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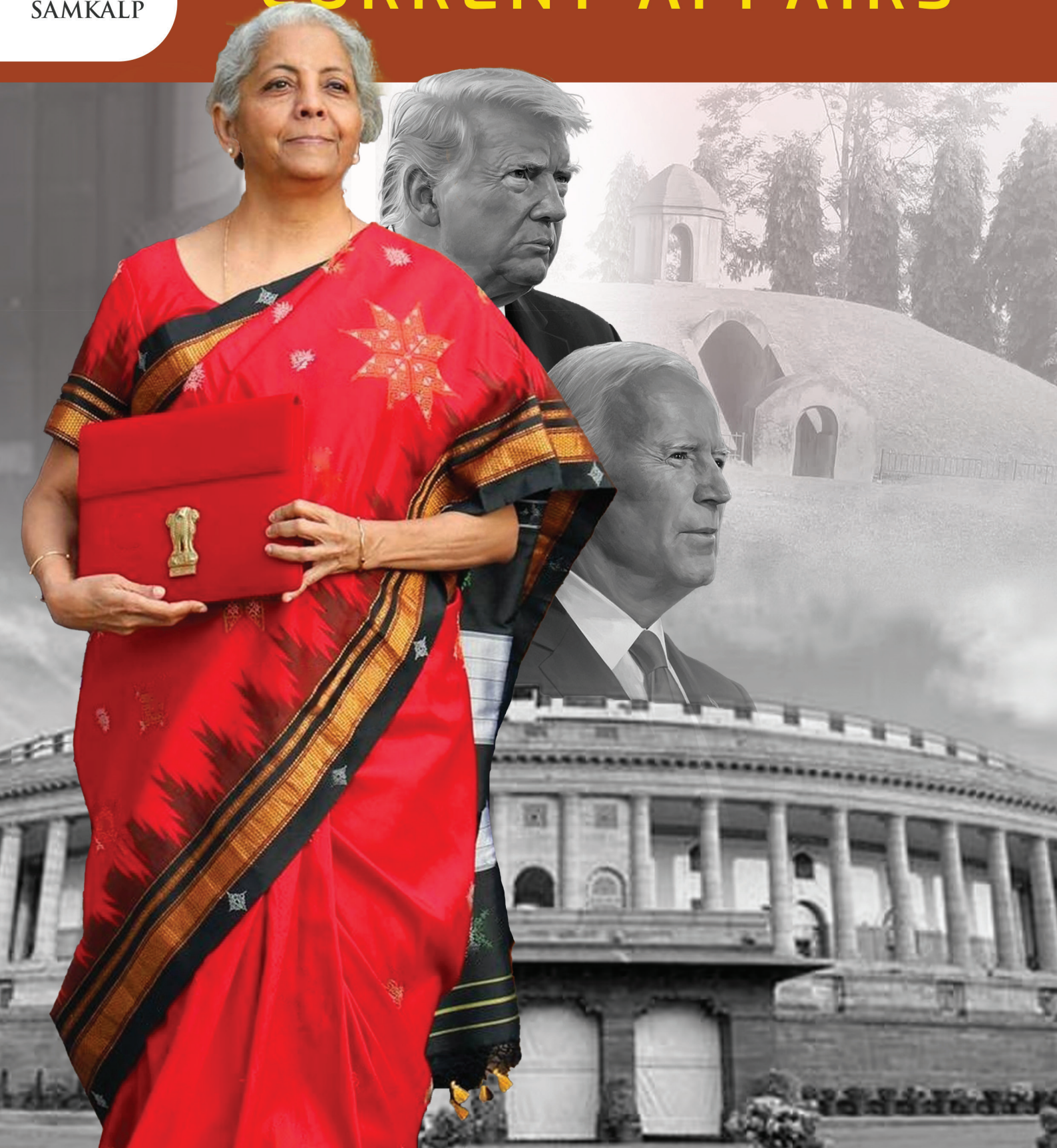


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JULY 2024

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A still life composition of historical artifacts. In the foreground, a brown leather flask with a metal cap stands on the left. A rolled-up scroll with a red and black pattern lies horizontally in the middle ground. Below the scroll, an old map with a grid and various markings is spread out. In the foreground, a metal ring with a dark square inset and a chain of metal links are visible. A key lies on the map to the right. The background is a textured, brownish-gold surface with a faint, repeating pattern.

# HISTORY- ARTS AND CULTURE





**WORLD'S OLDEST CAVE PAINTING  
DISCOVERED IN INDONESIA**

**41,000-YEAR-OLD OSTRICH NEST FOUND  
IN ANDHRA PRADESH**

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**ASSAM'S CHARAIDEO MOIDAMS ADDED  
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**LAOS UNVEILS WORLD'S FIRST STAMP  
OF LORD RAMA**



## WORLD'S OLDEST CAVE PAINTING DISCOVERED IN INDONESIA



On the island of Sulawesi in Indonesia, archaeologists have found the world's oldest known cave picture with a date that can be trusted. This piece of art was found on the roof of Leang Karampuang cave. It was made at least 51,200 years ago. Figures that look like people and a wild pig are engaging in what looks like a scene from a story. This new information changed when the first known stories told through art happened.

### DATING TECHNIQUES

A new science method using a laser to date calcium carbonate crystals that formed on top of the painting was used to figure out how old the painting was. Maxime Aubert, an expert at Griffith University, says this method is completely new and could change the way rock art dating is done all over the world.

### DETAILS

The main image in the piece of art is a pig, and three smaller figures look like people. They are all colored in dark red. Figures are put in a way that makes them look like they are interacting, which is a hint at an early form of storytelling. Researchers think that the artwork's careful placement of elements tells a clear story, though the exact story is still unknown.

### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE DISCOVERY

Not only does the picture at Leang Karampuang come before the oldest cave paintings in Europe, it also calls into question the idea that cave art only started in Europe. Another lead researcher, Adam Brumm, says that this discovery changes how we think about the cognitive skills of our ancestors and how early human art spread across the world.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR HUMAN HISTORY

This finding shows that the ability to make art and tell stories started a lot earlier than was thought before. It may have been developed by the first Homo sapiens, who came to Australia from Southeast Asia about 65,000 years ago. The results show that early humans had very advanced thinking skills, such as the ability to use symbols and tell stories. This important discovery in Indonesia gives us new ways to think about how society and art have changed over time. Researchers will try to learn more about the people who made these paintings and look for other works of art that haven't been found yet that might change how we think about ancient societies.

## 41,000-YEAR-OLD OSTRICH NEST FOUND IN ANDHRA PRADESH



In Prakasam, Andhra Pradesh, archaeologists found an ostrich nest that is 41,000 years old. This is the oldest known nest of its kind anywhere in the world. The site gave us important information about the megafauna of prehistoric India, including possible hints about how they went extinct. Assistant professor Devara Anil Kumar at MS University, Vadodara, led the group that found what used to be a nest that could hold 30 to 40 eggs, but only 9 to 11 egg shells were found.

### WHAT IS MEGAFUNA?

Megafauna are usually big animals that weigh more than 50 kg. The word refers to a group of big animals, such

as mega omnivores like ostriches, which can grow to be nine feet tall and weigh between 90 and 140 kg. This group helps us learn more about their eating habits and ecological roles, as well as their life cycles and times when they go extinct.

### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE OSTRICH DISCOVERY

This discovery is very important because it backs up proof that ostriches lived in southern India 41,000 years ago. This find, along with others, adds to the conversation about the extinction of megafauna in the Indian subcontinent. Such information had been given by fossils and artifacts discovered in other places, like Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, and Maharashtra. This led to talks about how species move around the world because of continental drift and human activity.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR EXTINCTION STUDIES

New studies, like the 2020 Yale University and Smithsonian studies, show that the arrival of humans 30,000 years ago in India is linked to the loss of large species there. These results are important for the "co-evolution hypothesis," which says that living together with hominins and things like being in a remote area could have caused rapid extinction phases. Finding and studying fossils all the time is important to support this idea and get a better picture of the subcontinent's biodiversity in the past.



## INDIA – US SIGNED CULTURAL PROPERTY AGREEMENT



- **Cultural Exchange:** It helps people around the world understand Indian culture and shows how important it is to human history.

### SIGNATORIES AND BACKGROUND

Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, who is Minister of Culture, was there when U.S. Ambassador Eric Garcetti and Indian Union Culture Secretary Govind Mohan signed the deal. It was signed after experts from both countries worked together to negotiate for almost two years.

### INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORK

This deal is in line with the UNESCO Convention of 1970, which is meant to stop the illegal sending and receiving of cultural property. The U.S. has 29 bilateral agreements on cultural property, which show that it wants to protect cultural assets around the world.

### STATEMENTS OF COMMITMENT

Ambassador Garcetti stressed how important this deal is for fairness and cultural understanding. He said again that the US was committed to saving cultural heritage around the world and making Indian culture more well-known. The Cultural Property Agreement between the United States and India is a big step toward working together to stop the illegal trade of cultural items. It also protects and honours cultural history for future generations.

India and the US signed a deal on cultural property on July 26, 2024. The goal was to make it easier for them to work together to protect cultural heritage. Both countries have made a larger promise to return stolen artifacts and stop the illegal trade of cultural property, which includes this deal.

### PURPOSE OF THE AGREEMENT

The main goals of the Cultural Property Agreement between the United States and India are twofold:

- **Justice:** It makes sure that culture items that belong to India are returned to the country.

## ASSAM'S CHARAIDEO MOIDAMS ADDED TO UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE LIST



sided wall. The Ahoms, who were related to the Tai people, chose burial over burning, which is different from Hindu customs. Their unique burial rituals, which were based on old Egyptian practices, meant that these moidams often held more than just the dead. They also held things for the afterlife, servants, animals, and even wives.

### IMPORTANCE OF CHARAIDEO

Charaideo, whose name comes from Tai Ahom words that mean “shining town on a hill,” was the first capital of the Ahom kingdom, which was set up by King Sukaphaa in 1253 AD. It stayed an important power center and is still a place with a lot of historical and cultural value.

### TOURISM AND PRESERVATION

The moidams are popular with tourists today, but many of them are in bad shape. The Archaeological Survey of India only protects 30 of the over 150 moidams. People know that the Charaideo Moidams are important as a whole, especially since they are different from other similar grave sites in terms of size and number of people buried there. Assam’s culture will always be linked to the Ahom kingdom, which ruled for a long time from 1228 to 1826 AD. People praise them for how well they run their government and how strong their military is, especially when fighting off foreign attacks. Celebrating people like Lachit Borphukan at events shows how important they are to modern Indian culture, especially as nationalism grows.

The Charaideo Moidams in Assam, which are royal burial grounds from the Ahom dynasty, were recently named UNESCO World Heritage Sites. This gives this nationally important area, which is about 30 km from Sivasagar in eastern Assam, international recognition.

### WHAT ARE MOIDAMS?

Moidams are tumuli, which are earth mounds built over the graves of Ahom kings. The moidams of the Ahom royal family are in Charaideo, but you can find other buildings like them all over eastern Assam. Each moidam usually has a vault with rooms inside, a hemispherical mound on top, and a tower called the chow chali that is surrounded by an eight-



**INDIA'S LARGEST ONLINE IAS COACHING ACADEMY**



## INDIA'S FIRST SUNKEN MUSEUM TO OPEN AT HUMAYUN TOMB



India's first sunken museum, located at the Humayun Tomb complex in Delhi, will have its grand opening on July 29, 2024. It will be open to visitors starting July 30. The museum's launch aligns with the 46th UNESCO World Heritage Committee session, which will be attended by Union Culture and Tourism Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat and Prince Rahim Aga Khan.

### SIGNIFICANCE OF HUMAYUN'S TOMB

Humayun's Tomb, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is renowned for its architectural and historical significance. Constructed in the 16th century, this monument is a prime example of Mughal heritage and stands as a key cultural landmark in Delhi. It exemplifies the grandeur and intricate design of Mughal architecture, highlighting the era's artistic and cultural achievements.

### INSPIRATION BEHIND THE MUSEUM DESIGN

The newly inaugurated sunken museum at the Humayun Tomb complex draws inspiration from traditional Indian 'baolis' (stepwells or water tanks), skillfully blending historical elements with contemporary exhibition techniques. This innovative design not only improves the visual appeal of the museum but also connects visitors with historical architectural styles.

### EXHIBITS AND ARTIFACTS

The museum features a range of historical artifacts, including:

- The final of Humayun's Tomb was restored after storm damage in 2014.
- Rare items such as 'farmans' (decrees), an astrolabe, a celestial sphere, and a warrior's helmet from the 16th or 17th century.

Construction of the museum began in April 2015, with an initial completion target set for 2017. The museum was strategically placed at the entrance of the World Heritage complex, establishing a link between various cultural sites within the area.

### TECHNOLOGICAL INTEGRATION

The museum uses the latest technology to make your visit more exciting and informative. It includes 3-D videos that show historical scenes, helping you see what the past was like. There are also detailed scale models of the nearby Nizamuddin Dargah complex, which was built in the 14th century. These models show how the site has changed over time, making it easier to understand its long history and significance.

### ABOUT HUMAYUN TOMB

- **HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE AND DESIGN:** Humayun's Tomb, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, was commissioned in 1569-70 by Empress Bega Begum, Humayun's widow. It is the first garden tomb built in India, showcasing Persian architectural influences and serving as a model for future Mughal architecture.
- **ARCHITECTURAL FEATURES:** The tomb complex includes over 100 other tombs and a large charbagh (four-fold) garden. Its design, featuring a central dome and symmetrical layout, later inspired the creation of the Taj Mahal.
- **RESTORATION AND DECORATION:** In the 20th century, the tomb underwent restoration with support from the Aga Khan Trust. The building is constructed from red sandstone and is decorated with intricate geometric patterns and calligraphy, highlighting its artistic and architectural significance.

## JAPAN'S SADO GOLD MINES ADDED TO UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE LIST



On July 27, 2024, UNESCO added the Sado gold and silver mines in Japan to its World Heritage List after South Korea withdrew its objections. This inclusion is significant due to the historical context of forced labour during World War II, where Korean laborers were conscripted to work under harsh conditions.

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The Sado mines have a long history, believed to have been operational since the 12th century. They continued producing gold and silver until after World War II. These mines are particularly notable for their traditional, artisanal mining techniques, which stand in contrast to the mechanized methods seen in European mines during the same period. This historical and cultural heritage, showcasing the evolution of mining technology and methods over several centuries, makes the Sado mines unique.

### CONTROVERSY AND OBJECTIONS

South Korea initially opposed the UNESCO listing due to the use of Korean forced labor during Japan's occupation of the Korean peninsula. During the war, Korean workers faced extremely harsh conditions, reportedly more severe than those experienced by their Japanese counterparts. This aspect of the mines' history raised historical and ethical concerns, leading to South Korea's initial objections.



### UNESCO LISTING PROCESS

Japan advocated strongly for the Sado mines' inclusion on the World Heritage List, emphasizing their cultural, historical, and archaeological significance. A key argument was the emphasis on preserving traditional mining activities and the unique social organization of the mining community that developed around the Sado mines. After years of diplomatic negotiations and advocacy, South Korea agreed to the listing on the condition that there would be a proper historical acknowledgment of the forced labour issues.

### INTERNATIONAL IMPACT AND RECOGNITION

The addition of the Sado mines to the UNESCO list is part of a broader effort to recognize and commemorate historical mining sites in Japan. This UNESCO recognition aims to improve tourism and raise global awareness about the site's cultural and historical importance. Additionally, it seeks to address historical injustices by ensuring that the darker aspects of the mines' history, including the discriminatory

labour practices during World War II, are not overlooked.

### ABOUT SADO GOLD AND SILVER MINES

- **Historical Significance and Production:** The Sado Gold and Silver Mines, located on Sado Island in Japan, began operations in the 17th century and were once among the country's largest gold producers, especially prominent during the Edo period.
- **Forced Labour and Unique Features:** The mines utilized forced labour from political exiles and are known for their unique underground tunnels, some of which stretch over 2,000 meters, showcasing the extensive and arduous mining work that took place.
- **Closure and UNESCO Nomination:** Declining production led to the closure of the mines in 1989. Today, they are a UNESCO World Heritage nominee, emphasizing their historical and cultural significance in Japan's complex mining history.

## LAOS UNVEILS WORLD'S FIRST STAMP OF LORD RAMA



In July 2024, Laos introduced a special set of commemorative stamps featuring Lord Rama and Lord Buddha to highlight the cultural ties between Laos and India. This event was attended by India's External Affairs Minister, S. Jaishankar, and his Lao counterpart, Saleumxay Kommasith.

### SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STAMP SET

The stamp set includes the world's first depiction of 'Ram Lalla of Ayodhya', showcasing the deep historical and cultural connections between India and Laos. The inclusion of these figures reflects the long-standing bonds between the two nations.

### CULTURAL HERITAGE

Buddhism has historically linked India and Laos for thousands of years. The Ramayana, known as Ramakien in

Laos, is an important cultural story often performed at major events.

### MoUs AND DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

During the visit, several agreements, known as Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs), were signed. These agreements focus on 10 Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) under the Mekong Ganga Cooperation framework, aimed at improving cooperation between the two countries. Jaishankar's visit also coincided with important ASEAN meetings hosted by Laos, which was the ASEAN Chair for 2024, showcasing Laos's active role in regional diplomacy. After visiting Laos, Jaishankar was scheduled to attend the Quad Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Japan, continuing his efforts in international relations and collaboration initiatives.

### ABOUT LAOS

- **Location and Borders:** Laos, officially the Lao People's Democratic Republic, is the only landlocked country in Southeast Asia. It is bordered by China, Vietnam, Thailand, Myanmar, and Cambodia.
- **Capital and Landmarks:** The capital city, Vientiane, is home to That Luang, the world's largest stupa. The country also features the Plain of Jars, an archaeological site with ancient stone jars.
- **Natural Features and Culture:** The Mekong River runs over 1,800 kilometres through Laos. The country has rich biodiversity, including endangered species like the Indochinese tiger. Laos is known for its sticky rice, a staple in its cuisine.

*"Intelligence plus character-that is the goal of true education. — Martin Luther King Jr.*



A vintage world map with a brass compass and a magnifying glass. The map is aged and shows various geographical features and labels in Latin. The compass is positioned in the lower right corner, and the magnifying glass is in the upper right corner. The word "GEOGRAPHY" is written in large, bold, black letters across the center of the map.

# GEOGRAPHY



**SHYOK RIVER (LADAKH)**

**MINAMI-TORISHIMA ISLAND  
(JAPAN)**

**WHAT IS APHELION POINT?**

**INCREASING WILDFIRES IN THE  
WORLD**

**ASSAM FLOODS: WHY GANGA-  
BRAHMAPUTRA REGION IS  
FLOOD PRONE?**

**SIANG RIVER**

**TIZU AND ZUNGKI RIVER  
(NATIONAL WATERWAYS 101)**

**GEVRA AND KUSMUNDA COAL  
MINES (CHHATTISGARH)**

**DARK OXYGEN**



## SHYOK RIVER (LADAKH)

**CONTEXT:** Five soldiers, including a junior commissioned officer, died in Ladakh after their T-72 tank was swept away by the Shyok River during a training exercise near Saser Brangsa.

### About Shyok River:

It is a tributary of the Indus River and flows through northern Ladakh in Jammu and Kashmir, India, and into Gilgit-Baltistan in Pakistan. Originating from the Rimo Glacier, it

flows southeast before turning northwest at the Pangong range and joining the Indus at Skardu. The river, fed by glacial meltwater, traverses high-altitude deserts and mountain ranges, spanning approximately 550 km. Its main tributary is the Nubra River.

## MINAMI-TORISHIMA ISLAND (JAPAN)

**CONTEXT:** Researchers discovered 230 million tons of minerals, including cobalt and nickel, off a remote island 1,200 miles from Tokyo.

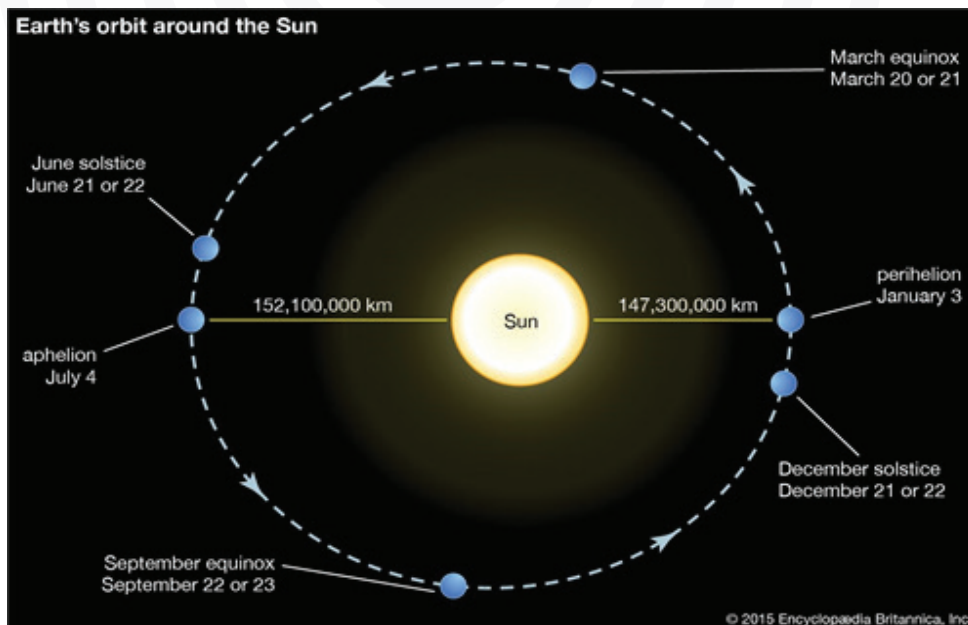
This find could supply Japan's EV battery needs for over a decade. The seabed near Minami-Torishima island contains 610,000 metric tons of cobalt and 740,000 metric tons of nickel.

Mining is set to begin in 2025, with commercial extraction expected by 2026. The discovery is significant as global demand for these minerals is projected to rise sharply, though deep-sea mining poses technical and environmental challenges.



## WHAT IS APHELION POINT?

Aphelion is when Earth is farthest from the Sun in its elliptical orbit, approximately 152 million kilometres away. This occurs annually in early July, contrasting with perihelion in early January when Earth is about 147 million kilometres close. Despite the 5 million kilometre difference, the tilt of Earth's axis primarily determines seasons, with aphelion receiving about 7% less sunlight compared to perihelion.



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## INCREASING WILDFIRES IN THE WORLD

**CONTEXT:** Arctic wildfires have become more frequent and intense due to global warming, causing significant environmental concerns. In 2024, over 160 wildfires in Sakha, Russia, burned nearly 460,000 hectares.

### Why Arctic is prone to wildfires?

The Arctic is experiencing rapid warming, approximately four times faster than the global average. This significant increase in temperature, about 3°C since 1980, has led to more frequent lightning strikes, which have more than doubled in regions like Alaska and the Northwest Territories since 1975, further aggravating wildfires. Additionally, the polar jet stream has slowed due to reduced temperature differences between the Arctic and lower latitudes. This results in prolonged warm weather and intense heatwaves, further increasing the risk of wildfires in the Arctic region.

### How Climate change is driving heatwaves and wildfires in the Arctic and other regions?

**Geographical reason:** Climate change affects jet streams, causing them to split and create areas of weak winds and high pressure conducive to heat waves.

**Global warming:** Human activities have increased global temperatures by about 1.2°C since pre-industrial times, raising the baseline temperature during extreme heat events (e.g., Australia's 2019-20 'Black Summer' fires).

**Creating ground:** Climate change creates hot, dry conditions that help fires spread faster and burn longer. It dries out vegetation, turning it into fuel, and pushes wildfires into new regions.

**Other factors:** Forest management and ignition sources, like human activities, also contribute to wildfires. Controlled burns and forest gaps can help limit severe fires.

## ASSAM FLOODS: WHY GANGA-BRAHMAPUTRA REGION IS FLOOD PRONE?

**CONTEXT:** Six more people died in Assam floods, raising the toll to 58. Over 24 lakh are affected across 30 districts, with rivers flowing above danger levels.

### The floods in Assam have led to severe consequences:

**Loss of Wildlife:** Over 130 wild animals, including 6 rare one-horned rhinos in Kaziranga National Park, have died. Other casualties include 117 hog deer, 2 sambar deer, a rhesus macaque, and an otter. Kaziranga hosts the world's largest population of one-horned rhinos.

**Infrastructure Damage:** Extensive damage to roads and infrastructure has hindered rescue and relief efforts.

**Displacement of People:** More than 2 million people have been displaced, forcing many to seek shelter in relief camps, straining resources and management.

Key factors contributing to the vulnerability of the Ganges-Brahmaputra Delta to annual floods:

### Natural Factors:

**Heavy Rainfall and Monsoon Intensity:** The region experiences intense monsoon rains, often exceeding 2,500 mm annually, leading to rapid riverine rises and flash floods.

Eg: These rivers drain 75% of the total basin runoff in only 3 months of the monsoon.

**Riverine Morphology:** The Brahmaputra River has a highly dynamic and shifting course, prone to erosion and channel avulsion (sudden change in course), increasing flood risks.

Eg: The course of the Brahmaputra River has changed dramatically over the past 250 years, of 80 km from east of the Madhupur tract (Bangladesh) to the west of it.

**Tectonic Activity:** The region lies in a seismically active zone, and earthquakes can trigger landslides and disrupt river courses, exacerbating flood events.

Eg: Earthquakes of 1897 and 1950 in Assam increased flood frequency in the delta due to subsidence.

## SIANG RIVER

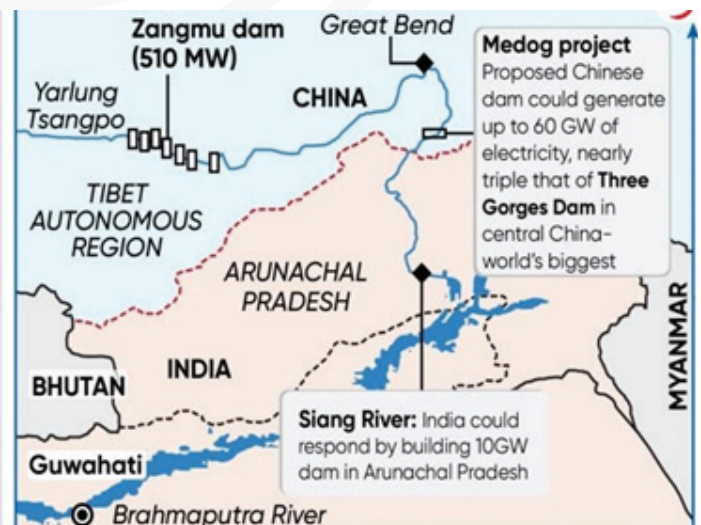
**CONTEXT:** Locals are protesting against the proposed Upper Siang hydropower project in Arunachal Pradesh due to environmental and social concerns.

The project, a massive 11,000 MW dam on the Siang River, is seen as a strategic counter to China's hydropower projects.

### About Siang River:

The Tsangpo, which originates in China, is called the Siang after it enters India through the Upper Siang district in the northeastern state.

The Siang joins two other rivers – the Lohit and the Dibang – downstream to form the Brahmaputra.





## TIZU AND ZUNGKI RIVER (NATIONAL WATERWAYS 101)

**CONTEXT:** The government has announced initiatives for the economic development of Nagaland through the harnessing of Tizu and Zungki rivers (National Waterways 101)

**About Tizu and Zungki River:**

**Tizu River:** Originates near Longkhim in Tuensang district, Nagaland. It flows into the Chinwin River (also known as Ningthi River) in Myanmar, a major tributary of the Irrawaddy River.

