.

Inclusion of Waste Pickers

Waste pickers, who work in hazardous and unhygienic conditions, often face social exclusion, lack of legal recognition, and no access to social welfare. The NAMASTE scheme now addresses these challenges by:

- Formalising their roles through ID cards.
- Ensuring access to social security schemes.
- Recognising their environmental contribution in waste management and recycling.

Conclusion

The expansion of the NAMASTE scheme is a significant step in upholding the rights and dignity of India's most invisible workers. It aligns with the constitutional promise of equality, social justice, and humane working conditions for all.

Amrit Bharat Station Scheme

Context

The Prime Minister inaugurated 103 modernised railway stations under this scheme. The stations span 86 districts in 18 states and UTs. The project cost was over ₹1,100 crore.

Background

- The scheme began in 2021 with Gandhinagar station's upgrade.
- A total of 1,300 stations are being redeveloped.
- Uttar Pradesh (157), Maharashtra (132), and West Bengal (101) have the most stations under the scheme.

Key Features

- Stations are being made cleaner and more comfortable.
- Local products will be promoted under the 'One Station One Product' scheme.
- Efforts are being made to make the stations green and attractive.

One Station One Product

This aims to showcase local crafts, handlooms, and regional products at railway stations. It supports tribal artefacts and region-specific goods.

POLITY AND GOVERNANCE

Inter-Services Organisations (ISOs) (Command, Control, and Discipline) Act Enforced

Context

The Inter-Services Organisations (Command, Control, and Discipline) Act, 2023, came into force on 10 May 2024. It aims to create a unified legal framework to govern joint institutions like the National Defence Academy, Defence Services Staff College, and Andaman and Nicobar Command.

Why It Was Needed

Earlier, personnel posted to Inter-Services Organisations (ISOs) were governed solely by their respective service Acts:

- Army Act, 1950
- Navy Act, 1957
- Air Force Act, 1950

This led to procedural delays and fragmented command structures. The new Act provides a common disciplinary and administrative framework to streamline operations.

Key Provisions

- **Unified Authority:** The Commander-in-Chief or Officer-in-Command of an ISO can now exercise full administrative and disciplinary powers over all personnel, regardless of their parent service.
- **Commanding Officer Role:** A new designation is created for day-to-day functioning and disciplinary action within units.
- **Central Government Oversight:** The Union government retains supervisory control over ISOs and can establish new ones as needed.

Impact on Military Reforms

The Act lays the foundation for “theaterisation” of Indian armed forces—a reform to integrate command structures across Army, Navy, and Air Force for greater operational efficiency. It also ensures quick decision-making and enhanced jointness.

Conclusion

The ISOs Act is a crucial step in modernising India’s defence governance. It addresses long-standing structural gaps and aligns India’s defence institutions with the needs of modern joint warfare strategy.

Safe Harbour Clause Under Review After Fake News Concerns

Context

Following a surge in fake news during and after the Pahalgam terror attack, the Central Government has initiated discussions to review the safe harbour protections granted to digital intermediaries under Section 79 of the IT Act, 2000.

What is Safe Harbour?

Section 79 protects platforms like YouTube, Facebook, and Twitter from liability for user-generated content as long as they:

- Do not initiate the transmission,
- Do not modify the information,
- Act upon receiving actual knowledge of unlawful content.

However, this immunity is revoked if due diligence is not followed under Section 79(3)(b).

Current Issues

Several YouTube channels and social media accounts spread misinformation about national security issues, forcing the government to block them. It highlighted the challenges in:

- Timely content moderation,
- Enforcing accountability,
- Preventing digital disinformation campaigns.

Proposed Reforms

The government is considering:

- Giving statutory recognition to the Press Information Bureau (PIB) Fact Check Unit,
- Promoting self-regulation with oversight, rather than a blanket legal overhaul,
- Mandating faster takedown protocols and traceability measures.

Court Interventions

The Bombay High Court earlier restricted the powers of the PIB's fact-checking unit. The Ministry of Electronics and IT may challenge this verdict to ensure smoother implementation of regulatory norms.

Conclusion

The safe harbour doctrine needs fine-tuning to ensure digital freedom without compromising national security and public order. The debate highlights the larger question of how democracies balance free speech and digital responsibility.

ECINET: One-Stop Electoral Tech Platform by ECI

Context

The Election Commission of India (ECI) has launched ECINET, a unified digital platform designed to streamline electoral management for voters, political parties, election officials, and civil society actors.

Need for Integration

Previously, over 40 separate mobile apps and web portals served various electoral functions. This caused confusion, duplication of efforts, and inconsistent user experiences. ECINET addresses these concerns by integrating key tools like:

- **Voter Helpline App**
- **cVIGIL** (for reporting code of conduct violations)
- **Suvidha 2.0** (for candidate permissions)
- **PwD App** (for persons with disabilities)

Key Features

- **Single Sign-on:** Users can access multiple services with one login.
- **Real-time Updates:** Election data, polling schedules, and grievance redressal are available live.
- **Accessibility Enhancements:** Available in multiple Indian languages with improved interface for senior citizens and the disabled.
- **Back-End Efficiency:** Election officials can upload and verify data on nominations, affidavits, and electoral rolls in one dashboard.

Security and Governance

To ensure data integrity and privacy, only ECI officials are authorised to make data entries. The platform complies with national cybersecurity norms and has encrypted access protocols.

User Reach

The platform is expected to benefit nearly 100 crore voters, making it one of the largest democratic digital interfaces in the world.

Conclusion

ECINET represents a major leap in electoral governance. By enhancing transparency, reducing manual processes, and increasing voter awareness, it strengthens India's commitment to free and fair elections.

Supreme Court Restricts Mining in the Aravalli Range

Context

In a significant environmental ruling, the Supreme Court of India has ordered the governments of Delhi, Haryana, Rajasthan, and Gujarat to immediately halt the issuance and renewal of mining leases in the Aravalli hills.

Ecological Significance

The Aravalli Range, one of the oldest mountain ranges in the world, spans over 700 km and plays a vital role in:

- Preventing desertification of the Gangetic plains.
- Recharging aquifers and supporting river systems.
- Serving as a biodiversity corridor in northwestern India.

Environmental and Cultural Value

Apart from being an ecological lifeline, the Aravallis are home to rich cultural heritage, including ancient temples, tribal settlements, and archaeological sites. Gurushikhar in Mount Abu is its highest peak.

Threats Faced

Over the years, unchecked mining, illegal quarrying, and urban encroachment have severely degraded the region. This has led to:

- Water table depletion,
- Air pollution,
- Increased vulnerability to extreme weather.

Court's Observations

The apex court held that environmental preservation cannot be sacrificed for short-term commercial gains. It asked for a comprehensive action plan from the Environment Ministry and state governments to ensure the long-term protection of the Aravallis.

Conclusion

This verdict reinforces the principle of inter-generational equity and sustainable development. It marks a turning point in India's ecological jurisprudence, placing conservation above profit.

Rules and Loopholes in Voter ID Verification

Context

Following the Pahalgam terror attack, reports emerged that some deported Pakistani nationals were found with Indian Voter ID cards, triggering alarms about systemic flaws in India's voter registration process.

Legal Provisions

- Article 326 of the Constitution guarantees the right to vote to every citizen aged 18 or above.
- Section 16 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950 disqualifies individuals who are:
 - Not Indian citizens,
 - Of unsound mind,
 - Convicted for electoral offences.

Registration Process

To enroll, individuals must:

- Fill Form 6,
- Provide self-attested documents for age and address,
- Undergo verification by the Electoral Registration Officer (ERO) **and** Booth Level Officer (BLO).

Existing Loopholes

Despite legal safeguards, the process has flaws:

- **Citizenship Proof Not Strictly Enforced:** Proof of Indian citizenship is not mandatory unless the ERO raises doubts.
- **Weak Ground Verification:** BLOs often rely on documents submitted, without comprehensive cross-verification.
- **No Biometric Integration:** Unlike Aadhaar, Voter ID lacks biometric checks, allowing duplication and misuse.

Proposed Reforms

- Mandatory linkage of Voter ID with Aadhaar (with safeguards for privacy).
- Biometric verification during voter enrollment.

- Stronger coordination between ECI and intelligence agencies for high-risk areas.

Conclusion

Electoral integrity is the backbone of democracy. Plugging these loopholes is essential to maintain public trust in India's electoral system, especially in a time of rising cross-border threats and digital impersonation.

Appointment of UPSC Chairman

Context

Dr. Ajay Kumar has been appointed as the new UPSC Chairman after the tenure of Preeti Sudan came to an end. His appointment was made through a Presidential order and reflects continuity in the leadership of the commission.

Constitutional Provision and Authority

The appointment of the Chairman of the Union Public Service Commission is governed by Article 316(1) of the Constitution of India. According to this provision, the President of India appoints the Chairman and other members of the Commission. The UPSC is a constitutional body responsible for conducting recruitment for All India Services and Central Services.

Tenure and Disqualification

A member, including the Chairman, holds office for a term of six years or until the age of 65 years, whichever comes earlier. Reappointment is not allowed. The conditions of service are also fixed by the President and cannot be changed to the disadvantage of a member after appointment.

Removal Procedure

The Chairman can only be removed by the President in cases of misbehavior, insolvency, other employment, or infirmity of body or mind. For misbehavior, the President must refer the matter to the Supreme Court for inquiry under Article 317. If the Court finds the charges valid, the President can remove the Chairman. This process ensures both accountability and judicial independence.

Article 22 of the Constitution

Nature of Safeguards

Article 22 provides specific rights to individuals who are arrested under both ordinary laws and preventive detention laws. It serves as a protection for personal liberty and procedural fairness.

Rights Under Ordinary Laws

Any person who is arrested must be informed of the reasons for arrest. He must also be allowed to consult a legal practitioner of his choice. The arrested person must be produced before a magistrate within 24 hours. He cannot be detained without the permission of the magistrate beyond this time.

Preventive Detention Provisions

Article 22 allows the state to detain a person without trial under preventive detention for a maximum period of three months. If the detention is to continue beyond three months, the case must be referred to an advisory board of judges. The person has no right to know the grounds for detention if it is against public interest.

Significance

The article tries to balance civil liberties with national security. While it upholds basic legal safeguards for arrested individuals, it also enables the state to act in cases of threats to public order or national security.

United States Birthright Citizenship

Context

The U.S. government has recently debated proposals to end or restrict this policy. Some policymakers argue that birthright citizenship incentivizes illegal immigration and anchor babies. Others warn that ending the policy could lead to statelessness and violate international law.

Definition and Legal Basis

Birthright citizenship means granting automatic citizenship to any individual born within a country's territory. In the United States, this is enshrined in the 14th Amendment to the Constitution. It states that all persons born in the U.S. are citizens regardless of their parents' nationality or immigration status.

Comparative Perspective with India

India does not follow an absolute birthright citizenship policy. Under the Citizenship Act, 1955, a person born in India after July 1987 must have at least one Indian parent to be a citizen. This makes India's approach conditional and distinct from the U.S. model.

Implications

The debate raises questions about inclusion, equality, and the role of constitutional guarantees in defining national identity.

OROP Principle for All Retired HC Judges

Context

The Supreme Court has directed the Central Government to apply the principle of One Rank One Pension (OROP) to all retired High Court judges. The directive aims to ensure parity in pensions for judges who retired at the same rank, regardless of the year of retirement.

Issue of Inequality

Currently, there is a disparity in pensions received by judges who served in similar positions but retired at different times. Newer retirees often receive higher pensions due to revised pay structures. The Court observed that such inequality undermines the principle of equal treatment under Article 14 of the Constitution.

Judicial Interpretation

The Court held that pension is not a bounty but a deferred payment of service. It emphasized that all retired judges should be treated equally for pensionary benefits. Applying OROP would correct existing anomalies and bring uniformity.

Implications

The decision is expected to benefit many retired judges and uphold the dignity of judicial service. It also sets a precedent for addressing pension disparities in other constitutional posts.

K. Veeraswami vs Union of India Judgment

Context

The judgment in K. Veeraswami vs Union of India (1991) laid down important principles regarding the initiation of criminal proceedings against sitting High Court and Supreme Court judges.

Key Judgment

The Supreme Court ruled that no First Information Report (FIR) can be registered against a judge without prior sanction from the Chief Justice of India (CJI). This is applicable even under anti-corruption laws like the Prevention of Corruption Act.

Reasoning and Safeguards

The Court emphasized the need to protect judicial independence. At the same time, it acknowledged the importance of judicial accountability. By requiring the CJI's approval, the judgment ensures that malicious or frivolous complaints do not erode public confidence in the judiciary.

Continuing Relevance

The decision remains the legal standard for all investigations involving constitutional judges. It safeguards the integrity of the judiciary while allowing for checks on misconduct.

Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA)

Context

Recently The Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA) reviewed the storage position of all the reservoirs in the Cauvery river basin.

Origin and Background

The Cauvery Water Management Authority was established in 2018 following the Supreme Court's directive to implement the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal award. The authority addresses inter-state water disputes between Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Kerala, and Puducherry.

Structure and Composition

The CWMA consists of a Chairman appointed by the central government, along with representatives from the four basin states. It also includes members from the Central Water Commission and the Ministry of Jal Shakti.

Powers and Functions

The authority monitors water storage levels in reservoirs and ensures the release of water to lower riparian states as per the prescribed schedule. It coordinates with state governments and resolves operational disputes related to the Cauvery river water.

Legal Standing

The CWMA functions under the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956. It has the power to issue binding directions. Non-compliance may invite judicial scrutiny.

NITI Aayog's Governing Council

Context

Some states have skipped the meetings citing concerns over declining federal spirit. The central government has emphasized the importance of consensus-building and state participation.

Institutional Role

The Governing Council is the top policy-making body of NITI Aayog. It includes the Prime Minister as the Chairperson, Chief Ministers of all states, Lieutenant Governors of Union Territories, and key Union Ministers.

Purpose and Mandate

The Governing Council fosters cooperative federalism. It is a platform for structured dialogue between the Centre and States. It aims to align national priorities with regional aspirations.

Key Areas of Focus

The Council discusses issues such as agriculture, health, infrastructure, employment, and skilling. It also reviews implementation of flagship schemes like PM Gati Shakti and National Education Policy.

Sikkim's 50th Statehood Day

Context

Recently Prime Minister Narendra Modi conveyed his greetings on the completion of 50 years of Sikkim's statehood.

Historical Context

Sikkim officially became the 22nd state of the Indian Union on 16 May 1975. Prior to that, it was a monarchy under the Chogyals. A public referendum and the 36th Constitutional Amendment facilitated its merger.

Geographical and Political Integration

Sikkim shares borders with Bhutan, Nepal, and China (Tibet Autonomous Region). Its strategic location in the Himalayas gives it geopolitical significance. The state has special protections under Article 371F of the Constitution.

Cultural and Ethnic Composition

The people of Sikkim include three major ethnic groups: Lepchas, Bhutias, and Nepalis. The state recognizes multiple languages, including English, Nepali, Sikkimese, and Lepcha as official languages.

Significance of Statehood

The statehood journey marked the peaceful assimilation of a princely state into the Indian Union. It symbolizes constitutional accommodation and federal inclusion.

e-Zero FIR Initiative

Context

The Indian Cybercrime Coordination Centre (I4C) has launched the e-Zero FIR initiative to enable swift action against criminals.

What is e-Zero FIR?

The e-Zero FIR initiative enables the electronic filing of First Information Reports without jurisdictional limitations. It allows a complaint to be filed immediately after a crime, regardless of where it occurred.

Implementation and Objective

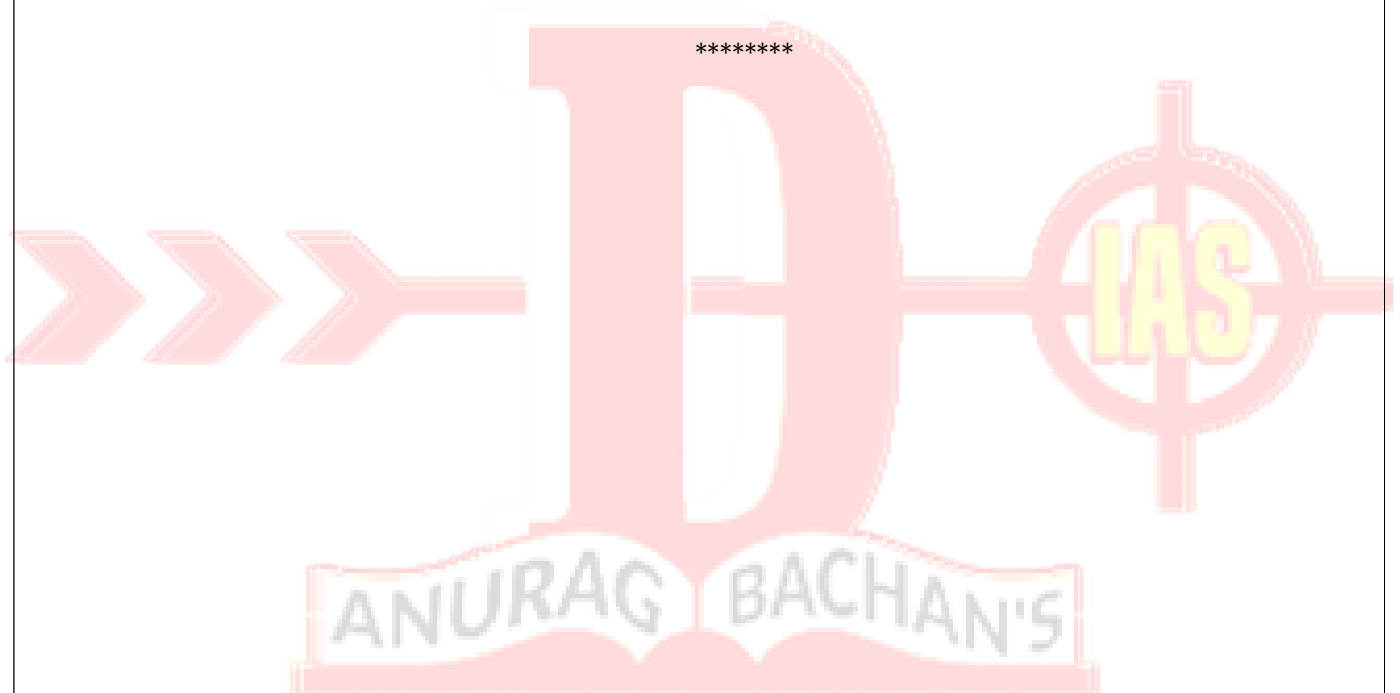
The initiative was launched by the Ministry of Home Affairs to speed up the registration of criminal cases. It is a part of the broader vision of Digital India and Criminal Justice Reform.