**Main Tributaries:** Include Zungki, Lanye, and Likimro rivers.

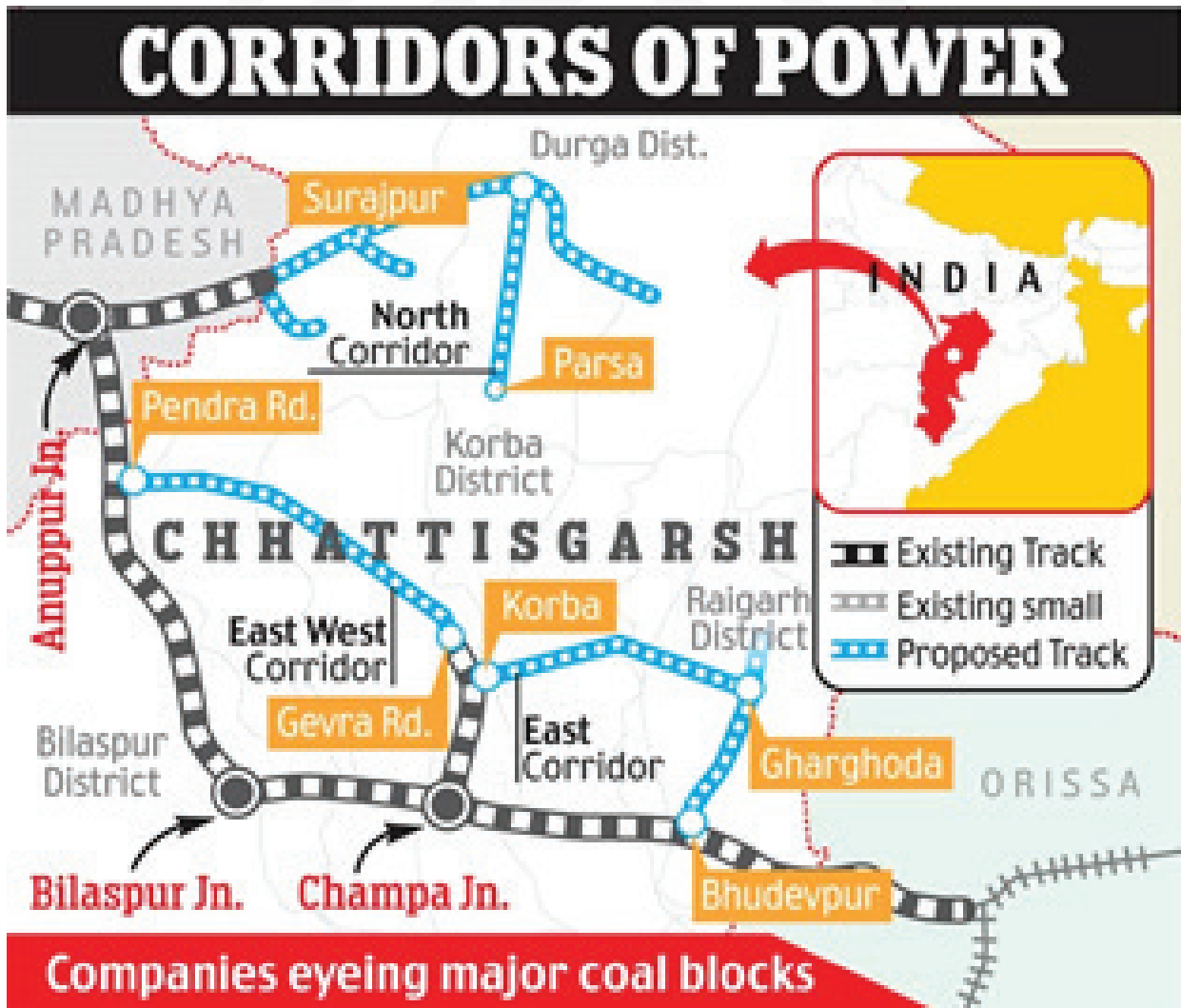
**Zungki River:** The largest tributary of the Tizu River within Nagaland.



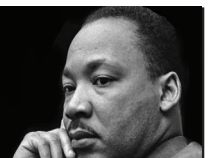
## GEVRA AND KUSMUNDA COAL MINES (CHHATTISGARH)

**CONTEXT:** Chhattisgarh-based South Eastern Coalfields Limited (SECL), a subsidiary of Coal India, has achieved a significant milestone with its Gevra and Kusmunda coal mines ranking 2nd and 4th among the world's largest coal mines.

These mines are located in the Korba district and collectively produce over 100 million tons of coal annually, constituting about 10% of India's total coal production.



*“Intelligence plus character-that is the goal of true education. — Martin Luther King Jr.*





## DARK OXYGEN

**CONTEXT:** Scientists have discovered “dark oxygen” being produced in the deep ocean by metallic nodules on the seafloor, challenging the belief that oxygen production requires sunlight.

### What is “Dark Oxygen”?

“Dark oxygen” is oxygen produced in the deep ocean, independent of sunlight, by metallic nodules on the seafloor.

### How is it being produced?

These naturally occurring metallic nodules act like batteries, generating electric currents that split seawater (H<sub>2</sub>O) into hydrogen and oxygen.



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# POLITY AND GOVERNANCE





**CURTAINS ON OLD IPC, CRPC, EVIDENCE LAW, NEW CRIMINAL CODES COME INTO EFFECT FROM TODAY**

**ESANKHYIKI PORTAL**

**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW CRIMINAL LAW REGIME**

**KERALA TO KERALAM**

**RESTORE SPEECH IN FULL, RAHUL TELLS BIRLA; SAYS EXPUNCTION IS AGAINST DEMOCRACY**

**'SAMPOORNATA ABHIYAN' LAUNCHED BY NITI AAYOG**

**SHOULD EDUCATION BE BROUGHT BACK TO THE STATE LIST?**

**WHAT IS DIGITAL BHARAT NIDHI, GOVT'S FRESH ATTEMPT AT IMPROVING RURAL TELECOM CONNECTIVITY?**

**WHAT IS PROJECT NEXUS THAT RBI HAS SIGNED UP FOR?**



## CURTAINS ON OLD IPC, CRPC, EVIDENCE LAW, NEW CRIMINAL CODES COME INTO EFFECT FROM TODAY

**CONTEXT:** Three new criminal laws - Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), and the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA) - came into effect across the country on July 1.



**BACKGROUND:** They introduced significant reforms in India's criminal justice system, replacing colonial-era laws such as the Indian Penal Code (1860), the Code of Criminal Procedure (1973), and the Indian Evidence Act (1872). Collectively, these three laws form the foundation of criminal justice jurisprudence in India, encompassing everything from defining criminal offenses and outlining procedures for investigation and evidence collection to regulating the trial process in court.

### THREE NEW CRIMINAL LAWS:

#### BHARATIYA NYAYA SANHITA (BNS) ACT

- **Introduction of New Crimes:**
  - **Clause 69:**
    - \* Penalizes sexual intercourse through "deceitful means."
    - \* Punishment: Up to 10 years imprisonment and a fine.
    - \* Deceitful means include false promises of employment or promotion, inducement, or marrying after suppressing identity.
    - \* **Criticism:** Potential to criminalize consensual relationships and fuel the "love jihad" narrative.
  - **Clause 103:**
    - \* Recognizes murder on the grounds of race, caste, or community as a separate offense.
    - \* Complies with the 2018 Supreme Court directive for a separate law on lynching.
- **Inclusion of Offenses such as Organized Crime and Terror:**
  - **Clause 111(1):**
    - \* Draws heavily from the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA).
    - \* Defines organized crime to include activities like kidnapping, robbery, vehicle theft, extortion, land grabbing, contract killing, economic offenses, and cyber-crimes.
  - **Clause 304(1):**
    - \* Defines snatching as a new crime, distinct from theft.
- **Community Service as Alternate Punishment:**
  - Applicable for minor offenses such as small theft, defamation, and attempted suicide with the intent to obstruct a public official.
  - **Concern:** The BNS does not define what constitutes community service, leaving it to judicial discretion.

#### BHARATIYA NAGRIK SURAKSHA SANHITA (BNSS) ACT

- **Expansion of Police Custody Detention:**
  - Extends the detention period from the existing 15 days under the CrPC to up to 90 days.
- **Victim-Centric Approach:**
  - In cases with a punishment of seven years or more, the victim must be given an opportunity to be heard before the government can withdraw the case.
- **Trials in Absentia:**
  - Allows for trials and convictions of accused individuals in their absence.
  - **Criticism:** Risks the state neglecting its duty to locate the accused before commencing the trial.
- **Removal of Statutory Bail Provision:**
  - If an accused has more than one offense against their name, they are no longer eligible for statutory bail.

#### BHARATIYA SAKSHYA (BSA) ACT

- **Modification of the Definition of Document:**
  - Includes electronic and digital records, granting them the same legal effect, validity, and enforceability as traditional documents.
- **Expansion of Secondary Evidence Scope:**
  - Adds categories such as oral admissions and written submissions.
- **Modification of Confessional Admission:**
  - States that a confession made by an accused person is irrelevant in a criminal proceeding.

## Changes proposed in criminal laws

Union home minister Amit Shah has introduced three key bills in the Lok Sabha that, if approved, will overhaul India's criminal justice system. A look at key aspects of the bills

**THE BHARATIYA NYAYA SANHITA (BNS) BILL, 2023**  
Proposed to replace **Indian Penal Code (IPC), 1860**

The IPC, which was framed by the British, is the official criminal code of India that lists various crimes and its punishments

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- Sedition deleted, but another provision penalising secessionism, separatism, rebellion and acts against sovereignty, unity and integrity of India brought in
- Provision of **death penalty** for gang rape of minors and for mob lynching
- **Community service introduced** as one of the punishments for the first time

**THE BHARATIYA NAGARIK SURAKSHA SANHITA, 2023**  
Proposed to replace **Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), 1973**

The CrPC lays down the procedure for investigation, arrest, court hearing, bail and punishment in criminal cases

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- **Time-bound investigation**, trial and judgment within 30 days of the completion of arguments
- **Video-recording** of the statement of sexual assault victims to be made mandatory
- New provision for **attachment of property and proceeds of crime**

**THE BHARATIYA SAKSHYA BILL, 2023**  
Proposed to replace the **Indian Evidence Act, 1872**

The IEA applies to all judicial proceedings in the country and defines the particulars of evidence produced and admissible in courts

**KEY TAKEAWAYS**

- **Documents to also include** electronic or digital records, e-mails, server logs, computers, smart phones, laptops, SMS, websites, locational evidence, mails, messages on devices
- **Digitisation of all records** including case diary, FIR, charge sheet and judgement
- Electronic or digital record shall have the same legal effect, validity and enforceability as paper records

### PROS & CONS OF THREE CRIMINAL LAWS

#### UPSIDES:

- **Expanded Definition of Rape:**
  - Sexual intercourse with a minor wife is now considered rape.
- **Inclusion of Mob-Lynching Offenses:**
  - Legislative acknowledgment of hate crimes, recognizing the importance of addressing mob-lynching.



- **Omission of Section 377 of IPC:**
  - The new laws exclude the contentious Section 377, which criminalized “carnal intercourse against the order of nature.”
- **Video-Conferencing of Trials:**
  - Emphasizes the use of video-conferencing and sets timelines for speedy trials, aiming to improve justice delivery.

#### **GREY AREAS:**

- **Consultation and Passage Process:**
  - The consultation process during the pandemic and the quick passage through Parliament have raised concerns.
- **Inadequate Overhaul:**
  - Legal experts argue that despite significant changes, the new laws do not completely overhaul the existing legal framework.
- **Reintroduction of Sedition:**
  - The BNS has reintroduced the offense of sedition with a broader definition, contrary to the government’s claims of removing it.
- **Lack of Gender-Neutral Rape Laws:**
  - Rape laws remain gender-specific, providing little criminal recourse for male victims of sexual assault.

#### **GOVERNMENT’S PREPARATION FOR IMPLEMENTING THE THREE NEW CRIMINAL LAWS:**

- **Operational Training:**
  - The Bar Council of India mandates the incorporation of new laws into university curricula and Centres of Legal

Education from the 2024-25 academic year.

- **Publicity/Awareness Campaign:**
  - The Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D) is coordinating efforts of the Inter-Ministerial Group for a coordinated publicity campaign.
- **Tech Upgradation:**
  - The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) has made 23 functional modifications in the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems (CCTNS) application for tech compatibility, including the registration of FIRs.
  - The National Informatics Centre (NIC) has developed applications such as eSakshya, NyayShruti, and eSummon to facilitate videography/photography of crime scenes, judicial hearings, and electronic delivery of court summons.
- **Capacity Building:**
  - The BPR&D has developed 13 training modules to build the capacity of the police, prisons, prosecutors, judicial officers, forensic experts, and central police organizations.

**CONCLUSION:** The introduction of the BNS, BNSS, and BSA marks a significant shift in India’s criminal justice system, replacing colonial-era laws with modern provisions. While these laws bring progressive changes like recognizing new crimes and emphasizing victim rights, concerns remain regarding implementation, consultation processes, and gender-neutrality. The government’s preparation, including operational training, awareness campaigns, and tech upgrades, is crucial for the effective execution and acceptance of these reforms.

## **ESANKHYIKI PORTAL**

**CONTEXT:** The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has developed an eSankhyiki portal.

**BACKGROUND:** The eSankhyiki Portal, launched in June 2024 by India’s Ministry of Statistics, is a central location for accessing official statistical data like National Accounts Statistics. It aims to improve data accessibility and encourage data-driven decision making.

#### **ESANKHYIKI PORTAL: A CENTRAL HUB FOR INDIAN STATISTICS (LAUNCHED JUNE 2024)**

- **Objective:** Establish a system for easy access and sharing of official statistics in India.
- **Target users:** Planners, policymakers, researchers, and the general public.
- **Real-time data access:** Provides current information for informed decision-making.

#### **Modules:**

- **Data Catalogue Module:**
  - Centralized location for major Ministry data assets.
  - Search within datasets and download data of interest (over 2291 datasets).
  - Includes metadata and visualizations for user convenience.
  - Data products:
    - » National Accounts Statistics
    - » Consumer Price Index
    - » Index of Industrial Production
    - » Annual Survey of Industries
    - » Periodic Labour Force Survey
    - » Household Consumption Expenditure Survey
    - » Multiple Indicator Survey

- **Macro Indicators Module:**
  - Offers time series data of key macro indicators.
  - Features for filtering, visualizing, and downloading data.
  - Allows sharing data and visualizations through APIs (increased reusability).
  - Current data:
    - » National Accounts Statistics
    - » Consumer Price Index
    - » Index of Industrial Production
    - » Annual Survey of Industries (last ten years)
  - Total records: Over 1.7 million
- **Alignment with Statistics Day:**
  - Launched on Statistics Day to promote “Use of data for Decision Making”.
  - Easy data access is crucial for evidence-based decision making.
- **User-centric approach:**
  - Designed to facilitate data use, reuse, and analysis for creating impact.

**CONCLUSION:** The eSankhyiki Portal is a significant step towards data transparency and accessibility in India. By providing a user-friendly platform for diverse users, it empowers data-driven decision making and fosters evidence-based policy and research across the nation.



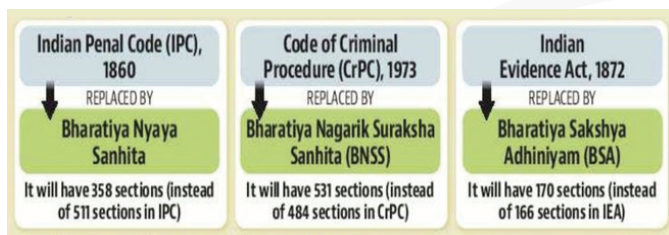
## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEW CRIMINAL LAW REGIME

**CONTEXT:** India's justice system underwent a major overhaul on July 1st, 2024. Three new codes - BNS, BNSS, and BSA - replaced 18th-19th century laws. These changes redefine crimes, update investigation methods, and modernize trial procedures.

### NEW CRIMINAL LAWS IN INDIA

#### OVERVIEW

- Effective Date: July 1, 2024
- New Laws:
  - Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS)
  - Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS)
  - Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA)
- Replaced Laws:
  - Indian Penal Code (1860)
  - Code of Criminal Procedure (1973)
  - Indian Evidence Act (1872)



### BHARATIYA NYAYA SANHITA (BNS)

- New Crimes Introduced:
  - Clause 69: Penalises sexual intercourse through deceitful means, including false promises of employment, inducement, or identity suppression (up to 10 years imprisonment and a fine).
- Criticism: Potential to criminalise consensual relationships and support "love jihad" narrative.
- Clause 103: Recognises murder on grounds of race, caste, or community as a separate offence (includes mob lynching).
- Clause 111(1): Defines organised crime (kidnapping, robbery, extortion, etc.) and borrows elements from the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA).
- Clause 304(1): Defines snatching as distinct crime from theft.
- Community Service:
  - Alternative punishment for offences like small theft, defamation, and attempt to die by suicide.
  - Grey Area: Lack of definition for community service.

## Crime and punishment

The new Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita has 358 Sections against the 511 in the Indian Penal Code that it replaces. The Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita replaces the Code of Criminal Procedure, and the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam comes in place of the Indian Evidence Act



#### What is new?

- Provision for **Zero FIR** allowing filing of a first information report at any police station, regardless of jurisdiction
- **Online registration** of police complaints and mandatory videography of crime

scenes for all heinous crimes

- A person can now report incidents by **electronic communication**, without the need to visit a police station
- Judgment in criminal cases has to come **within 45 days**

of completion of the trial

- Provisions against false promise of marriage, gang rape of minors and **mob lynching**
- Statement of a woman rape victim will be recorded by a woman police officer

in the presence of her guardian or relative

- Death sentence or life imprisonment for **gang rape of a minor**
- **Sedition** has been replaced with 'secession' or 'act against the country's sovereignty, unity and integrity'

### BHARATIYA NAGARIK SURAKSHA SANHITA (BNSS)

- Key Changes:
  - Detention Expansion: Increases police custody limit from 15 days to 90 days.
  - Victim-Centric Approach: Victims must be heard before case withdrawal in offences with punishment of seven years or more.
  - Trials in Absentia: Allows trials and convictions in the absence of the accused.
    - » Criticism: has raised concerns about the state's duty to locate accused individuals properly.
  - Statutory Bail Removal: No statutory bail if an accused has multiple offences.

### BHARATIYA SAKSHYA ADHINIYAM (BSA)

- **Modified Evidence Rules:**
  - **Electronic and Digital Records:** Recognised as primary evidence.
  - **Secondary Evidence Scope:** Expanded to include oral admissions and written submissions.

- **Confessional Admission:** Confessions by the accused are irrelevant in proceedings.

#### Upsides

- **Sexual Intercourse with Minor Wife:** Now Classified as rape.
- **Mob-Lynching:** Legal recognition as a hate crime. Inclusion is significant and marks legislative acknowledgment of such hate crimes.
- **Section 377 Omission:** Excludes criminalisation of "carnal intercourse against the order of nature".
- **Video-Conferencing and Speedy Trials:** Emphasis on technology for efficient justice delivery.

#### Grey Areas

- **Consultation Process:** Hasty passage of laws during the pandemic.
- **Sedition Offence:** Wider definition despite claims of removal.
- **Gender-Neutrality:** Rape laws remain gender-specific, excluding male victims.





### Implementation and Preparation

- **Operational Training:**
  - o New laws to be included in university curricula from 2024-25 academic year.
- **Publicity and Awareness:**
  - o Coordinated campaigns by Bureau of Police Research and Development (BPR&D).
  - o Use of applications like eSakshya, Nyay Shruti, and eSummon for tech upgradation.
- **Public Accessibility:** Filing FIRs electronically and in multiple languages enhances accessibility.
- **Capacity Building:**

- o 13 training modules for police, prosecutors, judicial officers, etc.

### Technological Integration

- **CCTNS Upgrade:**
  - o Enhanced for e-FIRs and zero FIRs.
  - o NCRB's 23 functional modifications for tech compatibility.
  - o Cloud-Based Systems: Platforms like eSakshya and e-pramaan for storing electronic evidence.
- **Electronic Evidence:**
  - o Mandates audio-video recording of crime scenes and judicial hearings.
  - o Use of mobile applications for crime scene recording.

# OBJECTIVES OF CCTNS

➤ Processing FIRs, investigation documents and chargesheets in a common software

➤ Establishing state and national crime and criminal databases

➤ Interlinking police stations, state and national data centres through a single network

➤ Integrating with other databases for antecedent verification, as also with other segments of the criminal justice system

Crime and Criminal Tracking Network & Systems (CCTNS)

### State Autonomy

- **Amendments:**
  - o States can amend BNSS provisions as needed.
  - o Transition period with concurrent operation of IPC and Cr. PC.

### Enhanced Security and Accountability

- **Cloud-Based Systems:**
  - o Use of platforms like e Sakshya and e-pramaan for evidence storage.

### Public Accessibility

- **E-FIR and Zero FIR:**
  - o FIRs can be filed electronically without visiting police stations.
- **Significance:**

- o Modernizes and streamlines India's criminal justice system.
- o Emphasis on efficiency, transparency, and responsiveness to contemporary needs.
- o Integration of technology, state-specific amendments, and enhanced security measures.

**CONCLUSION:** The new criminal laws represent a significant modernization of India's criminal justice system, aiming for efficiency, transparency, and responsiveness to contemporary needs. Key features include technological integration, flexibility for state-specific amendments, and enhanced security measures. However, successful implementation and addressing identified grey areas will be crucial for achieving the intended reforms.

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## KERALA TO KERALAM

**CONTEXT:** The Kerala Assembly's recent resolution requesting a state name change to "Keralam" hinges on invoking Article 3 of the Indian Constitution.



### CHANGING KERALA'S NAME: A JOURNEY THROUGH ARTICLE 3 AND BEYOND

The recent move by the Kerala Assembly to change the state's name from "Kerala" to "Keralam" highlights the power vested in Article 3 of the Indian Constitution. This article empowers the Parliament to alter names, boundaries, and areas of existing states. However, the process is not as simple as a single legislative vote.

#### UNDERSTANDING ARTICLE 3:

- **Parliament's Authority:** Article 3 grants Parliament the authority to:
  - o Form new states through separation or unification of existing ones.
  - o Increase or decrease the area of a state.
  - o Alter state boundaries.
  - o Change the name of a state.
- **Procedural Safeguards:** This power comes with safeguards:
  - o **Presidential Recommendation:** A bill for any of these actions requires the President's prior recommendation.
  - o **State Legislature Consultation:** The President must also refer the bill to the affected state's legislature for its views.

#### THE KERALA NAME CHANGE PROCESS:

1. **State Resolution:** The Kerala Assembly initiated the process by passing a resolution proposing the name

change to "Keralam."

2. **Presidential Reference:** This resolution is forwarded to the President for consideration.
3. **Parliamentary Bill:** With the President's recommendation, a bill for the name change is introduced in Parliament.
4. **Parliamentary Debate & Approval:** The bill undergoes debate and requires a simple majority vote in both houses of Parliament (Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha) for approval.
5. **Presidential Assent:** Once passed by Parliament, the bill receives final approval from the President, officially recognizing the name change.

#### KERALA'S SPECIFIC SITUATION:

- **Initial Attempt & Hurdles:** Kerala's first attempt in 2023 aimed to change the state's name across all languages listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution. However, this faced procedural issues and was sent back by the central government.
- **Modified Resolution:** The current resolution focuses solely on amending the First Schedule, which lists the names of states and union territories in English.

#### BEYOND LEGAL PROCEDURES: CONSIDERATIONS FOR NAME CHANGE

- **Cultural Significance:** The name change reflects Kerala's cultural and linguistic identity by aligning the official name with the local pronunciation, "Keralam."
- **Administrative Changes:** The name change necessitates updates across official documents, signage, and legal references, requiring administrative effort.
- **Public Perception:** The change may enhance state pride and recognition of the Malayalam language.

#### CONCLUSION:

The proposed name change for Kerala is a significant step with both legal and cultural implications. While the legal process outlined in Article 3 provides a clear framework, successfully navigating the procedural steps and achieving political consensus is crucial for its successful implementation.



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## RESTORE SPEECH IN FULL, RAHUL TELLS BIRLA; SAYS EXPUNCTION IS AGAINST DEMOCRACY

**CONTEXT:** Rahul Gandhi urges Speaker Om Birla to restore his expunged Lok Sabha speech, asserting that the removal of his critical remarks against BJP undermines parliamentary democracy and freedom of speech.

### CONTEXT AND IMMEDIATE REACTION

- **Expunged Speech:** Portions of Rahul Gandhi's maiden speech as the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha were expunged.
- **Letter to Speaker:** Rahul Gandhi wrote to Speaker Om Birla, claiming the expunction action went "against the very tenets of parliamentary democracy".

### Content of the Expunged Speech

- **Expunged Portions:** The Speaker removed 13 parts of Gandhi's speech from the records.

### Argument Against Expunction

- **Rules of Procedure:** Gandhi argued that the Chair's power to expunge remarks pertains only to words specified in Rule 380 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Lok Sabha.
- **Shock at Expunction:** He expressed shock at how considerable portions of his speech were removed under the guise of expunction.

### Emphasis on Freedom of Speech

- **Scope of Rule 380:** Gandhi contended that the expunged portions did not fall under the ambit of Rule 380.
- **Ground Reality:** He emphasized that his speech conveyed the ground reality and factual position.
- **Article 105(1):** Gandhi stressed that every member of the House, representing the collective voice of the people, has the freedom of speech as enshrined in Article 105(1) of the Constitution of India.

### DETAILED ANALYSIS OF RULE 380 AND ARTICLE 105(1) OF THE CONSTITUTION

#### WHAT IS RULE 380 OF THE LOK SABHA

**Rule 380** of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Lok Sabha provides the Speaker with the authority to expunge words from the proceedings of the House. The rule is a mechanism to maintain decorum and ensure that debates do not include offensive or unparliamentary language.

#### Authority of Rule 380

- **Constitutional Basis:** The authority for Rule 380 is derived from Article 118(1) of the Constitution of India, which empowers each House of Parliament to make its own rules for regulating its procedure and conduct of business.
- **Framing of Rules:** The Lok Sabha has framed its own set of rules under this constitutional provision, and Rule 380 is part of these rules.

#### Application of Rule 380

- **Unparliamentary Language:** The primary use of Rule 380 is to expunge words that are deemed unparliamentary, indecent, vulgar, defamatory, or otherwise inappropriate for the official records.
- **Speaker's Discretion:** The Speaker of the Lok Sabha has the discretion to decide which words or expressions should be expunged from the proceedings. This decision is usually based on the context and the potential impact of the words used during debates.

- **Maintaining Decorum:** By expunging certain remarks, the Speaker ensures that the dignity and decorum of the House are maintained and that the proceedings reflect a respectful and constructive debate.

### Process

1. **Identification of Words:** During the debate, if any member uses language that is considered unparliamentary or offensive, other members or the Speaker may raise an objection.
2. **Speaker's Decision:** The Speaker reviews the context and the language used, and if deemed necessary, orders the expunction of specific words or phrases.
3. **Official Records:** The expunged words are removed from the official records of the Lok Sabha proceedings, and these sections are replaced with an indication that words were expunged.

### Importance

- **Ensures Civility:** Rule 380 helps maintain a civil and respectful tone in parliamentary debates.
- **Protects Dignity:** It protects the dignity of the House and its members by preventing defamatory or derogatory remarks from being recorded.
- **Reflects Parliamentary Standards:** The rule ensures that the official records of the Lok Sabha uphold the standards expected of parliamentary discourse.

### HANDLING OF EXPUNGED REMARKS IN THE LOK SABHA

**Expunged Remarks:** When the Speaker of the Lok Sabha orders the expunction of certain remarks made during the proceedings, the following steps are taken:

1. **Removal from Official Records:**
  - **Debate Transcript:** The specific words or phrases that are expunged are removed from the official transcript of the parliamentary debate.
  - **Hansard:** The Hansard, which is the official verbatim report of the debates in the Lok Sabha, omits the expunged remarks. Instead of the actual words, a note indicating that certain words or phrases were expunged is inserted.
2. **Documentation:**
  - **Original Records:** The original records of the proceedings will still contain the expunged remarks, but they are marked or annotated to indicate that these portions have been expunged and should not be included in the public or official versions of the records.
  - **Annotations:** In the printed or electronic version of the proceedings, annotations such as "[Expunged as ordered by the Chair]" are included in place of the removed content.
3. **Access and Reference:**
  - **Restricted Access:** The expunged remarks are not available for public access. Only authorized personnel within the parliamentary secretariat may have access to these original records for administrative purposes.
  - **No Public Reproduction:** The expunged content cannot be reproduced, quoted, or referenced in any public document, debate, or media report, as it is considered officially non-existent in the context of the parliamentary records.



#### 4. Impact on Members:

- **Members' Accountability:** The expunction does not absolve members of accountability for their words. Members may still face disciplinary actions if their remarks violated parliamentary decorum or were against the rules.
- **Continued Debate:** While the expunged remarks are removed, the general flow of the debate continues, and members may refer to the fact that certain remarks were expunged without restating the expunged content.

#### Significance of Expunged Remarks

- **Upholding Decorum:** Expunction is essential for maintaining the decorum and dignity of the House, ensuring that debates remain respectful and constructive.
- **Protecting Integrity:** It protects the integrity of the parliamentary proceedings by preventing offensive, defamatory, or unparliamentary language from being part of the official record.
- **Guiding Future Conduct:** The process of expunction serves as a reminder to members about the standards of conduct expected in parliamentary debates, encouraging more mindful and respectful communication.

By handling expunged remarks in this manner, the Lok Sabha ensures that its official records reflect a high standard of parliamentary discourse while addressing any breaches of decorum effectively.

### COMPARISON OF FREEDOM UNDER ARTICLE 105(1) AND RULE 380

#### Article 105(1) of the Constitution

- **Provision:** Article 105(1) grants members of Parliament the freedom of speech in the House and its committees.
- **Scope:**
  - **Absolute Privilege:** MPs have absolute privilege within the House, meaning they cannot be prosecuted or held liable in any court for anything said during parliamentary proceedings.
  - **Purpose:** Ensures that MPs can express themselves freely without fear of legal repercussions, thereby enabling robust debate and discussion.
  - **Limitations:** This privilege is subject to the rules and orders governing the proceedings of Parliament, meaning it is not unfettered.

#### Rule 380 of the Lok Sabha

- **Provision:** Rule 380 empowers the Speaker to expunge words or expressions that are deemed unparliamentary or offensive from the official records.
- **Scope:**
  - **Maintaining Decorum:** Aimed at maintaining decorum and respect in parliamentary debates.
  - **Discretionary Power:** The Speaker has the discretion to decide what is unparliamentary or offensive and to expunge such remarks.
  - **Application:** It is used to ensure that the official records reflect a respectful and orderly debate, free from defamatory or inappropriate content.