Advantages

It ensures timely action, especially in crimes against women, cybercrime, and interstate offences. The FIR can be electronically transferred to the appropriate police station for investigation.

Legal Framework

The initiative aligns with the mandate of Section 154 of the Criminal Procedure Code, which obliges police to record cognizable offences. It reduces delay and improves victim access to justice.



INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Pakistan has put its ambitious canals project on hold**Context**

Pakistan has halted the Cholistan Canal Project. The decision came after intense protests in Sindh. The project is part of the \$3.3 billion Green Pakistan Initiative. It aims to modernise agriculture and improve irrigation. A key feature was the construction of a 176-km canal to irrigate 1.2 million acres of barren land in Punjab.

- The government claimed it would use floodwaters from the Sutlej River. But experts warned this water was insufficient. Sindh feared the canal would divert water from the already-stressed Indus River system.
- As a downstream province, Sindh is highly water-scarce. People warned that the project would worsen their water shortage. It could harm agriculture and destroy the fragile Indus Delta ecosystem.
- This sparked strong public opposition. Many saw it as another case of Punjab's dominance over national resources. The issue revived long-standing Punjab-Sindh tensions.
- The PPP, ruling in Sindh and part of the national alliance, was caught in a dilemma. It initially supported the project, angering its base. Facing backlash, the party reversed its position.

PM Shehbaz Sharif, with PPP leader Bilawal Bhutto, announced a pause on the project. But protests in Sindh continue. People remain distrustful. The project remains stalled. Future plans will depend on better consultations and guarantees of fair water sharing.

India and Indonesia Deepen Strategic and Defence Cooperation**Context**

India and Indonesia have reaffirmed their strategic partnership through enhanced defence cooperation and engagement in multilateral platforms, marking 75 years of diplomatic ties. A Joint Defence Industry Seminar was recently held in Jakarta to discuss future collaborations.

Historical and Cultural Ties

The two nations share deep-rooted civilisational links dating back over 2,000 years. Indian epics like the *Ramayana* and *Mahabharata* continue to influence Indonesian folklore and culture. Both were active participants in the Non-Aligned Movement and anti-colonial resistance.

Defence and Security Collaboration**Key developments include:**

- Regular bilateral military exercises: *Samudra Shakti* (naval) and *Garuda Shakti* (army).
- Joint efforts in maritime domain awareness and securing sea lines of communication.
- Interest from Indonesia to enhance its defence manufacturing with India's technological support.

- Signing of an MoU between India's Society of Indian Defence Manufacturers (SIDM) and Indonesia's Pinhantanas.

Trade and Economic Relations

- Bilateral trade in FY 2022–23 stood at USD 38.85 billion.
- India is the second-largest buyer of Indonesian coal and palm oil.
- India exports petroleum products, telecom instruments, and food grains to Indonesia.

Geostrategic Outlook

Indonesia is central to India's Act East Policy and Indo-Pacific vision. The two nations share common concerns on regional security, blue economy, and freedom of navigation in the South China Sea.

Conclusion

India–Indonesia relations are entering a more comprehensive and strategic phase. The shared cultural heritage, defence cooperation, and economic convergence signal long-term synergy in regional geopolitics.

India-Nigeria Strengthen Economic Partnership in Joint Trade Meet

Key Meeting

India and Nigeria recently held the 2nd Joint Trade Committee (JTC) session to boost bilateral trade and investment across various sectors, highlighting India's growing engagement with Africa's largest economy.

Areas of Cooperation

- Local currency trade settlement to reduce dependency on US dollar.
- Power sector reforms and renewable energy collaboration.
- Digital payments via UPI integration.
- Joint ventures in food processing and pharmaceutical sectors.

Strategic Importance

- Nigeria is India's second-largest trading partner in Africa.
- Bilateral trade reached \$7.89 billion in 2023–24.
- Indian companies have invested over \$27 billion in Nigeria in infrastructure, healthcare, FMCG, and automotive sectors.

Diplomatic Significance

India had established a diplomatic mission in Nigeria even before its independence in 1960. Both nations share a common vision in South-South cooperation, G77, United Nations, and the Non-Aligned Movement.

Conclusion

India-Nigeria ties are diversifying beyond oil and energy to strategic sectors like digital economy, renewables, and industrial innovation. The JTC meet reinforces India's Africa outreach under the "Vision SAGAR" and "Viksit Bharat" foreign policy pillars.

India and Belgium Enhance Strategic Economic Cooperation

Context

India's Commerce and Industry Minister recently visited Brussels and met Belgium's Minister of Defence and Foreign Trade. The visit aimed at deepening bilateral economic and strategic relations.

Trade and Investment Snapshot

- Belgium is India's fifth-largest trading partner in the European Union.
- Bilateral trade stood at \$15.07 billion in FY 2023-24.
- Belgian FDI into India has grown by 39%, reaching \$3.94 billion.

Focus Areas of Cooperation

- **Semiconductor manufacturing:** collaboration to strengthen India's chip-making ambitions.
- **Clean energy:** green hydrogen, solar components, and smart grids.
- **Defence production:** co-development and export-oriented joint ventures.
- **Pharmaceuticals and biotech:** research collaboration and manufacturing alliances.

BLEU Partnership

The India-Belgium Luxembourg Economic Union (BLEU) continues to provide a structured platform for expanding trade in advanced technologies, logistics, and digital services.

Conclusion

India-Belgium ties are entering a high-tech, innovation-driven era. Strategic cooperation in defence, semiconductors, and energy security aligns both countries in creating resilient supply chains and future-ready partnerships.

India Participates in IMDEX Asia 2025 in Singapore

Context

The Indian Navy participated in IMDEX Asia 2025, Asia-Pacific's premier maritime defence exhibition, held in Singapore. The INS Kiltan, an indigenous anti-submarine warfare corvette, represented India.

Significance of IMDEX

- IMDEX is a biennial event attended by over 230 exhibitors from 25 countries.
- It brings together naval forces, shipbuilders, defence industries, and maritime technology innovators.
- Over 12,000 delegates participated in the 2025 edition, underscoring the Indo-Pacific's maritime focus.

India's Role and Objectives

- Showcasing indigenous platforms like INS Kiltan to promote Make in India in defence exports.
- Strengthening naval diplomacy through bilateral meetings with regional navies.
- Enhancing maritime domain awareness and interoperability with ASEAN and Quad partners.

Strategic Context

India's participation reflects its growing stature in Indo-Pacific naval strategy, particularly amid concerns over South China Sea tensions and maritime security threats like piracy and illegal fishing.

Conclusion

IMDEX 2025 serves as a platform for India to demonstrate its naval capabilities, boost defence exports, and reinforce its commitment to a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific.

India and Chile Sign Terms for CEPA Negotiations

Milestone Agreement

India and Chile have signed the Terms of Reference (ToR) to begin negotiations for a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA). This builds upon their existing Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) signed in 2006.

Key Areas of Focus

- Expansion into digital trade and data services.
- Cooperation in critical minerals including lithium, which is vital for India's electric vehicle and battery storage goals.
- Enhanced trade in MSMEs, pharmaceuticals, and agricultural products.
- Promotion of bilateral investment flows and financial services.

Strategic Importance

Chile is a gateway to Latin America for India and is part of major trade blocs like Pacific Alliance and Mercosur (as an associate member). CEPA will significantly reduce tariff barriers and strengthen India's global trade diversification strategy.

Conclusion

This agreement represents a vital step in expanding India's economic presence in Latin America. It aligns with India's goal to create resilient global supply chains and access critical mineral resources.

India Slams OIC for Ignoring Pahalgam Terror Attack

Context

The Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) issued a statement criticizing India's actions in Jammu and Kashmir while ignoring the terror attack in Pahalgam that killed several civilians. This prompted a strong rebuttal from the Indian Ministry of External Affairs.

India's Response

- India called out the OIC's selective outrage and political bias, particularly its alignment with Pakistan's narrative on Kashmir.
- The government reiterated that Jammu & Kashmir is an integral part of India and warned against external interference in its internal affairs.

About OIC

- Founded in 1969 after the Al-Aqsa Mosque incident.
- Comprises 57 Muslim-majority nations.
- Headquartered in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

Broader Implications

India, which has the third-largest Muslim population in the world, has never been invited to join the OIC, despite its request for observer status. The OIC's silence on issues of cross-border terrorism continues to affect its credibility as a neutral international body.

Conclusion

India's strong stand reflects its commitment to counterterrorism and national sovereignty. It also underscores the need for global bodies like OIC to adopt an impartial and humanitarian approach in international affairs.

Quad Simulates Indo-Pacific Logistics Network

Strategic Tabletop Exercise

The Quad countries—India, the U.S., Japan, and Australia—conducted a Tabletop Exercise at the Asia-Pacific Centre for Security Studies in Honolulu. The focus was to advance the Indo-Pacific Logistics Network (IPLN) for enhanced regional disaster response.

Objectives of IPLN

- Develop shared logistics hubs and transport corridors.
- Facilitate rapid deployment of humanitarian assistance during natural disasters.
- Coordinate interoperability of naval and air logistics assets.

Background

The Quad was revived in 2017 after being initially formed post the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. Since then, it has expanded its scope to include cooperation on climate change, infrastructure, vaccines, and regional security.

Geopolitical Context

With increasing Chinese assertiveness in the South and East China Seas, the Quad seeks to promote a rules-based international order and ensure freedom of navigation in the Indo-Pacific.

Conclusion

The exercise strengthens India's regional security architecture and disaster response capabilities. It further consolidates the Quad's vision of a free, open, inclusive, and resilient Indo-Pacific region.

Kartarpur Corridor Temporarily Closed Amid Operation Sindoor

Context

In the wake of Operation Sindoor, the Kartarpur Corridor—the only open land route between India and Pakistan—was temporarily suspended due to heightened security concerns.

About the Corridor

- Inaugurated in November 2019, the corridor allows visa-free travel for Indian pilgrims to visit Gurdwara Darbar Sahib in Kartarpur, Pakistan.
- The site is of profound significance to Sikhs as it is the final resting place of **Guru Nanak Dev Ji**.

Reason for Closure

Following India's large-scale retaliatory military operation against terror camps in Pakistan, security agencies recommended closure to prevent misuse of the corridor and protect civilian pilgrims.

Broader Implications

While the corridor is a beacon of people-to-people diplomacy, it has also been a point of tension due to:

- Pakistan-based propaganda.
- Suspected surveillance activities.
- Attempts to exploit religious sentiments for separatist agendas.

Conclusion

The temporary suspension of the Kartarpur Corridor highlights the complex balance between religious access and national security. Restoring the corridor will depend on stabilisation of the regional security environment.

India-Moldova Sign Visa Waiver Agreement

Recent Development

India and Moldova signed a visa waiver agreement for holders of diplomatic and official passports. The move is intended to strengthen bilateral diplomatic engagement and promote greater institutional connectivity.

Historical Background

Diplomatic relations between the two countries were established in 1992. Over the years, bilateral ties have been limited but cordial, with periodic engagement through multilateral forums like the United Nations.

Scope of the Agreement

- **Eligibility:** Applies only to holders of diplomatic and official/service passports.
- **Duration:** Allows visa-free travel for short visits up to 90 days.
- **Purpose:** Facilitates official meetings, conferences, and government-level interactions.

Strategic Importance

While Moldova is a small Eastern European country, it is geopolitically significant due to its proximity to Ukraine, Russia, and the European Union. India's engagement aligns with its larger strategy of deepening ties across Central and Eastern Europe.

Conclusion

This agreement enhances India's diplomatic reach and promotes smoother institutional cooperation. It may also serve as a stepping stone for future cultural and economic engagement with Moldova and the broader European region.

France and Poland Sign Defence Treaty Amid Regional Tensions

Context

France and Poland signed a landmark Treaty of Cooperation and Friendship, reinforcing defence ties amid rising military tensions in Eastern Europe due to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict.

Key Provisions

- The treaty includes a mutual defence clause, mandating military assistance in case of armed aggression.
- It aims to strengthen bilateral defence coordination, complementing their existing NATO obligations.
- Areas of cooperation include military training, defence production, cybersecurity, and intelligence sharing.

Implications for India

While the treaty is bilateral, it holds indirect significance for India by:

- Increasing the importance of France as a defence partner.
- Creating opportunities for triangular cooperation in defence production (India-France-Eastern Europe).
- Reinforcing European unity in defence, which can impact global strategic alignments.

Conclusion

The France-Poland defence pact represents a growing trend of bilateral military alliances within broader multilateral frameworks like NATO. It underscores the urgency of preparedness in Europe and opportunities for India to align with responsible global defence stakeholders.

India to Move UNSC 1267 to Declare TRF a Terror Group

Context

India plans to approach the United Nations Security Council's 1267 Sanctions Committee to designate The Resistance Front (TRF) as a global terrorist group.

About TRF

The Resistance Front is believed to be an offshoot of Lashkar-e-Taiba, formed to give a domestic appearance to cross-border terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir. It has been involved in various terror attacks against Indian security forces and civilians.

Significance of UNSC 1267 Listing

The listing would mandate all UN member states to freeze TRF's assets, ban travel, and halt any arms supply to the group. This move aligns with India's consistent diplomatic efforts to expose Pakistan-backed terror outfits.

Strategic Importance

Such listing puts international pressure on countries harbouring terror groups. It also strengthens India's counterterrorism position at global forums.

US-Saudi Arabia Deals

Context

The United States and Saudi Arabia have agreed on a series of economic and defence cooperation measures.

Key Aspects of the Deal

It includes major defence procurement, joint technology projects, and energy security collaboration. The agreements aim to deepen economic ties, stabilize oil prices, and counter regional threats.

Geopolitical Implications

The deal reinforces Saudi Arabia's role as a strategic ally of the US in the Middle East. It also influences the regional power balance, especially amid tensions with Iran.

India's Perspective

Stable oil prices and secure energy routes benefit India as a major oil importer. India maintains diplomatic neutrality while deepening economic ties with both nations.

India-US Dialogue on Africa

Context

The second round of the India-US Dialogue on Africa took place in Washington, D.C. It aims to coordinate developmental and strategic projects in Africa, aligning with African priorities. Both nations seek synergy in healthcare, technology, critical minerals, and capacity building.

Why Africa Matters

Africa is rich in resources and has a growing youth population. India sees Africa as a key partner in its Global South outreach and UNSC aspirations.

Way Forward

Both India and the US plan to support initiatives under G20 and UN frameworks. Greater trilateral cooperation is expected, especially in infrastructure and climate adaptation.

12th India-Mongolia Joint Working Group Meeting

Context

India and Mongolia held the 12th Joint Working Group meeting on defence cooperation in Ulaanbaatar. The meeting reviewed progress in bilateral defence cooperation including joint training, military exchanges, and capacity building. Both sides discussed ways to strengthen counter-terrorism efforts and border security.

Strategic Context

Mongolia shares strong cultural and democratic ties with India. It is also strategically important as India's third neighbour policy for China containment.

India's Role

India has been providing defence equipment, training, and scholarships to Mongolian forces. Mongolia also supports India's candidatures at international platforms.

New Caledonia Crisis

Context

Violent unrest erupted in New Caledonia after France proposed constitutional reforms impacting local voting rights.

Background

New Caledonia is a French overseas territory in the Pacific with significant indigenous Kanak population. The independence movement seeks to reduce French political and economic influence.

Recent Developments

France deployed troops and banned TikTok in the territory. The reforms are viewed as undermining the indigenous vote and escalating tensions.

India's Concern

New Caledonia is part of the wider Indo-Pacific, a strategic region for India. Instability may affect trade routes, undersea cables, and India's Act East policy interests.

Chabahar Port and INSTC

Context

India and Iran signed a 10-year contract for the operation of Chabahar Port.

Strategic Importance of Chabahar

It is India's gateway to Afghanistan, Central Asia, and Europe bypassing Pakistan. It is a key node in the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), connecting India with Russia via Iran.

Recent Developments

India Ports Global Limited (IPGL) will continue to develop and operate the port. The long-term contract boosts confidence in connectivity and supply chain resilience.

Geopolitical Implications

This enhances India's regional influence and access to untapped markets. It also counters China's Belt and Road Initiative in the region.

UK Signed Deal to Hand Over Chagos Islands to Mauritius

Context

The United Kingdom agreed in principle to transfer the Chagos Archipelago to Mauritius.

Background

Chagos Islands were separated from Mauritius in 1965 and retained as British territory. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled the separation was unlawful.

Geostrategic Importance

The archipelago houses the Diego Garcia military base leased to the US. It holds critical importance for Indian Ocean maritime security.

India's Position

India has historically supported Mauritius's claim over the islands. This move aligns with India's vision of a rules-based Indo-Pacific order.

Algeria Joined New Development Bank

Context

Algeria has officially joined the New Development Bank (NDB), initiated by BRICS countries.

About NDB

The NDB was founded in 2015 by BRICS nations to fund infrastructure and sustainable development. It offers an alternative to Western-dominated financial institutions like the IMF and World Bank.

Implications of Algeria's Entry

Algeria's membership expands NDB's presence in North Africa. It boosts South-South cooperation and aligns with de-dollarisation efforts.

India's Stake

India is a founding member and supports multilateral financing outside Western influence. NDB also enhances India's financial diplomacy with Africa.

Trump's Plan to Rename Persian Gulf and Iran

Context

Iran strongly objected to former US President Donald Trump's use of "Arabian Gulf" in official references.

Iran's Stand

Tehran considers any alternative naming as an attack on its sovereignty and historical identity. The term "Persian Gulf" has been used in official international documents for centuries.

Geopolitical Sensitivity

The naming dispute reflects deep-rooted tensions between Iran and Gulf Arab states. It also signals US alignment with anti-Iran blocs in West Asia.

India's Neutrality

India maintains the use of "Persian Gulf" in official usage and refrains from taking sides in Middle Eastern disputes.

One Big Beautiful Bill Act

Context

The "One Big Beautiful Bill Act" was proposed in the United States Congress to prevent multiple policy items being clubbed into a single bill.

Objective of the Act

The bill seeks to bring transparency and clarity by avoiding legislative bundling. It mandates each legislative proposal to be voted on individually.

Governance Significance

It enhances accountability and reduces legislative manipulation. Policymakers and the public can scrutinize each provision clearly.

Relevance to India

Though specific to the US, such a proposal reflects global best practices in lawmaking. India's Parliament too has faced criticism for passing bills without sufficient debate or scrutiny.

India Participates in 58th ADB Annual Meet

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman attended the 58th Annual Meeting of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) Board of Governors in Milan. India reaffirmed its commitment to becoming a developed nation by 2047, highlighting investments in infrastructure, digital economy, and inclusive development.

Metre Convention

Context

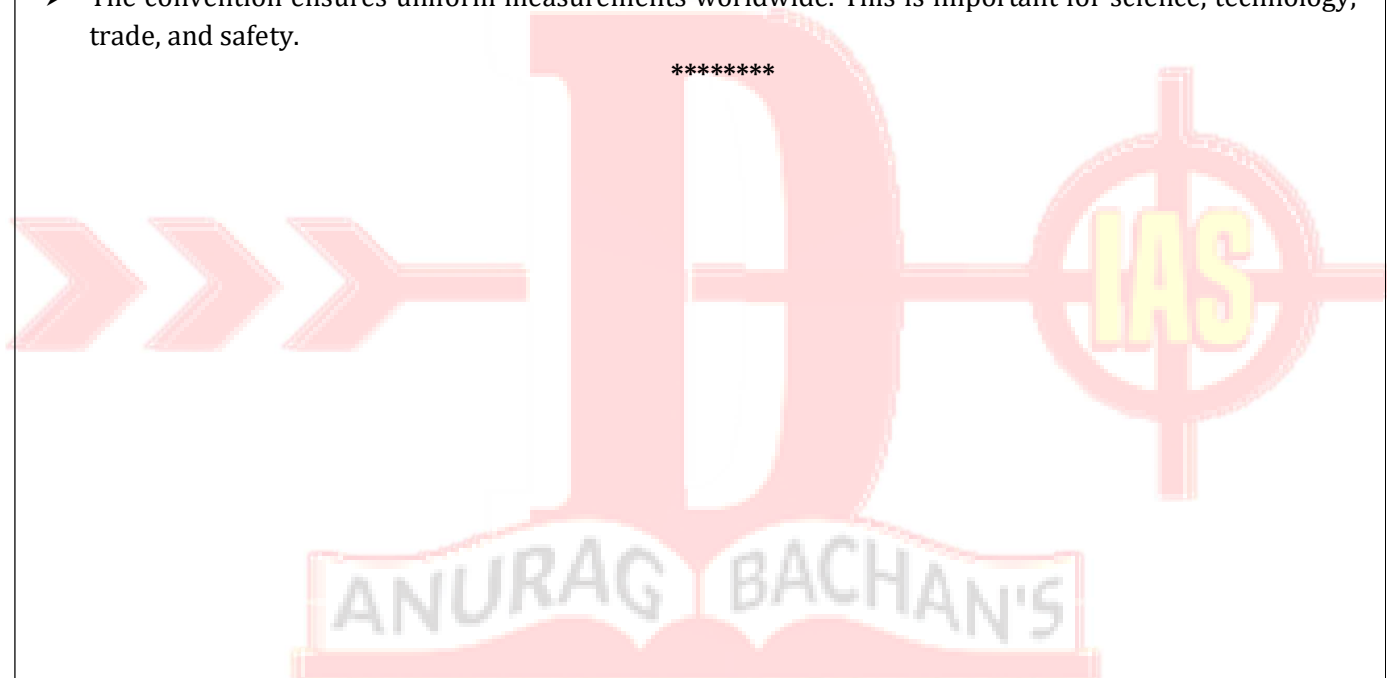
The Department of Consumer Affairs celebrated World Metrology Day 2025 on 20 May. This year marked 150 years since the signing of the Metre Convention. There are 64 Member States and 37 Associate States. India is one of the full members.

About Metre Convention

The Metre Convention was signed on May 20, 1875. It was later amended in 1921. The aim was to create a unified and evolving metric system for global use. The agreement led to the establishment of the International Bureau of Weights and Measures (BIPM).

Role of BIPM

- BIPM ensures scientific accuracy in measurements. It promotes global standardization and traceability.
- The convention ensures uniform measurements worldwide. This is important for science, technology, trade, and safety.



INDIAN ECONOMY

Sugarcane FRP Increased for 2025-26

Context

- The government has raised the Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) for sugarcane to ₹355 per quintal for the 2025-26 season. This is ₹15 more than last year.
- FRP ensures that sugarcane farmers are paid fairly, even if sugar mills are not making profits. It is a legal right for farmers and must be paid within 14 days of delivery.
- The price is linked to the sugar recovery rate. Higher recovery means better payment. The system also encourages better farming practices and timely payments.

Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP)

- The Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) is the minimum price that sugar mills are legally required to pay to sugarcane farmers for the cane supplied to them. It is announced annually by the Central Government based on the recommendations of the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) and is binding under the Essential Commodities Act, 1955.
- FRP is meant to ensure that sugarcane farmers receive a fair return on their investment and effort, covering the cost of production and ensuring a margin for profit, regardless of the sugar market's fluctuations.

Key Features of FRP

- **Legally Binding:** Payment of FRP is mandatory for sugar mills. It is the floor price—no sugar mill can pay less than the FRP set by the government.
- **Fixed by the Centre:** FRP is announced by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA), chaired by the Prime Minister, based on the CACP's recommendations and stakeholder consultations.
- **Based on Cost of Production:** The FRP is calculated keeping in view various factors like:
 - Cost of production of sugarcane
 - Return to the farmer (margin over cost)
 - Recovery rate of sugar from cane
 - Demand-supply situation
 - Price trends in sugar
 - Inter-crop price parity
 - Cane farmer's interest and industry's capacity to pay
- **Recovery-Linked Payment:** The FRP is linked to a basic recovery rate, typically 10%. If a mill achieves higher recovery, it must pay a premium to farmers for each 0.1% increase in recovery. If the recovery is lower, the payment can be proportionately reduced, though a minimum FRP is ensured.
- **No Bonus Liability:** Unlike State Advised Prices (SAPs), the FRP mechanism does not mandate any additional bonus or price above the FRP unless voluntarily decided by the mill or state government.
- **Encourages Timely Payment:** Mills are required to pay farmers within 14 days of sugarcane delivery. Delay beyond this period attracts interest penalties.

Distinction from State Advised Price (SAP)

Some states like Uttar Pradesh and Punjab announce their own State Advised Prices, which are higher than the FRP. While SAPs are politically motivated to support farmers, they create financial pressure on sugar mills and lead to arrears in cane payments.

Significance

- Supports farmer income and price stability
- Protects against market volatility
- Encourages consistent cane production
- Ensures equitable growth of the sugar sector

However, the FRP system also leads to challenges for the sugar industry when sugar prices are low, as mills are obligated to pay FRP irrespective of market conditions.

India's E-Commerce Market Set to Cross \$300 Billion by 2030

Context

According to Invest India, the Indian e-commerce sector is expanding at an unprecedented pace and is projected to surpass \$325 billion by 2030, becoming the third-largest e-commerce market globally. Currently valued at around \$70 billion, it constitutes about 7% of India's retail industry.

Digital Infrastructure and Internet Penetration

India has over 900 million internet users, making it the second-largest internet user base in the world. Mobile internet usage has risen by 21% since 2019, and by 2025, over 87% of households are expected to be internet-connected. The rise of cheap data plans, increasing smartphone use, and digital literacy programs have catalysed e-commerce growth.

Consumer Dynamics

- Rural consumers are expected to grow at a CAGR of 22%, faster than urban buyers (15%) from 2019 to 2026.
- Mass consumers (annual income ₹2.5 to ₹10 lakh) will account for over 50% of Gross Merchandise Value (GMV) by 2030, contributing around \$135 billion.
- India may surpass the U.S. in online shopper volume in the next few years.

Challenges

Despite promising growth, the sector faces key challenges:

- Inadequate digital infrastructure in rural areas.
- High compliance costs for small businesses.
- Platform monopolies and unfair practices.
- Complexity in taxation and regulatory clarity.

Government Support

The government has introduced several initiatives to strengthen the ecosystem:

- 100% FDI in B2B e-commerce.
- Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) to democratize digital retail access.
- Schemes like Startup India, Digital India, and BharatNet to improve logistics and connectivity.

Conclusion

India's e-commerce sector is at a transformational juncture. Addressing infrastructural gaps, promoting competition, and empowering local businesses will be critical to sustaining this momentum and making the market more inclusive.

Domestic Institutional Investors Surpass FPIs in NSE Stake

Context

For the first time since 2009, Domestic Institutional Investors (DIIs) have overtaken Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs) in terms of ownership in NSE-listed companies. As of the March 2025 quarter, DIIs held a 17.62% stake, slightly higher than the 17.22% held by FPIs.

Who Are DIIs?

DIIs include:

- Mutual funds,
- Insurance companies,
- Pension funds,
- Banks and financial institutions.

They represent a more stable, long-term capital source compared to FPIs, who are known for short-term speculative investments.

Why This Matters

- DIIs' increasing dominance reduces market volatility.
- It reflects growing domestic retail participation through SIPs and mutual fund investments.
- It shows investor confidence in the Indian growth story, especially amid global uncertainties.

Impact on Market Behaviour

- With FPIs pulling out of emerging markets due to U.S. interest rate hikes and geopolitical tensions, DIIs have cushioned the Indian equity markets.
- There is a positive sentiment towards DIIs' value-based, long-term investing strategies.

Conclusion

The shift indicates a maturing capital market ecosystem where domestic savings are being channelled into productive investments. Policy support for retail investors and continued transparency will further strengthen this trend.

Expanded Credit Guarantee Scheme for Startups (CGSS)

Context

The Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) has expanded the Credit Guarantee Scheme for Startups to improve access to credit. Major reforms include:

- Increasing the loan guarantee ceiling from ₹10 crore to ₹20 crore.
- Reducing annual guarantee fees for recognised startups in 27 champion sectors.

Challenges Faced by Startups

Startups, especially in early stages, struggle with:

- Lack of collateral,
- High risk perception by banks,
- Limited access to formal credit,
- High interest rates.

The CGSS aims to address these pain points by providing government-backed guarantees to lending institutions.

Expected Impact

- Greater lender confidence in funding innovation.
- Boost to manufacturing, services, and R&D-based startups.
- Enhanced financial inclusion and entrepreneurship in Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities.

Conclusion

The expansion of CGSS is a positive step towards creating a vibrant startup ecosystem. It supports India's ambition to become a global innovation hub while promoting job creation and economic diversification.

India Highlighted Development Model at ADB Annual Meet

Context

At the 58th Annual Meeting of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) in Milan, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman emphasized India's development story, particularly the success of inclusive schemes, infrastructure expansion, and digitization.

Main Highlights

India presented its journey toward becoming a developed country by 2047. It showcased the role of initiatives like PM Gati Shakti, Digital India, and Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile (JAM) trinity in improving service delivery and empowering citizens.

India also advocated for greater financing to developing countries for green transition, digital infrastructure, and resilience building.

Strategic Value

The ADB is a key multilateral lender for India. With a total commitment of over \$7 billion in 2023, India is one of ADB's largest borrowers, especially in urban infrastructure, transport, and energy.

Conclusion

India used the ADB platform to highlight its developmental model rooted in inclusivity and innovation. The country is positioning itself as a leader among emerging economies pushing for reform in global financial institutions.

Cashless Treatment Scheme for Road Accident Victims

Context

The Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has launched a pan-India cashless treatment scheme for road accident victims. It will cover treatment costs up to ₹1.5 lakh per person for the first 48 hours post-accident.

Coverage Details

- Applicable on both highways and rural roads.
- Will cover all categories of road users—drivers, passengers, pedestrians.
- Includes ambulance services, trauma care, and emergency surgery.

Funding and Implementation

- The scheme will be funded from the Motor Vehicle Accident Fund.
- National Health Authority (NHA) will serve as the implementing agency.
- Hospitals empanelled under PM-JAY will participate in delivering care.

Need for the Scheme

India records nearly 1.5 lakh road accident deaths annually, with a significant number attributed to lack of timely medical aid. The new scheme aims to reduce mortality and financial burden on victims.

Conclusion

The cashless accident treatment scheme reflects a shift toward victim-centric public policy. It underscores the importance of quick medical aid in saving lives and reducing long-term disability.

India Sets Target of 100 MT Coal Gasification by 2030

Context

Coal gasification is a process of converting coal into syngas, which can be used to produce energy, chemicals, or hydrogen. It's seen as a cleaner way to utilize India's abundant coal reserves.

India's Ambitious Plan

The government has set a target of 100 million tonnes (MT) of coal gasification by 2030. Four new coal gasification plants will be developed through public-private partnerships.

Strategic Objectives

- Reduce India's dependency on imported gas and fertilizers.
- Utilize domestic coal in a cleaner and more efficient manner.

- Promote self-reliance in critical sectors like methanol, urea, and hydrogen.

Policy Support

- Coal Gasification Mission approved by the Cabinet.
- Incentives for private sector participation.
- Use of surplus coal from CIL and SCCL.

Conclusion

Coal gasification is central to India's plan for a just energy transition. While concerns about water usage and carbon emissions remain, the initiative is an important bridge in the shift from coal to green energy.

Chief Economic Adviser Calls for Inclusive Growth and Tax Reforms

Context

India's Chief Economic Adviser, V. Anantha Nageswaran, emphasized the importance of inclusive growth during his recent address at a global policy forum. He noted that India must ensure that economic gains reach the bottom 50% of the population while maintaining macroeconomic stability.

Major Points Highlighted

- He underscored the need to make the taxation system more efficient and equitable, especially in light of rising income inequalities.
- Suggested simplifying the personal income tax regime and improving tax compliance using digital tools.
- Emphasized enhancing social spending in education, nutrition, and healthcare to unlock long-term growth.

Inclusive Growth as a Strategy

India's strong GDP growth needs to be matched with broad-based employment creation. The government's focus on schemes like PM Vishwakarma Yojana, MGNREGA, and skill development will play a crucial role.

Conclusion

The CEA's views underline the dual goals of robust growth and social equity. A well-designed tax structure and investment in human capital are crucial to realizing India's development aspirations.

Fiscal Deficit for FY 2024–25 to be Contained at 5.1% of GDP

Context

In line with the interim budget, the Finance Ministry has reiterated its commitment to fiscal consolidation by targeting a fiscal deficit of 5.1% of GDP for FY 2024–25.

Revenue and Expenditure Trends

- Strong GST collections and direct tax inflows have supported revenue growth.
- Rationalization of subsidies and better targeting of welfare schemes have helped control expenditure.

Implications

Containing the fiscal deficit helps:

- Maintain investor confidence.
- Keep inflation in check.
- Preserve India's sovereign credit rating.

Conclusion

The government's adherence to the fiscal glide path reflects disciplined macroeconomic management, which is vital in the backdrop of global uncertainty and rising interest rates.

RBI Finalised Netting Norms to Boost Derivatives Market

What Are Netting Norms?

Netting refers to offsetting mutual claims and obligations in financial contracts. The Bilateral Netting of Qualified Financial Contracts Act (2020) provided the legal basis, and now the RBI has finalized the operational framework.

Key Features

- Applies to qualified financial contracts like interest rate swaps, credit derivatives, etc.
- Reduces counterparty risk for financial institutions.
- Helps lower capital requirements under Basel norms.

Impact on Financial Markets

The norms are expected to:

- Deepen the Indian derivatives market.
- Attract more institutional investors.
- Improve hedging options for companies and banks.

Conclusion

Finalizing netting regulations marks a crucial step in modernizing India's financial infrastructure. It aligns with global standards and enhances systemic stability.

World Bank Sanctions \$700 Million Credit Line for Indian MSMEs

Context

The World Bank approved a \$700 million loan to boost access to finance for India's Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs), especially those hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic and global economic slowdown.

Focus Areas

- Improve digital credit access using public digital infrastructure like Aadhaar and UPI.
- Support women-owned and rural MSMEs.
- Help integrate MSMEs into global value chains.

Partner Institutions

The program will be implemented through the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) and participating banks and NBFCs.

Importance of MSMEs

MSMEs account for nearly 30% of India's GDP and over 40% of exports. Yet, many struggle with credit access due to collateral requirements and lack of financial history.

Conclusion

The World Bank's support strengthens India's financial inclusion agenda. Empowering MSMEs with better credit access is essential for creating jobs and sustaining grassroots entrepreneurship.

Most Favoured Nation (MFN) Status

Context

The President of the United States signed an executive order to reduce the prices of prescription drugs. This policy was described as implementing a "most favoured nation" approach, where drug prices would align with the lowest price among developed countries. Though used in the health context, the term "most favoured nation" originates from international trade law.

Understanding the MFN Principle

The Most Favoured Nation (MFN) status is a fundamental principle under the World Trade Organization (WTO). Its core aim is to prevent any member country from discriminating among its trading partners.

Key Features

- Under MFN, each WTO member must treat all other members equally in terms of tariffs, regulations, and market access.
- If a country offers a concession or a favorable deal (such as reducing tariffs) to one country, it must offer the same to all other WTO members.
- The principle ensures uniformity, transparency, and predictability in trade relations.

Philosophy Behind MFN

The MFN clause seeks to replace power-based or bilateral trade pressures with a rules-based international trade framework.

It promotes fairness where market access and rights do not depend on the political or economic might of individual countries.

Global Applicability and Exclusions

- Countries that are not part of the WTO, such as Russia, Iran, North Korea, Syria, and Belarus, are outside the obligations of the MFN principle.
- WTO members are allowed to impose trade restrictions on non-members without violating global trade norms.

Permitted Exceptions

There are certain exceptions under the WTO framework where differential treatment is allowed.