#### Relationship and Balance

##### 1. Complementary Roles:

- Article 105(1) provides broad freedom of speech to MPs, facilitating free and frank discussion necessary for democratic deliberation.

- Rule 380 serves as a regulatory mechanism to ensure that this freedom does not lead to disorderly conduct or disrespectful language in the House.

##### 2. Balancing Act:

- **Freedom vs. Decorum:** While Article 105(1) allows MPs to speak freely, Rule 380 ensures that this freedom is exercised within the bounds of parliamentary decorum.
- **Speaker's Role:** The Speaker acts as the arbiter, balancing the need for free expression with the necessity of maintaining order and respect in the House.

#### Supreme Court Verdicts and Observations

##### Key Cases and Observations

###### 1. Keshav Singh Case (1965):

- **Context:** This case dealt with the privileges of the legislature versus judicial review.
- **Observation:** The Supreme Court held that while MPs have certain privileges, these are not absolute and can be subject to judicial review, especially if fundamental rights are violated.

###### 2. P.V. Narasimha Rao Case (1998):

- **Context:** Concerned whether MPs could be prosecuted for accepting bribes to make a speech or vote in a particular manner.
- **Observation:** The Supreme Court ruled that the immunity under Article 105(2) extended to acts of voting and speaking within the House, protecting MPs from prosecution for their speeches in Parliament.

###### 3. Rajendra Sail v. Madhya Pradesh High Court Bar Association (2005):

- **Context:** Related to comments made outside the Parliament.
- **Observation:** The Supreme Court emphasized that parliamentary privilege under Article 105 does not extend to comments made outside the House, reinforcing the idea that freedom within the House is balanced by responsibility and decorum.

#### Balancing Freedom and Decorum

The Supreme Court has recognized the importance of parliamentary privileges, including freedom of speech, but has also underscored the need for these privileges to be exercised responsibly. The Court has acknowledged the Speaker's role in maintaining decorum and has generally refrained from interfering in matters strictly related to parliamentary proceedings, unless there is a clear violation of constitutional provisions or fundamental rights.

#### CONCLUSION

The freedom granted under Article 105(1) and the regulatory mechanism provided by Rule 380 work together to ensure that parliamentary proceedings are both free and orderly. The Speaker's discretionary power to expunge remarks ensures that debates remain respectful and constructive, while the Supreme Court has upheld the sanctity of parliamentary privileges, emphasizing the need for a balanced approach. This balance allows for robust debate within a framework of respect and order, essential for the functioning of a democratic legislature.



## 'SAMPOORNATA ABHIYAN' LAUNCHED BY NITI AAYOG

**CONTEXT:** NTA chief removed & NEET-UG probed by CBI after irregularities, impacting NEET PG & prompting a review committee.



### WHAT IS SAMPOORNATA ABHIYAN?

Launched by NITI Aayog, Sampoornata Abhiyan is a nationwide campaign focused on achieving saturation in key social indicators for Aspirational Districts and Blocks. It's a concentrated effort spanning three months (July - September 2024) to accelerate progress in these areas.

#### Target Areas:

- **Aspirational Districts:** 112 Districts across India identified by NITI Aayog as lagging in socio-economic development.
- **Aspirational Blocks:** 500 Blocks within the Aspirational Districts facing similar challenges.

#### Campaign Goals:

The Abhiyan aims to achieve "saturation" in six crucial social indicators for both Aspirational Districts and Blocks. Saturation signifies achieving a target percentage (often 100%) for each indicator.

#### Key Indicators (Aspirational Blocks):

- **Maternal Healthcare:**
  - o Percentage of pregnant women registered for Antenatal Care (ANC) within the first trimester.
- **Non-Communicable Diseases:**
  - o Percentage of individuals screened for Diabetes and Hypertension against the targeted population.
- **Child Nutrition:**
  - o Percentage of pregnant women receiving regular supplementary nutrition under the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) program.
- **Soil Health:**
  - o Percentage of Soil Health Cards generated compared to the target for soil sample collection.

#### Women's Empowerment:

- o Percentage of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) that have received a Revolving Fund, a financial instrument to support their entrepreneurial activities.

#### Key Indicators (Aspirational Districts):

##### Maternal & Child Healthcare:

- o Percentage of pregnant women registered for Antenatal Care (ANC) within the first trimester.
- o Percentage of pregnant women receiving regular supplementary nutrition under the ICDS program.
- o Percentage of children fully immunized (9-11 months).

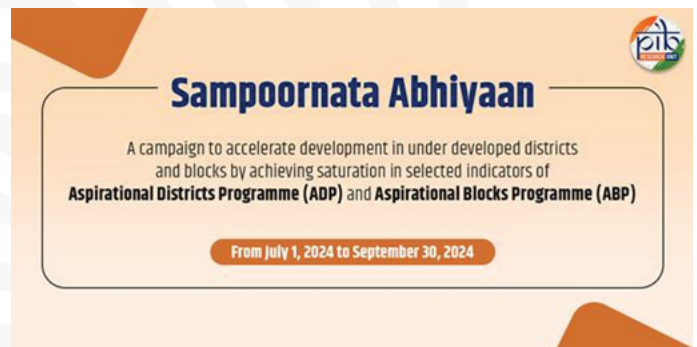
##### Education:

- o Percentage of schools with functional electricity at the secondary level.
- o Percentage of schools providing textbooks to children within 1 month of the academic session's start.

#### Collaboration for Success:

NITI Aayog, the central government planning agency, is leading the initiative. They will collaborate with various stakeholders to ensure its success:

- Central Ministries & Departments: Providing relevant expertise and resources.
- State & Union Territory Governments: Implementing the campaign at the local level.



#### Additional Information:

- The specific targets for each indicator may vary depending on the baseline data for each district and block.
- Sampoornata Abhiyan emphasizes data-driven monitoring and course correction to achieve the desired outcomes.
- The initiative builds upon the existing Aspirational Districts and Blocks program, launched in 2017, to accelerate development in lagging regions.

**CONCLUSION:** With active citizen participation, Sampoornata Abhiyan has the potential to significantly improve social welfare in Aspirational Districts and Blocks. This time-bound campaign, coupled with data-driven monitoring, can bridge critical development gaps and empower communities for a brighter future.





## SHOULD EDUCATION BE BROUGHT BACK TO THE STATE LIST?

**CONTEXT:** A series of controversies surrounding India's higher education entrance exams, including alleged irregularities in NEET-UG and the cancellation of UGC-NET after it was conducted, has reignited the debate on devolving control of education back to individual states.

### STATUS OF EDUCATION – HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

#### EARLY PHASE - EDUCATION IN THE PROVINCIAL LIST

- **Government of India Act, 1935:** During British rule, this act created a federal structure for the first time in Indian polity.
- **Legislative Distribution:** The act distributed legislative subjects between the federal legislature (present-day Union) and provinces (present-day States).
- **Provincial Control:** Education, as an important public good, was placed under the provincial list.

#### AFTER INDEPENDENCE

- **Continuation of 1935 Trend:** Post-independence, the framework set by the Government of India Act, 1935 was continued.
- **State List:** Education remained part of the 'State list' under the distribution of powers.

#### RECOMMENDATION OF SWARAN SINGH COMMITTEE

- **Emergency Period:** During the Emergency, the Congress party formed the Swaran Singh Committee to recommend constitutional amendments.
- **Committee's Recommendation:** One of the recommendations was to move 'education' to the concurrent list to develop all-India policies on the subject.

#### 42ND CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT AND STATUS OF EDUCATION

- **42nd Amendment (1976):** This amendment shifted 'education' from the State list to the concurrent list.
- **Lack of Detailed Rationale:** No detailed rationale was provided for this change.

#### ATTEMPT TO RETURN EDUCATION TO THE STATE LIST

- **44th Constitutional Amendment (1978):** The Janata Party government, led by Morarji Desai, passed this amendment to reverse many changes made by the 42nd amendment.
- **Failed Reversal:** One of the amendments aimed at returning 'education' to the State list passed in the Lok Sabha but failed in the Rajya Sabha.
- **Current Status:** Since then, education has remained in the concurrent list of the Constitution.

#### PREVAILING INTERNATIONAL PRACTICES

- **United States:** Educational standards and standardized tests are set by state and local governments. Federal oversight focuses on financial aid and key educational policies.
- **Canada:** Education is entirely delegated to its provinces.
- **Germany:** Educational legislative authority resides with its states (Länder).
- **South Africa:** National departments manage school and higher education, while provinces implement national policies and address local educational needs.

### WAY FORWARD

#### ARGUMENTS FOR 'EDUCATION' IN THE CONCURRENT LIST

- **Uniform Education Policy:** Advocates argue for a unified approach to education across the country to improve standards and ensure consistency.
- **Synergy Between Centre and States:** Central coordination is seen as beneficial for aligning national goals with state-level implementation.
- **Corruption and Lack of Professionalism:** Critics cite concerns about inefficiencies and ethical issues within state-level management of education.

#### ARGUMENTS FOR RESTORING 'EDUCATION' TO THE STATE LIST

- **Recent Issues with Centralization:** Events like NEET controversies highlight that centralized control does not eliminate problems, challenging assumptions about governance efficacy.
- **Autonomy and Tailored Policies:** States argue for autonomy to tailor educational policies to local needs, especially concerning syllabus, testing, and admissions for professional courses.
- **Diverse Needs:** Considering the vast diversity of the country, a 'one size fits all' approach is neither feasible nor desirable.
- **Financial Distribution:** A significant amount of education expenditure is borne by the states. For instance, according to the Ministry of Education's 2022 report on education spending, out of the total ₹6.25 lakh crore spent by education departments in 2020-21, the Centre contributed 15%, and the States contributed 85%. Including all other departments' spending on education and training, the breakdown shifts to 24% by the Centre and 76% by the States.

#### SUGGESTED WAY FORWARD

- **Hybrid Model:** Experts suggest maintaining central oversight for regulatory frameworks like medical and technical education while devolving policymaking autonomy to states.
- **Collaborative Governance:** Emphasis must be given on productive dialogue between central and state authorities to achieve balanced educational reforms and efficient resource allocation.

**CONCLUSION:** The debate over whether education should be placed back on the State list underscores the complexities of governance in India's diverse and dynamic educational landscape. While a uniform national policy can ensure consistency and high standards, it may also overlook regional variations and specific local needs. Conversely, state control can provide tailored solutions but might face challenges related to inefficiency and resource disparities. A balanced hybrid model that combines central oversight with state autonomy, fostering collaborative governance, appears to be a pragmatic approach. This can harmonize national objectives with regional requirements, ensuring effective and equitable educational reforms across the country.

*"Intelligence plus character-that is the goal of true education"*  
-Martin Luther King Jr.



## WHAT IS DIGITAL BHARAT NIDHI, GOVT'S FRESH ATTEMPT AT IMPROVING RURAL TELECOM CONNECTIVITY?

**CONTEXT:** The Department of Telecommunications (DoT) released draft rules to operationalise the Digital Bharat Nidhi, in a fresh attempt by the central government at increasing telecom connectivity in rural areas

### **DIGITAL BHARAT NIDHI: BRIDGING THE RURAL CONNECTIVITY GAP**

The Government of India is taking a fresh step towards boosting rural telecommunication with the introduction of the Digital Bharat Nidhi (DBN). This initiative replaces the existing Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF) and aims to bridge the digital divide in underserved regions.

#### **Funding the Digital Revolution:**

- **Replacing USOF:** DBN takes over the role of USOF, a fund built through a levy on telecom companies' revenue.
- **Consolidated Fund of India (CFI):** Telecom companies' contributions first go to the CFI, a central pool for government revenue.
- **Transfer to DBN:** The government then transfers these funds to DBN for telecom expansion projects.

#### **Utilizing the Funds:**

- **Universal Service:** DBN prioritizes expanding telecom services in underserved rural, remote, and even urban areas.
- **R&D and Innovation:** The fund supports research and development of new telecom technologies and products.
- **Pilot Projects and Support:** DBN facilitates pilot projects, consultancy services, and advisory support to improve connectivity.
- **Bridging the Digital Divide:** DBN prioritizes projects offering targeted access to marginalized groups like

women, people with disabilities, and underprivileged communities.



#### **Streamlined Administration:**

- **Administrator Appointment:** The Central government appoints an administrator to oversee DBN operations.
- **Implementer Selection:** This administrator selects "DBN implementers" through bidding or applications.
- **Flexible Funding:** DBN offers flexible funding models, including full funding, partial funding, co-funding, and risk mitigation support for projects.

The Digital Bharat Nidhi represents a strategic shift in India's rural telecom landscape. By focusing on targeted funding, innovation, and inclusive access, DBN has the potential to significantly improve connectivity in underserved areas and empower communities with the benefits of the digital age.



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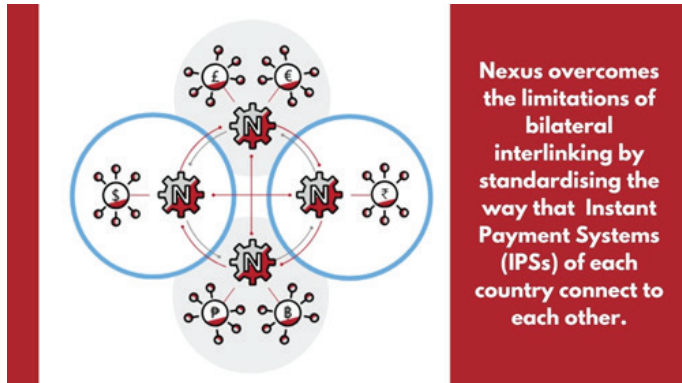
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## WHAT IS PROJECT NEXUS THAT RBI HAS SIGNED UP FOR?

**CONTEXT:** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has joined Project Nexus, a multilateral initiative aimed at enabling instant cross-border retail payments by interlinking domestic Fast Payments Systems (FPSs).



## WHAT IS BANK FOR INTERNATIONAL SETTLEMENTS (BIS)

### About

- The Bank for International Settlements (BIS) is an international financial institution that serves central banks globally, promoting international monetary and financial cooperation.
- Established in 1930, it's the oldest global financial institution.
- Headquarters are located in Basel, Switzerland.

### Main Functions

- **Central Bank Cooperation:**
  - Facilitates collaboration among central banks.
  - Provides a platform for policy discussions and decision-making.
- **Financial Stability:**
  - Promotes monetary and financial stability through research, policy analysis, and development of international standards.
- **Banking Services:**
  - Provides banking services to central banks and other international organizations, including gold and foreign exchange transactions.
- **Economic Research:**
  - Conducts research and analysis on global economic and financial issues, producing reports and publications.

### Importance

- **Coordination:** Acts as a forum for central banks to

collaborate on monetary policy and financial regulation.

- **Standard Setting:** Plays a crucial role in setting international standards and guidelines to ensure the stability of the global financial system.
- **Crisis Management:** Provides a platform for coordinated responses to global financial crises and economic challenges.

### Notable Works

- **Basel Accords:** A set of international banking regulations aimed at improving bank capital adequacy, risk management, and financial stability.
  - **Basel I (1988):** Introduced minimum capital requirements for banks.
  - **Basel II (2004):** Expanded on Basel I by adding requirements for market risk and operational risk.
  - **Basel III (2010-2017):** Strengthened capital requirements, and introduced new regulations on liquidity and leverage, aiming to enhance banking sector resilience.
- **BIS Innovation Hub:** Fosters collaboration on financial technology (FinTech) and innovation among central banks, focusing on digital currencies, cybersecurity, and new technologies.
- **Financial Stability Board (FSB) Support:** Played a key role in establishing and supporting the FSB, which coordinates international efforts for financial stability and regulatory reforms.

## PROJECT NEXUS: SIMPLIFYING CROSS-BORDER PAYMENTS

### Background

- India's Unified Payments Interface (UPI) has been establishing bilateral connections with other countries' Fast Payment Systems (FPS) to enable Person-to-Person (P2P) and Person-to-Merchant (P2M) cross-border transactions.
- While these connections are valuable, a multilateral approach offered by Project Nexus holds the potential for significantly wider international reach for Indian payment systems.
- The global landscape currently boasts over 70 countries with instant payment systems facilitating domestic transactions within seconds at minimal cost. Project Nexus aims to connect these systems, enabling faster cross-border payments (potentially completed within 60 seconds in most cases).

**INTERNATIONAL AND NATIONAL SCHOLARSHIP GUIDANCE PROGRAMME (INSGP)**

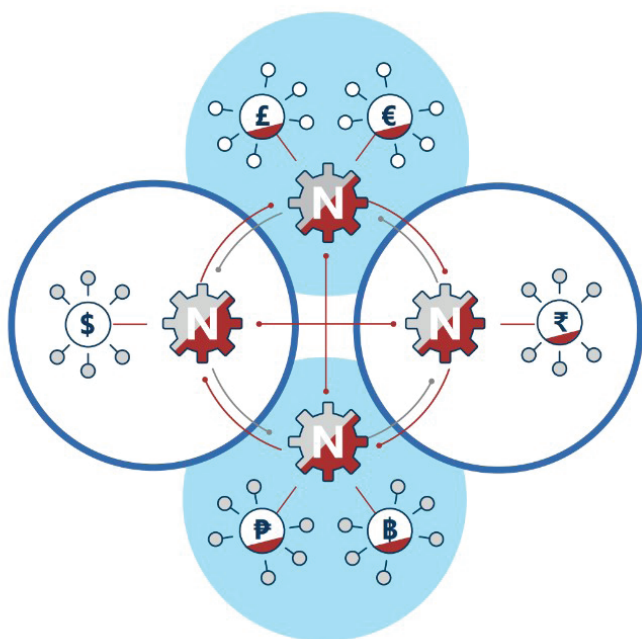
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**What is Nexus?** – A multilateral payment scheme that aims to achieve the G20 targets of enabling cheaper, faster, more transparent and accessible cross-border payments.

**How Nexus works** – Nexus provides a comprehensive blueprint to standardize the way domestic instant payment systems (IPS) communicate with each other. Its multilateral nature allows each IPS to make a single connection to the Nexus platform to reach all other IPS in the network.

**Who is involved?** – This has been a collaborative effort between the BISIH and interested central banks and IPS that has been developed and refined over three phases of work. In the next and final phase of Nexus, the BISIH will support a coalition of countries interested to implement Nexus in the real world and to use it to connect to their domestic IPS.

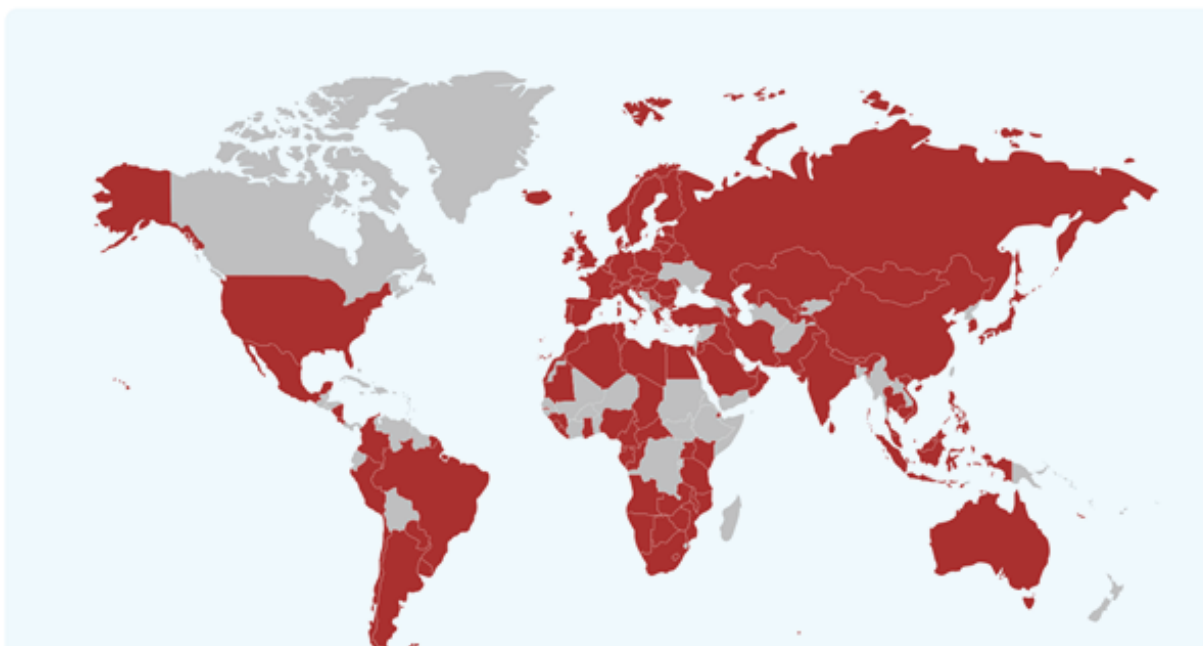
#### About

- Project Nexus is an initiative by the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) Innovation Hub.
- It aims to improve cross-border payments by establishing connections between multiple domestic instant payment systems (IPS) globally.
- Notably, it's the first BIS Innovation Hub project in the payments sector to progress towards live implementation.

#### Benefits

- Project Nexus aims to standardize how Instant Payment Systems (IPS) connect with each other.
- Currently, each system operator needs to create custom connections for every new country they want to connect with. Project Nexus simplifies this by allowing a single connection to the Nexus platform.
- This single connection grants access to all other countries within the network, potentially leading to a significant acceleration in the growth of instant cross-border payments.

There are **over 70 countries** today with IPS that enable domestic payments to reach their destination in seconds at near-zero cost to the sender or recipient. Connecting these IPS to each other has the potential to enable cross-border payments from Sender to Recipient within 60 seconds.

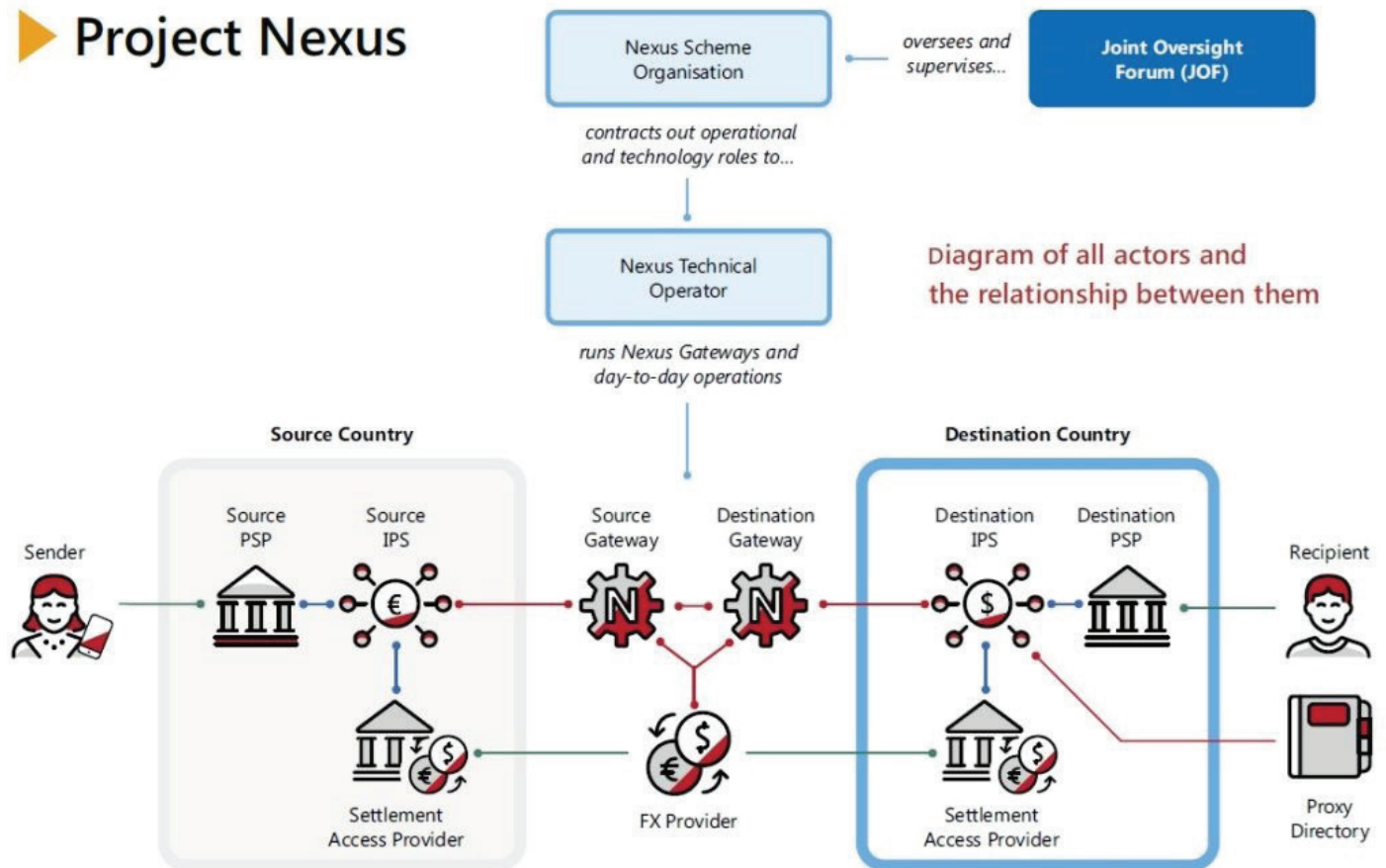




### Participating Countries

- Founding members and first movers on the platform include India and four member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN): Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand.
- Indonesia is expected to join the platform in the future.

## ► Project Nexus



### SOME POTENTIAL FUTURE BENEFITS OF PROJECT NEXUS BEYOND ITS CORE FUNCTION:

- Increased financial inclusion through easier access to cross-border transactions, particularly for migrant workers and small businesses.
- Reduced costs associated with international money transfers.
- Enhanced transparency and traceability in cross-border payments.

**CONCLUSION:** Project Nexus represents a significant step towards a future with faster, cheaper, and more efficient cross-border payments. By leveraging India's experience with UPI and standardizing connections between domestic instant payment systems globally, Project Nexus holds the potential to revolutionize the way people and businesses send and receive money internationally. With its focus on wider accessibility and transparency, Project Nexus could also contribute to greater financial inclusion and economic growth in the long run.

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# **INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS**





**AUSTRALIA-INDIA STRATEGIC RESEARCH FUND**

**DRDO TAKES UP PRELIMINARY STUDY ON DEVELOPMENT OF INDIGENOUS CONVENTIONAL SUBMARINE**

**H.E ANTÓNIO COSTA ELECTED AS PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL**

**HIGHLIGHTS OF THE INDIAN PM'S TWO-DAY VISIT TO RUSSIA**

**INDIA BACKS MAURITIUS' EFFORTS TO RECLAIM CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO**

**INDIA MIDDLE EAST EUROPE TRADE CORRIDOR**

**INDIA SECURES OPERATIONAL RIGHTS AT MONGLA PORT: STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS AND REGIONAL DYNAMICS**

**INDIA'S GAME CHANGER: FIRST MOTHERSHIP DOCKS AT VIZHINJAM PORT**

**INDO-RUSSIAN JOINT VENTURE DELIVERS 35,000 AK-203 RIFLES TO INDIAN ARMY**

**PM MODI TO VISIT RUSSIA AT TIME WHEN MOSCOW IS DEEPENING EMBRACE WITH CHINA**



## AUSTRALIA-INDIA STRATEGIC RESEARCH FUND

**CONTEXT:** The Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology in India presided over the announcement of the awardees for the 15th funding round of the Australia-India Strategic Research Fund (AISRF).



### AUSTRALIA-INDIA STRATEGIC RESEARCH FUND (AISRF)

#### What is it?

The Australia-India Strategic Research Fund (AISRF) is a collaborative program that fosters joint research efforts between Australian and Indian scientists. Established and jointly funded by the governments of India and Australia, it serves as a platform for bilateral cooperation in science and technology.

#### Objectives:

- **Boosting Cutting-Edge S&T:** The AISRF aims to increase the adoption of leading-edge science and technology (S&T) by supporting collaborative projects between researchers from both nations. These projects should focus on strategically important areas and cutting-edge research topics.
- **Strengthening Research Alliances:** The program seeks to solidify strategic partnerships between Australian and Indian researchers, fostering long-term collaboration and knowledge exchange.
- **Global S&T Access:** The AISRF facilitates India and

Australia's access to the wider global science and technology network, enabling researchers to tap into international expertise and resources.

#### Funding Rounds and Priorities:

The AISRF operates through funding rounds, with specific research priorities identified for each round.

- **Round Fifteen:** This recent round focused on collaborative projects in the following key areas:
  - o Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning
  - o New and Renewable Energy Technologies (with a focus on ultra-low-cost solar and clean hydrogen)
  - o Urban Mining and Electronic Waste Recycling

#### Outcomes:

By promoting collaborative research, the AISRF contributes to:

- Addressing shared challenges faced by both India and Australia through joint scientific efforts.
- Enhancing the overall scientific capabilities of both nations.
- Strengthening the bilateral relationship between India and Australia through collaborative scientific endeavors.

#### Additional Information:

- The program typically offers grants ranging from \$500,000 to \$1,000,000 for approved research projects.
- Project duration is usually limited to three years.
- Researchers can find more information and application details on the websites of the Indian Department of Science and Technology (DST) and the Australian Department of Industry, Science and Resources.

#### CONCLUSION:

The announcement of the 15th AISRF awardees signifies the program's continued success in fostering scientific collaboration between India and Australia. By supporting research in critical areas like AI, renewable energy, and waste management, the AISRF not only strengthens bilateral ties but also paves the way for innovative solutions to shared challenges. This collaborative approach to scientific advancement holds immense potential for propelling both nations towards a brighter technological future.



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## DRDO TAKES UP PRELIMINARY STUDY ON DEVELOPMENT OF INDIGENOUS CONVENTIONAL SUBMARINE

**CONTEXT:** The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has taken up a preliminary study on the design and development of an indigenous conventional submarine under Project-76.

- **Advanced technology:**
  - Indigenous weapon control system.
  - Lithium-ion batteries (planned).



### PROJECT 76: INDIA'S INDIGENOUS SUBMARINE PROGRAM

**Project Goal:** Design and develop India's first indigenously built diesel-electric attack submarine.

- **Scale:** The Indian Navy envisions building 12 submarines under Project 76.

**Key Features:**

- **Air-independent propulsion (AIP):** Extending underwater endurance compared to previous models.
- **Submerged displacement:** Expected to be 3,000 tons, potentially larger than Project 75 and 75I submarines.

**Significance:**

- **Successor to Kilo class:** Project 76 represents a leap forward in indigenous submarine capabilities.
- **Reduced reliance on foreign OEMs:** Aims to minimize dependence on foreign suppliers for submarine design.
- **Merging expertise:** Project 76 seeks to combine learnings from:
  - French technology from Project 75.
  - German/Spanish collaboration from Project 75I (India).

**Timeline:**

- Design completion: Expected by 2026.
- Prototype construction: Objective is to initiate by 2028.

### INDIAN SUBMARINE ACQUISITION PROJECTS

Project	Focus	Stage	Technology	Builder	No: of Submarines	Displacement
<b>Project 75</b>	Procurement (foreign design, Indian construction)	Construction	French Scorpene	Mazagon Dock Ltd(MDL)	6	1800 tonnes
<b>Project 75(I)</b>	Indigenous construction (foreign assistance)	Vendor Selection	More advanced, potentially with AIP (depends on collaborator)	MDL & L&T (to be partnered with foreign vendor)	6	Larger than P 75
<b>Project 76</b>	Indigenous Design & Construction	Design (completion by 2026)	Indigenous weapon systems, Lithium-ion batteries (planned)	To be determined (Indian shipyard)	6	3000 tonnes



## WHAT IS DEFENCE RESEARCH DEVELOPMENT ORGANISATION?

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) serves as the technological backbone of India's Ministry of Defence. Established in 1958, it arose from the strategic consolidation of three key entities:

- The Technical Development Establishments (TDEs) of the Indian Army
- The Directorate of Technical Development and Production (DTDP)
- The Defence Science Organisation (DSO)

This merger fostered a synergy of expertise, propelling DRDO to its current role as a preeminent force in national security.

### DRDO's Vision and Mission:

- **Vision:** To empower India with cutting-edge defense technologies, solidifying the nation's position as a global leader in military innovation.

- **Mission:** To achieve self-reliance in critical defense technologies and systems. This mission is two-fold:

- o Equipping India's armed forces with state-of-the-art weapon systems and equipment, ensuring they possess the most advanced tools to defend the nation.
- o Fulfilling the specific requirements laid down by the three branches of the Indian military (Army, Navy, Air Force).

Through its unwavering commitment to research and development, DRDO plays a pivotal role in safeguarding India's territorial integrity and strategic interests.

**CONCLUSION:** With DRDO initiating this indigenous submarine development under Project-76, India takes a significant step towards self-sufficiency in submarine design and construction. This project aligns perfectly with DRDO's mission of bolstering domestic defense capabilities and equips the Indian Navy with advanced underwater deterrence capabilities.

## H.E ANTÓNIO COSTA ELECTED AS PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL

**CONTEXT:** The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi has congratulated H.E António Costa on being elected as next President of the European Council.



Portugal's António Costa, The European Council's Next President

## THE EUROPEAN COUNCIL: GUIDING THE EUROPEAN UNION

### What is the European Council?

- The European Union's institution responsible for defining the EU's overall political direction and priorities.

### History:

- Established in 1974 as an informal forum for discussions between EU member state leaders.
- Gained formal status and role under the Treaty of Maastricht (1993).

### Members:

- Heads of state or government from all 27 EU member states.
- The European Council President.
- The President of the European Commission.

### Meetings:

- Typically convenes four times a year, with additional meetings possible for urgent issues.





**Decision-Making:**

- Primarily decides by consensus.
- Unanimity or qualified majority voting used in specific cases.
- Only heads of state/government hold voting rights.

**Key Functions:**

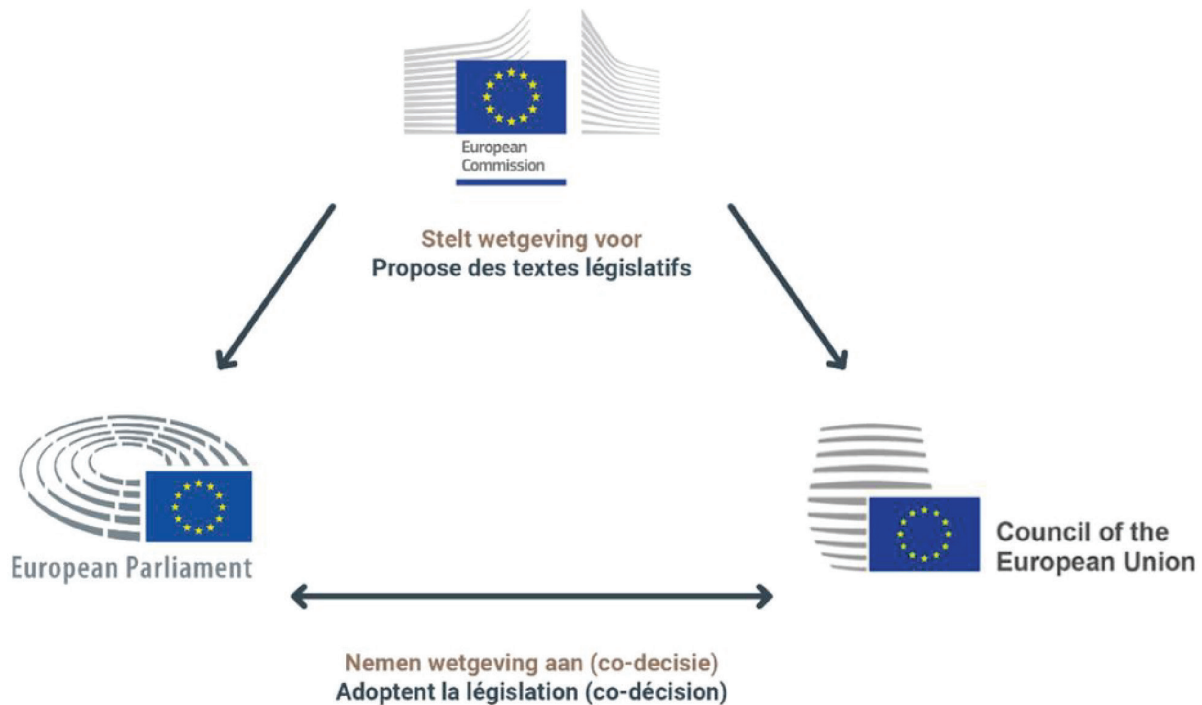
- Sets overall direction and political priorities: The European Council charts the EU's course without enacting legislation.
- Tackles complex issues: Addresses sensitive or

challenging matters beyond the scope of lower-level cooperation.

- Foreign & Security Policy: Establishes the EU's common foreign and security policy, considering strategic interests and defense implications.
- High-Level Appointments: Nominates and appoints candidates for prominent EU positions like the European Central Bank (ECB) and the European Commission.

**Headquarters:**

- Brussels, Belgium



Entity	Description	Role
<b>European Union</b>	A political and economic union of 27 member states	Establishes laws and regulations. - Works towards political and economic integration among member states. - Has its own governing bodies and institutions (including the European Council).
European Council	An institution within the EU	- Defines the overall political direction and priorities of the EU. - Provides impetus and general political guidance for the EU. - Acts as a strategic steering committee for the EU.

**What is the European Free Trade Association (EFTA)?**

The European Free Trade Association (EFTA) is a trade bloc of four European nations: Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland. Founded as an alternative to the EU, it focuses on free trade between members. While they participate in the European Single Market, EFTA countries are not part of the EU's customs union or political structures.

**CONCLUSION:** Prime Minister Modi's congratulatory message to President Costa highlights the importance of strong leadership within the European Council. As the EU grapples with complex issues and seeks to define its future direction, effective collaboration between the Council and other institutions like the European Commission will be crucial. This cooperation will be essential for navigating the EU's role on the global stage and fostering continued partnership with India.



## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE INDIAN PM'S TWO-DAY VISIT TO RUSSIA

**CONTEXT:** Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi departed for Austria after concluding a significant two-day visit to Russia, where he attended the 22nd India-Russia annual summit with President Vladimir Putin.

### HIGHLIGHTS OF THE INDIAN PM'S TWO-DAY VISIT TO RUSSIA:

**Receives Highest Civilian Honour:** The Indian PM was awarded Russia's highest civilian honour, the Order of St. Andrew the Apostle, by President Vladimir Putin. Although this honour was announced in 2019, it was presented during this visit.

### Bilateral Talks - A Meeting of Close Friends and Trusted Partners:

The summit focused on reviewing the multifaceted ties between India and Russia, covering areas such as defence, investment, energy cooperation, education, and culture. The Indian PM emphasized that a solution to the Ukraine conflict cannot be achieved on the battlefield, advocating for peace talks over violence. The Russian President also agreed to expedite the discharge of all Indians recruited by the Russian military, many of whom are currently at the war front.



**Interactions with the Indian Community in Moscow:** The Indian PM addressed the Indian community, highlighting India's rising global profile as a 'Vishwa Bandhu' (World Friend). He praised their contributions to strengthening India-Russia relations and announced the opening of Indian Consulates in Kazan and Yekaterinburg.

**Other Highlights:** At the Rosatom Pavilion, the Indian PM viewed the "Atomic Symphony," a model of the VVER-1000 reactor used in India's Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant.

**A Joint Vision Statement on Trade and Economic Cooperation:** The summit marked a shift from previous ones, focusing more on economic issues than on military supplies and strategic partnerships. Key issues to be resolved by 2030 include:

- Eliminating non-tariff barriers.
- Developing a bilateral settlement system using national currencies.
- Streamlining customs procedures and exploring new connectivity routes such as the Chennai-Vladivostok maritime route, the Northern Sea Route, and the International North-South Transport Corridor via Iran.
- Prioritizing investments in the energy sector, including nuclear energy, infrastructure development, and investment promotion.

India and Russia signed several MoUs in areas such as climate change, polar research, legal arbitration, and

pharmaceutical certification.

**Ambitious Bilateral Trade Target:** India and Russia set an ambitious target to increase bilateral trade to \$100 billion by 2030, including the use of national currencies to bypass Western sanctions. In FY 2023-24, bilateral trade reached an all-time high of \$65.70 billion, largely due to India's increased imports of Russian crude. Achieving the \$100 billion target would elevate the trade relationship to the levels India currently has with major economies like the U.S., China, and the EU.

**Conclusion of the Indian PM's Two-Day Visit to Russia:** The Russian leader invited the Indian PM to the first "Extended BRICS" summit in Kazan, scheduled for October 2024. This summit will include five new members to the Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa grouping of emerging economies.

**The Indian PM Departs for Austria:** The visit to Vienna marks the first visit by an Indian PM in over four decades, with Indira Gandhi being the last PM to visit in 1983. This one-day official visit comes as both countries celebrate 75 years of diplomatic relations.

**CONCLUSION:** Prime Minister Modi's two-day visit to Russia significantly strengthened India-Russia relations through high-level discussions, economic agreements, and community engagements, culminating in a joint vision for future cooperation. His subsequent visit to Austria underscores India's commitment to enhancing global diplomatic ties as both nations celebrate 75 years of partnership.



## INDIA BACKS MAURITIUS' EFFORTS TO RECLAIM CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO

**CONTEXT:** India has reiterated its steadfast support for Mauritius' claim over the Chagos Archipelago, aligning its position with its long-standing commitment to decolonization and the upholding of territorial integrity.



### LOCATION AND GEOGRAPHY

The Chagos Archipelago is a group of islands situated in the central Indian Ocean, approximately 1,000 miles (1,600 km) south of the southern tip of the Indian subcontinent. The archipelago comprises over 60 islands, forming part of the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT), an overseas territory of the United Kingdom established on November 8, 1965.

Key Islands

**Among the significant islands in the Chagos Archipelago are:**

- Diego Garcia Atoll: The largest and most strategically important island, hosting a major United States military base.
- Danger Island: A remote island known for its rich biodiversity.
- Egmont Islands: A cluster of small islands offering pristine natural environments.
- Eagle Islands: Noted for their unique flora and fauna.
- Nelsons Island: An uninhabited island with historical significance.
- Peros Banhos Atoll: An atoll consisting of multiple islands, known for its beautiful coral reefs and marine life.





## Climate

The Chagos Archipelago experiences a tropical marine climate characterized by high temperatures and elevated humidity levels throughout the year.

### THE CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO DISPUTE

**British Claim:** UK claimed Chagos Archipelago (including Mauritius) in 1814.

**British Colonial Rule:** The UK controlled the Chagos Archipelago, including Mauritius, until the mid-19th century.

**Forced Displacement:** To establish a US military base on Diego Garcia, the UK forcibly removed the Chagossian population in the 1960s.

**Mauritius Independence:** Mauritius gained independence from the UK in 1968, but the Chagos Islands remained under British control.

**Legal Challenges:** The Chagossians and Mauritius have engaged in legal battles to challenge the UK's control and seek the right of return for the Chagossian people.

**International Court Ruling:** In 2019, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled in favour of Mauritius, declaring the UK's control illegal.

**Ongoing Dispute:** Despite the ICJ ruling, the UK continues to administer the Chagos Archipelago, citing strategic interests. Strategic Importance

Diego Garcia is a pivotal military base for the United States, serving as a key logistical and strategic hub in the Indian Ocean region. It plays a crucial role in various military operations, including those in the Middle East and Asia. The base's strategic location allows for significant control over maritime routes and enhances the capability for rapid deployment of forces.



## Biodiversity and Environmental Concerns

The Chagos Archipelago is renowned for its rich marine biodiversity and pristine coral reefs. The islands and surrounding waters host a variety of marine species, including turtles, sharks, and numerous fish species. Efforts have been made to preserve this unique ecosystem, with parts of the archipelago designated as marine protected areas.

However, environmental challenges such as climate change, rising sea levels, and illegal fishing activities pose significant threats to the archipelago's delicate ecosystem. Conservation efforts are crucial to maintaining the ecological balance and protecting the natural heritage of the Chagos Archipelago.

### FUTURE OF SOVEREIGNTY OF THE CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO

#### Current Status

The Chagos Archipelago remains a disputed territory, with the United Kingdom currently exercising sovereignty as the British Indian Ocean Territory (BIOT). The archipelago, particularly Diego Garcia, holds significant strategic military value for both the UK and the United States, complicating the sovereignty issue.

## International Legal Rulings

Recent international legal developments have put pressure on the UK to relinquish control of the Chagos Archipelago:

**International Court of Justice (ICJ) Advisory Opinion (2019):** The ICJ concluded that the UK's separation of the Chagos Archipelago from Mauritius in 1965 was unlawful and that the process of decolonization was not completed. The court advised that the UK should end its administration of the islands as soon as possible.

**United Nations General Assembly Resolution (2019):** Following the ICJ's opinion, the UN General Assembly passed a resolution demanding the UK withdraw from the Chagos Archipelago and return control to Mauritius.

### POTENTIAL SCENARIOS FOR SOVEREIGNTY

Several potential scenarios could shape the future sovereignty of the Chagos Archipelago:

#### Return to Mauritius:

- **Diplomatic Negotiations:** The UK could engage in negotiations with Mauritius to transfer sovereignty, possibly with arrangements ensuring the continued



operation of the US military base on Diego Garcia.

- **Gradual Handover:** A phased approach might be adopted, starting with shared administration and leading to full Mauritian sovereignty over time.

#### **Maintenance of Status Quo:**

- **Strategic Interests:** The UK may continue to assert sovereignty, citing strategic and security interests, particularly related to the US military presence.
- **International Pushback:** Maintaining the status quo could lead to increased diplomatic pressure and potential sanctions from the international community.

#### **Enhanced Autonomy for Chagossians:**

- **Self-Governance:** Establishing a form of self-governance for the Chagossian people, either under Mauritian or British sovereignty, could address some of the human rights issues while maintaining strategic arrangements.

### **GEOPOLITICAL AND STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS**

**US Military Base:** The future of the US military base on Diego Garcia is a critical factor. Any change in sovereignty would likely need to ensure that the base's operations continue unimpeded, given its importance for regional security and global military strategy.

**Regional Stability:** The Indian Ocean region's geopolitical dynamics, including relationships with India, China, and other regional powers, will influence the sovereignty discussions. Ensuring stability and security in the region will be a priority for all involved parties.

### **ENVIRONMENTAL AND HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUES**

**Environmental Protection:** Any future sovereignty arrangement must consider the archipelago's unique environmental significance. Conservation efforts and sustainable management of natural resources will be crucial.

**Chagossian Rights:** Addressing the rights and aspirations of the displaced Chagossian people remains a central issue. Ensuring their right of return, compensation, and participation in any governance framework will be vital for a just resolution.

### **INDIA'S SUPPORT FOR MAURITIUS IN THE CHAGOS ARCHIPELAGO DISPUTE**

India's support for Mauritius' claim over the Chagos Archipelago is rooted in several key principles and strategic considerations. Here are the main reasons behind India's stance:

#### **1. Commitment to Decolonization**

India has a long-standing commitment to decolonization and the principle of self-determination:

- **Historical Context:** As a nation that achieved independence after a prolonged struggle against colonial rule, India strongly supports the decolonization of all remaining colonial territories.
- **International Norms:** India aligns itself with international norms and principles, including those articulated by the United Nations, regarding the end of colonialism and the right of all peoples to self-determination.

#### **2. Territorial Integrity**

India upholds the principle of territorial integrity and the inviolability of borders:

- **Support for Sovereignty:** By supporting Mauritius, India reinforces its stance on the importance of respecting internationally recognized borders and the sovereignty of nations.

- **Legal Precedents:** India's position is bolstered by the 2019 International Court of Justice (ICJ) advisory opinion, which dismissed the UK's claim to the Chagos Islands and called for their return to Mauritius.

#### **3. Historical and Cultural Ties**

India and Mauritius share deep historical, cultural, and ethnic ties:

- **Diaspora Connection:** A significant portion of Mauritius' population is of Indian descent, and there are strong people-to-people links between the two countries.
- **Bilateral Relations:** India and Mauritius have a close and friendly relationship, characterized by cooperation in various fields, including economic, cultural, and political domains.

#### **4. Geopolitical and Strategic Considerations**

Supporting Mauritius aligns with India's broader strategic interests in the Indian Ocean region:

- **Regional Stability:** Ensuring that the Chagos Archipelago is under a friendly government like Mauritius can contribute to regional stability and security.
- **Influence in the Indian Ocean:** India seeks to enhance its influence in the Indian Ocean, and supporting Mauritius helps solidify its presence and leadership in the region.

#### **5. International Legal and Moral Grounds**

India's stance is consistent with international legal principles and moral considerations:

- **ICJ Ruling:** The 2019 ICJ advisory opinion and the subsequent UN General Assembly resolution provide a strong legal basis for Mauritius' claim, which India supports.
- **Human Rights:** The displacement of the Chagossian people is a significant human rights issue. India's support for Mauritius also reflects its concern for the rights and welfare of displaced populations.

#### **6. Aligning with Multilateralism**

India's support reflects its commitment to multilateralism and a rules-based international order:

- **UN and International Law:** By backing Mauritius, India demonstrates its adherence to the decisions of international institutions like the ICJ and the UN General Assembly.
- **Global Governance:** India's position underscores its advocacy for a fair and just global governance system that respects the rights of all nations, particularly those in the Global South.

### **CONCLUSION**

India's support for Mauritius' claim over the Chagos Archipelago underscores its commitment to decolonization, territorial integrity, and international law. By aligning with Mauritius, India strengthens its historical and cultural ties, promotes regional stability, and upholds the principles of human rights and multilateralism. This stance not only enhances India's strategic interests in the Indian Ocean but also reaffirms its dedication to a fair and just global governance system. As the dispute continues, India's principled support for Mauritius highlights its role as a key advocate for decolonization and sovereignty in the international arena.



## INDIA MIDDLE EAST EUROPE TRADE CORRIDOR

### Why in the news?

Recently, the Prime Minister of India, the President of the United States, the Chancellor of Germany, the Crown Prince of Saudi Arabia, the President of UAE, the Prime Minister of Italy, and the President of the EU unanimously agreed to establish the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC).

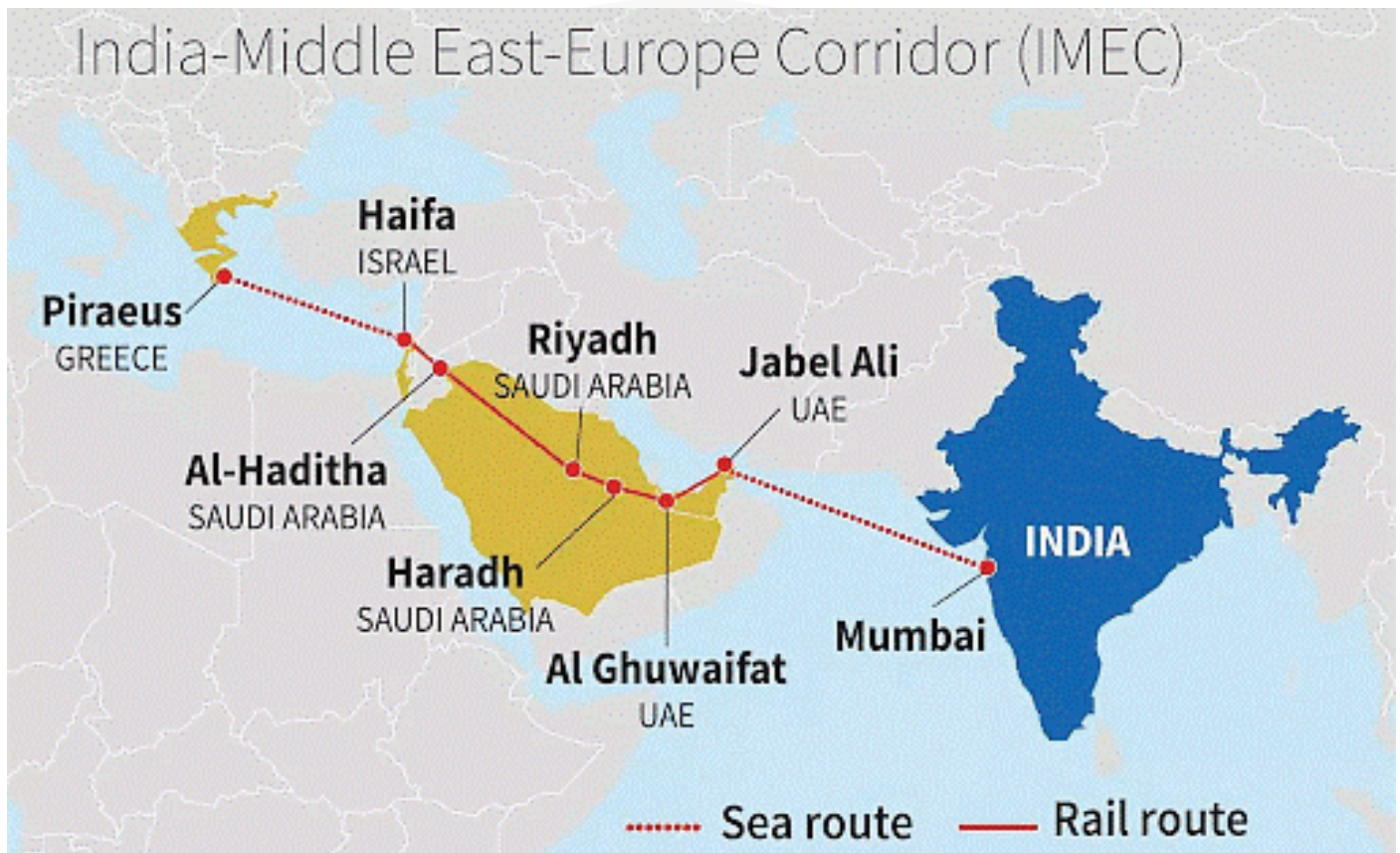
The IMEC is designed to provide transport connectivity to accelerate the development and integration of Asia, the Arabian Gulf, and Europe.

### What is the India-Middle East Economic Corridor?

- The **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)** is a reliable and cost-effective railway and ship-

to-rail transit network that aims to supplement maritime and road routes.

- It will enable the easier movement of goods and services between India and its partners - UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israel, and the EU.
- Members:** India, the U.S.A., Saudi Arabia, the U.A.E., France, Germany, Italy, and the EU.
- It is part of the **Partnership for Global Infrastructure Investment (PGII)** which was created by the G-7 as an alternative to the China-led Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).
  - Components:** It consists of two corridors:
    - East Corridor:** India to the Arabian Gulf
    - West Corridor:** Arabian Gulf to Europe



### Why is it necessary?

- Improved trade:** The IMEC will boost regional trade and connect Asia to Europe through a new regional route.
- Despite the region's potential for boosting connectivity due to the shorter transit times, easier accessibility, and multimodal connectivity, it has not been previously tapped.
- Challenges with existing routes: Existing maritime corridors such as the Suez Canal and Mediterranean routes, face problems such as congestion, long transits, and higher logistics costs.
- Potential expansion:** It can be expanded in the future to cover sectors such as energy pipelines and optical fiber links.
- Geopolitical shifts: It is an opportunity to strengthen Indian-West Asian ties, particularly with the UAE and Saudi Arabia.
- Infrastructure for peace: It could also help reduce tensions in the Arabian peninsula and encourage interregional

connectivity.

### How will it work?

- IMEC offers shorter routes by linking major ports of western India such as JNPT, Kochi, Kandla, and Mundra with major Gulf shipping ports like Jebel Ali, Fujairah, Ras Al-Khair, Dammam, Duqm, and Salalah.
- The cargo will then be transported via the Saudi rail network through Israel and Jordan.
- Haifa, a deep seaport, can handle bulk container trains to European ports in Greece, Italy, France, and Spain.
- The goods will then be transported across Europe via road container trailers or container cargo trains.

### Land-bridging

- Rail links, terminals, and inland container depots have to be constructed at all major Gulf and Mediterranean ports for the transshipment of cargo from ship to rail and rail to ship.
- India with its well-integrated railroad network, mega



ports, and highways is on the Eastern end the Western end consists of a well-developed and explored sea route across the Mediterranean to Europe, which also has excellent hinterland connectivity via rail and road.

- A uniform railway network on a standard gauge will help reduce logistics costs and improve the efficiency of operations.
- India can support the implementation of rail projects in the GCC, Jordan, and Israel through its rail PSUs such as IRCON, RITES, DFCC, RailTel, and CONCOR.

#### Hinterland connectivity

- The **Gulf Cooperation Council** is constructing a north-south coastal railway network to connect ports along Kuwait and Muscat which will have to be connected to the Saudi Arabian Rail network which runs heavy and long-haul trains in the region.
- In order to ensure the viability of the IMEC, the Saudi rail corridor must be extended to Haifa in Israel via Jordan by building critical infrastructure.
- At present, Jordan is planning a rail link connecting Amman to Beit She'an in Israel while Israel is planning to connect Haifa to Beit She'an.

#### Significance of the project

##### Global connectivity

- IMEC has been developed as a sustainable alternative to existing initiatives for global connectivity.
- It will offer an efficient alternative route to the Suez Canal for cargo ships and enhance connectivity, logistics, clean energy production, and economic cooperation in the region.

##### Improved access to West Asia

- The IMEC will eliminate Pakistan's monopoly of the inland connectivity between India and West Asia, which has prevented India from improving its access to West Asia and Central Asia.
- It will also reduce India's reliance on Iran's Chabahar port and the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).

##### Geopolitical ties

- The participation of the EU, France, and Germany in the IMEC will help India improve its economic and diplomatic ties with European countries.
- IMEC also offers India an opportunity to participate in the Trans-African Corridor which has been proposed by the US and the EU.
- It will help enable India-U.S. convergence in West Asia and build upon achievements such as the I2U2.

##### Competitive trade

- According to the President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, trade between India and Europe will

become 40% faster due to the IMEC.

- This will make Indian exports more competitive in the European market by reducing their costs due to lower logistic expenses.

#### Multilateral funding

- As member states have committed to implementing the project, it will be easier to obtain funding from multilateral stakeholders like the World Bank.
- The project also promises high returns on investments which will help obtain funding.