These include:

- Preferential access for developing and least developed countries
- Regional Free Trade Agreements (FTAs)
- Customs unions such as the European Union

Revoking MFN Status

There is no formal procedure under the WTO to suspend MFN treatment. However, member countries can:

- Raise import duties
- Impose quotas
- Ban certain goods or services from a specific country

Case Study: India and Pakistan

In 2019, following the Pulwama terrorist attack, India withdrew MFN status from Pakistan. This was a strong diplomatic signal that India no longer viewed Pakistan as an economic partner. India subsequently imposed a 200% customs duty on imports from Pakistan, essentially halting trade.

Implications of Losing MFN Status

- The affected country may face higher tariffs and trade barriers.
- Exporters from the country lose competitive advantage in global markets.
- The diplomatic message is that the country is isolated economically and politically.
- It can also affect services and investment flows from the imposing country.

About the WTO

- The World Trade Organization (WTO) is the largest global intergovernmental body for trade.
- It was established in 1995 as a successor to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).
- With over 160 member countries representing more than 98% of world trade, the WTO works to liberalize trade and resolve disputes among nations.
- Its primary goal is to make global trade predictable, fair, and free for the benefit of all member economies.

India's Retail Inflation Hits Six-Year Low

Context

Retail inflation in India has hit a six-year low in April 2025, indicating easing price pressure across essential commodities.

Inflation Trend

Consumer Price Index-based inflation stood at 3.2% in April. This is the lowest level since 2019. The moderation is mainly due to controlled food prices, a stable rupee, and subdued fuel inflation.

Factors Behind the Decline

A strong rabi harvest led to a steady supply of cereals and vegetables. Oil prices remained moderate in global markets. The government took proactive steps like buffer stock releases and controlling LPG prices. These factors collectively softened inflation in urban and rural areas.

Category-Wise Details

Food inflation was under control. Housing and transport services showed stable trends. Fuel inflation even turned negative in some categories. Clothing and footwear registered only marginal increases.

Policy Implications

Lower inflation improves consumer sentiment and boosts real income. The Reserve Bank of India may consider rate cuts to support growth. Lower borrowing costs encourage investment and spending.

Concerns

Despite the favorable numbers, inflation risks remain. A weak monsoon, supply shocks, or international conflicts can reverse the trend. Continuous policy monitoring is necessary to sustain stability.

National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development (NaBFID)

Context

NaBFID has been established to finance India's long-term infrastructure projects. It functions as a dedicated Development Finance Institution.

Institutional Setup

The bank was created by an Act of Parliament in 2021. It is initially fully owned by the Government of India. Over time, institutional investors may be allowed to invest. It has an independent board and functions under RBI regulation.

Core Objectives

NaBFID aims to provide long-term funding for infrastructure sectors such as roads, railways, airports, and energy. It seeks to attract private capital by de-risking infrastructure finance. It will also help deepen India's bond market.

Key Functions

It will lend directly to infrastructure projects. It will invest in bonds and structured debt instruments. It will provide guarantees and undertake refinancing. It will also build institutional capacity for project appraisal and monitoring.

Significance

Infrastructure financing requires long tenure funds, which are not available through traditional banks. NaBFID fills this critical gap. It supports schemes like the National Infrastructure Pipeline and PM Gati Shakti. It helps India achieve sustainable development goals and a \$5 trillion economy target.

India's Trade Deficit Widens to \$8.65 Billion

Context

India's trade deficit widened to \$8.65 billion in April 2025 due to higher imports compared to exports.

Trade Performance

Merchandise exports grew by 9% to \$38.49 billion. Imports increased sharply by 19.1%, reaching \$64.91 billion. Crude oil and gold accounted for a large share of imports. Rising industrial activity increased demand for intermediate goods and machinery.

Services Trade

Services exports stood at \$35.31 billion. Imports in services reached \$17.54 billion. The net services surplus was \$17.77 billion. However, it could not fully offset the merchandise trade gap.

Implications

The trade deficit adds pressure to the current account. It can impact currency stability and foreign exchange reserves. The rupee may depreciate, making imports costlier. Inflationary risks could rise if the trend continues.

Way Forward

The government may consider export promotion measures. Focus may shift to import substitution through Make in India initiatives. Trade diversification is essential to reduce dependence on oil and gold imports.

RBI Surplus Transfer to the Government

Context

The Reserve Bank of India is expected to transfer a record surplus of ₹2.5-3 lakh crore to the central government in 2025.

Source of Surplus

The RBI earns income from its foreign reserves, government securities, and currency operations. After providing for contingency reserves, the remaining profit is transferred to the government under Section 47 of the RBI Act.

Committee Recommendations

The Jalan Committee recommended maintaining a Contingency Risk Buffer between 5.5% to 6.5% of the balance sheet. Surpluses beyond that can be shared with the government without affecting the central bank's financial health.

Fiscal Significance

The surplus will support government expenditure on infrastructure and welfare. It can reduce the fiscal deficit and dependence on market borrowings. It may also help avoid raising taxes in the short term.

Autonomy Concerns

Repeated large transfers may create pressure on RBI's independence. A balance is needed between fiscal support and central bank autonomy.

Role of Agritech in Transforming India's Agriculture Sector

Context

Agritech is revolutionizing Indian agriculture through digital tools and smart farming techniques. India has over 2,800 agritech startups offering services in weather forecasting, soil health monitoring, drone spraying, and online marketplaces. The Digital Agriculture Mission 2021 promotes technology adoption across states.

Technologies in Use

Drones are used for fertiliser spraying. AI and sensors monitor soil moisture and crop health. Big data helps in market forecasting. IoT-based irrigation systems are reducing water use.

Economic Benefits

Agritech increases yield, reduces input costs, and provides better market access. It helps in risk management through insurance and advisory services. It boosts farmer incomes and reduces rural distress.

Challenges

Digital penetration is uneven. Small farmers face literacy and affordability barriers. Infrastructure like rural internet and cold chains needs development.

Way Forward

Government support through subsidies and policy frameworks is essential. Public-private partnerships can scale innovation. Farmer training and inclusive platforms are key to success.

Futures and Options

Context

The former Chairman of the Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) has expressed concern over the rising participation of retail investors in the Futures and Options (F&O) segment. He highlighted that most individuals investing in these instruments are incurring heavy losses.

What is a Derivative?

- A derivative is a financial contract whose value is derived from an underlying asset. This asset can be a stock, a stock index, or a commodity like crude oil, natural gas, gold, silver, or copper.
- Derivatives help traders manage risk. Informed investors use them as hedging instruments to reduce the chances of loss in volatile markets.

Futures Contracts

A futures contract is a legal agreement between two parties to buy or sell a specific quantity of an underlying asset at a predetermined price on a specific future date.

In such a contract, both the buyer and the seller are obligated to fulfill the contract regardless of the current market price on the settlement date. For example, if a trader believes the price of natural gas will rise in the next three months, he may enter into a futures contract today. If the prediction is correct, he earns a profit. But if the price falls, he suffers an unlimited loss, as the obligation to buy or sell remains.

Options Contracts

Options contracts differ from futures in one major aspect. In an options contract, the buyer has the right, but not the obligation, to execute the contract. There are two types of options:

- **Call Option:** Grants the right to buy the underlying asset.
- **Put Option:** Grants the right to sell the underlying asset.

Options are considered more flexible than futures. However, they are equally risky. If the market moves against the investor's expectation, the capital invested in the premium may completely erode.

Concerns and Market Trends

Retail investors often enter F&O markets without full knowledge of the risks. High leverage, complex pricing, and fast market movements lead to significant losses. Regulatory authorities like SEBI have been emphasizing investor awareness and rational participation in derivatives.

Despite the appeal of quick profits, derivatives trading requires expertise. Without proper hedging and strategy, these instruments can result in severe financial losses.

Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs)

Context

The Reserve Bank of India has proposed revised guidelines to relax investment restrictions imposed on regulated entities investing in Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs). This development could boost the flow of capital into India's alternative investment space.

What is an AIF?

An Alternative Investment Fund is a privately pooled investment vehicle. It is established in India and raises funds from sophisticated Indian or foreign investors. These funds invest according to a specific investment policy aimed at benefiting the investors.

AIFs operate outside the scope of traditional mutual funds. They are not governed under SEBI's Mutual Funds Regulations, Collective Investment Scheme Regulations, or any other retail fund management regulations. They are considered suitable only for high-net-worth or institutional investors due to their complexity and risk profile.

Classification of AIFs in India

Category I AIFs

These funds invest in areas considered socially or economically desirable by the government or regulators. They include investments in:

- Startups
- Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)
- Infrastructure
- Social venture projects

These funds generally enjoy regulatory incentives and policy support.

Category II AIFs

Funds in this category do not fall under Category I or III. They include:

- Private equity funds
- Debt funds
- Real estate funds
- Distressed asset funds

They do not employ leverage except for meeting operational requirements.

Category III AIFs

These are high-risk, high-return funds. They use complex strategies and can invest in both listed and unlisted derivatives. These funds are allowed to use leverage and typically aim to generate short-term returns.

Significance of AIFs

AIFs play a critical role in India's financial ecosystem. They mobilize long-term risk capital, especially for sectors like infrastructure and startups where traditional funding is limited. They also bring global capital and innovative financial instruments into Indian markets.

The regulatory clarity and ongoing reforms are expected to deepen the AIF market. As more investors seek diversified avenues beyond traditional equity and debt, AIFs will continue to grow in importance.

CBDT notified Cost Inflation Index (CII)

Context

The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has notified the Cost Inflation Index (CII) for the financial year 2024–25. The CII is used to adjust the purchase price of assets for inflation, which helps in the calculation of long-term capital gains (LTCG) for tax purposes.

What is Cost Inflation Index?

- The Cost Inflation Index is a tool used to reflect inflation in the cost of capital assets. It is notified by the CBDT every financial year. This index helps taxpayers calculate the indexed cost of acquisition, thereby reducing the taxable capital gains.
- The CII helps account for the erosion of the value of money over time due to inflation. By inflating the purchase price, the capital gain is adjusted downward, resulting in lower tax liability.

Application in Capital Gains Taxation

- When a person sells a long-term capital asset (held for more than 24 or 36 months depending on the asset), the cost of acquisition and improvement can be indexed using the CII.
- **The formula used is:**
$$\text{Indexed Cost} = \text{Original Cost} \times (\text{CII of Year of Sale} \div \text{CII of Year of Purchase})$$
- This reduces the net taxable gain and hence the tax payable.

Legal Framework

- The use of the CII is governed under Section 48 of the Income Tax Act, 1961. It applies only to long-term capital assets such as land, buildings, unlisted shares, gold, and other movable or immovable properties.
- The indexation benefit is not available for short-term assets and some special capital gains like those from listed equity shares, where a flat 10% tax may apply beyond a threshold, without indexation.

Relevance and Impact

- Notifying the CII annually provides clarity to taxpayers in advance of filing their income tax returns. It ensures that capital gains taxation remains fair and inflation-adjusted.
- The use of the CII is crucial for preserving the real value of gains and for encouraging long-term investment by providing tax efficiency.

Cabinet Approved Hike in MSP for Kharif Crops

Context

The Union Government has approved an increase in the Minimum Support Prices (MSP) for Kharif crops for the marketing season 2025–26. This move aims to ensure fair and remunerative prices to farmers, protect them from market fluctuations, and promote agricultural production.

Key Highlights of MSP Revision

The highest absolute increase in MSP has been given to nigerseed, with a rise of ₹820 per quintal. It is followed by ragi (₹596), cotton (₹589), and sesamum (₹579) per quintal. This revision supports both food security and income assurance for farmers engaged in kharif crop cultivation.

What is Minimum Support Price (MSP)?

MSP is the minimum rate at which the government procures crops from farmers. It acts as a safety net, ensuring that farmers do not sell below a guaranteed price, even in case of a price crash in open markets. It brings income security and reduces distress selling.

Institutional Mechanism and Pricing Criteria

The Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP), set up in 1965, recommends MSPs to the government. Final approval is given by the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, chaired by the Prime Minister. CACP considers various factors like cost of cultivation, demand-supply conditions, domestic and international market trends, and inter-crop parity.

Profit Margin Assurance

MSP is designed to provide at least a 50% profit over the cost of production. The cost includes inputs like seeds, fertilizers, labor, irrigation, machinery, fuel, interest on capital, and imputed value of family labor.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

India's First Gene Therapy Approved for Commercial Use

Context

India's drug regulator has granted approval for the country's first gene therapy developed indigenously to treat a rare inherited blood disorder called Spinal Muscular Atrophy (SMA). The therapy, named "Dosthera", was developed by a biotech startup in partnership with a government-supported innovation fund.

About the Therapy

Gene therapy involves altering defective genes to cure or alleviate diseases. Dosthera uses a modified viral vector to deliver a healthy copy of the gene responsible for producing the SMN protein, which is deficient in SMA patients.

Significance

- Offers a one-time curative solution compared to lifelong symptomatic treatment.
- Provides an affordable alternative to global gene therapies that cost over ₹16 crore.
- Marks a major milestone in India's bio-innovation and regulatory landscape.

Challenges Ahead

- Requires highly skilled handling and infrastructure.
- Post-treatment monitoring and ethical frameworks need strengthening.
- Public awareness on gene therapy remains low.

Conclusion

Dosthera's approval is a transformative step in India's medical research ecosystem. It positions India as a potential leader in affordable gene therapy solutions and enhances domestic biotech capabilities.

ISRO Plans New Space Station Module by 2035

India's Human Spaceflight Ambitions

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has announced plans to deploy a space station module by 2035, following the successful Gaganyaan human spaceflight program. The proposed module will serve as India's independent orbital laboratory.

Key Features

- It will host 2-3 astronauts in low-Earth orbit for up to 20 days.
- It will allow experiments in microgravity, space biology, and materials science.
- Will be equipped with renewable life-support systems and docking capabilities.

Strategic Value

- Reduces India's reliance on the International Space Station (ISS).
- Enhances collaboration with countries like France, UAE, and Japan.
- Provides a stepping stone toward future deep-space missions and lunar exploration.

Ongoing Developments

- The Gaganyaan mission is expected to send humans to space by 2025.
- ISRO is upgrading its launch vehicles and ground systems for continuous crewed missions.

Conclusion

India's plan to build a space station aligns with its aspiration to be among the top-tier spacefaring nations. It represents a leap in technological autonomy and international prestige.

Tata Institute Developed Indigenous Quantum Computer Prototype

Context

The Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR), in collaboration with the Ministry of Electronics and IT, has unveiled India's first fully indigenous quantum computer prototype capable of performing basic quantum operations using 4 qubits.

Technology Highlights

- Built using superconducting qubits and cryogenic systems.
- Capable of performing Grover's algorithm and quantum teleportation simulations.
- Operated under extreme low temperatures, near absolute zero.

Why It Matters

Quantum computers hold the potential to revolutionize cryptography, drug discovery, and climate modelling. India's prototype, though basic, lays the foundation for future research in quantum supremacy and scalable quantum hardware.

- The National Quantum Mission (NQM) has been allocated ₹6,000 crore for 2023–28.
- Research hubs are being developed in Bengaluru, Pune, and Hyderabad.

Conclusion

The development of India's indigenous quantum computer signals a new era in advanced computing research. It offers strategic advantages and positions India competitively in the global quantum race.

A treatment for Lafora Disease

Context

Researchers are working on developing a treatment for Lafora Disease.

About The disease

Lafora Disease is a rare, fatal, and progressive genetic disorder of the nervous system. It falls under the category of Progressive Myoclonic Epilepsies (PMEs). The disease is named after Spanish neuropathologist Gonzalo Rodríguez Lafora, who discovered it.

- This disease occurs due to the buildup of Lafora bodies in the brain and tissues. These bodies are insoluble, glycogen-like structures. Their accumulation disturbs normal neuronal activity. This leads to severe seizures, loss of motor control, and mental decline.
- The genetic mutations involved are in the EPM2A or EPM2B (also called NHLRC1) genes. It follows an autosomal recessive inheritance. Marriages within close relatives raise the risk.
- There is no permanent cure. The current treatment focuses only on managing symptoms.

Quantum Key Distribution (QKD)

Context

India has achieved a major milestone in quantum communication. The Indian Army and DRDO successfully tested Quantum Key Distribution (QKD) over a 100-km optical fibre between Prayagraj and Vindhyachal.

What is QKD?

- Quantum Key Distribution is a secure communication method. It uses principles of quantum mechanics to exchange cryptographic keys. Any attempt to intercept the key disturbs the quantum state, thus revealing the presence of an intruder.
- QKD ensures absolute data security. It allows secure transmission even in hostile and cyber-vulnerable environments. It has military, banking, and critical infrastructure applications.

India's Development

DRDO and BEL developed the QKD system. It uses polarization encoding and quantum entanglement. The successful trial between Prayagraj and Vindhyachal shows India's capability in strategic quantum technologies.

Significance

This marks India's entry into elite nations possessing indigenous quantum communication infrastructure. It will improve the Armed Forces' ability to prevent data leaks. QKD systems are also central to national data governance and cyber security.

Global Context

China leads in quantum communication, having launched the Micius quantum satellite. Europe and the US are also investing heavily in QKD for secure government and defense systems.

BrahMos Missile

Context

India successfully test-fired an extended-range version of the BrahMos missile from a Su-30 MKI fighter aircraft over the Bay of Bengal.

About BrahMos

BrahMos is a supersonic cruise missile jointly developed by India and Russia. It is named after two rivers – Brahmaputra of India and Moskva of Russia. The missile is capable of carrying conventional and nuclear warheads.

Capabilities

It has a speed of Mach 2.8 to 3.0 and a strike range extended up to 450–500 km. It can be launched from land, sea, air, and submarine platforms, making it a multi-platform weapon.

Air-Launched Variant

The air-launched version was first tested from a Su-30 MKI in 2017. The integration allows the Indian Air Force to strike deep into enemy territory with pinpoint accuracy.

Strategic Importance

BrahMos enhances India's precision strike capability. It serves as a deterrent against high-value targets. Its versatility and speed make it difficult to intercept.

Global Outlook

India has started exporting BrahMos to countries like the Philippines. Talks are ongoing with Vietnam, UAE, and South Africa. It marks a turning point in India's emergence as a defence exporter.

Weather Balloons

Context

Reports have noted the increased use of weather balloons for atmospheric monitoring and research purposes in both civilian and strategic sectors.

What are Weather Balloons?

Weather balloons are high-altitude balloons filled with helium or hydrogen. They carry instruments like radiosondes to collect data on temperature, humidity, pressure, and wind.

Functioning

The balloon ascends to the upper atmosphere, often reaching the stratosphere. The attached device transmits real-time data to ground stations. At a certain altitude, the balloon bursts, and a parachute brings down the instruments.

Applications

They are crucial for weather forecasting, climate research, and tracking monsoon patterns. Defence agencies use them to monitor upper atmospheric conditions for missile tests and surveillance.

Recent Global Focus

In 2023, the U.S. shot down an alleged Chinese spy balloon, raising global attention on balloon-based surveillance. India has also been upgrading its balloon-based meteorological capacity.

Strategic Use

Apart from civilian meteorology, weather balloons are used in military exercises, ballistic trajectory calculations, and nuclear testing environments.

India's Air Defence Systems

Context

India is actively strengthening its layered air defence shield in response to growing regional threats, especially from Pakistan and China.

Layered Defence Model

India follows a multi-tiered defence approach:

- **Long-Range Surface-to-Air Missiles (LRSAMs)** like S-400.
- **Medium Range SAMs** like Akash and MR-SAM.
- **Short Range SAMs** and close-in weapon systems for terminal defence.

S-400 Triumph System

India acquired the S-400 from Russia. It has a range of 400 km and can detect and destroy multiple aerial targets including stealth aircraft and ballistic missiles. It is among the best in the world.

Indigenous Systems

India has developed Akash SAM, capable of engaging multiple targets within 25–30 km range. New projects like the XRSAM and VSHORAD systems are underway under Make in India.

Integration and Coordination

The Integrated Air Command and Control System (IACCS) links radar stations, command centres, and interceptor units across the country.

Significance

The need for air defence is rising due to drone attacks, cruise missiles, and aerial surveillance. India's layered system provides strategic depth and quick response.

Bhargavastra- advanced electronic warfare system

Context

DRDO has recently tested an advanced electronic warfare system named Bhargavastra, which is capable of neutralising multiple threats using indigenous technology.

About the System

Bhargavastra is an advanced self-protection and electronic countermeasure system. It can detect, jam, and mislead enemy radar and communication signals. It is meant to protect fighter aircraft and critical military installations.

Features

It includes sensors, radar jammers, and decoy modules. The system operates across multiple frequencies and can simultaneously handle several incoming threats. It enhances survivability during both defensive and offensive operations.

Significance

Bhargavastra represents a leap in India's indigenous defence capability. It reduces dependence on foreign electronic warfare systems. It is part of a broader initiative under Make in India and Atmanirbhar Bharat to modernize India's armed forces using domestic technology.

Deployment Plans

It will be integrated into frontline aircraft of the Indian Air Force. Its use is also being explored for naval vessels and armoured vehicles in a modified form.

LUPEX Mission for the Lunar Polar Exploration

Context

India and Japan have collaborated for the Lunar Polar Exploration (LUPEX) mission, scheduled for launch in the coming years. The mission aims to study the Moon's south polar region.

Objective

LUPEX will explore the lunar surface for water ice and examine the possibility of future human habitation. The mission will carry a lander and a rover to the Moon's southern pole.

Collaboration

JAXA (Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency) will provide the lander. ISRO will contribute the rover and launch services. The mission reflects the growing space partnership between India and Japan.

Scientific Goals

It will assess the lunar soil, map surface composition, and test navigation and communication systems in polar terrain. Water ice, if found in significant quantities, could support human life and fuel future space missions.

Strategic Importance

LUPEX helps strengthen India's role in the global lunar race. It builds on the legacy of Chandrayaan missions. It is also aligned with global efforts to create a permanent base on the Moon.

Akash Missiles

Context

The Defence Acquisition Council has cleared the procurement of new Akash missile systems under the indigenisation push of the Indian defence sector.

About Akash

Akash is a medium-range surface-to-air missile developed by DRDO. It is capable of targeting aircraft, cruise missiles, and drones at a range of 25–30 km. It has an all-weather capability and can engage multiple targets simultaneously.

Variants

There are multiple versions including Akash-1, Akash-NG (New Generation), and Akash Prime. These offer improved range, guidance systems, and reaction times.

Deployment

It is deployed by both the Indian Army and Air Force. It is integrated into India's layered air defence network. It is also being offered for export to friendly countries in Africa and Southeast Asia.

Significance

Akash is a major success of India's missile development under the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme (IGMDP). It enhances self-reliance and provides an effective deterrent against aerial threats.

Shingles Vaccine

Context

India's health authorities have introduced a new vaccine against shingles, a painful skin condition caused by the varicella-zoster virus.

What is Shingles?

Shingles is caused by reactivation of the chickenpox virus. It leads to a painful rash, nerve pain, and complications like post-herpetic neuralgia. It commonly affects older adults and people with weakened immune systems.

The Vaccine

The new shingles vaccine is a recombinant, non-live vaccine. It provides over 90% protection and is recommended for individuals above 50 years of age. It is administered in two doses.

Health Impact

Shingles can reduce quality of life and lead to severe complications if untreated. The vaccine reduces disease burden and long-term costs for public health systems.

Implementation

The government is considering integrating it into adult immunisation programmes, especially for vulnerable populations. Awareness campaigns are also planned to educate citizens on prevention.

NASA GRAIL Mission

Context

NASA's GRAIL mission has provided significant insights into the internal structure of the Moon by using twin spacecraft.

About the Mission

- GRAIL stands for Gravity Recovery and Interior Laboratory. It was launched by NASA in 2011. The mission involved two spacecraft, named Ebb and Flow. They orbited the Moon to map its gravitational field in great detail.
- The spacecraft measured slight changes in the distance between them caused by variations in the Moon's gravitational pull. These measurements revealed the distribution of mass beneath the lunar surface.

Key Findings

GRAIL confirmed that the Moon's crust is thinner than previously believed. It also showed that the interior is more fractured and porous. These findings help understand the Moon's geological history and formation.

Significance

The mission improved our knowledge of lunar evolution, impact cratering, and internal layering. It has implications for future lunar bases and planetary science. The data is used to support upcoming missions like Artemis.

Kodaikanal Solar Observatory

Context

The Kodaikanal Solar Observatory celebrated over 125 years of continuous solar observation, making it one of the oldest in the world.

Kodaikanal Solar Observatory

- It is Located in Tamil Nadu and operated by the Indian Institute of Astrophysics. The observatory was established in 1899. It plays a major role in India's solar research programmes.
- It has a long record of solar images, especially white-light observations of sunspots. It also contributed to studying solar flares and coronal mass ejections.

Technological Tools

Instruments like the spectroheliograph, solar tunnel telescope, and recent digitization of sunspot records are housed here. These tools help understand solar cycles, which affect Earth's climate and satellite systems.

Global Recognition

The observatory's data is used by scientists worldwide. It supports ISRO's Aditya-L1 mission and other heliophysics research projects.

A new system for enhancing air defence command and control - Akashteer

Context

India has launched Akashteer, a new system for enhancing air defence command and control for the Indian Army.

About

Akashteer is an automated air defence control and reporting system. It enables monitoring of low-level airspace over sensitive areas in real time.

Functionality

The system integrates radars, air defence control centres, and weapon platforms. It can track enemy aircraft, drones, and missiles. It supports quick response decisions and automatic alerts to units.

Development

It has been developed by Bharat Electronics Ltd (BEL) under the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' mission. The software and hardware are completely indigenous.

Significance

Akashteer enhances coordination among multiple layers of air defence assets. It is vital for tackling aerial intrusions, especially from drones and low-flying aircraft. It increases battlefield awareness and reaction time.

Pokhran-I - 50 Years

Context

India recently commemorated the 50th anniversary of Pokhran-I, its first successful nuclear test conducted on May 18, 1974.

About the Test

Codenamed 'Smiling Buddha', the test was conducted at the Pokhran Test Range in Rajasthan. It marked India's formal entry into the list of nuclear-capable nations.

Historical Background

India had initiated its nuclear programme in the late 1940s under Homi Bhabha. The test was a response to China's nuclear tests and perceived strategic threats. It was conducted under high secrecy by the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC) with support from the Indian Army.

Outcome and Global Reaction

The test led to global reactions including sanctions and suspension of nuclear cooperation. The Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) was formed as a response. However, it also showcased India's technological capability and strategic autonomy.

Significance

Pokhran-I laid the foundation for India's independent nuclear doctrine. It reinforced the country's status in global geopolitics. It eventually led to the 1998 Pokhran-II tests, which formalised India's nuclear posture under a no-first-use policy.

Nor'westers Research Testbed

Context

The India Meteorological Department (IMD) has developed a dedicated testbed in Odisha to study Nor'westers or 'Kalbaisakhi' storms.

What are Nor'westers?

These are violent thunderstorms that occur in parts of eastern and northeastern India during pre-monsoon months. They are often accompanied by heavy rain, hail, and high-speed winds.

Geographical Occurrence

Common in states like West Bengal, Bihar, Jharkhand, Assam, and Odisha. They arise due to strong surface heating, moisture convergence, and wind shear.

Significance of the Testbed

The facility in Odisha will allow real-time data collection using doppler radars, satellites, weather balloons, and ground stations. It helps in improving prediction models and issuing timely warnings.

Impact

The study aims to reduce economic damage to crops, power lines, and human life. It also contributes to better understanding of meso-scale weather phenomena.

Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC)

Context

The Government of India has launched ONDC as an alternative digital commerce platform to democratise e-commerce.

Objective

ONDC is designed to end platform-centric monopolies. It enables sellers and buyers to transact across various e-commerce platforms using a unified protocol.

Structure

Unlike existing platforms like Amazon or Flipkart, ONDC is a network-based system. It separates services like search, cataloguing, ordering, logistics, and payments, which can be provided by different players.

Implementation

It is supported by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT). Major public and private sector banks are stakeholders. Startups and MSMEs are being onboarded rapidly.

Benefits

ONDC reduces entry barriers for small traders and ensures fair competition. It also aims to bring down consumer prices and promote local businesses.

Challenges

There are concerns regarding digital literacy, cybersecurity, and dispute resolution in a decentralized environment. Government support and private sector partnerships are crucial for its success.

LUPEX Mission Collaboration with JAXA

Context

ISRO and Japan's JAXA are jointly developing the Lunar Polar Exploration (LUPEX) mission. It aims to explore the Moon's south pole.

Mission Components

JAXA will provide the lander. ISRO is developing the rover. The mission is expected to be launched aboard a Japanese H3 rocket in the coming years.

Scientific Objectives

LUPEX will search for water ice in permanently shadowed craters. It will study lunar soil properties and test deep drilling technologies.

Strategic Relevance

Water ice is critical for sustainable lunar missions. It can support human habitation and be used to produce oxygen and hydrogen fuel.

Technology Transfer

The mission will test high-end autonomous rover navigation, telecommunication from extreme terrains, and energy-efficient thermal management. It will boost India's deep-space mission capabilities.

Cyberbullying Laws in India

Context

Cyberbullying, especially among children and women, is emerging as a growing threat in India. Several high-profile cases have sparked demands for stronger legal mechanisms.

Definition and Scope

Cyberbullying involves using digital platforms like social media, messaging apps, or gaming sites to harass, threaten, or demean individuals. It includes online stalking, impersonation, trolling, doxxing, and image-based abuse.

Legal Provisions

While there is no specific law on cyberbullying, several provisions in the Indian Penal Code and IT Act are used:

- Section 354D (IPC): Addresses stalking, including through electronic means.
- Section 507 (IPC): Deals with criminal intimidation by anonymous communication.
- Section 66E, 67, and 67A of the IT Act: Cover privacy violations, obscene content, and sexually explicit material.

Juvenile Concerns

Schools often struggle with incidents involving minors. The absence of child-specific digital safety rules creates challenges. Awareness programs and school-level cyber cells are being encouraged.

Judicial View

Courts have emphasized that online freedom must be balanced with personal dignity and protection from abuse. Recent PILs have urged the government to draft a focused anti-cyberbullying law.

Way Forward

Experts recommend introducing a separate law on digital harassment, particularly for vulnerable groups. Faster redressal mechanisms, AI-based moderation, and parental controls are also being promoted.

Rare Earth Magnets and India's Supply Chain Strategy

Context

India is focusing on developing domestic rare earth magnet production capabilities to reduce dependency on China.

What are Rare Earth Magnets?

These are powerful permanent magnets made from rare earth elements like neodymium, samarium, and dysprosium. They are used in electronics, defence, EV motors, and wind turbines.

India's Challenges

Although India has reserves of rare earth elements, it lacks refining and processing technology. China controls over 90% of the global market in finished rare earth products.

Strategic Initiatives

The Department of Science and Technology has proposed a National Rare Earth Mission. India is collaborating with countries like Australia and Japan for tech transfer and joint ventures.

Private Sector Involvement

Companies are being encouraged to set up magnet-making facilities under Production Linked Incentive (PLI) schemes. Defence PSUs are also sourcing rare earth-based materials indigenously.

Significance

Developing self-reliance in this area is vital for India's clean energy transition, Atmanirbhar Bharat in electronics, and supply chain security in defence.

Transfat

Context

WHO has recognised Austria, Norway, Oman, and Singapore for eliminating industrially produced trans fats.

About Transfat

- Trans fats are unsaturated fats. They are found in both industrial and natural sources.
- Some trans fats are chemically modified through hydrogenation. This process makes oils solid at room temperature. These are widely used in packaged and processed foods.

Health Impacts of Trans Fats

- Both industrial and natural trans fats harm health.
- They increase bad cholesterol (VLDL and LDL) and lower good cholesterol (HDL).
- This causes arteries to harden and raises the risk of heart attacks and strokes.

India's Response to Trans Fat Regulation

- India has taken several steps to reduce TFA intake.
- Trans Fat Free Logo helps consumers identify safer products.
- Heart Attack Rewind was a campaign to spread awareness.
- Eat Right India promotes healthy and sustainable food habits.
- In 2021, FSSAI limited TFA to 3% in oils and fats. This was reduced to 2% by January 2022.

Global Actions

- WHO launched a validation programme from 2023 to 2025.
- It recognises countries that eliminate industrial TFAs.
- WHO has urged all nations to adopt best practices by 2025.

***** USA's Golden Dome Project

Context

The United States has announced the shortlisted design for its Golden Dome defence project.

Golden Dome Project

- It is a missile defence shield covering land, sea, air, and space.
- The system is inspired by Israel's Iron Dome.
- It includes many small satellites with interceptors. These intercept missiles shortly after launch.
- It is designed to protect the U.S. from threats like ICBMs from countries like China and Russia.

Other Major Missile Defence Systems

- Iron Dome (Israel) is used for short-range rocket defence.
- THAAD (USA) intercepts missiles in their final stage.
- S-400 (Russia) is a long-range missile defence system.
- HQ-19 (China) is similar to THAAD and targets mid-course missiles.

PREFIRE Mission

Context

NASA has launched the PREFIRE mission, consisting of two satellites, to study far-infrared radiation emitted from Earth's polar regions. The mission stands for Polar Radiant Energy in the Far-Infrared Experiment.

PREFIRE Satellites

- The satellites are compact 6U CubeSats. They measure about 90 cm in height and extend to 120 cm in width when solar panels are deployed. Both satellites orbit Earth at around 525 kilometers in a near-polar path.
- Each satellite is equipped with a miniaturised infrared spectrometer. This device measures radiation in the 0 to 45 micrometer (μm) range with a spectral resolution of $0.84 \mu\text{m}$. The mission duration is planned for one seasonal cycle, roughly one year.

Objectives of PREFIRE

The mission has three key goals:

- To measure far-infrared spectral fluxes, particularly in the 5–45 μm range. Nearly 60% of the Arctic's heat emission occurs beyond 15 μm wavelengths.
- To improve climate models by providing data on Arctic warming, melting ice sheets, and sea-level rise. It strengthens climate predictions by measuring energy loss from the poles.
- To examine the role of the Arctic as Earth's "thermostat." It regulates the global climate by releasing excess heat absorbed from tropical regions.

Significance for Earth's Energy Budget

The balance between incoming solar radiation and outgoing thermal radiation defines Earth's temperature and climate. A large portion of the outgoing radiation in polar regions lies in the far-infrared range. Despite its importance, this range has never been observed systematically. PREFIRE will close this data gap by measuring radiation from 5 μm to 45 μm on hourly to seasonal timescales. It will enhance understanding of the planet's heat budget and support better long-term climate predictions.

ISRO Launched RISAT-2B-HR for Border Surveillance

A new high-resolution radar imaging satellite, RISAT-2B-HR, has been launched to provide 24/7 surveillance, especially for monitoring India's borders and natural disasters. The satellite uses synthetic aperture radar and has all-weather, day-night imaging capability.

India to Set Up National AI Mission

The government has announced a National AI Mission focused on building sovereign AI capabilities. It will include the creation of a National AI Cloud Platform, datasets repository, and support for startups developing AI solutions in health, education, and agriculture.

Indian Scientists Discover Plastic-Degrading Bacteria

Researchers at the Indian Institute of Science Education and Research (IISER) have discovered a new bacterial strain that breaks down polyethylene plastic in a matter of weeks. This has potential applications in managing India's plastic waste problem.

Dholes (Asiatic Wild Dog)

Context

The Indira Gandhi Zoological Park in Visakhapatnam recently celebrated World Dhole Day. The occasion highlighted the conservation concerns and ecological importance of dholes, also known as Asiatic wild dogs.

About Dholes

Dholes, scientifically known as *Cuon alpinus*, are a species of wild canids native to Southeast Asia. They are social animals and often hunt in packs. In the wild, they live around 10 to 13 years, whereas in captivity they can survive up to 16 years. Dholes are known for their distinctive whistle-like calls used for communication.

Distribution and Population

Dholes have a fragmented population distribution across Asia. Their current global population is estimated to be between 949 and 2,215 adults. The largest populations are found in India and Thailand, with India hosting the majority.

Threats and Decline

Several factors have led to the decline of dhole populations. These include large-scale habitat loss, reduced prey availability, and human persecution. Diseases spread from domestic dogs and competition with other large carnivores further threaten their survival. Habitat fragmentation has also isolated their populations, affecting breeding and movement.

Conservation Status

Dholes are listed in Appendix II of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES). They are also classified as Endangered under the IUCN Red List. These designations highlight the urgent need for habitat protection, prey base restoration, and human-wildlife conflict mitigation to ensure their survival.