#### Green and sustainable growth

- Unlike other corridors, the IMEC also includes plans to lay electric cables and clean hydrogen pipelines as part of its efforts to reduce greenhouse emissions.

#### Regional integration

- IMEC could help integrate India, West Asia, and Europe enabling unprecedented levels of growth.
- It will also enable the growth of the regional economy and cement India's position as a regional leader with technical leadership and forward-oriented strategies.

#### Challenges

- **Lack of clarity:** There is a lack of clarity over the official timelines for the project, its expected date of completion, and other details such as the use of existing railway and port infrastructure in West Asia.
- **Non-binding nature:** While the MoU of the IMEC does not provide any rights or obligations under international law, it only sets out non-binding political commitments for its participants.
- **Finance:** Large amounts of funds would be required to implement the project which could be affected by recession in advanced economies and the difficulty to mobilize hybrid capital.
- **Chinese opposition:** China is likely to oppose the project as it has already invested significantly in its BRI project., particularly in countries such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the UAE.

#### Conclusion

- The IMEC offers an opportunity for multilateral unity and economic growth through a shared plan of action developed by experts from the railway sector, ports and shipping, and communications sector.
- A comprehensive IMEC agreement can act as a catalyst for a new strategy of collective growth, globalization, and connectivity which reflects India's message of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam, which was the theme of its G-20 Presidency.
- The success of the IMEC could lead to similar regional and global cooperation initiatives for socio-economic development being implemented across the world.

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## INDIA SECURES OPERATIONAL RIGHTS AT MONGLA PORT: STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS AND REGIONAL DYNAMICS

**CONTEXT:** India has achieved a significant strategic victory by obtaining operational rights for a terminal at Bangladesh's Mongla Port, a move seen as a countermeasure to China's expanding influence in the region. This development underscores India's growing engagement in global port management and reflects its efforts to bolster its strategic foothold in the Indian Ocean.



### KEY DEVELOPMENTS

#### 1. Operational Rights at Mongla Port

- **Strategic Significance:** Mongla Port, Bangladesh's second-largest seaport after Chittagong, is now under the management of Indian Port Global Limited (IPGL). This move marks India's third successful international port management venture, following Chabahar Port in Iran and Sittwe Port in Myanmar.
- **Regional Impact:** Securing these rights is viewed as a strategic manoeuvre to curb China's ambitions in the region and enhance India's influence over key maritime locations.

#### 2. India's Port Management Ventures

- **Strategic Win:** The Mongla port deal is part of India's broader strategy to counter Beijing's growing influence in the Indian Ocean, where China has invested heavily in port infrastructure as part of its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).
- **Economic and Geopolitical Benefits:** The port will enhance India's trade connectivity and regional influence, providing a vital alternative route for India's northeast regions, which currently rely on the congested Siliguri corridor for access to maritime trade.

#### 3. Bangladesh's Diplomatic Balancing Act

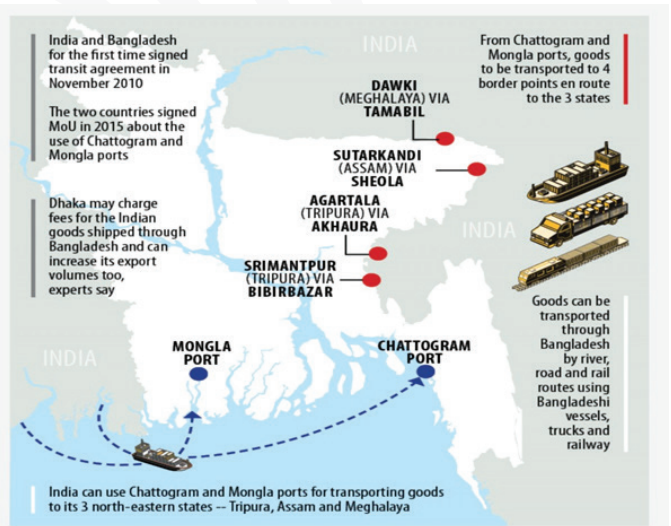
- **Recent Visits:** Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's recent visits to both India and China underscore Dhaka's strategic balancing act. During her visit to India, several cooperation agreements were signed, including those related to the maritime sector. Conversely, her visit to China yielded a modest financial assistance package, significantly below initial expectations.
- **Strategic Choices:** Hasina's preference for India over China for the Teesta River Project highlights a shift towards strengthening ties with New Delhi, reflecting a nuanced approach to balancing relations with both major powers.

#### 4. China's Reaction and Regional Influence

- **Beijing's Strategic Concerns:** China's extensive investments in regional ports and its Maritime Silk Road initiative underscore the strategic importance of the Mongla port deal for Beijing. With substantial investments in ports like Gwadar and Djibouti, China's influence in the Indian Ocean remains significant.
- **Competitive Landscape:** The Mongla port deal represents a counter-move to China's growing maritime footprint, enhancing India's strategic position in the Bay of Bengal and reinforcing its role in regional security.

#### 5. Implications for India-Bangladesh Relations

- **Enhanced Trade and Connectivity:** The operational rights at Mongla Port are expected to boost bilateral trade between India and Bangladesh. The port's proximity to Kolkata will facilitate maritime trade, reducing shipment times and improving trade efficiency.
- **Strategic Importance:** The deal not only strengthens economic ties but also reinforces India's strategic posture in the region, countering China's influence and projecting Indian maritime power.



### IMPACT OF INDIA SECURING MONGLA PORT ON CHINA'S BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE (BRI)

#### 1. Disruption of Strategic Ambitions

- **Strategic Balance:** Securing the operational rights to Mongla Port allows India to counterbalance China's growing influence in South Asia and the Indian Ocean. Mongla Port, being Bangladesh's second-largest seaport, is strategically significant. India's presence in this port disrupts China's maritime dominance in the region, where it has heavily invested through its Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).
- **Counteracting BRI Influence:** The BRI aims to create a global trade and infrastructure network, including significant investments in ports and infrastructure across Asia, Africa, and Europe. By gaining control over Mongla Port, India limits China's ability to extend its maritime and economic reach in South Asia, directly challenging one of the key areas of the BRI.

#### 2. Implications for Regional Connectivity

- **Altered Trade Routes:** The Mongla Port could potentially





serve as an alternative or complement to the BRI's planned maritime routes. India's control over this port may encourage shifts in regional trade patterns and logistics, impacting the efficacy of China's connectivity initiatives.

- **Increased Competition:** With India managing Mongla Port, it introduces competition to China's investments in regional ports. This competition could lead to improved port services and infrastructure investments, impacting the competitive advantage of BRI ports in the region.

### 3. Impact on Bangladesh-China Relations

- **Diplomatic Strain:** The operational control of Mongla Port by India may lead to diplomatic strain between Bangladesh and China. Although Bangladesh remains a BRI participant, the port deal highlights a strategic pivot towards India, potentially influencing future Chinese investments and projects in Bangladesh.
- **Financial and Political Repercussions:** Bangladesh's recent experiences with China, including unmet loan expectations, might affect its willingness to commit to large-scale Chinese projects. This could result in a reassessment of Bangladesh's engagement with the BRI, potentially favouring Indian investments and cooperation.

### 4. Strategic Response by China

- **Enhanced Diplomatic Engagement:** In response to India's strategic win, China may seek to strengthen its diplomatic and economic relations with other BRI participants. Beijing might increase efforts to offer more attractive financial packages or favourable terms to countries involved in the

BRI to counterbalance India's influence.

- **Re-evaluation of BRI Projects:** China might reassess its BRI projects and investments to mitigate the impact of India's strategic moves. This could include increasing focus on other regions or enhancing existing investments to maintain the momentum of the BRI despite setbacks.

### 5. Influence on Regional Security Dynamics

- **Geopolitical Competition:** India's management of Mongla Port adds a new layer of geopolitical competition in South Asia. It reinforces India's role as a significant player in regional security and economic affairs, impacting China's strategic calculations and its approach to the BRI.
- **Maritime Security:** India's presence in key ports like Mongla may lead to increased maritime security measures and surveillance in the Indian Ocean. This could affect the operational dynamics of BRI maritime routes, particularly in ensuring the security of critical sea lanes.

### CONCLUSION

India's acquisition of operational rights at Mongla Port represents a pivotal moment in its strategic and economic engagement with Bangladesh. As India navigates its role in the Indian Ocean and counters China's expansive maritime ambitions, the successful management of Mongla Port will be instrumental in enhancing regional connectivity and asserting India's influence in South Asia. The ongoing diplomatic and strategic manoeuvres reflect the evolving geopolitical landscape, with India and Bangladesh forging deeper ties amidst competing global interests.

## INDIA'S GAME CHANGER: FIRST MOTHERSHIP DOCKS AT VIZHINJAM PORT

**CONTEXT:** Marking a significant milestone, India's first deepwater transshipment port, the Vizhinjam International Seaport near Thiruvananthapuram, welcomed its maiden mothership, the MV San Fernando. Carrying a hefty load of 2,000 containers, the vessel received a grand welcome as it berthed at the port. This arrival signifies the commencement of trial runs at Vizhinjam, paving the way for its upcoming full-fledged commercial operations.

### DEEPWATER TRANSSHIPMENT PORT: A POWERFUL COMBINATION

#### Deepwater Port:

- **Designed for Large Ships:** Deepwater ports boast deep water depths (typically exceeding 40 feet or 12 meters) to accommodate massive cargo ships carrying thousands of containers. These ships, known as Panamax or even larger New Panamax vessels, are too large for shallower ports.
- **Strategic Location:** Deepwater ports are often located on coastlines with easy access to major shipping lanes, allowing for efficient movement of goods across vast distances.

#### Transshipment Port:

- **Cargo Consolidation Hub:** These ports act as central points where cargo containers are unloaded from large ships, sorted, and then reloaded onto smaller feeder vessels for delivery to their final destinations. This process allows for efficient use of large ships for long-

distance travel and smaller, more maneuverable vessels for navigating regional ports.

- **Economic Benefits:** Transshipment ports generate significant economic activity. They create jobs in logistics, cargo handling, and related services. Additionally, they attract businesses and industries that benefit from efficient access to global markets.

#### Deepwater Transshipment Port - The Perfect Marriage:

Combining the capabilities of both, a deepwater transshipment port offers several advantages:

- **Increased Efficiency:** Large cargo ships can offload and reload quickly due to the deep water and modern infrastructure.
- **Reduced Costs:** Transshipment allows shipping companies to utilize larger, more economical vessels for long journeys, while smaller, feeder ships handle final deliveries.
- **Global Connectivity:** Deepwater transshipment ports become vital links in the global supply chain, facilitating trade between continents.

#### An Example:

The recently operational Vizhinjam International Seaport in India is a prime example of a deepwater transshipment port. Its strategic location on the Indian coast and ability to handle massive cargo ships position it to become a major player in global maritime trade.



## WHY INDIA NEEDS DEEPWATER CONTAINER TRANSSHIPMENT PORTS: A GAME CHANGER FOR TRADE



India's ambitions for global trade are currently bottlenecked by a lack of crucial infrastructure: deepwater container transshipment ports. Here's why these ports are essential for India's economic future:

**Missed Opportunities:** Existing Indian ports are simply too shallow to accommodate the massive cargo ships (think Ultra Large Container Ships or ULCS) that dominate global trade today. This forces India to rely on foreign transshipment hubs like Colombo, Singapore, and Klang. In 2021-22, a staggering **75% of India's transshipment cargo (4.2 million TEUs)** bypassed Indian ports entirely!

- **Financial Drain:** India loses out on significant foreign exchange (forex) by depending on external transshipment. These foreign ports capture revenue that could be generated in India, hindering economic growth.
- **Missed Multiplier Effect:** Transshipment ports act as magnets for other industries. Warehousing, ship repairs, logistics, and bunkering facilities all cluster around these hubs, creating a ripple effect of economic activity and job creation. India is missing out on this entire ecosystem by relying on foreign ports.
- **Global Disconnect:** Without deepwater transshipment ports, India remains partially disconnected from the global maritime trade network. This limits India's ability to efficiently export goods and import essential materials.

### BENEFITS OF DEEPWATER TRANSSHIPMENT PORTS:

Developing deepwater container transshipment ports in India would unlock a multitude of benefits:

- **Cost Savings:** Transshipment allows shipping companies to utilize larger, more economical vessels for long journeys, while smaller feeder ships handle final deliveries within India. This reduces overall shipping costs.
- **Increased Efficiency:** Deepwater ports can handle massive cargo volumes quickly, thanks to their modern infrastructure and ability to accommodate ULCS. This translates to faster turnaround times and a more efficient supply chain.
- **Job Creation:** The entire ecosystem surrounding a deepwater transshipment port creates a wealth of employment opportunities in logistics, maritime services, and related industries.
- **Global Recognition:** A well-developed deepwater transshipment port attracts foreign direct investment (FDI) and elevates India's profile in the global maritime trade landscape.

### The Road Ahead:

The recent inauguration of the Vizhinjam International Seaport marks a significant step forward for India. This deepwater port has the potential to become a major player in global trade, but further development of similar ports along India's coastline is crucial to fully capture the economic benefits and establish India as a force in maritime trade.

### VIZHINJAM INTERNATIONAL SEAPORT PROJECT: A GATEWAY TO INDIA'S MARITIME FUTURE

The Vizhinjam International Seaport Project, underway near Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, is a game-changer for India's maritime ambitions. Here's a breakdown of this ambitious project:

#### Public-Private Partnership (PPP) Model:

- **Developed by:** Adani Ports and SEZ Private Limited under a Design, Build, Finance, Operate and Transfer (DBFOT) model.
- **DBFOT Model Explained:** This PPP model involves the private company designing, building, financing, operating the port for a specified period, and then transferring ownership back to the public sector.
- **Project Investment:** Adani Group will invest Rs 2,454 crore, with additional funding of Rs 1,635 crore from the state and central governments. The Kerala government also contributes 500 acres of land.
- **Project Duration:** The initial DBFOT concession is for 40 years, with potential extension for another 20 years.

#### Key Features of Vizhinjam Port:

- **India's First Deepwater Transshipment Hub:** Boasting a natural depth of over 18 meters (scalable to 20 meters), Vizhinjam can accommodate massive cargo vessels and mother ships, a capability currently lacking in India.
- **Multipurpose Functionality:** The port is designed to handle container transshipment, multipurpose cargo, and break-bulk cargo, catering to a diverse range of maritime needs.
- **Reduced Shipping Costs:** The port's deepwater capabilities are expected to significantly lower the cost of container movement to and from international destinations.
- **Strategic Location:** Situated strategically ten nautical miles from the main international shipping route, Vizhinjam is poised to compete with established transshipment hubs like Colombo, Singapore, and Dubai.
- **High Capacity and Low Maintenance:** Phase one boasts a capacity of 1 million TEUs (Twenty-foot Equivalent Units), expandable to 6.2 million TEUs. Additionally, the minimal littoral drift and minimal need for dredging ensure low maintenance requirements.
- **Economic Boon:** The project is expected to generate 5,000 direct jobs and boost the development of an industrial corridor and cruise tourism in the region.
- **Modern Infrastructure:** Vizhinjam offers state-of-the-art infrastructure with large-scale automation for swift vessel turnaround, allowing it to handle even the largest Megamax container ships.

#### A Glimpse into the Future:

The Vizhinjam International Seaport Project has the potential to revolutionize India's role in global maritime trade. By providing a world-class deepwater transshipment hub, it



can boost efficiency, reduce costs, and create a ripple effect of economic benefits for the entire region.

### What is DBFOT Model?

DBFOT stands for Design-Build-Finance-Operate-Transfer. It's a type of Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model used for financing and developing large-scale infrastructure projects. Here's a breakdown of how it works:

Stages of a DBFOT Model:

- 1. Design:** The private partner takes responsibility for designing the project based on specifications provided by the public authority. This includes creating blueprints, technical drawings, and engineering plans.
- 2. Build:** Once the design is approved, the private partner constructs the project according to the agreed-upon plan. They are responsible for securing funding, procuring materials, and managing construction.
- 3. Finance:** The private partner arranges financing for the project. This might involve using their own capital, securing loans from banks or institutions, or a combination of both.
- 4. Operate:** After construction is complete, the private partner operates and maintains the project for a predetermined period (concession period). This involves managing day-to-day operations, ensuring smooth functionality, and collecting revenue from users (e.g., tolls on a bridge).
- 5. Transfer:** Upon completion of the concession period, ownership of the project is transferred back to the public

## INDO-RUSSIAN JOINT VENTURE DELIVERS 35,000 AK-203 RIFLES TO INDIAN ARMY

**CONTEXT:** The Indo-Russian Rifles Private Limited (IRRPL), a joint venture between India and Russia, has successfully delivered 35,000 AK-203 Kalashnikov assault rifles to the Indian Army.

### THE AK-203: A MODERN KALASHNIKOV FOR THE INDIAN ARMY

The Indian Army is acquiring a new assault rifle: the AK-203. This modern firearm, designed by the legendary Mikhail Kalashnikov, is a variant of the AK-200 chambered for the Indian Army's standard 7.62x39mm cartridge.



### Combining Tradition and Modernity:

The AK-203 inherits the hallmarks of Kalashnikov rifles: exceptional reliability and ease of maintenance, crucial qualities for soldiers operating in harsh environments. However, it incorporates modern features for enhanced performance. Made in India:



authority. The public entity then takes over responsibility for operating and maintaining the infrastructure.

### Benefits of DBFOT Model:

- **Private Sector Expertise:** Leverages private sector experience in design, construction, and financing for efficient project development.
- **Reduced Public Burden:** Lessens the financial burden on the government by attracting private investment.
- **Innovation:** Encourages private companies to implement innovative solutions to optimize project design and construction.

### Examples of DBFOT Projects:

- **Airports:** Many airports around the world, including Delhi's Indira Gandhi International Airport and London Heathrow Airport, were built using the DBFOT model.
- **Toll Roads:** A significant portion of India's highway network, like the Mumbai Pune Expressway, was developed under DBFOT.
- **Renewable Energy Plants:** Several solar and wind power plants in India have been built and operated by private companies under DBFOT agreements.

In essence, the DBFOT model allows the public sector to access private sector expertise and resources for developing critical infrastructure, while the private partner recovers their investment and earns a profit during the operational period.

India is the first country outside Russia to produce the AK-200 series. This is being achieved through Indo-Russian Rifles Private Limited (IRRPL), a joint venture established in 2019. The IRRPL facility in Amethi, Uttar Pradesh, leverages Russian technology and certified equipment to ensure adherence to strict quality standards. The joint venture's long-term goal is to achieve 100% localization of AK-203 production in India.

### Key Features:

- **Lightweight:** Weighing just 3.8 kg, the AK-203 offers excellent manoeuvrability.
- **Compact Design:** With a variable length of 880-940 mm depending on the stock position, the rifle is suitable for various combat situations.
- **Reliable Operation:** The gas-operated action with a rotating bolt provides a firing rate of approximately 700 rounds per minute.
- **Effective Range:** The AK-203 boasts an effective firing range of 400-800 meters, depending on sight adjustments.
- **Magazine Options:** The rifle feeds from detachable box magazines, with standard 30-round options and compatibility for higher capacity 50-round magazines.
- **Versatility:** Adjustable iron sights come standard, while Picatinny rails enable the use of various optical sights for improved target acquisition.

The AK-203 represents a significant addition to the Indian Army's arsenal. Its blend of proven Kalashnikov reliability, modern features, and Indian production makes it a well-suited weapon for the nation's defense needs.

**DRDO UGRAM:** DRDO unveiled "Ugram," a cutting-edge indigenous assault rifle earlier this year in month of January



2024. Developed in under 100 days, this 7.62mm caliber weapon surpasses the firepower of the INSAS rifle and boasts a 500-meter effective range. Weighing less than 4 kg, it offers robust operation in single and full-auto modes, making it a promising addition to India's army.

**CONCLUSION:** With the delivery of 35,000 AK-203 rifles and the promising development of the Ugram by DRDO, India is bolstering its infantry's firepower with a blend of modern technology, reliable partnerships, and domestic innovation. This focus on next-generation weaponry strengthens India's defense capabilities.

## PM MODI TO VISIT RUSSIA AT TIME WHEN MOSCOW IS DEEPENING EMBRACE WITH CHINA

**CONTEXT:** Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be on a crucial 2-day visit to Moscow for the India-Russia annual summit, ongoing since 2000.



### WHY THE VISIT IS SPECIAL THIS TIME?

#### First Bilateral Meeting Since Russia's Invasion of Ukraine:

- This is the first bilateral meeting between PM Modi and President Putin since Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.
- **Previous Meetings:**
  - o Total of 16 meetings since 2014.
  - o Indian PM's last visit to Russia: Eastern Economic Forum in Vladivostok, September 2019.
  - o Russian President's last visit to India: Annual bilateral summit, December 2021.

#### Traditions Broken:

- **First Bilateral Visit:**
  - o Indian PM chose Russia, breaking the tradition of first visiting a neighboring country after being sworn in.
- **Previous First Visits of Shri Narendra Modi:**
  - o Bhutan in June 2014.
  - o Maldives and Sri Lanka in June 2019.
- **Recent Travels:**
  - o Italy for a multilateral meeting of G7 leaders last month.
  - o The PM had skipped the SCO meeting and opted to send the External Affairs Minister instead.

### Significance of the Visit

#### A Foreign Policy Priority:

- **Historic Relationship:**
  - o Seven-decade-old relationship carried over from the USSR era.
  - o The strongest pillars today are defense, space, and nuclear collaboration.
  - o Russia is still the source of many critical technologies for India, which the West is reluctant to share.

#### Global Significance:

- **Timing of the Meeting:**
  - o Coincides with NATO leaders gathering in Washington DC to celebrate 75 years of the anti-Russia military alliance.

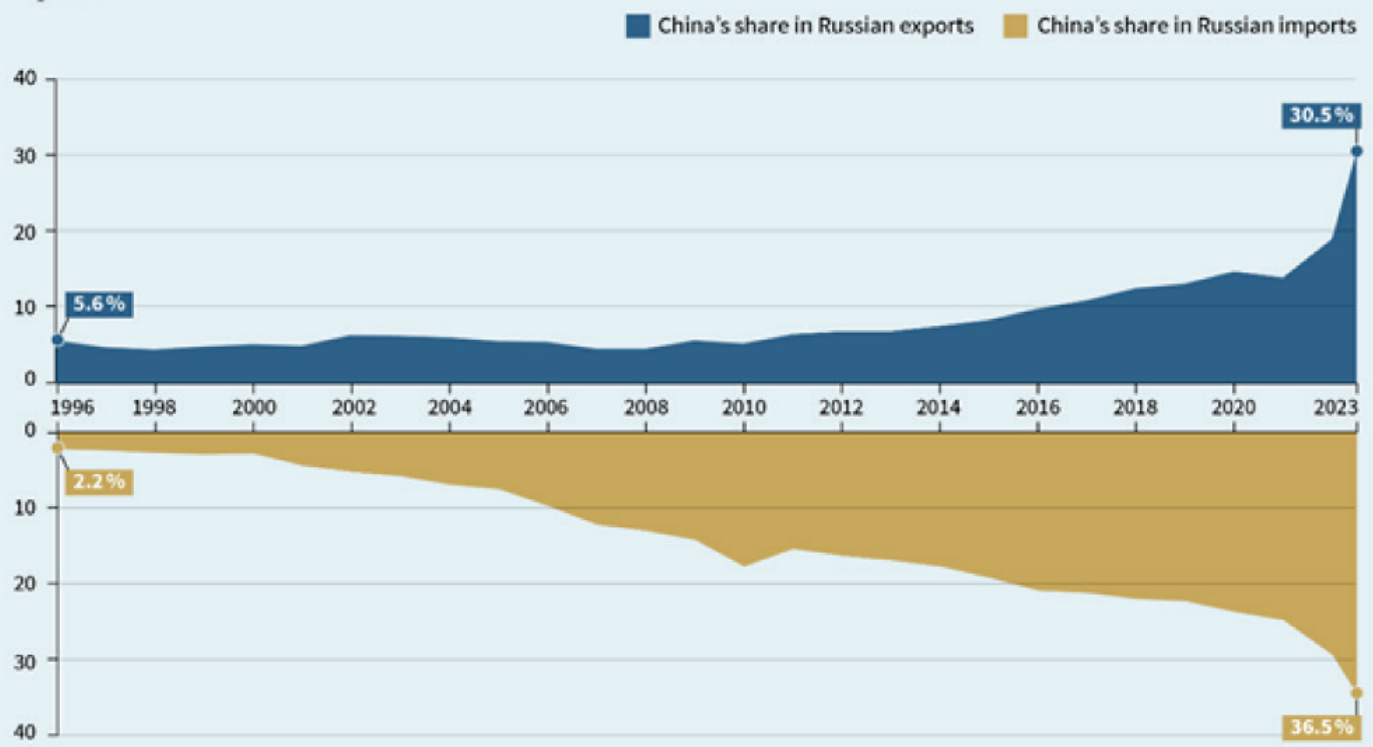
#### Russia's Deepening Ties with China:

- **India-Russia Relationship Stagnation:**
  - o Some areas have stagnated as India diversifies its global relationships.
- **Russia-China Relations:**
  - o Russia is getting closer to China, which supports Moscow during Western sanctions.
  - o India must ensure that Russian weaponry and technologies supplied to Beijing do not conflict with Indian interests.



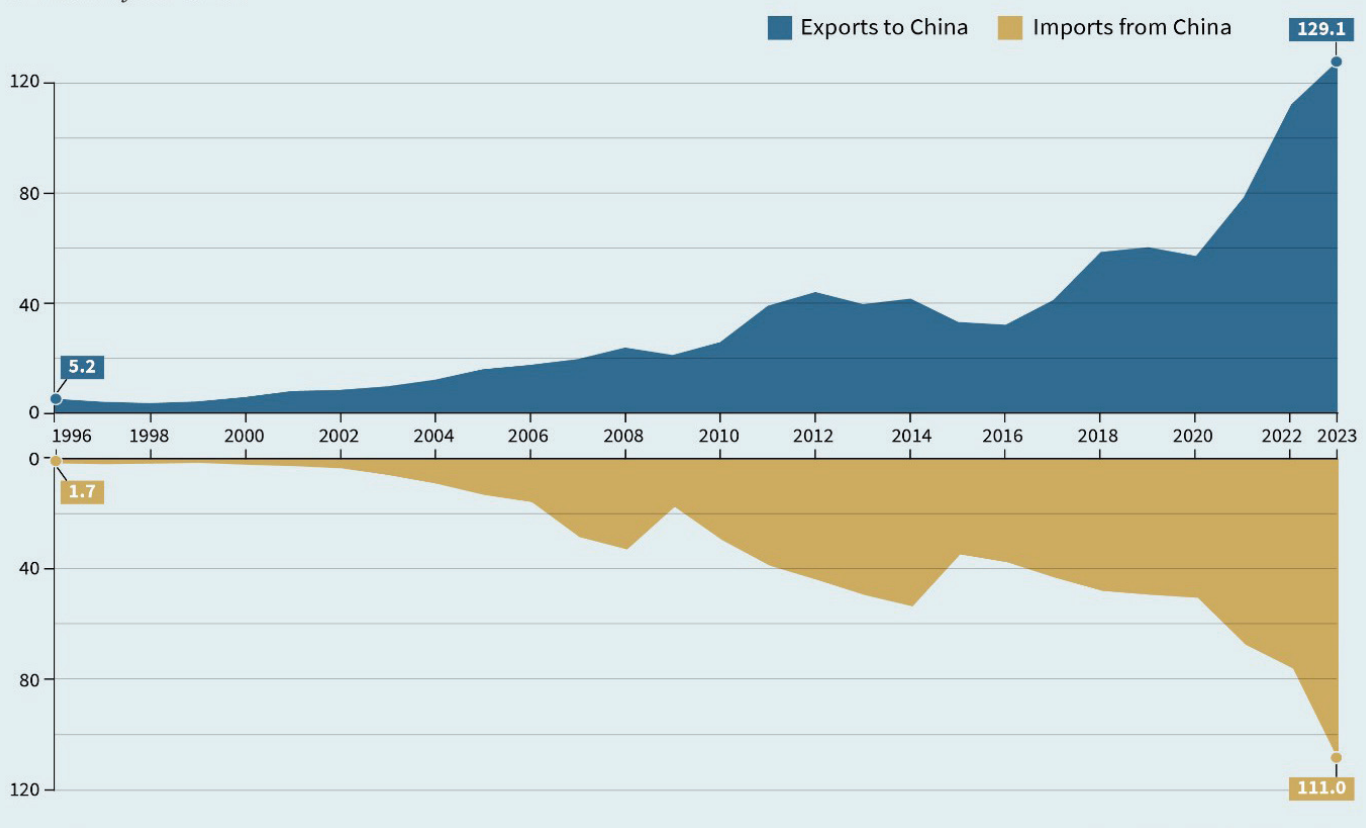
### China's share in Russian goods trade

In percent



### Russian goods trade with China

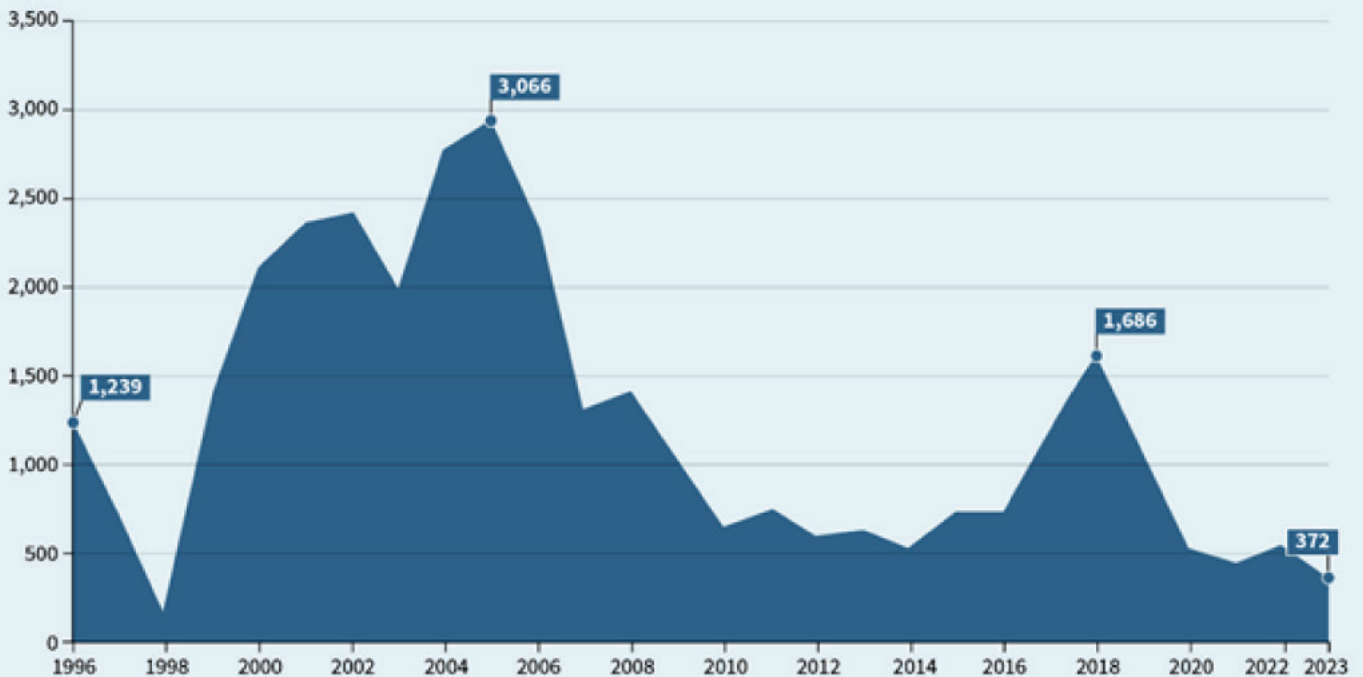
In billions of U.S. dollars





## Russian arms exports to China

In million TIV



### ANALYSIS

What the above graphics show is that while total volume of Russia china trade has increased as well as share of China in Russia trade has also increased, but the volume of Russian arms exported to China has decreased.