Electric Hansa (E-HANSA)

Context

India has taken a significant step toward clean aviation technology. It has initiated the development of Electric Hansa (E-HANSA), a next-generation, two-seater electric trainer aircraft. This project reflects India's vision to promote indigenous innovation and green mobility in aviation.

About E-HANSA

E-HANSA is being developed by the CSIR-National Aerospace Laboratories (NAL). It is a part of the HANSA-3 Next Generation (NG) aircraft program. The HANSA-3 series is already known for providing affordable and indigenous flight training platforms. The electric version builds upon this foundation while aligning with global sustainability goals.

Design and Purpose

The aircraft is designed as a two-seater, primarily for pilot training. It will operate using clean energy sources instead of fossil fuels. The E-HANSA is aimed at reducing carbon emissions, operational costs, and reliance on fuel imports. It offers an efficient, low-noise, and eco-friendly alternative for training purposes.

Significance for India

The development of E-HANSA contributes to India's broader goals of green energy adoption and self-reliance in defence and aerospace sectors. It also aligns with India's net-zero emission targets and carbon reduction commitments. The project promotes domestic R&D and reduces dependency on imported aircraft used for training.

Cost Advantage

E-HANSA is expected to be significantly cheaper than foreign alternatives. Its lower operational cost makes it ideal for Indian flight schools and defence institutions seeking affordable, sustainable training aircraft.

ANURAG BACHAN'S

INTERNAL SECURITY

New Rules Notified for Curbing Misuse of Drone Technology

Context

The Ministry of Civil Aviation has issued new rules under the Unmanned Aircraft System (UAS) framework to regulate the use of drones, particularly in sensitive zones like border areas, airports, and nuclear facilities.

Key Provisions

- No-drone zones extended to 5 km radius around military bases and 2 km around airports.
- All drones must now be equipped with Real-Time Kinematic (RTK) GPS for precise tracking.
- Night flying and BVLOS (Beyond Visual Line of Sight) operations restricted to licensed operators.
- Digital sky platform integration made mandatory for all drone missions.

Security Concerns

Security agencies had flagged increased drone-based activities in border areas, including:

- Narcotics delivery from across the border in Punjab.
- Surveillance over Army installations in Jammu and Kashmir.
- Threats of drone-based explosives.

Government Strategy

A multi-agency coordination mechanism has been activated involving DRDO, BSF, NTRO, and police departments to counter rogue drones. Counter-drone systems are being installed in critical zones.

Conclusion

India's revised drone regulations aim to balance innovation with internal security. The strict compliance regime is necessary to prevent misuse in a highly volatile regional security environment.

India to Set Up National Cyber Coordination Centre 2.0

Context

India's existing National Cyber Coordination Centre (NCCC) is being upgraded to a 2.0 version with enhanced real-time cyber threat intelligence and faster response capability.

Key Features

- Real-time sharing of threat data with central agencies, CERT-In, and private ISPs.
- Integration with global databases for ransomware, phishing, and malware alerts.
- Use of AI for predictive threat modelling and automatic isolation of affected nodes.

Cyber Threat Landscape

India has faced a surge in cyberattacks:

- Ransomware attacks on healthcare databases.
- Phishing attacks targeting online payment platforms.

- Cyber espionage targeting defense networks.

With digital public infrastructure expanding, the risk of large-scale data breaches and disruption has grown.

Strategic Importance

NCCC 2.0 will act as the nodal body for managing national cyber defence, supplementing CERT-In and the National Critical Information Infrastructure Protection Centre (NCIIPC).

Conclusion

The upgraded NCCC 2.0 marks a strategic step in India's cyber resilience strategy. A proactive, real-time approach is essential for defending against modern digital threats.

Nagaland's "Smart Fence" Project

Context

The government of Nagaland, with assistance from the Union Ministry of Home Affairs, has launched a pilot smart fence project along the porous Indo-Myanmar border.

Technological Components

- Solar-powered sensors and motion detectors.
- Thermal cameras for night surveillance.
- Drone integration for aerial monitoring.

Security Rationale

The Indo-Myanmar border has seen cross-border insurgent movement, arms trafficking, and drug smuggling. The Free Movement Regime (FMR), which allows people from border tribes to travel up to 16 km into each other's territory, has been frequently misused by insurgents.

Expected Impact

- Improved control over infiltration and contraband smuggling.
- Enhanced border village security.
- Faster response by Assam Rifles and State Police.

Conclusion

The smart fence project reflects India's shift toward tech-driven border management. It blends security with humanitarian considerations, especially in ethnically sensitive areas.

India's New Security Doctrine

Context

India is revising its national security strategy to address emerging challenges. The doctrine now emphasizes 'proactive deterrence' and integrated warfare.

Need for Change

India's security environment has evolved rapidly. Threats from hostile neighbours, terrorism, cyber attacks, and hybrid warfare require a comprehensive, forward-looking strategy. The 2020 Galwan clash with China and persistent Pakistan-sponsored terrorism have been key triggers.

New Approach

The revised doctrine promotes seamless coordination among the three armed forces. It shifts focus from reactive to preventive security operations. Special emphasis is laid on maritime security, space-based capabilities, and cyber defense.

Integration of Technology

Artificial Intelligence, drones, and satellite surveillance will be key enablers. The doctrine encourages indigenous defense production and technological innovation through initiatives like Make in India and iDEX.

Institutional Reforms

The Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) and the Department of Military Affairs are central to implementing the doctrine. The Theatre Command model is being pushed to integrate operations across air, land, and sea.

Global Alignment

India's new doctrine aligns with global practices like the US's Indo-Pacific strategy and China's integrated military-civilian systems. It highlights the importance of multi-domain preparedness in the 21st century.

National Defence Fund (NDF)

Context

The Union Government has recently allocated a special grant from the National Defence Fund to support children of armed forces personnel and promote defence innovation.

What is the NDF?

- The National Defence Fund was established in 1962 to support the welfare of members of the Armed Forces, paramilitary forces, and their dependents. It also supports R&D in defence technology.
- The Fund is operated under the Ministry of Defence. The Prime Minister heads the Executive Committee. Other members include the Defence Minister, Finance Minister, and Home Minister.

Sources of Funding

It receives voluntary contributions from individuals, institutions, and corporate entities. Contributions are eligible for 100% income tax exemption under Section 80G of the Income Tax Act.

Recent Developments

A portion of the NDF is now allocated to promote defence innovation through the iDEX initiative. Additionally, scholarships under the 'PM Scholarship Scheme' for wards of soldiers have been enhanced.

Significance

The fund serves dual objectives: honouring sacrifices of soldiers and boosting self-reliance in defence technology. It enables society to participate directly in nation-building and defence support.

Crackdown on Terror Financing

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has intensified its operations against terror financing networks in Jammu and Kashmir. Assets worth over ₹20 crore were attached under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA).

Left-Wing Extremism Declines

The Ministry of Home Affairs reported a 32% reduction in Left-Wing Extremism (LWE)-related incidents in the first half of 2025 compared to the same period last year. This includes surrender of 91 Maoists and seizure of large arms caches.

BSF Deploys New AI-Based Surveillance Towers

The Border Security Force has deployed AI-enabled smart towers along the India-Bangladesh border. These towers feature auto-recognition and alert systems for human movement in dense forest and riverine patches.

ANURAG BACHAN'S

ENVIRONMENT

India Launched National Green Credit Programme

Context

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change officially launched the National Green Credit Programme (NGCP) as a market-based initiative to incentivize voluntary environmental actions by individuals, communities, and organizations.

Key Features

- Participants will earn Green Credits for activities such as afforestation, water conservation, and waste management.
- These credits can be traded in a designated digital platform, similar to carbon credit markets.
- Credits are verified by third-party auditing agencies approved by the government.
- Corporates can use Green Credits to meet ESG (Environmental, Social, Governance) commitments.

Pilot Implementation

The programme began with pilot projects in states like Uttarakhand, Maharashtra, and Odisha, focusing on degraded land restoration and urban greening.

Significance

- Encourages sustainable practices beyond regulatory mandates.
- Empowers local communities and start-ups to participate in climate action.
- Complements India's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement.

Conclusion

The NGCP marks a shift from regulation-based to incentive-based environmental governance. It has the potential to create a green economy driven by market forces and civic engagement.

Record Heatwave in Northern India Raises Climate Alarms

Context

In June 2025, large parts of Northern India witnessed an **unprecedented heatwave**, with temperatures crossing 49°C in cities like Delhi, Gwalior, and Kanpur.

Causes and Patterns

- Weak western disturbances and delayed monsoon onset worsened the situation.
- Urban heat island effects intensified temperatures in metropolitan areas.
- Climate scientists linked the event to ongoing global warming trends and El Niño patterns.

Impact

- Increase in heatstroke-related fatalities, especially among outdoor workers and the elderly.
- Schools shut down temporarily in UP and Bihar.
- Power grids came under stress due to surging demand for cooling.

Government Response

- National Disaster Management Authority issued updated heat action plans.
- Water tankers and mobile clinics were deployed in vulnerable areas.
- Awareness campaigns on hydration and cooling shelters were activated.

Conclusion

The heatwave serves as a stark reminder of India's vulnerability to climate extremes. Long-term urban planning and climate adaptation are now imperative policy priorities.

India Joins Global Plastic Treaty Negotiations

Context

India participated in the fourth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-4) to develop a legally binding international treaty on plastic pollution under the UNEP.

India's Position

- India advocated for a circular economy approach rather than a complete plastic ban.
- Supported capacity-building funds for developing countries to manage plastic waste.
- Pushed for technology transfer, particularly in biodegradable plastics.

Domestic Context

India has already banned single-use plastics in 2022 and is implementing extended producer responsibility (EPR) regulations. However, compliance remains patchy.

Significance

- A global plastic treaty will standardize rules, reporting, and responsibility across borders.
- Helps reduce marine and microplastic pollution affecting Indian coastlines and aquatic life.

Conclusion

India's active role in plastic treaty negotiations reflects its balancing of environmental concerns with economic and technological realities. It also underscores the need for multilateral coordination in global waste management.

Yala Glacier officially declared “dead”

Context

Glaciologists and local communities in Nepal have expressed sorrow over the Yala Glacier being officially declared “dead.” It is the first known Nepalese glacier to reach this status.

About Yala Glacier

Yala Glacier is located in the Langtang National Park, situated in the Himalayan region of Nepal. It lies at an altitude of around 5,000 meters above sea level. This glacier is a small plateau-type formation. It has been used frequently as a site for glaciological research and for training mountaineers.

The glacier has shown a significant retreat over the last few decades. It has shrunk by 66% since the 1970s. It has retreated 784 meters and is expected to disappear completely by 2040.

Other Notable Glacier Losses Globally

In 2017, Bhutan’s Lemthang Glacier vanished after a glacial lake outburst flood. In 2019, Iceland’s OK Glacier became the first glacier in the world to be declared “dead.” The same year, Switzerland’s Pizol Glacier was officially mourned after losing over 80% of its mass since 2006. In 2021, the Ayoloco Glacier in Mexico was also declared dead.

The loss of such glaciers is a stark reminder of the accelerating pace of climate change and its impact on fragile ecosystems in high-altitude regions.

Endangered Primates: Cross River Gorilla and Tapanuli Orangutan

Context

A recent international report has placed the Cross River Gorilla and the Tapanuli Orangutan among the 25 most endangered primates in the world.

List Highlights

The 2023–2025 list includes 25 primates from across the globe. Six are from Africa, four from Madagascar, nine from Asia, and six from the Neotropics, which include regions in South America.

Cross River Gorilla

- The Cross River Gorilla is a subspecies of the western lowland gorilla. It is identified scientifically as *Gorilla gorilla diehli*. These gorillas have redder or greyer fur than their eastern relatives. They are the rarest gorilla subspecies, with only a few hundred individuals surviving.
- Their population exists in fragmented forest patches along the border between Cameroon and Nigeria. The major threats to their survival include poaching, habitat fragmentation from agriculture and infrastructure, and limited genetic diversity due to the small population. The species is classified as Critically Endangered by the IUCN.

Tapanuli Orangutan

This species was discovered and classified separately only in 2017. Its scientific name is *Pongo tapanuliensis*. It is now considered the most endangered species of great ape in the world. It is found only in North Sumatra, Indonesia.

The population is extremely small and isolated. Major threats include habitat destruction caused by agriculture and hydropower development. Like the Cross River Gorilla, the Tapanuli Orangutan is also listed as Critically Endangered by the IUCN. The report calls for urgent conservation action to prevent the extinction of these unique primates.

Tsarap Chu Conservation Reserve

Context

The government of Himachal Pradesh has notified the Tsarap Chu region as a Conservation Reserve. The designation is made under Section 36A(1) of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

With this, Tsarap Chu becomes the fifth Conservation Reserve in Himachal Pradesh, joining Darlaghat, Naina Devi, Potter Hill, and Shilli.

What is a Conservation Reserve?

A Conservation Reserve is a category of protected area introduced through the 2002 amendment to the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972. It is meant to protect ecologically important habitats that do not fall within the boundaries of existing National Parks or Wildlife Sanctuaries. These areas often act as buffer zones or wildlife corridors and are declared with the consent of local communities.

About Tsarap Chu Region

Tsarap Chu is located in the high-altitude trans-Himalayan region of Himachal Pradesh. It is bounded by Ladakh in the north, the Kibber Wildlife Sanctuary and Lungar Lungpa to the east, Kabjima Nala to the south, and the Chandratat Wildlife Sanctuary to the west. The reserve lies at the confluence of the Unam River and the Charap Nala.

Ecological Significance

The reserve supports a rich population of snow leopards. The area serves as a vital wildlife corridor connecting Kibber and Chandratat sanctuaries. It also functions as the catchment of the Charap Nala, contributing to the region's ecological stability.

The designation of Tsarap Chu as a Conservation Reserve is an important step toward protecting Himalayan biodiversity in a changing climate.

World Wildlife Crime Report 2024

Context

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has released the World Wildlife Crime Report 2024, highlighting trends, challenges, and threats posed by illegal wildlife trade globally. The report provides data from the period 2015 to 2021.

Key Findings

- Rhino horn trade accounted for the largest share (29%) of the global illegal wildlife market.
- Pangolin scales followed closely at 28%, with elephant ivory at 15%.
- Other species affected included eels (5%), crocodilians (5%), parrots and cockatoos (2%), carnivores (2%), turtles and tortoises (2%), snakes (2%), and seahorses (2%).
- Rhinoceros (animal) and cedar (plant) were the most impacted species due to trafficking and poaching.

Drivers of Wildlife Crime

- **High Demand for Exotic Products:** Traditional medicine, fashion, ornaments, and luxury items contribute to illegal demand for animal parts such as rhino horn, ivory, and tiger bones.
- **Lucrative Economics:** Wildlife crime is part of organized international crime networks offering high profits.
- **Weak Law Enforcement:** Inadequate monitoring, corruption, and lack of coordination among agencies reduce the effectiveness of existing laws.
- **Poverty and Livelihood Pressure:** Rural communities often turn to poaching due to lack of viable income alternatives.
- **Global Trade Networks:** Enhanced connectivity and international trade routes have made smuggling faster and harder to track.

Ecological and Societal Impacts

- **Biodiversity Loss:** Poaching of endangered species may cause irreversible ecological damage.
- **Ecosystem Disruption:** The killing of predators or keystone species leads to imbalances, resulting in overgrazing, vegetation loss, or decline of other species.
- **Economic Loss:** Governments lose potential revenue from sustainable wildlife tourism and regulated bio-resources.
- **Public Health Risk:** Illegal trafficking of animals increases chances of zoonotic diseases being transmitted to humans.
- **Cultural Erosion:** Indigenous tribes lose symbolic species that are vital to their rituals, folklore, and ecological knowledge systems.

Major International Conventions

- **CITES:** Regulates international trade in wildlife species to ensure their survival is not threatened.
- **IUCN:** Provides the Red List of Threatened Species and sets global standards for species conservation.
- **CMS (Bonn Convention):** Focuses on the conservation of migratory species across international borders.

India's Legal and Institutional Framework

- **Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972:** Provides comprehensive protection and punitive provisions against poaching and illegal trade.

- **Wildlife Crime Control Bureau (WCCB):** A statutory multi-agency body that collects intelligence, coordinates enforcement, and assists in crime detection.
- **National Biodiversity Act, 2002:** Aims to protect, conserve, and sustainably use India's biological diversity.
- **Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats:** A scheme supporting habitat development, species recovery, and eco-development in protected areas.

Constitutional Backing

- **Article 48A:** Directs the State to safeguard wildlife and improve environmental conditions.
- **Article 51A(g):** Imposes a fundamental duty on every citizen to protect the natural environment, including forests and wildlife.

Way Forward

- **Strengthen Enforcement:** Improve coordination between customs, forest departments, and global enforcement networks.
- **Community Engagement:** Involve local and tribal communities in conservation through livelihood support and incentives.
- **Awareness Campaigns:** Educate consumers globally on the ecological consequences of wildlife trade.
- **Technology in Surveillance:** Use AI, drones, and data analytics to track and intercept trafficking routes.
- **Capacity Building:** Train law enforcement, wildlife managers, and judiciary on emerging wildlife crime trends and conservation laws.

ANURAG BACHAN'S

Iberian Lynx: A Conservation Success

Context

The population of the endangered Iberian lynx has almost doubled since 2020, now surpassing 2,000 individuals in Spain and Portugal, making it a rare global conservation success story.

About the Iberian Lynx

- **Scientific Name:** *Lynx pardinus*
- **Physical Characteristics:**
 - Medium-sized nocturnal wild cat with a short tail and long legs.
 - Recognized by its bright yellow to tawny spotted fur and black ear tufts.
- **Habitat:**
 - Native to the Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal).
 - Now found only in fragmented areas of southwestern Europe.

Threats

- **Habitat Loss:** Urban expansion and agricultural activities have degraded their natural habitats.
- **Road Accidents:** Vehicle collisions remain a major threat.
- **Illegal Hunting:** Poaching and persecution for sport or retaliatory killings.
- **Diseases:** Feline leukemia caused mortality in several individuals in 2007.

Conservation Status

- **IUCN Red List:** Endangered
- **CITES:** Appendix II (regulated international trade)

Significance

The Iberian lynx recovery reflects the success of collaborative conservation, including habitat restoration, captive breeding, and awareness campaigns. It sets a global benchmark for reversing species extinction trends.

Sea Otters: Nature's Kelp Forest Guardians

Context

Recent research has documented that sea otters use tools, further revealing their complex intelligence and ecological role in marine ecosystems.

About Sea Otters

- **Scientific Name:** *Enhydra lutris*
- **Size:** Smallest of all marine mammals
- **Social Behavior:** Often float in same-sex groups called 'rafts'
- **Habitat:**

- Prefer coastal regions with kelp forests
- Found in countries like the US, Canada, Japan, Mexico, and Russia
- **Feeding and Grooming:** Performed while floating on the water surface

Ecological Role

- They regulate populations of sea urchins and other grazers, preserving kelp forests.
- Kelp forests are crucial for carbon sequestration and marine biodiversity.

Threats

- **Oil Spills:** Reduce their ability to thermoregulate.
- **Pollution:** Chemical runoff causes diseases.
- **Hunting (historically):** Once extensively hunted for fur.

Conservation Status

- **IUCN Red List:** Endangered

SNAP-X Bio-Ink for Coral Reef Restoration

Context

Scientists have created SNAP-X, a novel bio-ink designed to improve coral reef restoration by enhancing larval settlement rates by more than 20 times.

Background

Coral reefs are among the most diverse marine ecosystems, often called the “rainforests of the sea.” They support:

- 25% of marine species
- Livelihoods through fishing and tourism
- Coastal defense from storms and erosion

Threats to Coral Reefs

- Climate Change: Warming oceans, ocean acidification
- Overfishing and Physical Damage
- Pollution and Sedimentation
- Coral Bleaching Events

About SNAP-X Bio-Ink

- **Composition:** Transparent ink infused with metabolites from Crustose Coralline Algae (CCA)
- **Function:**
 1. CCA emits chemical signals that guide coral larvae to suitable settlement zones.
 2. SNAP-X mimics these cues and releases them over a period of one month.
 3. Creates an ideal microhabitat for coral growth.

Significance

- Offers a **scalable, cost-effective, and scientifically advanced** technique for reef recovery.
- Enhances traditional coral nursery methods with chemical ecology.

Advanced Institute for Wildlife Conservation (AIWC), Tamil Nadu

Context

Tamil Nadu has redirected its Endangered Species Conservation Fund to the Advanced Institute for Wildlife Conservation (AIWC) to strengthen implementation and oversight.

Background

The fund was initially under the State Forest Development Agency (SFDA) and the Mudumalai Tiger Reserve Foundation. However, SFDA's inactivity necessitated a strategic shift.

About AIWC

- **Established:** 2017 in Vandalur, Tamil Nadu
- **Mandate:**
 - Wildlife research and species conservation
 - Capacity building for forest and wildlife officials
 - Scientific studies in partnership with national institutions
- **Facilities:**
 - Three forensic labs focused on DNA sequencing, morphometry, and histopathology

Significance

AIWC's institutional capacity enhances Tamil Nadu's ability to meet conservation targets and monitor biodiversity effectively. It exemplifies decentralised, research-based conservation governance.

Live Baiting for Tigers – A Conservation Dilemma

Context

Recent discussions have raised concerns about the use of artificial feeding and live baiting for injured or aging tigers, due to associated risks of habituation and human-animal conflict.

What is Live Baiting?

- A practice of offering live prey (like goats or buffaloes) to attract predators.
- Historically used by colonial hunters and later for tourism photography.
- Officially banned in 1982 by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

Current Use and Concerns

- Still occasionally practiced to trap conflict animals or feed aging/injured tigers.

- National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) SOP recommends minimal intervention.
- Feeding disrupts natural survival patterns and may increase human dependency.

Expert View

- Conservationists suggest it should only be an emergency measure.
- Artificial food supply must be limited to a maximum of three months.

Implications

- Prolonged artificial feeding alters predator behavior, increases chances of conflict, and diminishes hunting instincts in wild tigers.
- Undermines the "survival of the fittest" principle essential for maintaining wild gene pools.

Shirui Lily Festival

Context

The Shirui Lily Festival has resumed in Manipur after a two-year hiatus due to prolonged conflict in the state.

About the Festival

- The Shirui Lily Festival is organized by the Manipur Department of Tourism. It was first celebrated in 2017 and is dedicated to the Shirui Lily, the state flower of Manipur, which blooms between April and June.
- The event is held in Ukhrul district, the natural habitat of the Shirui Lily and home to the Tangkhul Naga community. The festival showcases the region's ethnic culture, traditional music, indigenous sports, and local cuisine.
- It plays a vital role in promoting eco-tourism, spreading awareness about the endangered Shirui Lily, and celebrating tribal heritage and biodiversity.

Operation Olivia

Context

Operation Olivia by the Indian Coast Guard played a significant role in protecting over 6.98 lakh Olive Ridley turtles that nested at the Rushikulya river mouth in Odisha this year.

About Operation Olivia

Operation Olivia is an annual coastal conservation initiative run by the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) between November and May. It aims to safeguard the nesting habitats of Olive Ridley turtles, particularly at Gahirmatha Beach and adjacent coastal zones in Odisha.

The operation involves:

- Regular aerial surveillance
- Patrolling of illegal trawling zones

- Coordinating with local forest departments and marine officials to prevent turtle mortality

About Olive Ridley Turtles

The Olive Ridley turtle is one of the smallest and most abundant sea turtles, named after its olive-colored, heart-shaped shell. It is carnivorous, feeding mainly on jellyfish, shrimp, crabs, and mollusks. Olive Ridley turtles inhabit tropical and subtropical waters of the Pacific, Indian, and Atlantic Oceans.

Key Nesting Sites in India

- Rushikulya rookery coast (Odisha)
- Gahirmatha beach (Bhitarkanika National Park)
- Mouth of the Debi River

Unique Behavior

They are known for their Arribada, a phenomenon where thousands of females come ashore simultaneously to nest on the same beach.

Conservation Status

- IUCN Red List: Vulnerable
- CITES: Appendix I
- Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972: Schedule I

Operation Olivia highlights the importance of proactive coastal surveillance in protecting marine biodiversity and ensuring safe nesting habitats for endangered species.

India's Lion Population Risen by 32% Since 2020

Context

India's lion population has grown by 32% between 2020 and 2025.

Key Findings

- The lion population rose from 674 in 2020 to 891 in 2025.
- There are 196 males, 330 females, 140 sub-adults, and 225 cubs.
- About 56% of lions live in forested areas. Around 44% live in non-forested regions.

Asiatic Lion (*Panthera leo persica*)

- Asiatic lions are one of India's five big cats.
- They are smaller than African lions and have less developed manes.
- They have a visible skin fold along the belly.

Distribution

They are mainly found in Gujarat. Key habitats include Gir National Park, Paniya, Mityala, and Barda Wildlife Sanctuaries.

Conservation Status

IUCN: Endangered

CITES: Appendix I

Wildlife Protection Act: Schedule I

Clownfish shrink in size

Context

A study showed that clownfish shrink in size to survive heat stress. This reduces their risk of death by 78%.

About Clownfish (*Amphiprion percula*)

- There are at least 30 species. They live in the Indian Ocean, Red Sea, and western Pacific.
- Clownfish come in many colours like yellow, orange, red, and black.
- They are listed as Least Concern on the IUCN Red List.

'Ideas4LiFE' Initiative

Context

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change announced 21 winning ideas under the 'Ideas4LiFE' initiative. This initiative is part of the broader Mission LiFE framework.

About Ideas4LiFE Initiative

It was launched through a special portal in partnership with UNICEF YuWaah. The aim was to gather innovative and sustainable ideas from students, researchers, faculties, and academic institutions.

Eligibility

Open to students, research scholars, faculty members, and academic institutions.

Themes Covered

The entries were invited on seven themes:

- Save Energy
- Save Water
- Say No to Single-Use Plastic
- Adopt Sustainable Food Systems
- Reduce Waste
- Reduce E-Waste
- Adopt Healthy Lifestyles

Selection Process

The evaluation was done in three phases:

- **Phase I:** Checked for originality and completeness.
- **Phase II:** Judged by experts on five parameters — innovation, feasibility, impact, scalability, and sustainability.
- **Phase III:** A national jury selected the top three ideas for each theme.

Mission LiFE

Mission LiFE was announced by India at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP26) in 2021. It focuses on

promoting eco-friendly individual behaviors as a part of climate action. The goal is to shift from a 'use-and-dispose' model to a circular economy.

Implementation in India

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change is the nodal agency for the mission's implementation in India.

Approach of Mission LiFE

- **Focus on Individual Behaviour:** It aims to become a mass movement by encouraging eco-conscious actions.
- **Co-create Globally:** Ideas are crowdsourced globally from universities, think tanks, and international organizations.
- **Leverage Local Culture:** It promotes traditional, climate-friendly habits and cultural practices from around the world.

Cyclone Remal Hits Bay of Bengal Coast

Cyclone Remal made landfall near the Odisha-West Bengal coast with winds up to 140 km/h. Massive preemptive evacuation reduced casualties. This marks the first severe cyclonic storm of the 2025 season, indicating early monsoon volatility.

Cheetah Reintroduction Update

Officials reported three new cheetah cubs born in Kuno National Park, indicating early success of the cheetah reintroduction project. However, high mortality among relocated cheetahs remains a concern.

Mangrove Afforestation in Sundarbans

West Bengal initiated a mangrove afforestation drive in cyclone-prone zones of the Sundarbans, planting over 1 crore saplings. The effort is part of the state's Climate Resilient Infrastructure Mission.

DISASTER MANAGEMENT

India Revises National Disaster Management Plan 2025

Overview

The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) released an updated version of the National Disaster Management Plan (NDMP 2025), integrating recent experiences, technological tools, and global best practices.

Key Changes

- Introduction of a climate risk lens in disaster planning.
- Emphasis on early warning dissemination using AI and satellite data.
- Integration of heatwave, forest fire, and pandemic risks into national hazard mapping.
- Strengthening community-based disaster preparedness through local governments.

Focus Areas

- Enhancing the resilience of critical infrastructure.
- Training Panchayati Raj institutions for frontline response.
- Use of mobile-based alert systems in regional languages.

Why It Matters

India faces recurrent disasters ranging from floods and cyclones to earthquakes and industrial accidents. The revised plan seeks to reduce vulnerability and build disaster-resilient systems at every level.

Conclusion

The NDMP 2025 is a forward-looking blueprint for disaster governance. It focuses on decentralization, technology, and community capacity-building to manage emergencies better.

Landslide Forecasting System Operational in Himachal and Sikkim

Background

The Geological Survey of India (GSI), in collaboration with IIT-Mandi and ISRO, has launched an operational Landslide Early Warning System in Himachal Pradesh and Sikkim.

Key Features

- Uses real-time rainfall data, soil movement sensors, and satellite imagery.
- Issues localized alerts for landslide-prone villages and highways.
- Can send warnings through SMS, loudspeakers, and local apps.

Need for the System

Himalayan states witness frequent landslides during the monsoon season, leading to road blockages, deaths, and disruption of essential supplies. The 2023 Himachal floods underscored the need for preemptive alerts.

Impact

- Better preparedness in vulnerable zones.
- Reduction in casualties and economic loss.
- Improved response time for National and State Disaster Response Forces.

Conclusion

The landslide warning system marks a scientific step toward localized disaster prevention. It will help in saving lives and protecting mountain infrastructure.

India and Japan Conduct Joint Earthquake Preparedness Drill

Context

India's NDMA and Japan's Disaster Management Agency organized a bilateral simulation drill on earthquake response in Delhi and Tokyo. The drill focused on coordination between emergency responders, hospitals, and local governments.

Objectives

- Share technology in seismic building design and retrofitting.
- Practice real-time evacuation and mass casualty management.
- Improve data-sharing protocols for post-quake damage assessment.

Why India-Japan Cooperation?

Both countries lie in earthquake-prone regions. Japan's expertise in seismic engineering and India's scale of urban exposure make collaboration vital.

Outcome

The exercise highlighted gaps in building code enforcement and urban evacuation strategies in Indian cities. A roadmap for capacity-building and urban resilience has been proposed.

Conclusion

International collaboration in disaster management strengthens India's preparedness. Earthquake drills provide critical insights into emergency logistics and public awareness.

News in Brief (Disaster Management)

Heatwave Protocol Activated in 14 States

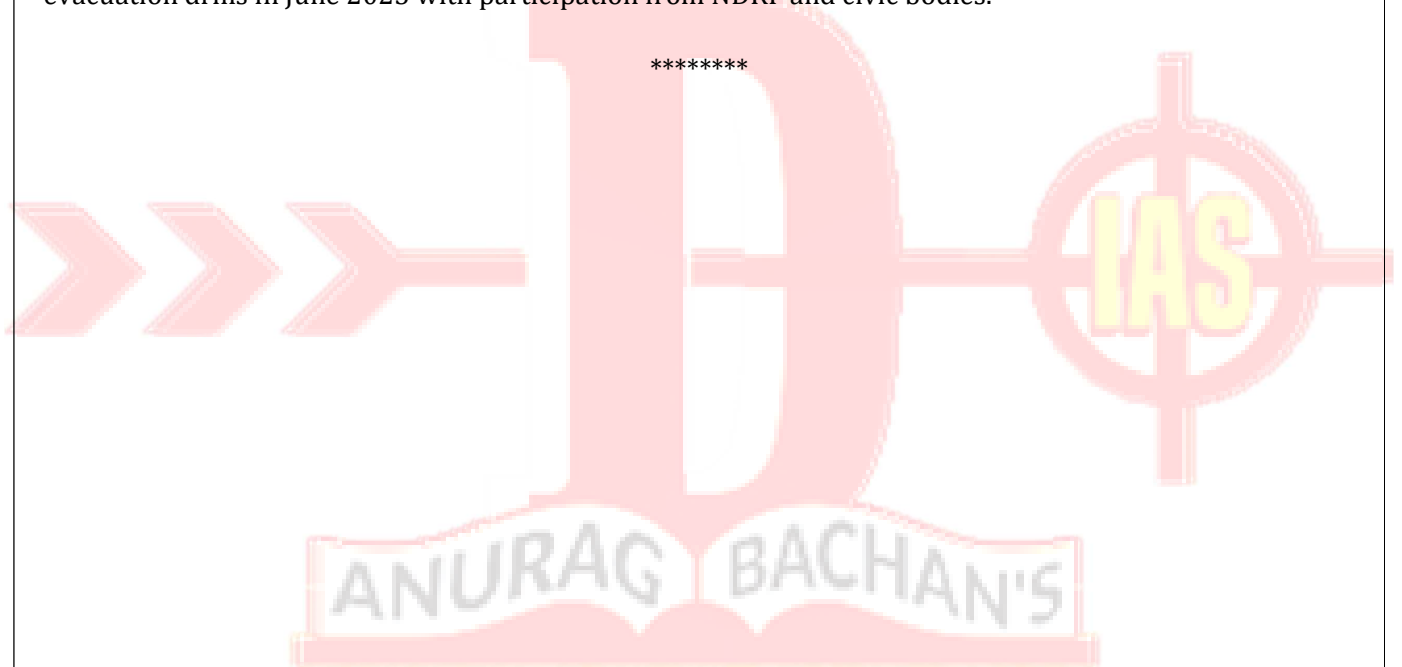
NDMA issued updated Heat Action Plans for 14 heatwave-prone states. The plans include establishing public cooling centers, adjusting school and work timings, and distributing ORS kits.

Flood Preparedness Measures in Assam

Brahmaputra Board deployed mobile flood barriers and community boats in Assam ahead of peak monsoon. District-wise dry ration depots have also been established.

Mock Drills in Coastal Cities

Major coastal cities like Chennai, Visakhapatnam, and Kochi conducted mock tsunami and cyclone evacuation drills in June 2025 with participation from NDRF and civic bodies.



GAMES AND SPORTS

WADA and India's Compliance

Context

India is working towards regaining full compliance with the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) standards after receiving multiple notices for lapses.

About WADA

- The World Anti-Doping Agency is the global body regulating anti-doping norms in sports. It sets the World Anti-Doping Code and oversees national anti-doping agencies.
- India's National Dope Testing Laboratory (NDTL) was earlier suspended due to non-conformity with international testing standards. Shortcomings included outdated technology and delayed test results.

Recent Measures

India has upgraded its testing capacity, modernised lab equipment, and adopted AI-based sample tracking. Legislative efforts are also being made under the National Anti-Doping Act.

Significance

Full WADA compliance is essential for hosting international sports events and protecting athletes' rights. It reflects India's commitment to clean and ethical sports.

Seven Summits challenge

Context

Vishwanath Karthikey Padakanti, a teenager from Hyderabad, has achieved a historic feat. He is now the youngest Indian and the second youngest person in the world to complete the Seven Summits challenge. This reflects India's growing strength in global adventure sports.

What are the Seven Summits?

The Seven Summits refer to the highest mountains on each of the seven continents. Successfully climbing all seven is considered one of the greatest accomplishments in mountaineering. It tests a climber's physical, mental, and technical endurance.

List of Peaks

The standard list includes:

- Mount Everest (Asia)
- Mount Kilimanjaro (Africa)
- Mount Elbrus (Europe)
- Mount Aconcagua (South America)
- Mount Kosciuszko (Australia)
- Mount Vinson (Antarctica)
- Mount Denali (North America)

Some climbers use an alternate version by replacing Kosciuszko with Carstensz Pyramid in Papua, Indonesia. This is based on a broader definition of the continent Australasia.

Height Ranking and Records

Mount Everest is the tallest, while Kosciuszko is the shortest. The descending height order is Everest, Aconcagua, Denali, Kilimanjaro, Elbrus, Vinson, Carstensz, and Kosciuszko. Richard Bass was the first to complete the Seven Summits in 1985. Jordan Romero became the youngest to do so at age 15 in 2011.

Significance

Vishwanath's achievement symbolizes global adventure excellence. It inspires youth and reflects India's rising presence in endurance sports. The Seven Summits remain a powerful symbol of human willpower and exploration.

AWARDS and Honours

World Food Prize 2025

Context

Brazilian microbiologist Mariangela Hungria has been announced as the recipient of the 2025 World Food Prize for her groundbreaking work in sustainable agriculture.