### Key Areas of Engagement

#### Defence:

##### • Historic Defence Ties:

- o USSR was India's main supplier of defense equipment during the Cold War.
- o 60-70% of India's defense equipment is of Russian and Soviet origin.

##### • Evolving Cooperation:

- o From buyer-seller to joint R&D, co-development, and joint production.

##### • Key Agreements:

- o Supply of S-400 TRIUMF missile systems, MiG-29 fighters, Kamov helicopters.
- o Licensed production of T-90 tanks, Su-30MKI fighters, AK-203 rifles, and BrahMos missiles.
- o INS Vikramaditya, an Indian Navy aircraft carrier, is a former Soviet and Russian warship.

#### Oil Boost:

##### • Increased Oil Purchases:

- o India buying large amounts of discounted Russian oil since the Ukraine war.
- o Indian External Affairs Minister reiterated that purchases will continue in the interest of Indian consumers.

#### Trade:

##### • Surpassing Trade Targets:

- o Bilateral trade volumes exceeded expectations due to Russian crude purchases.
- o Pre-war trade target of \$30 billion by 2025 reached \$65.70 billion in FY 2023-24.
- o Trade is skewed in Russia's favour; Indian exports are only about \$3.2 billion.
- o China-Russia trade has already reached \$245 billion.
- o Russia requested to convert rupee deposits to Chinese yuan; India refused.
- o Re-investing locked Russian money in India for mutual benefit is an important issue.



#### Challenges for India

##### Balance of Trade:

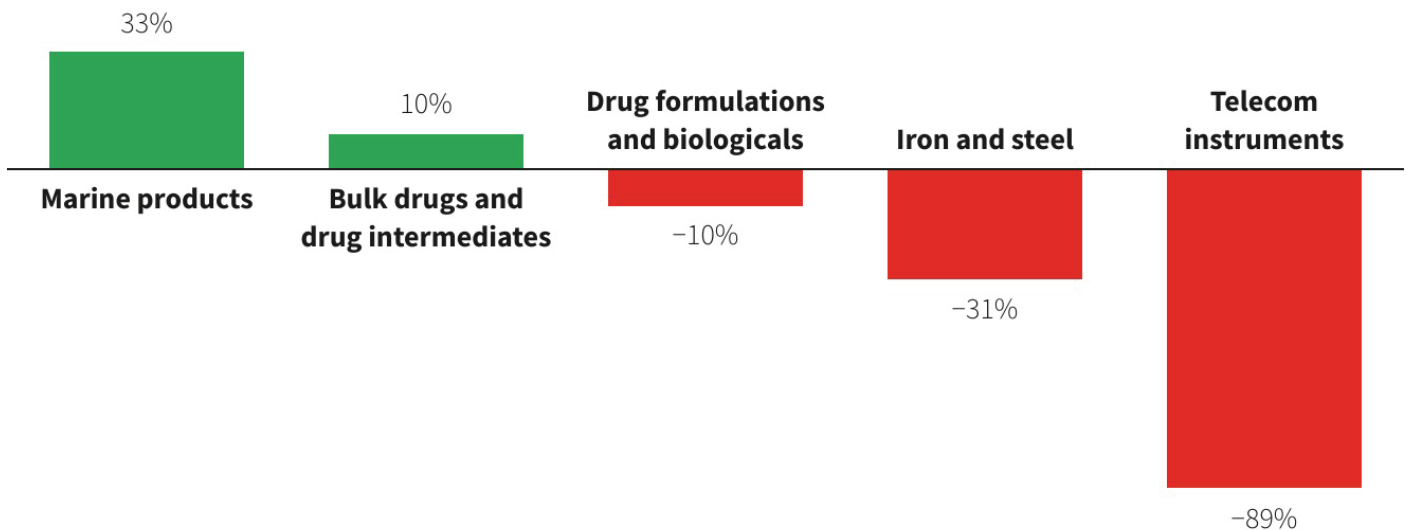
##### • Trade Imbalance:

- o India imports \$61.44 billion from Russia, mostly oil and petroleum products.

# India's exports to Russia fall

Exports of three out of five principal commodities have declined after Russia's invasion of Ukraine as Indian exporters grapple with payment-settlement uncertainty.

**Change in trade from Feb 24, 2022 to April 5, 2023 compared to the same period in the previous year**



Source: Reuters reporting | Reuters, May 4, 2023 | By Kripa Jayaram and Aftab Ahmed

## Diplomatic Tightrope:

- **Neutral Stance on Invasion:**
  - o India has not condemned the Russian invasion but expressed concern over nuclear threats.
  - o Abstained from voting against Russia in several UNSC resolutions.
- **Maintaining Ties with Western Nations:**
  - o Russia-Ukraine war complicates India's diplomatic relations with Western allies.
  - o Series of meetings with Western nations before PM's visit to Russia indicates diplomatic balancing.

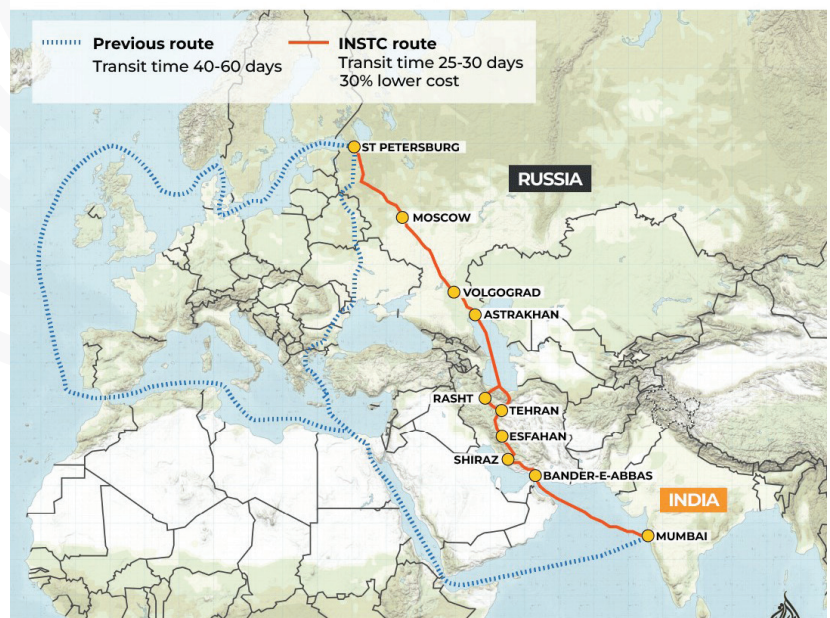
## China and Other Non-Western Alliances:

- **Western Policies:**
  - o Western policies have driven China and Russia closer.
- **Russia's Independent Course:**
  - o Putin's visit to North Korea and partnership with Vietnam indicate the intentions of not to be overly dependent on China.

## INDIA

## International North-South Transport Corridor

The INSTC could offer Russia an economic escape route to Asia at a time when sanctions are limiting its transit access through most of Europe.



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### Mediator Role:

- **Neutral Player Perception:**
  - India is seen as a potential mediator between Russia and Ukraine.

### Presence of Indians in Russia:

- **Indians Misled into War:**
  - Some Indians in Russia are believed to have been misled into joining the Ukraine war.
  - New Delhi has asked for their early discharge, to be discussed during the visit.

### Way Ahead for India

#### Core Concerns:

- **Defence Relationship:**
  - Ensuring continuity and strength of the defense relationship with Russia.
- **Countering Moscow-Beijing Relations:**
  - Growing Russia-China relationship is against Indian strategic interests.
- **Objectives of the Visit:**
  - Strengthen historical ties.
  - Ensure Beijing does not become a factor in the India-Russia relationship.

### Strategic Importance of Modi's Upcoming Visit to Russia

#### Engaging with Russia:

- **Preventing Russia-China Alliance:**
  - Ensuring Russia's alliance with China doesn't work against India's interests.
- **Strategic Calculus:**
  - Modi's visit underscores the importance of Russia in India's geostrategic calculus.

### Current State of India's International Relations

#### Closer Ties with Washington:

- **Deeper and Broader Ties:**
  - India maintains deeper and broader ties with Washington than with Moscow.
- **Nixon's China Opening:**
  - Still affects the bilateral relationship.
- **US Policy:**
  - US policy of aiding China's economic rise has created a strategic adversary for both US and India.
- **Sino-Indian Military Standoff:**
  - Military standoff in the Himalayas is now in its fifth year.

### Motivation for Strengthening Ties with Russia

#### Counterbalancing China:

- **Strategic Counterbalance:**
  - Strengthening ties with Russia is seen as a counterbalance to China.
- **Russia's Global Stature:**
  - Spans 11 time zones, vast natural resources, significant nuclear arsenal, growing space capabilities, and veto power at UN Security Council.
- **Natural Competitors:**
  - Russia and China are natural competitors with diverging interests in Central Asia, Northeast Asia, and the Arctic.

### Challenges in Russia-China Relations

#### Growing Russia-China Alliance:

- **US Actions:**
  - US actions have driven Russia and China closer.

- **"No-Limits" Partnership:**
  - Poses a threat to US and Indian security.

#### Military Technologies:

- China has accessed advanced military technologies previously exclusive to India.

### China Profiting from the Ukraine War:

#### Economic Benefits:

- China is benefiting significantly from the ongoing conflict in Ukraine.

### India's Strategic Role

#### Driving a Wedge Between Russia and China:

##### Preventing Alignment:

- India must take the lead in preventing Russia from aligning too closely with China.

##### Independent Course:

- Russia's recent defense pact with North Korea suggests Putin's willingness to pursue an independent course.

### Mediating the Ukraine War:

#### Mediation Role:

- India should mediate an end to the Ukraine war.

#### Focus on Indo-Pacific:

- This would allow the US to focus on enhancing security in the Indo-Pacific and improving Taiwan's chances of survival.

### Recent Developments and Diplomatic Efforts

#### Deepening Russia-China Military Relationship:

##### Technology and Intelligence Sharing:

- Advanced technology and potential intelligence-sharing between Russia and China could work against India's interests.

#### Western Sanctions:

##### Impact on Russia:

- Western sanctions have pushed Russia to cozy up to China, but India should avoid hyphenating the two.

#### Energy and Resource Security:

##### Oil Imports:

- Amid the Ukraine war, India has ramped up imports of Russian crude oil despite US and EU sanctions.

##### US Clarification:

- US Ambassador to India, Eric Garcetti, clarified that India's purchases of Russian oil don't amount to a violation.

### Modi's Diplomatic Goals

#### Reinforcing Strategic Ties:

##### Importance of Russia:

- Modi's visit to Moscow reinforces the importance of Russia in India's geostrategic calculations.

##### Signal of Closeness:

- The visit aims to send a signal that the two sides remain close, despite the global political landscape.

#### Historical Context:

##### Long-Standing Relationship:

- India and Russia have a long-standing relationship dating back to the Cold War.

##### Resilient Relationship:

- Russia is India's biggest supplier of weapons and oil, maintaining a resilient relationship.

#### Geopolitical Benefits:

##### Rebuffing Isolation:





- o The trip helps Russia rebuff Western efforts to isolate Putin and shore up relations with an important trading partner.
- **Foreign-Policy Independence:**
  - o Modi seeks to affirm India's foreign-policy independence while reaping strategic benefits from closer ties with Russia.

### Strategic Leverage Against China

#### Balanced Foreign Policy:

- **Essential Relationship:**
  - o India views its relationship with Russia as essential to a balanced foreign policy.
- **Strategic Leverage:**
  - o Strengthening ties with Russia allows India to leverage its position against China.

#### Balancing Act:

- **Navigating US Relations:**
  - o Despite warming ties with the US, India aims to avoid alienating Russia, a key defense and energy partner.

- **Strategic Autonomy:**

- o Maintaining strategic autonomy and leveraging ties with Russia to counterbalance China's growing influence in the region.

#### Multipolar World:

- **Geopolitical Dynamics:**

- o The visit underscores the importance of a multipolar world, where India navigates complex geopolitical dynamics to maintain strategic autonomy and leverage its relationships for maximum benefit.

**CONCLUSION:** PM Modi's visit to Russia underscores the enduring strategic partnership between India and Russia amidst shifting global dynamics. It highlights India's efforts to maintain a balanced foreign policy, leveraging ties with Russia to counterbalance China's influence while navigating its relationship with the US. The visit reaffirms India's commitment to a multipolar world and strategic autonomy, ensuring continued defense and energy cooperation with Russia despite geopolitical challenges.

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# **INTERNAL SECURITY**



**DRDO'S 'ABHYAS' COMPLETES  
SUCCESSFUL TRIALS**

**INDIAN NAVY JOINS WORLD'S  
LARGEST NAVAL EXERCISE  
RIMPAC**

**EXERCISE PITCH BLACK**

**EXERCISE MAITREE 2024**

**NOMADIC ELEPHANT-2024**

**SEBEX 2**

**TWO STEALTH FRIGATES BEING  
BUILT IN RUSSIA SET TO BE  
DELIVERED SOON**

**ELISA DE ANDA MADRAZO – FATF  
PRESIDENCY**

**MAHARASHTRA SPECIAL PUBLIC  
SECURITY (MSPS) ACT, 2024**

**DRDO SUCCESSFULLY TESTS  
PHASE-II BALLISTIC MISSILE  
DEFENCE SYSTEM**

**SNOWBLIND MALWARE**

**PROJECT-76**



## DRDO'S 'ABHYAS' COMPLETES SUCCESSFUL TRIALS



ABHYAS is a High-Speed Expendable Aerial Target (HEAT) that was made by the Aeronautical Development Establishment (ADE) in Bengaluru, India, for the Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO). Its main job is to make fake enemy planes so that defense systems can practice. DRDO recently tested ABHYAS six times at the Integrated Test Range in Chandipur, Odisha, and all of them went well. These tests looked at a better booster setup that made the system work better and be more reliable.

### DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT

The ABHYAS design lets it fly itself with the help of an autopilot device created at ADE. It comes with high-tech add-ons like Radar Cross Section (RCS), Visual, and Infrared,

which are necessary for practicing real weapon systems. Its guidance system was made by the Research Center Imarat, while its booster system was made by the Advanced Systems Laboratory.

### TRIAL ACHIEVEMENTS

ABHYAS showed important skills during its tests, including safe booster release, rocket clearance, and strong endurance performance. Two launches were carried out in a row, one after the other, within 30 minutes of each other. This showed how well the system worked with little planning.

### OPERATIONAL FEATURES

ABHYAS has a laptop-based Ground Control System that makes it easier to connect the aircraft, do pre-flight checks, and give the pilots control during the flight. The device can also record data during flights so that it can be analyzed later.

### PRODUCTION AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

The successful testing shows that ABHYAS is no longer just an idea and is now ready to be built. Hindustan Aeronautics Limited and Larsen & Toubro have been chosen as the companies that will make it. This step is a big step forward for Indian defense technology and shows that India is serious about improving its military power. ABHYAS is an important step forward in India's defense training because it creates a very real threat situation for practicing and testing the country's weapons systems.

## INDIAN NAVY JOINS WORLD'S LARGEST NAVAL EXERCISE RIMPAC



As a participant in the Rim of the Pacific Exercise (RIMPAC) 2024, the Indian Navy has made a strong statement in the world of military exercises. This exercise is the world's biggest international maritime warfare exercise, and it takes place in Hawaii with a huge group of troops from around the world.

**CONTEXT:** In 2024, the exercise had over 150 planes, 40 surface ships, 3 submarines, people from over 29 countries, and a total of over 25,000 people. The Hawaiian Islands are the focus of this huge show of military power and cooperation, which runs until August 01. The Indian Navy sent the INS Shivalik, a cutting-edge multi-role stealth frigate, to this important military gathering.

### DEPLOYMENT OF INS SHIVALIK

The INS Shivalik, a guided missile stealth frigate that was planned and built in India, shows how technically advanced and flexible the Indian Navy is. The frigate was sent to Pearl Harbor to take part in different parts of RIMPAC 2024.

It had been sent to key areas like the South China Sea and the North Pacific Ocean before. That the ship traveled 9000 Nautical Miles to take part in the drill shows how far the Indian Navy can go.

### PHASES OF RIMPAC 2024

RIMP began with a phase in the harbor that lasted from June 27 to July 7. This was followed by a carefully planned phase at sea. The last phase is split into three smaller phases. During these phases, the naval forces that are taking part will carry out some complicated maritime activities. An aircraft carrier battle group, submarines, maritime reconnaissance planes, and remotely piloted surface ships will all be moving around, and amphibious force landing operations will also be shown.

### OBJECTIVE AND SIGNIFICANCE

Commander of the US 3rd Fleet and the RIMPAC 2024 Combined Task Force, Vice Admiral John Wade, talked about the exercise's two goals: to strengthen ties between countries and make it easier for allied forces to work together. The main objective is to improve everyone's skills in maritime operations, which will help keep the Indo-Pacific area peaceful and stable. In a nutshell, this is what this year's RIMPAC theme, "Partners: Integrated and Prepared," means.

### RIM OF THE PACIFIC EXERCISE (RIMPAC)

- **LARGEST MARITIME WARFARE EXERCISE:** The Rim of the Pacific Exercise (RIMPAC) is the world's largest international maritime warfare exercise, initiated in 1971 and led by the U.S. Navy's Pacific Fleet. It is held biennially in the waters around the Hawaiian Islands and Southern California.



- **EXTENSIVE INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPATION:** RIMPAC began with five nations and has grown to include participants from 26 countries, including non-NATO members like China and India. This expansion improves international maritime relations and stability across the Pacific Rim.

- **DIVERSE ACTIVITIES AND INNOVATION:** The exercise encompasses various activities such as gunnery, missile, anti-submarine, and air defense exercises, along with humanitarian and counter-piracy operations. Additionally, RIMPAC is unique for its live innovation fair, where new technologies are tested and demonstrated.

### EXERCISE PITCH BLACK



The Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) will start “Exercise Pitch Black” on July 12, 2024. This is a major multinational aerial warfare practice that is held in Australia every two years. Over 140 planes from around the world are taking part in this year’s drill, which is the biggest one in the 43-year history of the event. The India Air Force (IAF) has said it will take part in the drill, which will run from July 12 to August 2, 2024, sending Su-30 MKI fighter jets.

#### OVERVIEW OF EXERCISE PITCH BLACK

Exercise Pitch Black is a big international military event meant to make involved countries more ready for battle and strengthen ties between them. It began in 1981 and is now seen as the most important flying exercise for the RAAF. Since it began, the drill has grown in size and difficulty, with a focus on defensive counter-air, offensive counter-air, and strategic air operations.

#### PARTICIPATION OF INDIA

India will participate in this event, and its IAF troops

will work from important Northern Territory RAAF sites, such as Darwin and Tindal. The IAF wants to show off its space skills and work together with other international air forces more. After this, the IAF will also take part in “Ex Udara Shakti 24” with the Royal Malaysian Air Force. This shows that India is even more dedicated to building strong military ties in the area.

#### STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE

Exercise Pitch Black is very important for improving the tactical skills of the air forces that take part because it uses realistic training situations that are very hard to pass. It gives air forces a place to share what they know, help each other learn, and come up with a unified way to deal with security issues. The unprecedented size of the 2024VOKE edition shows how important it is becoming as a foundation for stability and security cooperation in the area.

#### ABOUT SU-30 MKI

The Su-30 MKI is a version of the Sukhoi Su-30 that was specially made for the Indian Air Force. It has modern Israeli electronics as well as French and Indian systems. It has thrust-vectoring motors and canards that make it easier to turn. It’s also interesting that it has a special glass cockpit that makes flying much easier. Radar-absorbent material lowers the MKI’s Radar Cross Section (RCS), which makes it more likely to survive. It is a powerful platform for pinpoint strikes because it can carry the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile. India’s HAL makes the plane under license, showing a good example of how India and Russia can work together in military flight. By 2005, the first Su-30 MKI unit was fully up and running.

### EXERCISE MAITREE 2024



The 13th edition of Exercise Maitree is set to take place from July 1 to 15, 2024, in Tak Province, Thailand, marking the continuation of military cooperation between India and Thailand. This year’s drill is special because it starts up again after a break caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This shows how important it is for the military to work together and train

together again.

#### Historical Background

The exercise began in 2006 as the Thai-Indian Cooperation Field Exercise (TICAFE). In 2013, it was changed its name to Maitree, which means “friendship” in Hindi. India and Thailand take turns hosting the event every year. The goal is to improve military ties by sharing training operations.

#### Composition and goals of the contingents

India’s Ladakh Scouts and Thailand’s 1st Battalion, 14 Infantry Regiment each send 76 people to the 2024 drill, making it an even split between the two countries. As required by Chapter VII of the UN Charter, the main goal is to improve joint skills in operations against insurgency and terrorism, especially in jungle and city settings.

#### Key tactical drills and activities

For Exercise Maitree 2024, tactical drills will be held that focus on several military and strategic activities, such as:

- Setting up Joint Operation and Intelligence and Surveillance Centers
- The use of cutting edge tech like drones and anti-drone



systems

- Special operations like working from helicopters, getting into rooms, and tearing down illegal buildings

The goal of these activities is to improve cooperation and share best practices so that both forces are better prepared for situations that might happen in the real world.

**Cultural and strategic significance**

Exercise Maitree is more than just military drills. It's also a chance for soldiers from different cultures to meet and learn from each other, which helps them understand each other better and work together better. This sense of community is important for working together well on real-life

tasks.

**Broadening scope of cooperation**

Disaster relief, humanitarian aid, and peacekeeping operations are all part of Exercise Maitree, which makes sure that everyone is ready for a wide range of situations. This broad view not only improves military power, but it also shows how important the armed forces are as a social force. The practice makes it possible for future training sessions to be more integrated and for more people to work together, maybe in areas like cyber defense and space security. As both countries continue to deal with new security issues, these kinds of exercises must keep the area safe and stable.

**NOMADIC ELEPHANT-2024**

The 16th "Nomadic Elephant" Joint Military Exercise will take place between the Indian Army and the Mongolian Army from July 3, 2024, to July 16, 2024. They are going to do this military drill in Umroi, Meghalaya. The goal of the exercise is to improve the two forces' ability to work together and communicate during semi-normal operations in semi-urban and mountainous areas, as directed by the UN.

**Objective and significance**

'Nomadic Elephant's' main goal is to help players get better at tactical and operational skills in joint action situations. The goal of the practice is to get both armies ready for UN peacekeeping missions by focusing on semi-conventional warfare. This makes it easier for them to work together in different environments, which improves military relations and shared understanding.

**Historical context and recent developments**

"Nomadic Elephant" takes place every year in India and Mongolia, switching between the two countries. Mongolia took

care of the 15th version of the exercise in Ulaanbaatar. Indian troops from the Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry Regiment were among those there, and Mongolia was represented by Armed Forces Unit 084. The ongoing drills show that the two countries are working together strongly on the military level, which is in line with their stronger strategic ties. In May 2023, the 12th Joint Working Group meeting looked over and moved forward with defense cooperation projects. This showed that the resolve to strengthen military ties was still strong.

**Future impact**

The continuation of the "Nomadic Elephant" series shows that India and Mongolia are becoming more strategic partners, especially when it comes to defense. Both countries want to strengthen their cooperation and readiness to handle complex military operations by holding regular high-level military drills. This will help keep the peace and stability in their areas and beyond.

**SEBEX 2**

The Indian Navy along with Solar Industries created SEBEX 2, a cutting-edge bomb that is 2.01 times more powerful than TNT. This is a very important step forward for India's Defense Export Promotion Scheme.

**Advantages of SEBEX 2**

SEBEX 2 is made from High-Melting Explosives (HMX), which means it can greatly increase the destructive power of many weapons, like bombs, gun shells, and warheads, without adding any extra weight. With its approval, it is one of the most powerful non-nuclear explosives in the world.

**Comparative lethality**

Before SEBEX 2, the strongest conventional explosive used in India, mostly in BrahMos weapons, was about 1.50 times as powerful as TNT. On the other hand, most

global weapons have TNT equivalences between 1.25 and 1.30, which shows that SEBEX 2 is more effective.

**Notable developments**

Economic Explosives Limited (EEL) is also working on a different type of explosion that will have 2.3 times the power of TNT in six months. Also, the Indian Navy has approved the first thermobaric explosive, SITBEX 1. It has been used in recent conflicts because it has a long blast duration and produces a lot of heat, which makes it perfect for attacking well-fortified enemy areas. Another important step forward is the approval of SIMEX 4, which makes handling and storing it safer. This makes it necessary for sensitive uses like submarine torpedo weapons.

## TWO STEALTH FRIGATES BEING BUILT IN RUSSIA SET TO BE DELIVERED SOON



After a series of delays, two stealth frigates under construction in Russia for the Indian Navy are set to be delivered from September. Construction and deliveries were delayed due to COVID-19, the war in Ukraine and Western

sanctions.

“First ship Tushil is ready for acceptance by the Indian Navy and is scheduled to be delivered by September. The commissioning crew reached Russia earlier this month,” a defence official in the know said. “The second ship Tamal is expected to be delivered by February 2025.”

### Agreement for frigates

In October 2016, India and Russia signed an inter-governmental agreement for the four stealth frigates, two directly imported and two to be manufactured by Goa Shipyard Ltd. (GSL).

A \$1-billion deal was subsequently signed for the two frigates under direct purchase. In November 2018, the GSL signed a \$500-million deal with Rosoboronexport of Russia for material, design and specialist assistance to locally manufacture the two frigates, and in January 2019, the contract was signed between the Indian Defence Ministry and the GSL. All the ships are powered by engines from Zorya-Mashproekt of Ukraine.

### Schedule to be followed

As per schedule, the GSL is scheduled to deliver the first ship in 2026 and the second one six months later. “Construction at GSL is progressing and the launch of the first ship would take place in the next couple of months,” a defence source said. The basic structures of two frigates in Russia were lying at the Yantar shipyard in Russia which are now being finished. The Indian Navy already operates six of these frigates weighing around 4,000 tonnes each.

## ELISA DE ANDA MADRAZO – FATF PRESIDENCY

On July 1, 2024, Elisa de Anda Madrazo of Mexico took over as head of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). The appointment, which is good until June 2026, is a big change in the way this important global financial watchdog is run. During her presidency, she plans to make it easier for people around the world to fight financial crimes and terrorist funding.

### Inclusive, Transparent Leadership

Advocating for openness, variety, and inclusion in FATF’s work is at the heart of Madrazo’s leadership style. These ideas are very important for changing governance strategies, making new rules, and getting stakeholders more involved. Her agenda shows how important it is to include different points of view from around the world so that there is a more comprehensive reaction to financial crimes around the world.

### Proportionality and Risk-Based Implementation

One of Madrazo’s main goals as president is to push for the risk-based application of FATF Standards, with the concept of proportionality at the center. This approach is very

important for increasing financial inclusion because it helps solve problems caused by people not having easy access to formal financial services. The FATF wants to use this way to not only fight financial crimes but also make financial services available to a wider range of people.

### Enhanced Collaboration and Transparency

As long as Madrazo is president, all of FATF’s members, associate members, and partners are strongly committed to making the organization more open. This plan is meant to create a unified front against global financial crimes by combining efforts and letting institutions and countries share strategic insights.

### Addressing Terrorism and Proliferation Financing Risks

Madrazo wants to do more study and raise awareness about the ways and trends that terrorists and other dangerous groups are funding and spreading their ideas. The goal is to come up with better ways to stop problems before they happen and fight them, which will make FATF better at getting rid of these threats to global security and financial systems.

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## MAHARASHTRA SPECIAL PUBLIC SECURITY (MSPS) ACT, 2024



The MahaYuti government, which was run by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), passed the Maharashtra Special Public Security (MSPS) Act on July 11, 2024. This law was meant to stop the spread of Naxalism in cities. The “urban naxal” law is the name given to this suggested law that has caused a lot of debate.

### Purpose of the Bill

The government says that Naxal-related actions are becoming more common in cities. Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnis talks about the role of frontal organizations that help Maoist forces with logistics. The law is meant to give the government the tools it needs to properly control these activities.

### Comparison with existing laws

The MSPS Act is like the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), but it suggests different ways to keep an eye on things. Instead of the UAPA’s tribunal method, names of illegal groups will be confirmed by an advisory board. In this case, the Maharashtra Control of Organized Crime Act (MCOCA) is also important.

### Provisions of the MSPS Act

The Act gives the government the right to declare any group illegal and lists four main crimes:

- Being a part of an illegal group.
- Raising money for or hiding members of a group that does illegal things.
- Organizing or promoting groups or events that are illegal.
- Taking part in or planning to do illegal things. Fines and prison terms that run from two to seven years are possible.

### Legislative status

The Bill has been brought up in the Lower House, but the Assembly’s term is ending. Its future is unclear, especially since elections are coming up soon. The Bill is no longer valid since the summer session was over.

### Opposition Response

Leaders of the opposition, such as former Chief Minister Prithviraj Chavan, have called the Bill harsh and pointless, saying that current laws are enough to control Naxal activities. Chavan says that the government is trying to silence criticism, which means that if the government changes, the Bill could be thrown out.

## DRDO SUCCESSFULLY TESTS PHASE-II BALLISTIC MISSILE DEFENCE SYSTEM



The Phase-II Ballistic Missile Defense (BMD) system was successfully flight-tested by the Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO) on July 24, 2024. This test showed that India is getting better at protecting itself against ballistic missiles with lengths of up to 5,000 kilometers. This is a big step forward from the current Phase-I system.

### Phases of the BMD System

There are two parts to the BMD program:

- Phase I: Already set up and working, this step can stop missiles from up to 2,000 km away.
- Phase II: This phase, which was just tried, makes it easier to intercept targets up to 5,000 km away.

### Test Procedure

As part of the test, a target missile was fired from LC-IV Dhamra to mimic a threat from an enemy. Both land and sea radars picked up the signal, which turned on the Air Defence

(AD) interception system. Two minutes later, the Phase-II AD endo-atmospheric missile fired from the Integrated Test Range in Chandipur was used to intercept the target.

### Technology and Capabilities

The Phase-II system combines cutting-edge technologies with a network-based structure for warfare:

- Long-range sensors
- Low latency communication systems
- Mission Control Centre
- Advanced interceptor missiles

Together, these parts improve national security by stopping different types of enemy ballistic missile risks within a certain range of altitudes.

### Missile Specifications

The AD endo-atmospheric missile is a solid-fueled, two-stage system that is meant to be launched from the ground. Targeting rocket threats in the endo to low exo-atmospheric regions makes the BMD system even more flexible in how it can be used. India’s No First Use nuclear policy makes the BMD an important part of its national defense plan. The growing number of long-range ballistic weapons in the area makes a strong BMD system necessary. This shows how important it is to have your defense systems.

### DRDO

India’s Defense Research and Development Organization (DRDO), which has been around since 1958, has made more than 500 items, such as missiles like the Agni and Prithvi. It debuted the Tejas, a light combat aircraft that was made in India. The “Ventilator 2.0” was made by the Defence





Bioengineering and Electromedical Laboratory of DRDO in answer to COVID-19. The organization's missile technology includes the BrahMos, which was made with help from

Russia. DRDO also works on quantum computing and artificial intelligence, and it encourages partnerships with other organizations to develop cutting-edge military technologies.

## SNOWBLIND MALWARE

As more people use mobile banking, they are enjoying never-before-seen levels of convenience when handling their money. But this change has also caught the attention of hackers who want to steal private user data. Promon, a cybersecurity company, recently found a new danger called "Snowblind" malware. This malware targets Android devices to steal banking information.

### Snowblind Android Malware

Snowblind is made to get into Android devices, get banking login information, and make deals without permission. Very smart malware hides itself by repackaging safe programs as harmful ones. This way, it avoids being found by security software. People take advantage of accessibility features to steal private data and take control of an infected device from afar.

### Method of Distribution

Social engineering is the main way that Snowblind gets spread. People are tricked into getting malicious apps that look like they are safe. Most of the time, you won't find these apps in official app shops. This suggests that they are spread through other platforms or phishing.

### How Snowblind Operates

The way Snowblind is different from other malware is that it uses a function in the Linux kernel called "seccomp" to check for any changes made to the system. Injecting harmful code before seccomp is turned on is how Snowblind gets around built-in security. Once the malware gets past these defenses, it uses accessibility services to keep an eye on the device's screen, steal login information, and mess up banking sessions. With this feature, Snowblind can turn off important security features like biometric and two-factor login systems (2FA), which makes fraud and identity theft much more likely.

### Recognition and Prevention

Because Snowblind works quietly in the background, users may not be aware that it is there until transfers are made without their permission. It is important to only download apps from reliable sources, like official app stores, and to be wary of download links you get through email or chat apps that you didn't ask for. Always choose apps with lots of downloads and good reviews, and if you want extra protection against these kinds of threats, you might want to use reliable security apps made just for Android devices.

## PROJECT-76

DRDO initiates Project-76 for an indigenous conventional submarine, continuing from the ATV and nuclear submarine projects, aiming for advanced technology and substantial indigenous content in submarine capabilities. DRDO authorized by Defence Ministry for preliminary study under Project-76. Study expected to conclude within a year, followed by Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) approval.

### Continuation from ATV Project

Project-76 builds on ATV project, continuing Arihant series (SSBN) and nuclear-powered submarine (SSN) development. Project 76 emphasise on indigenous development of conventional submarines post P-751 procurement.

### Indigenous Content and Capabilities

Project-76 to feature substantial indigenous components:

- Weapons, missiles, combat management system, sonars, communications, electronic warfare suite, mast, and periscope.
- Indian Navy's 30-year submarine building program underscores commitment to indigenous submarine design and construction.

### Propulsion Advancements

DRDO-developed air independent propulsion (AIP) module awaits fitment on Scorpene-class submarines. Scheduled for refit of first Scorpene-class submarine Kalvari in 2025, enhancing submarine endurance and stealth capabilities. DRDO's Project-76 marks India's stride towards self-reliance in submarine technology, enhancing national defense capabilities.

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# ECONOMICS





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## INDIA TOPS GLOBAL REMITTANCES IN 2023

In 2023, India achieved the highest record of remittance inflows globally, amassing USD 125 billion. Strategic economic deals and strong job markets in other countries, especially in the US, UK, and Singapore, were the main things that caused this rise. One important mutual agreement with the United Arab Emirates (UAE) stood out. It made it easier for the two countries to use their currencies in trade.

### Remittance trends

According to the Migration and Development Brief from the World Bank, more money is being sent back to India. This is helping to increase the share of money coming into South Asia, from 63% in 2022 to 66% in 2023. Even though the rate of growth was supposed to drop from the previous year's high of 24.4% to 12.4%, this rise showed big growth. One reason for this growth is that inflation is going down and there are lots of job chances in high-income countries, where a lot of highly skilled Indian professionals live.

### Impact of economic agreements on remittances

India and the UAE signed a deal in February 2023 to encourage trade in the Indian Rupee and the Emirati Dirham. This was a very important step. This agreement makes trade and money transfers easier and less dependent on third-party currencies, which could lead to more and faster money transfers. It turned out that the UAE was India's second-largest source of remittances, which shows how important this economic relationship is.

### Global perspective on remittance flows

Many businesses, especially those in low- and middle-income areas, depend on remittances coming in. They are very important for keeping current accounts and budget

deficits in check. It is expected that global remittances grew by 3.8% in 2023, which was less than the big growth seen in the two previous years. This slowdown is a sign of bigger problems in the economy, like rising prices around the world and weak growth chances, that could affect migrants' real incomes in 2024. This summary of the World Bank report shows how India's strong role in global remittances is driven by smart economic partnerships and strong global labor markets that play a big role in its socioeconomic framework.

### INDIA-UAE BILATERAL TRADE AGREEMENT

- **TRADE EXPANSION GOALS:** The India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), which was signed in February 2022, wants to double trade between the two countries to \$100 billion in five years. Starting in May 2022, the deal aims to lower tariffs on 80% of goods, and over time, it will cover 90% of trade goods.
- **SECTORAL FOCUS AND INVESTMENT:** Key industries like petrochemicals, gems, jewelry, and fabrics are part of CEPA, which means that big investments will be made in infrastructure. This important agreement should strengthen business ties and encourage growth in many areas.
- **INNOVATION AND DUTY-FREE ACCESS:** The deal also makes it possible for businesses to work together in new areas like AI, blockchain technology, and fintech. Notably, CEPA wants to let 90% of India's goods go to the UAE duty-free, which will make trade between the two countries easier.

## WORLD BANK GRANTS \$ 1.5 BILLION FOR INDIA'S GREEN ENERGY PUSH

The World Bank has agreed to lend India \$1.5 billion to help it move toward a low-carbon energy future. This strategic funding will help create green hydrogen and electrolyzers and make it easier for the country to use renewable energy.

### Objective and implementation

The main goal of this money is to improve India's energy policies and rules so that more investments can be made in the energy transition industry. One important part of this is encouraging new ideas in green hydrogen and sustainable energy. The World Bank's plan is set up to do more than just fund direct projects. It also aims to support policymaking and provide professional assistance for creating important interventions.

### Mobilising further financing

One important part of this initiative is that it focuses on getting more private sector money into the energy industry. This move fits with the bigger goal of boosting green energy options like floating solar power systems and offshore wind

farms.

### Enhancing energy efficiency

In addition to giving money, the World Bank's program aims to make different areas more energy efficient, such as by encouraging the construction of green buildings. Also, attempts will be made to change grid codes so that renewable energy sources can be used more. This will make the energy systems stronger and last longer.

### Integrating renewable energy into the grid

Renewable energy being added to the national grid is a key part of the program's plan. As part of the scheme, existing grid codes will be changed to make room for more renewable energy. Aside from that, it wants to encourage options like battery energy storage that make it easier to provide clean power all day. The World Bank's all-around method shows a complete plan to help India switch to a low-carbon economy, which will allow it to keep up with its fast economic growth while also taking environmental impacts into account.

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## PROJECT NEXUS BY RBI

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has joined Project Nexus, a worldwide effort to make it easier for people to send money instantly across borders. To do this, Fast Payment Systems (FPSs) in different countries are linked together. In this plan, the Unified Payments Interface (UPI) of India will link to the FPSs of Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. This is all part of the project.

### Project Nexus

The Bank for International Settlements (BIS) Innovation Hub started Project Nexus to bring about a new way of doing things in international payments. Nexus' main goal is to improve international money transfers by combining different local Instant Payment Systems (IPS) in a way that doesn't cause any problems. With this promise, Project Nexus will be the first live implementation-focused project for the payments industry by the BIS Innovation Hub. The framework of the project supports an open, quick, and safe space for sending money across borders, supporting connectivity for both Person to Person (P2P) and Person to Merchant (P2M) payments.

### Advantages of Project Nexus

Project Nexus is unique because it can standardize the connectivity methods for instant payments around the world. In the past, each country's FPS needed its unique links to each other's. With Nexus, these systems only need

one way to connect to the platform. This makes the process much easier and cuts down on the time and money needed for integration. Some of the biggest benefits are faster purchases (often finished in less than 60 seconds) and lower costs, which lead to more users and happier users.

### Membership and expansion

- **FOUNDING MEMBERS OF PROJECT NEXUS:** At its commencement, Project Nexus will include the Fast Payment Systems (FPSs) of four Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) – Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand – alongside India. These nations, recognized as the founding members of the Nexus platform, formalized their participation and mutual commitment at a signing event held in Basel, Switzerland, on June 30, 2024.
- **FUTURE EXPANSION PLANS:** Looking into the future, additional countries like Indonesia have expressed intentions to join the initiative, indicating potential growth and broader inter-connectivity within global payment networks.
- **ECONOMIC IMPACT AND EFFICIENCY:** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and its partners want to strengthen the economy so that digital transactions across borders are not only possible but also as common and quick as those conducted within the country.

## AGENDA FOR THE 16TH FINANCE COMMISSION

According to Article 280 of the Indian Constitution, the 16th Finance Commission (FC) of India has started its work. This is to make sure that the combined fund is shared fairly among all levels of government, including local bodies. New changes, mostly the 73rd and 74th, have raised the standing of local governments within the federal system and told the Commission to look into ways to give panchayats and municipalities more money.

### Significance of cities in the Indian economy

India's cities are important economic hubs; they bring in about 66% of the country's GDP and 90% of its government income. This important addition shows that cities are important places for national growth. Despite this, cities face big problems, such as not getting enough money from higher levels of government, which makes it harder for them to build new infrastructure and grow existing ones.

### Challenges in fiscal devolution to Urban Local Bodies (ULBs)

It is about 0.5% of GDP that the state and national governments give to Urban Local Bodies (ULBs). This is a lot less than what other developing countries get. This is called intergovernmental transfers (IGTs). This lack of help has made municipalities' finances worse, which has a negative impact on the productivity and living standards of cities. Moreover, the introduction of the Goods and Service Tax (GST) has greatly decreased the sources of income for ULBs, leaving them more reliant on the unpredictable IGTs.

### Parallel agencies and fiscal distortion

Local governments have lost more and more control over their jobs and finances, even though changes to the constitution were meant to give them more power. These overlapping duties make it harder for local governments to do their jobs well and keep their finances in order. Also, programs like the Member of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme make things even more complicated when it comes to money by changing the way planned fiscal devolutions and jobs work.

### Imperatives of updated Census Data

Putting in place evidence-based economic policies and devolutions is harder to do when the 2021 Census is delayed. Using 2011 statistics as a starting point doesn't fully show the big changes in population and urbanization, especially the growth of existing cities and the appearance of many new ones. The 16th Finance Commission needs accurate, up-to-date data to make smart choices about how to spend money.

### Recommendations for the 16th Finance Commission

To improve the financial health and facilities of cities, the 16th Finance Commission needs to work on several important issues. These include pushing for a big rise in the share of GDP that goes to IGTs for ULBs, changing property tax rules to match what the state GST says should be done, and making sure there is enough money for basic services like water, sewers, and trash collection. India's cities will need to deal with these problems if they want to keep growing as economic engines.



## BHARAT BILL PAYMENT SYSTEM

From July 1, all credit card payments made through third-party apps must go through the Bharat Bill Payment System (BBPS), which is what the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) wants. People with credit cards from big Indian banks will be affected by this restructuring. They won't be able to use platforms like CRED, PhonePe, Amazon Pay, and Paytm to pay their bills unless they are integrated with BBPS.

### Bharat Bill Payment System (BBPS)

It is run by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) and is meant to make the payment process faster for both companies and customers. Many different ways to pay are supported by this method, including both physical and digital ones. It lets people quickly and easily make transactions across a network of banks, apps, and websites. It also lets people choose from different payment ways to suit their needs.

### Significance of BBPS in recent RBI policies

The goal of adding BBPS is to make the processing of credit card payments in India more consistent and safe. The RBI wants to make things more regulated and clear by sending all third-party app payments through BBPS. This will

lower the risks of illegal data access and financial mistakes. By combining different payment methods on a single site, this system also makes monitoring easier and transactions less complicated.

### Current integration status with BBPS

Twelve Indian banks, including well-known ones like SBI, ICICI Bank, and Kotak Bank, are currently active members of the BBPS network as of the prescribed date. Though, big banks like HDFC Bank and Axis Bank are still working on connecting their systems to BBPS.

### Challenges in integration

Because of the large investments needed to completely change systems that already serve many third-party apps, some banks may have been slow to integrate. Additionally to making transfers easier, these platforms allow banks to collect large amounts of customer data that helps them provide more personalized services. Transitioning to BBPS requires a lot of resources and changes to how internal banking works, which might not be seen as immediately profitable.

## INDIA CREATES 46.7 MILLION JOBS IN FISCAL 2023-24

India's employment rate went up a lot in the fiscal year 2023–24, adding 46.7 million new jobs for a total of 643.3 million jobs across the country. The number of jobs has grown by 6%, which is a big jump from the 3.2% growth rate in the previous fiscal year. These numbers are shown in the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) newly released provisional output report.

### RBI's Provisional Productivity Report

The RBI has now posted a provisional estimate for economic productivity for FY24. This is the first time that this has been done. In contrast to its previous reports, which only looked at past data, this new report measures output using currently available data. This important change makes it easier to see how India's economy is changing right now, especially in the job market.

### Contrasting views on unemployment

Even though there are signs that more jobs are being created, the rising jobless rate is still a worry. The Center for Monitoring the Indian Economy (CMIE) reported that the jobless rate rose from 7% the previous month to 9.2% in June 2024. This was the highest rate in eight months. These numbers differ from the positive news about job creation,

which has led to ongoing arguments about "jobless growth," a big topic of conversation during the last parliamentary election.

### GDP growth and future employment prospects

India's GDP grew by an amazing 8.2% in FY24, which was more than expected. The RBI has predicted that the GDP will continue to grow at a rate of 7.2% in FY25, which is in line with this strong growth. Citibank research, on the other hand, shows that even a 7% GDP growth would only create 8 to 9 million jobs, which might not be enough to meet the needs of workers over the next ten years. This study shows that the connection between GDP growth and real job creation is not as simple as it seems.

### Methodology

The RBI's estimates use information from the Ministry of Labour and the government's National Accounts to extrapolate levels of output and employment across 27 industries that represent the whole Indian economy. These estimates are given at broad sectoral levels, such as for agriculture, manufacturing, and services. This gives a full picture of job conditions in many economic areas.

## ANGEL TAXES SCRAPPED IN THE BUDGET

The Budget has scrapped the unpopular "angel tax" on startups should be gotten rid of. The goal is to make it easier for startups to get funding and make them more appealing to investors.

### Understanding Angel Tax

Angel tax is a tax that private companies have to pay on raised money that is more than their fair market value. It mostly affects payments from angel investors, which is how the name came about. Section 56(2) VII B of the Income Tax Act put this tax in place. It says that any premium on selling shares to foreign buyers is "income from other sources," which means it needs to be taxed.

### Origins of Angel Tax

The angel tax was included in the 2012 Union Budget by Pranab Mukherjee, who was Finance Minister at the time. Its goal was to stop people from moving money. In April 2018, a big change was made: startups didn't have to pay this tax if the total investment, including funds from angel investors, didn't go over 10 crore. However, they still had to get more licenses and valuation certificates.

### Rationale behind DPIIT's recommendation for repeal

This suggestion came from talking with people in the startup environment and industry groups that were constantly worried about how the angel tax would hurt startup funding and growth. The DPIIT has told the finance ministry about these



worries and suggested that getting rid of it could help capital formation in the country a lot.

### Impact on Startups

Getting rid of the angel tax could greatly help India's over 141,000 DPIIT-registered startups. It would also make angel investments more attractive and smart financially. Angel tax is currently seen as a turnoff by possible investors because it lowers the amount of money that can be used to grow and reinvest in startups. The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and other business groups have been vocal supporters of

lowering this tax to help the startup environment.

### Current Investment trends and challenges

A small drop in startup fundraising efforts was seen in the first half of 2024, which shows that the economy is tough for new tech startups. Also, big drops in the values of well-known startups are a sign of a wider slowdown in funding, which is made worse by investors' careful views on the world's markets. Getting rid of the angel tax might help with some of these problems by promoting more robust business activities.

## NABARD LAUNCHES AGRISURE FUND FOR STARTUPS

The "Agri-SURE" fund was created by the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) because agriculture needs new and long-lasting ways to grow right away. The project is being run by NABVENTURES, a branch of NABARD, and has a starting fund of Rs 750 Cr. The fund's goal is to boost the agricultural industry by helping new businesses and rural businesses that use technology to solve problems.

### Financial structure and contributions

The "Agri-SURE" fund has 750 crore rupees in it, which was given by NABARD, the Ministry of Agriculture, and other organizations, with each giving 250 crore rupees. This large amount of money shows that both the public and private sectors are determined to close the innovation and funding gap in agriculture.

### Objectives and operational strategy

The fund's main goal is to improve the farming value chain by giving direct equity support and investing in Alternative Investment Funds (AIFs) that are both sector-specific and sector-agnostic. Agri-SURE wants to help about 85 agribusiness start-ups. It works on high-risk, high-impact projects, and each one could get up to 25 crore in investment. The ultimate goal is to create an environment that makes farming more productive, especially for small landowners and makes it easier to automate and digitize farming on a large scale.

### Focus Areas

The goal of Agri-SURE is to support new, tech-based projects that not only help Farmers' Producer Organizations (FPOs), but also build the links and infrastructure needed for a

new rural environment. The fund's goals are to promote long-term growth and create jobs in rural places by investing in IT solutions and renting out machinery. NABARD and Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare leaders have talked about how important it is for technology to keep getting better so that resources can get to the people who need them most quickly. Through digital and Fintech solutions, innovations backed by Agri-SURE are expected to improve productivity, increase last-mile connectivity, and spark the next wave of growth in agriculture. In the end, this project is a major step toward turning traditional farming into a more productive and long-lasting industry that meets both short-term wants and long-term development goals.

### ABOUT NABARD

- **APEX FINANCING AGENCY:** Established on July 12, 1982, by an act of the Indian Parliament, NABARD serves as the apex financing agency for institutions providing investment and production credit to promote agriculture, cottage, and rural industries.
- **SHG BANK LINKAGE PROGRAMME:** NABARD's "SHG Bank Linkage Program" has helped millions of poor people in rural areas by connecting self-help groups with banks. This has made it easier for people in rural areas to get credit and use banking services.
- **MANDATE AND FUNCTIONS:** NABARD took the place of RBI's Agricultural Credit Department and Rural Planning and Credit Cell. It is run by the Ministry of Finance. As a key part of the Indian government's strategy for financial inclusion, it makes it easier for credit to flow for rural development.

## AGRISTACK

In the 2024-25 Budget, Nirmala Sitharaman, the Finance Minister called for a Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) for the agriculture sector. The goal of this DPI is to connect more than six crore farmers to a formal land registry system through a project called Agristack.

### Agristack

Agristack is a digital framework that is meant to build a complete database for farmers that includes information about their identity, land records, income, loans, crop information, and insurance history. It uses data from farms and information that comes from government APIs.

### Data Sources

The information for Agristack will come from three main databases:

- **Farmers Registry:** Entitle each farmer with a unique digital ID tied to their Aadhaar and land records.

- **Geo-referenced Village Maps:** Realtime updation of farms and keep track of crops through digital surveys.
- **Crop Sown Registry:** Uses satellite data and remote sensing technology to make accurate maps of crops.

Agristack was started by the Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare in 2021 based on the suggestions of a task group. Its design was spelled out in a white paper, which led to pilot projects in several states.

### Purpose of Agristack

Agristack wants to make it easier to get information, cut down on unnecessary copies, and improve the accuracy of agriculture records. This unified method will help farmers plan their sales and assist the government in putting the scheme into action and keeping an eye on it. e-Nam, eChoupal, and NeML are some of the applications that will be part of the framework. These will give farmers important information



about the weather, market supply lines, and storage.

#### **Stakeholders involved**

The Union Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare is in charge of Agristack. Private companies like Amazon and Microsoft work together on some use cases,

but they don't have direct access to Agristack data yet. Some problems that could happen are old land records and the speed at which things are being digitized, which could make Agristack less useful. To solve land border disputes, you need a strong way to settle disagreements.

## **FISCAL RESPONSIBILITY AND BUDGET MANAGEMENT ACT (FRBM ACT)**

The Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, passed in 2003, was meant to make the Indian government more responsible with its money and cut down on its debt. Its importance has been emphasized during economic problems, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, when the FRBM Act's usual fiscal goals were loosened to allow for more government spending.

#### **Origin and implementation**

The FRBM Act was first suggested by Yashwant Sinha, who was Finance Minister at the time, in 2000. It became law in 2003. It was officially put into place on July 5, 2004, and its goal was to set up a framework for fiscal control to protect macroeconomic stability and long-term economic growth.

#### **Goals and objectives of the FRBM Act**

The Act's goals are to:

- Keep the budget stable.
- Promote transparency in government financial operations.
- Give the Reserve Bank of India more practical freedom to control inflation.
- One of its long-term goals is to ensure the financial load is shared fairly.

#### **Key features of the FRBM Act**

The FRBM Act mandates the presentation of specific documents with the Union Budget:

- Medium-term fiscal policy statement.

- Macroeconomic framework statement.
- Fiscal policy strategy statement.

There is a clear picture of the government's finances in these papers because they show predictions for important fiscal indicators like revenue and fiscal deficits. The Act lets the government deviate from its fiscal goals in certain situations, like natural disasters or major threats to national security, which gives fiscal policy some freedom.

#### **Challenges and reforms**

The FRBM Act has a very detailed structure, but it has been hard to put into practice, so it has been changed many times over the years. In 2016, the NK Singh Committee looked over the Act and suggested a number of changes, such as making paying down debt the main budget goal.

- Making a separate economic council to keep an eye on things.
- Making it clear what kinds of deviations from economic goals are okay.
- Setting strict rules for how the government can borrow money.

The goal of these suggestions is to make the FRBM Act better at promoting long-term economic growth and security. The FRBM Act is still very important for India's economic management because it enforces structured fiscal control and openness. This is especially true now that the global economy is unstable.

## **GOVERNMENT TO PROPOSE INSURANCE ACT AMENDMENTS IN BUDGET SESSION**

People in New Delhi are getting more and more excited about the upcoming Budget session. They think that the government will bring a bill to change the Insurance Act of 1938. 'Insurance for All by 2047' is the goal of this project, which will make a lot of big changes to the insurance industry to fit modern needs.

#### **Proposed amendments**

The proposed changes to the Insurance Act include adding a composite license, changing the capital requirements (differential capital), lowering the solvency standards, giving out captive licenses, changing the rules on investments, setting up a one-time registration system for intermediaries, and letting insurers sell other financial products. The draft bill, which is being prepared for approval by the Cabinet, wants to change the insurance industry so that it is more like the banking sector, which is divided into general banks, small finance banks, and payments banks.

#### **Impact of composite licensing**

The plan for composite licensing is a big change. The Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI) does not allow Indian insurance companies to have a license that would allow them to give both life insurance and other types of insurance, like health or general insurance. With this change, life insurers would be able to give health and general insurance as well. This would make the process easier and allow one insurer to provide more services.

#### **Operational and economic benefits**

The suggested changes to the laws should not only better protect customers and increase their returns, but they should also make it easier for new companies to enter the market. By making the insurance business more operational and financial efficient, this could help the economy grow and create jobs. With these changes, it should be easier to do business, which should bring more Indian and foreign companies into the insurance market.

#### **Regulatory Background**

For the insurance business in India, the Insurance Act of 1938 is the most important law. The Insurance Act and the Insurance Regulatory Development Act of 1999 are both being looked at again to make sure they meet the needs of today's business. In December 2022, the Ministry of Finance asked the public for feedback on the planned changes, highlighting the government's open approach to changing important economic laws.

#### **Broader implications for the insurance sector**

By making it easier for insurers to meet certain capital and liquidity requirements, these changes could lead to the rise of niche insurers that focus on areas that haven't been well served, like micro-insurance or regional insurance. With these new companies coming into the Indian market, more people from all walks of life and in more places are likely to get





insurance. This will have a big effect on the country's economy. The government wants to make the Indian insurance market more active, responsive, and open to everyone by taking

these steps. These goals are in line with the country's overall economic strategy.

## ECONOMIC SURVEY 2023 – 24

“Open minds are a good place to start... Our knowledge and attitudes have to continually evolve...”