About the Laureate

Mariangela Hungria developed advanced seed and soil treatments using beneficial microorganisms such as rhizobia and Azospirillum brasilense. These bacteria assist soybean crops in naturally fixing atmospheric nitrogen and stimulate root development in cereal crops like maize. This leads to improved nutrient and water absorption, reducing dependency on chemical fertilizers.

About the World Food Prize

The World Food Prize is an international award that honors individuals whose contributions have significantly enhanced the quality, quantity, or availability of food globally.

Establishment and Background

The prize was founded in 1986 by Nobel Peace Prize winner Dr. Norman E. Borlaug, who is known as the father of the Green Revolution. Often called the "Nobel Prize for Food and Agriculture," it seeks to highlight exceptional contributions to food security and human development.

Award Details

The prize carries a cash award of \$500,000 and is formally conferred at the Laureate Award Ceremony held annually in October around World Food Day (October 16).

Significance of the 2025 Award

The 2025 award to Hungria brings global attention to the role of microbial solutions in environmentally sustainable agriculture. Her innovations are particularly vital for regions facing soil degradation and rising input costs. The recognition also underscores the growing contribution of women scientists in tackling global challenges related to hunger and climate resilience.

58th Jnanpith Award

Context

The 58th Jnanpith Award was conferred by the President of India, Droupadi Murmu, on Sanskrit scholar Jagadguru Rambhadracharya and celebrated Urdu poet and lyricist Gulzar.

About the Jnanpith Award

The Jnanpith Award is the highest literary honour in India. It was instituted in 1961 by Bharatiya Jnanpith, a literary and research organization founded by Sahu Shanti Prasad Jain and Smt. Rama Jain. The first Jnanpith Award was conferred in 1965 on Malayalam poet G. Sankara Kurup for his work “Odakkuzhal” (The Bamboo Flute).

Award Criteria and Eligibility

The award is given annually to Indian authors for outstanding literary contributions. It is open to works in 22 Indian languages listed under the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution and, since 2013, in English. To ensure linguistic diversity, the award follows a rotation policy—once a language is awarded, it becomes ineligible for the next three years.

Award Components

The recipient is honoured with a cash prize, a citation, and a bronze replica of Vagdevi (Goddess Saraswati), representing knowledge and wisdom.

India Awarded with Certificate of Elimination of Trachoma

Context

India has received the Certificate of Elimination of Trachoma as a Public Health Problem from the World Health Organisation (WHO) during the 78th World Health Assembly held in Geneva.

About

The WHO had earlier declared that India had successfully eliminated trachoma as a public health concern. This recognition makes India the third country in the Southeast Asia Region to achieve this significant public health milestone.

The achievement was made possible through concerted government efforts under the National Programme for Control of Blindness and Visual Impairment (NPCBVI), which implemented targeted strategies for the prevention, early detection, and treatment of trachoma.

Trachoma

Trachoma is an infectious eye disease caused by the bacterium Chlamydia trachomatis. It is a leading cause of preventable blindness globally.

Currently, trachoma remains a public health issue in 38 countries and is responsible for causing blindness or visual impairment in approximately 1.9 million people worldwide. The damage caused by trachoma-induced blindness is permanent and irreversible.

The infection spreads through direct contact with infected individuals via hands, clothing, bedding, or contaminated surfaces. Flies that come into contact with eye or nasal discharge of an infected person also contribute to transmission.

As of now, there is no commercially available vaccine to prevent trachoma. However, research and clinical trials are underway to develop an effective vaccine in the future.

Russia Honours Biju Patnaik for Role in World War II

Context

On the occasion of the 80th anniversary of Victory Day, Russia honoured Indian freedom fighter and former Odisha Chief Minister Biju Patnaik for his heroic contributions during World War II. A special reception was held by the Russian Embassy in New Delhi, with his son Naveen Patnaik invited as the guest of honour.

Biju Patnaik's Role in World War II

- Biju Patnaik was a trained pilot from the Delhi Flying Club and joined the Royal Indian Air Force in 1936. During World War II, he undertook high-risk supply missions to assist Soviet forces at the Battle of Stalingrad, a decisive engagement against Nazi Germany.
- His courage and flying skills enabled him to deliver essential supplies even while under constant threat from enemy fire. In recognition of his service, Russia awarded him a jubilee medal in 1995.

Other Wartime Contributions

Apart from aiding the Soviet Union, Biju Patnaik also contributed to:

- **Evacuation of British families from Rangoon** during the Japanese invasion.
- **Assistance to Chinese forces** resisting Japanese occupation.
- **Support to Indonesian freedom fighters**, for which he was honoured as 'Bhoomi Putra' by the Government of Indonesia.

Significance of the Honour

This recognition reinforces the importance of India's unsung heroes in global wartime efforts and highlights the international acknowledgment of Indian contributions to the anti-fascist struggle during the Second World War.

PERSONS IN THE NEWS

Joseph Nye Passed away

Context

Renowned American political scientist Joseph Nye passed away on May 6, 2025, at the age of 88. He is credited with introducing and developing the influential concept of "soft power" in the study of international relations.

About Soft Power

Soft power refers to a country's ability to shape the preferences and actions of other nations through attraction rather than coercion or payments. The term was first popularized by Nye in his 2004 book, *Soft Power – The Means to Success in World Politics*.

Components of Soft Power

According to Nye, soft power derives from three main sources:

- Cultural influence and global appeal
- Political values, particularly when they are upheld both domestically and internationally
- Foreign policies that are perceived as legitimate and morally sound

Contrast with Hard Power

While hard power is based on a nation's ability to influence others through military force or economic pressure, soft power relies on building goodwill, shaping opinions, and encouraging voluntary alignment with national interests.

Significance in International Relations

Soft power plays a vital role in diplomacy, public relations, and global influence. It enables countries to build alliances, attract investments, and expand their global standing without engaging in conflict or compulsion. Nye's theory has been influential in shaping modern foreign policy debates, including India's evolving diplomatic strategy.

Pioneering Nuclear Dr M. R. Srinivasan Scientist Passes Away

Context

Dr M. R. Srinivasan, one of India's foremost nuclear scientists, passed away on 20 May 2025 at the age of 95. He played a central role in building India's indigenous nuclear energy programme and was a former Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission.

Career in Nuclear Science

Dr Srinivasan began his career in September 1955 by joining the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE), working alongside Dr Homi Bhabha on India's first nuclear research reactor, Apsara, which went critical in 1956. He later served as Principal Project Engineer for India's first atomic power station, and by 1967, was leading the Madras Atomic Power Station as Chief Project Engineer.

In 1974, he became Director of the Power Projects Engineering Division, and later, Chairman of the Nuclear Power Board. In 1987, he became Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission and the founding Chairman of Nuclear Power Corporation of India Limited (NPCIL). Under his leadership, India developed a network of 18 nuclear power units.

Contributions Beyond Nuclear Energy

Dr Srinivasan also contributed internationally and nationally beyond the nuclear field. He served as senior advisor to the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) between 1990 and 1992. From 1996 to 1998, he was a member of the Planning Commission, overseeing Energy and Science & Technology sectors. He also served on India's National Security Advisory Board and chaired the Task Force on Higher Education in Karnataka from 2002 to 2004.

Awards and Recognitions

His achievements were widely recognized:

- Padma Shri in 1984
- Padma Bhushan in 1990
- Padma Vibhushan in 2015

He was also a founding member of the World Association of Nuclear Operators (WANO) and a fellow of the Indian National Academy of Engineering and the Indian Nuclear Society.

Legacy

Dr M. R. Srinivasan's contributions established the backbone of India's nuclear energy independence. His leadership in science, engineering, and policy-making continues to serve as an inspiration for India's scientific community and future generations.

Jayant Vishnu Narlikar passed away

Context

Renowned Indian astrophysicist Jayant Narlikar passed away.

Early Life & Career

- Born in Varanasi, educated at BHU and Cambridge.
- Worked at Tata Institute of Fundamental Research.
- Founded the IUCAA in Pune and served as its Director.

Key Contributions

- Co-developed Hoyle-Narlikar theory opposing the Big Bang.
- Supported the Steady-State Theory of the Universe.
- Adapted Einstein's relativity to include continuous matter creation.

Honours

Received Padma Bhushan, Padma Vibhushan, and UNESCO's Kalinga Award.

PLACES IN THE NEWS

Wadge Bank

Context

Fishermen in Kanyakumari have raised concerns over the Union government's proposed hydrocarbon exploration project at Wadge Bank under the Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP). They fear the move may endanger their livelihoods and disturb the ecologically sensitive marine ecosystem.

About Wadge Bank

- Wadge Bank is a prominent submarine plateau situated in the Indian Ocean, approximately 80 km off the coast of Kanyakumari (Cape Comorin). It lies within India's Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ).
- A bank is defined as a shallow elevation or rise on the continental shelf, generally less than 200 meters deep, and typically of continental geological origin. Wadge Bank is one of the richest fishing grounds in the world due to its high levels of organic productivity.
- The area supports abundant fishery resources and hosts a diverse range of marine life. Its significance is further amplified during the peak fishing season from July to October, when seasonal upwelling increases nutrient availability, thus enhancing fish population density.

Strategic and Legal Importance

Under the 1976 India-Sri Lanka Maritime Boundary Agreement, India holds exclusive sovereign rights over Wadge Bank. This includes the right to explore and exploit petroleum and mineral resources, while prohibiting Sri Lankan fishermen from operating in the area.

Wadge Bank not only plays a critical role in supporting the livelihoods of Indian fishermen but also holds ecological and economic significance due to its biodiversity and potential resource deposits.

Mt. Makalu

Context

The Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) successfully completed an expedition to Mt. Makalu, the fifth highest mountain in the world.

About Mt. Makalu

- Mt. Makalu is located in the Mahalangur range of the Nepal Himalayas and lies along the international border between Nepal and Tibet. It rises to an elevation of 8,485 meters above sea level.
- It is situated southeast of Mount Everest. Mt. Makalu is renowned for its distinct and elegant pyramid-like shape, with four sharp ridges defining its structure. It forms part of the Makalu Barun National Park and overlooks the pristine Barun Valley, a region known for its rich biodiversity.
- The first successful ascent of Mt. Makalu was made in 1955 by a French expedition led by Jean Franco.

Parasnath Hill

Context

The Jharkhand High Court has directed the state government to implement an existing ban on the sale and consumption of meat, alcohol, and intoxicants on Parasnath Hill. The hill holds sacred value for both the Jain community and the Santal Adivasi tribe, making it a site of cultural and religious contention.

Significance of Parasnath Hill

Parasnath Hill is located in Giridih district of Jharkhand. It is known by two different names reflecting its dual sacred identity. To Jains, it is Parasnath, named after the 23rd Tirthankara, Parshvanatha. To the Santal tribe, it is Marang Buru, meaning “the Great Mountain.”

Religious Importance for Jains

The hill is considered one of the holiest pilgrimage sites in Jainism. It is believed that 20 of the 24 Jain Tirthankaras, including Parshvanatha, attained Nirvana (liberation) on this hill. The site is home to several temples, dharamshalas, and spiritual centers, making it a focal point for Jain religious activities and ascetic practices.

Cultural Importance for Santals

For the Santals, an indigenous tribal community, Marang Buru is their supreme animist deity and the seat of divine justice. The Jug Jaher Than, a sacred grove on the hill, is their most revered dhorom garh or religious site. The Lo Bir Baisi, a traditional tribal council, convenes here to resolve disputes among Santal villages.

Parasnath Hill also has a deep historical connection to tribal resistance. It was from Marang Buru that the Santal Hul rebellion of 1855 was launched, led by tribal leaders Sidhu and Kanhu Murmu against British colonial rule.

The Parasnath Dispute

The hill has become a flashpoint due to the Sendra festival, a traditional hunting ritual practiced by Santal men as a rite of passage. The activity is in direct conflict with Jain principles of ahimsa (non-violence) and strict vegetarianism. This clash of cultural values has led to legal disputes and administrative challenges in managing access, rituals, and conservation on the hill.

About the Santals

The Santals are among India’s largest tribal communities, residing in Jharkhand, Bihar, West Bengal, Odisha, and Assam. They speak Santali, a constitutionally recognized language in the Eighth Schedule, written in the Olchiki script developed by Pandit Raghunath Murmu.

Santali cultural expression is rich in music (sereng) and dance (enej), which are central to their festivals and social traditions.

DEFENCE EXERCISES / OPERATIONS

Exercise NOMADIC ELEPHANT

Context

The Indian Army is set to participate in the 17th edition of Exercise NOMADIC ELEPHANT, a bilateral military exercise with Mongolia. This edition will be conducted at Ulaanbaatar, the capital of Mongolia. It signifies a continuing commitment to defence cooperation between the two nations.

About the Exercise

Exercise NOMADIC ELEPHANT is an annual bilateral military exercise held alternately in India and Mongolia. It has been conducted since 2006, with the previous edition hosted in Meghalaya, India, in 2024. The exercise is a symbol of deepening military-to-military ties and defence diplomacy.

Objectives and Scope

The main objective of the exercise is to enhance interoperability between the armed forces of India and Mongolia. The exercise focuses on training a joint task force in semi-conventional operations. These operations simulate scenarios in semi-urban and mountainous terrain. The exercise is conducted under a United Nations mandate, reflecting the shared commitment of both nations to global peacekeeping and multilateral cooperation.

Strategic Importance

The exercise boosts India's strategic engagement with Mongolia, a country located in a geopolitically sensitive region between Russia and China. It strengthens India's Act East Policy and promotes defence preparedness in varied terrain. The joint training also fosters mutual understanding, professional exchange, and operational coordination between the two armies.

Exercise NOMADIC ELEPHANT represents not only a defence collaboration but also an expression of India's expanding strategic partnerships in East and Central Asia.

OPERATION SHIELD: NATIONWIDE CIVIL DEFENCE EXERCISE

Context

Following renewed tensions between India and Pakistan, six border states and Union Territories conducted a large-scale civil defence simulation under Operation Shield. The exercise tested emergency responses to simulated air raids, drone attacks, and mass rescue operations. The drills occurred shortly after the cessation of hostilities and Operation Sindoor, during which India struck multiple terror sites across the border.

Purpose and Design

Operation Shield aimed to evaluate the preparedness of civil and emergency systems. It focused on blackout protocols, air raid sirens, volunteer mobilization, and evacuation drills. The exercise intended to close gaps identified in previous mock drills and strengthen India's readiness along the Line of Control (LoC) and International Border (IB).

Participating Regions and Activities

The exercise was held in Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Haryana, and Chandigarh.

- In J&K, blackouts were enforced in Srinagar and Lal Chowk.
- In Punjab and Haryana, 10,000+ volunteers joined fire, medical, and rescue drills.
- Gujarat witnessed exercises across 18 districts, including air raid simulations and blood donation camps.
- In Rajasthan, rooftop rescues were rehearsed in Jaipur, simulating post-airstrike emergencies.

Significance

Operation Shield showcased multi-agency coordination and public participation in national security preparedness. It reinforced India's civil defence capabilities and highlighted the importance of community involvement, especially in vulnerable border areas.

DAYS IN THE NEWS

International Workers' Day

- 1st May is marked as International Workers' Day. It celebrates the contribution of workers and reminds the world about labour rights.
- International Workers' Day is also known as May Day or Labour Day. It is a global day to honor the contributions of workers and commemorate the labor movement's struggles and victories. The day marks a period of solidarity for workers and is observed with parades, union gatherings, and demonstrations in many countries.
- The day was first observed in the United States. On May 1, 1886, workers went on strike to demand an 8-hour workday. The protest turned into a movement and later became a global symbol of workers' rights.
- In 1923, the Labour Kisan Party of Hindustan organised India's first May Day in Chennai. Since then, the day has been a platform to voice workers' concerns.

India is a founding member of the International Labour Organisation (ILO). The ILO was set up in 1919 and became part of the UN later. It works to ensure decent working conditions for all. India has merged 29 central laws into four labour codes. These cover wages, social security, industrial relations, and working conditions. While these aim to protect workers, challenges remain in enforcing them, especially in the unorganised sector.

World Telecommunication Day

Context

Observed on May 17 every year, the day celebrates the role of telecommunication in global connectivity.

Historical Background

It marks the founding of the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) in 1865. The theme for the year was "Digital Innovation for Sustainable Development."

Telecom Sector in India

India is the second-largest telecom market in the world. It has over 1.1 billion subscribers and growing internet penetration.

Challenges and Reforms

The sector faces issues like infrastructure gaps, pricing pressure, and cyber threats. Government initiatives like BharatNet, PLI schemes, and Digital India aim to bridge digital divides.

Global Relevance

The day reminds nations to innovate responsibly and use telecom as a force for inclusive development.

Date	Day/Event
1 May	International Labour Day (May Day), Maharashtra Day, Gujarat Day
2 May	World Tuna Day
3 May	World Press Freedom Day
4 May	Coal Miners Day, International Firefighter's Day, World Laughter Day (Sunday)
6 May	International No Diet Day, World Asthma Day (Tuesday)
7 May	World Athletics Day
8 May	World Red Cross Day, World Thalassaemia Day
9 May	Rabindranath Tagore Jayanti, Maharana Pratap Jayanti
10 May	World Lupus Day
11 May	National Technology Day, Mother's Day (Second Sunday of May)
12 May	International Nurses Day, Buddha Jayanti (Buddha Purnima)
16 May	National Dengue Day, International Day of Light, National Endangered Species Day (Third Friday of May)
17 May	World Telecommunication Day, World Hypertension Day, Armed Forces Day (Third Saturday of May)
18 May	World AIDS Vaccine Day, International Museum Day
20 May	International HR Day
21 May	National Anti-Terrorism Day, International Tea Day
22 May	International Day for Biological Diversity
23 May	World Turtle Day
25 May	Africa Day (African Liberation Day)
26 May	National Memorial Day (Last Monday of May)
30 May	International Day of Potato, Goa Statehood Day, Hindi Journalism Day
31 May	Anti-Tobacco Day (World No Tobacco Day)

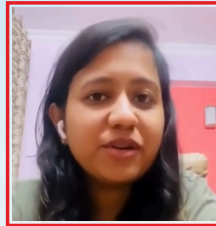


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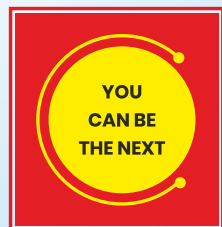
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