### Going strong, concerns remain

While the 2024 Economic Survey said the economy is resilient, it warned about widening inequality and the need to add lakhs of jobs annually

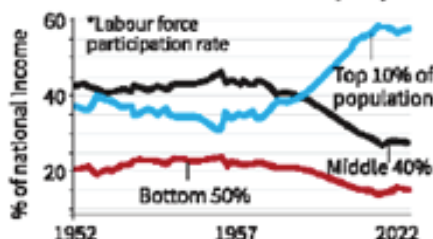
#### Consistent growth

Real GDP grew by 8.2% in FY24, posting growth in excess of 7% for a third year



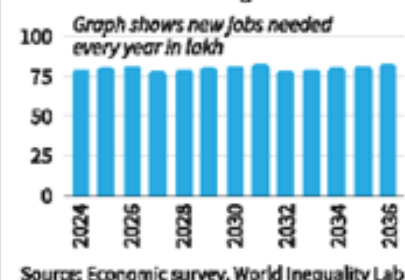
#### Widening inequality

Informal sector integration and expansion of female LFPR\* in focus to address inequality



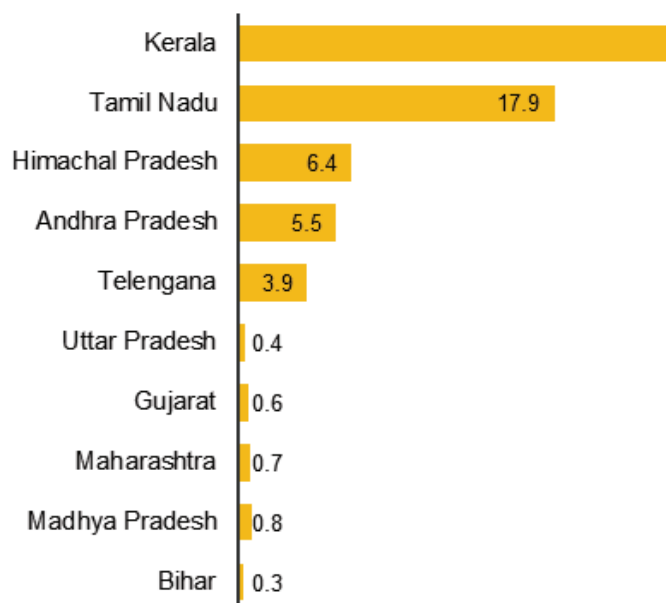
#### Quantum of new jobs needed

India needs to generate nearly 78.5 lakh jobs annually until 2030 in the non-farm sector to cater to the rising workforce



The Indian economy broadly caught up with pre-COVID growth trends likely to grow by 6.5% - 7% for the FY 2024-25 with prospects of clocking 7%-plus growth in coming years that also drew attention to the need to address inequality and unemployment as a policy priority. India's per capita income GDP has risen seven times since 1990 to \$ 2,500.

### POVERTY ALLEVIATION & MG NATIONAL RURAL EMPLOYMENT GUARANTEE SCHEME



Employment Guarantee scheme was not a “real indicator” of rural distress. Tamil Nadu and Kerala together accounting for approximately 1% of the total poor in the country generated 51 crore person-days of employment drawing nearly 19% of all the MGNREGS funds released in the financial year 2023-24 respectively. Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, with about 45% of the poor population, generated 53 crore person-days drew out only 17% of the MGNREGS funds. The correlation coefficient between State-wise multidimensional poverty index and person-days generated was only 0.3, indicating that the MGNREGS fund usage and employment generation were not proportional to poverty levels. (A coefficient of 1 would indicate that the poorer a State, greater the number of person-days it would generate, while a coefficient of 0 would indicate no relationship between poverty and person-days.)

The Survey concludes that “demand under MGNREGS is not a real indicator of rural distress but is rather predominantly linked with the State's institutional capacity and to some extent also different minimum wages and other considerations”. At the same time, it concedes that the variation in fund usage can be attributed to the varying MGNREGS wage rates in each State. States such as Haryana, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka have relatively high notified wage rates under the MGNREGS. The difference in registering the demand for the scheme is heavily dependent on the efficiency of State administration. This is reflected in the fact that despite provisions mandating States to grant unemployment allowance, only ₹90,000 was released in FY24 and ₹7.8 lakh in FY23 across all States.

For instance, in States such as Kerala and Tamil Nadu, where the poverty-level is among lowest in the country, the MGNREGS fund usage is among highest.

The graph shows the ratio of proportion of MGNREGS fund released to States and proportion of the poor population of major States.

FIGURE: Bar chart representation of relation of poverty alleviation & MG National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme.

Chief Economic Adviser V. Anantha Nageswaran noted in the Economic Survey that the demand under the MG National Rural



## UNION BUDGET 2024 – 25

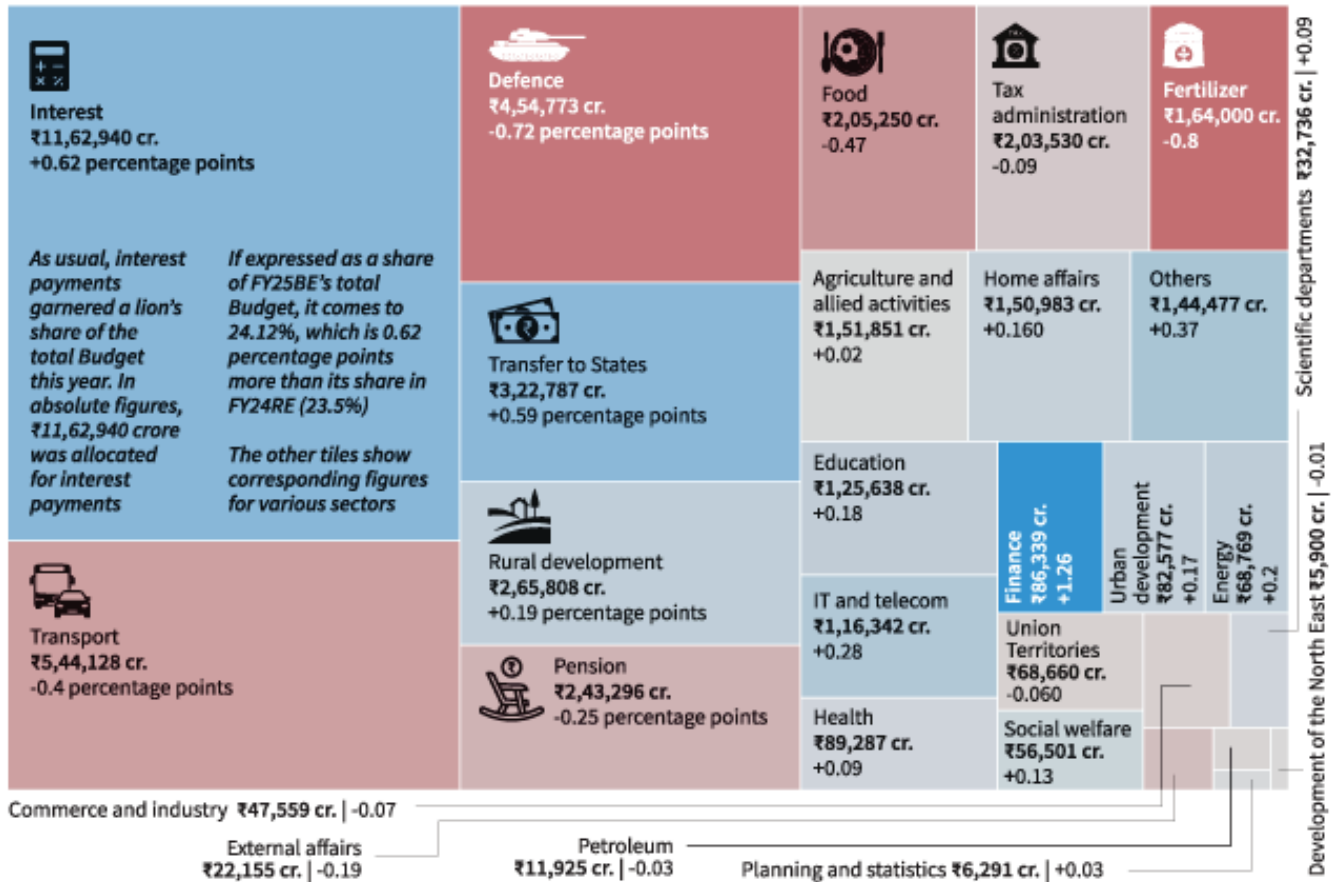
“This is a Budget that will take the country’s villages, poor and farmers on the path of prosperity. This is for the continuation of the empowerment of the neo middle class”

NARENDRA MODI  
Prime Minister



# Budget breakdown

The outlay for the transport sector (apart from interest payments) formed the bulk of the expenditure in FY25BE. However, transport's share in total Budget came down by 0.4% points from last year (11.69% in FY24RE to 11.29% in FY25BE). The graphic depicts budgeted expenditure (₹ crore) and the change from FY24RE in percentage points



SOURCE: THE FIGURES ARE SOURCED FROM "THE EXPENDITURE OF MAJOR ITEMS" PAGE WHICH FEATURES IN THE "BUDGET AT A GLANCE" DOCUMENT

## Most sectors shed pandemic blues

Growth of Gross Value Added (GVA) accelerated across most sectors, except agriculture, in Q4FY24. Growth in agriculture stagnated, recording the lowest figure in over five years in Q4FY24 (considering only the last quarter). In contrast, manufacturing and industry sectors posted significant growth. Table shows y-o-y% increase in GVA

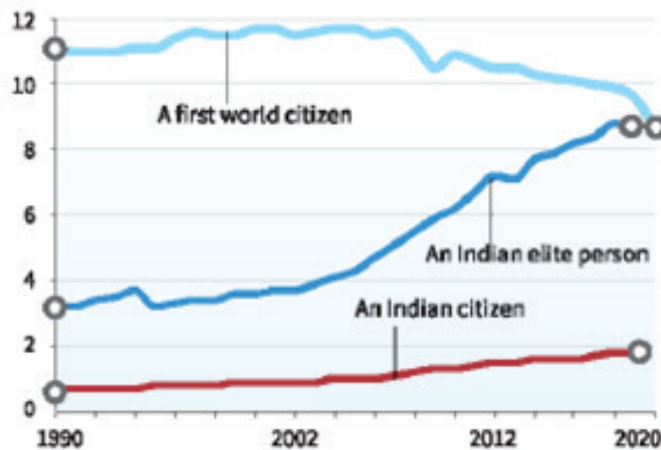
Quarter	Agriculture	Industry	Mining	Manufacturing	Electricity	Construction	Services
FY18Q4	7.8	9.5	-8.9	11	11.2	14	5.9
FY19Q4	-0.9	3	0.4	1.7	5.1	6.6	7.7
FY20Q4	8.8	-2.1	-1.2	-4.7	2.8	2.3	5.6
FY21Q4	3.3	16.3	-2.9	19.6	2.7	19.4	1.3
FY22Q4	5.5	2.3	1	-0.3	7.2	7	5.3
FY23Q4	7.6	3.4	2.9	1	7.3	7.4	7.2
FY24Q4	0.6	8.4	4.3	8.9	7.7	8.7	6.7

- Financing the green transition

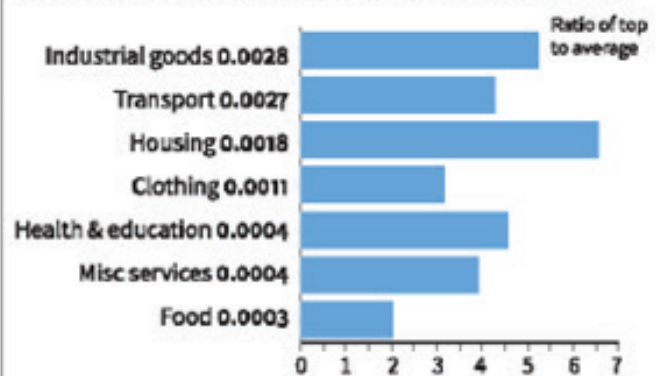
# Financing the Indian Green Deal

The data for the charts were sourced from the World Bank, World Inequality Database (WID), NSSO 68th round, India's Input Output matrix data, and the PLFS (July 2017-June 2018) Annual Report

**Chart 1:** The per capita carbon footprint of the top 10% of the Indian population, which, while diverging from an average Indian's, has converged with that of a first world citizen.

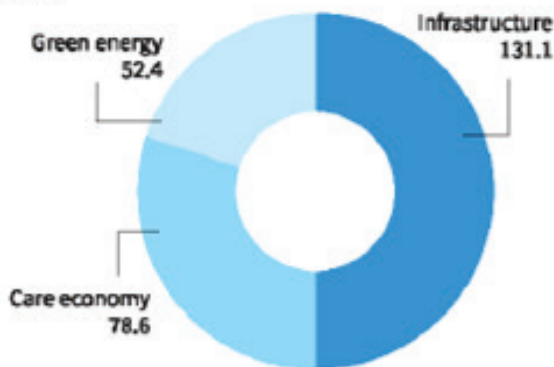


**Chart 2:** The chart plots the ratio of expenses incurred by the Indian elite and an average Indian across different commodities and compares these with the carbon embodied in those commodities. Numbers in bold: Carbon content (MTCO<sub>2</sub>/\$)

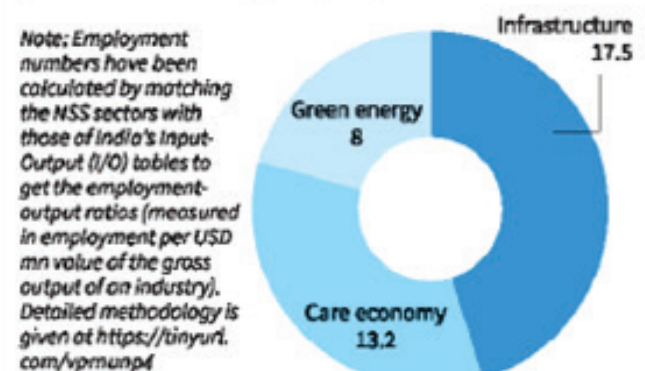


Note: This is based on consumption data of the 2011-12 round of the NSSO. We are updating it for the most recent round.

**Chart 3 (a):** The chart shows the expenses (in USD billion) under three categories: Green energy, Infrastructure and Care economy

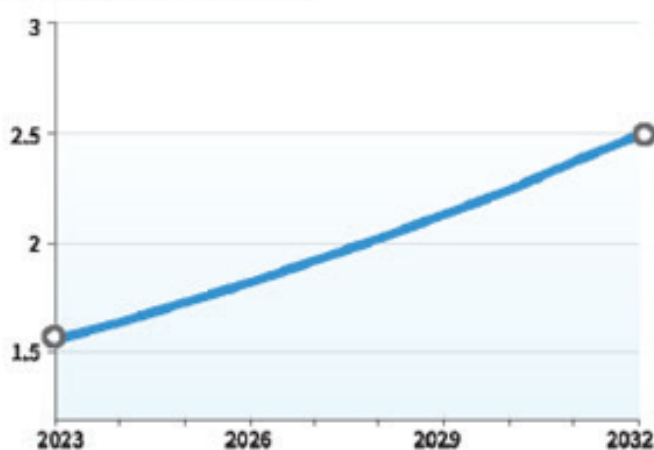


**Chart 3(b):** The chart shows the total employment generated in these categories (in mn)

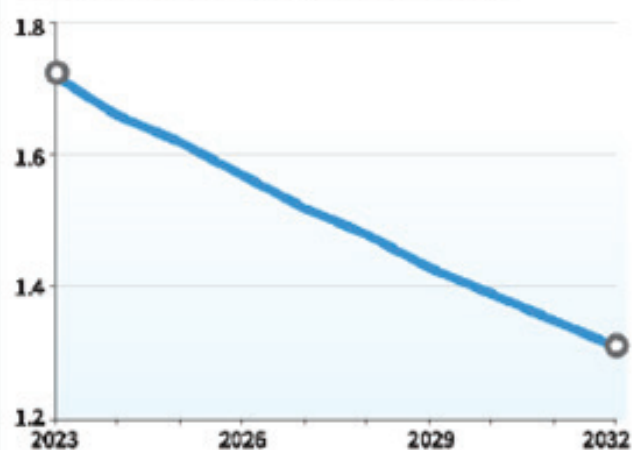


Note: Employment numbers have been calculated by matching the NSS sectors with those of India's Input-Output (I/O) tables to get the employment-output ratios (measured in employment per USD mn value of the gross output of an industry). Detailed methodology is given at <https://tinyurl.com/vpmunp4>

**Chart 4(a):** The chart shows the projected rise in wealth of the Indian elite (in Million crores)



**Chart 4(b):** The chart shows a declining wealth tax rate (in %) which would go down to 1.3% by the end of 2032





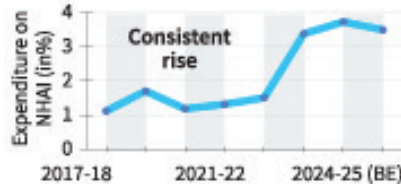
# A mixed bag

Outlays to implement housing in urban & rural areas, and other basic amenities in urban areas as a share of total Budget have improved in FY25BE. The allocation to smart city mission as a share of total Budget, on the other hand, has plunged

**AMRUT:** Water supply, sewerage, transport, and parks in urban areas



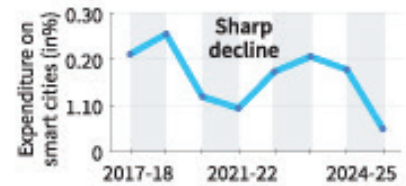
**NHAI:** Responsible for the execution of the Bharatmala Pariyojana



**PMAY-U:** Aims at providing pucca houses to beneficiaries in urban areas



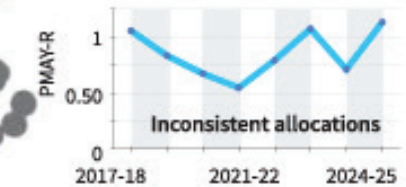
**Smart cities mission:** Aims at transforming cities through better infrastructure



**FAME:** Supports the electrification of public and shared transportation



**PMAY-R:** Aims at providing pucca houses to beneficiaries in rural areas



**Employment and Education** - Proposed a prioritised approach in the fields of employment and skilling announcing 5 schemes with an outlay of ₹ 2 lakh Cr to generate jobs for the youth. The Centre will implement three schemes for “employment- linked incentive” as part of the Prime Minister’s package. based on enrolment in the Employees’ Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) focussing on recognition of first-time employees, and support to employees and employers.

- Provide one-month wage in three instalments via direct benefit transfer of up to ₹ 15,000 for an estimated 21 Cr. first-time employees in all formal sectors registered in the EPFO, drawing a salary of ₹ 1 lakh per month.
- Incentivise EPFO contribution of employment of first-time employees in the manufacturing sector in the first four years expected to benefit 30 lakh youth entering employment, and their employers.
- Reimburse employers up to ₹ 3,000 per month for two years towards their EPFO contribution for each additional employee in all sectors.
- Upgradation of thousand Industrial Training Institutes under a hub-and-spoke model to skill 20 lakh youth over a five-year period.
- Internship allowance of ₹ 5,000 per month and a one-time assistance of ₹ 6,000 for 12 months in 500 top companies

in the next five years to 1 Cr. youths



Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) – Formulated a package covering financing, regulatory changes, and technology support for MSMEs and manufacturing, particularly labour-intensive manufacturing to help them grow and also compete globally. MSMEs contribute 35.4 % to all-India manufacturing output in FY22 and the share of MSME-made products in exports in FY24 was 45.7 %.

- **CREDIT GUARANTEE SCHEME** pooling credit risks of MSMEs to facilitate non-collateral or third-party guarantee term loans for purchase of equipment.
- **GUARANTEE COVER** up to ₹ 100 Cr. to each applicant upon paying an upfront guarantee fee and an annual guarantee fee on the reduced loan balance via independent self-financing guarantee fund.
- **NEW CREDIT ASSESSMENT MODEL** to be developed Public sector banks in-house, based on the scoring of digital footprints of MSMEs in the economy to assess MSMEs for credit.
- **ENHANCING LIMIT OF MUDRA LOANS** from ₹ 10 lakh to ₹ 20 lakh for those who have repaid previous loans under

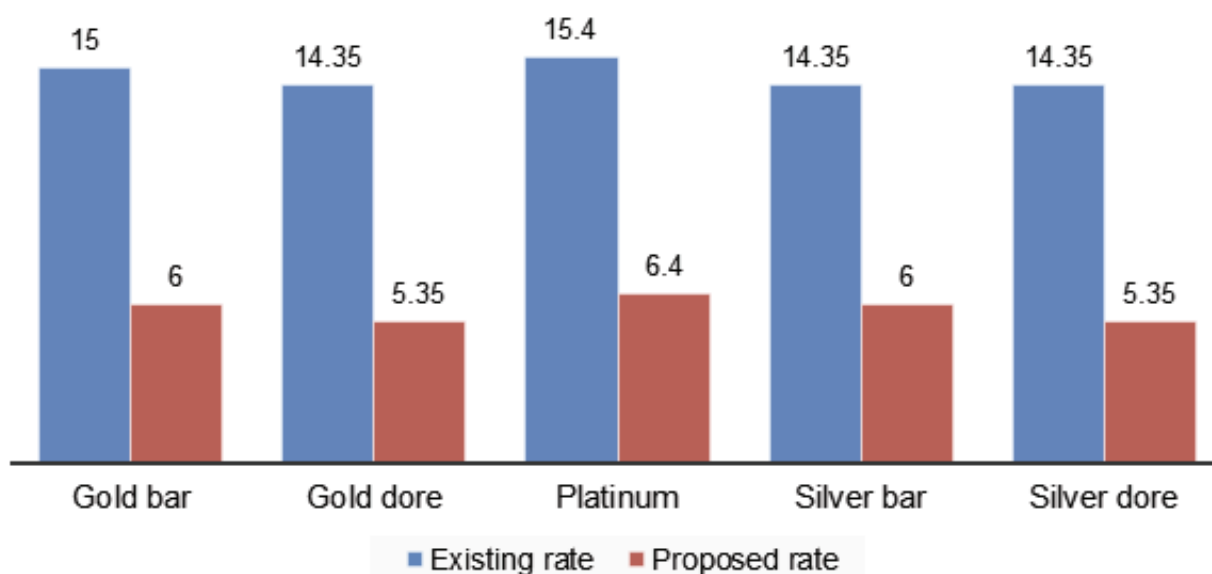
the 'Tarun' category.

- **E-COMMERCE EXPORT HUBS** to be set on public-private-partnership (PPP) mode to facilitate MSMEs and traditional artisans to sell their products in the international markets.
- **INVESTMENT-GRADE ENERGY AUDIT** of traditional MSMEs in 60 clusters to financially support for transition to cleaner forms of energy.
- **RENTAL HOUSING WITH DORMITORY TYPE ACCOMMODATION** for industrial workers will also be facilitated on PPP mode.

**Productivity –**

**Customs Duty on gold, silver reduced to 6 %**

### Customs Duties



**FIGURE:** Column chart representation of the customs duties of metals.

The significant duty cuts would help reduce smuggling and cost the government an annual revenue loss of ₹ 28,000 Cr. based on FY24 import levels. India is a world leader in the diamond-cutting and polishing industry, employing a large number of skilled workers. The proposal to abolish equalisation levy and announcement of safe-harbour tax on rough diamond trading is expected to fuel the growth of the diamond cutting and polishing industry.

**Customs duty slashed on certain inputs for textile and leather industries**



Proposal to reduce import duty some of the additional accessories and embellishments for manufacture of textile and leather garments, leather and synthetic footwear, or other leather products for exports is expected to enhance the competitiveness of exports in the leather and textile sectors.

**YOU DO IT CAN**

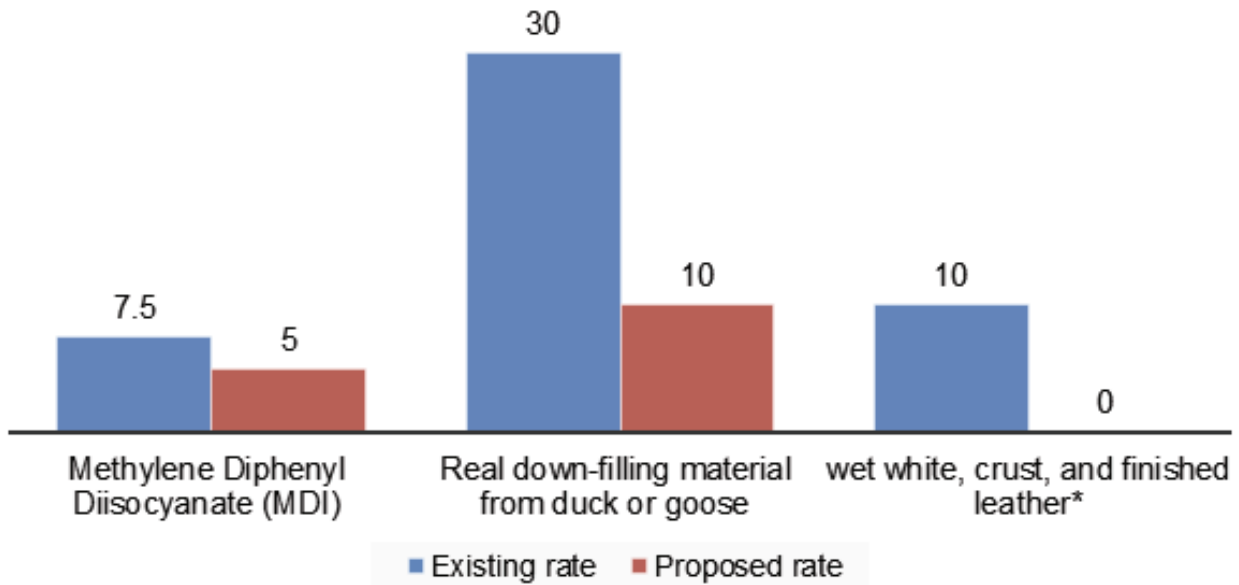
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## Customs Duties

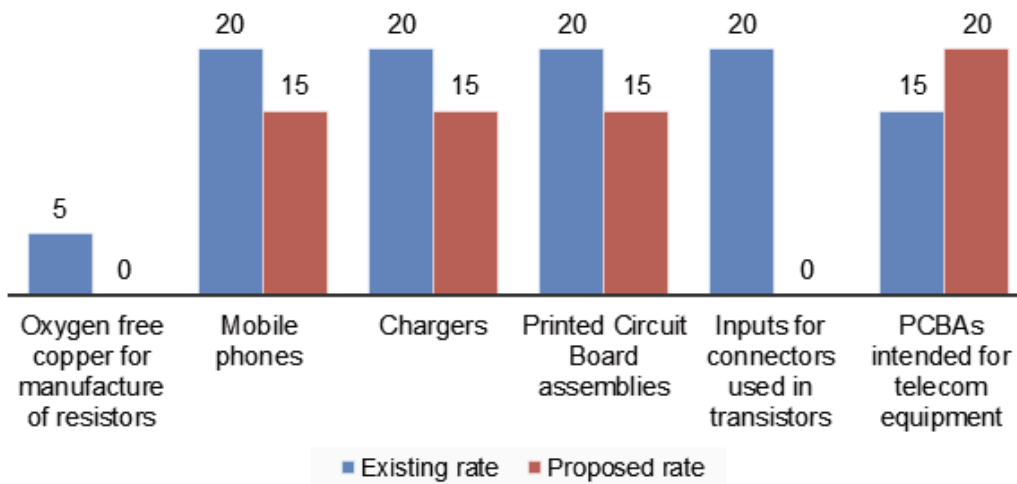


**FIGURE:** Column chart representation of the customs duties of metals. \* for manufacture of garments, footwear, and other leather products for exports.



Customs duty reduced on mobile phones, chargers, and electronic components Slashed basic customs duty on mobile phones, chargers, and some components as part of the Budget.

## Customs Duties



**FIGURE:** Column chart representation of the customs duties on mobile phones, chargers, and electronic components.



### ₹1,000-cr. venture capital fund for space start-ups

Announced a pool of ₹1,000 Cr. (US \$ 120 million) as Venture Capital Funding (VCF) for space start-ups with the goal of “expanding the space economy by five times in the next 10 years. The total funds raised in 2023-2024 by all our space start-ups combined was a paltry US \$ 134 million.

### Farming sector

- Review the agriculture research set-up to bring focus on raising productivity and developing climate-resilient varieties. New 109 high-yielding and climate-resilient varieties of 32 field and horticulture crops will be released for cultivation by farmers.
- Initiate one Cr farmers across the country into natural farming supported by certification and branding in the next two years.
- Implementation of Digital Public Infrastructure for Agriculture, and digital crop survey of kharif crop in 400 districts.
- Financial support for setting up a network of Nucleus Breeding Centres for shrimp broodstocks through NABARD.



Land – Land-related reforms and actions, both in rural and urban areas, will cover land administration, planning and management, and urban planning, usage and building bylaws”. The 2024-25 Union Budget presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman promised a few reforms related to land and land use in the country ranging from their identification to planning and potentially drawing from multiple domains.

- The Centre “in partnership with States will facilitate the implementation of the Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) in agriculture for coverage of farmers and their lands in three years”, including a “digital survey” of the kharif crop in 400 districts and the land details being brought into a “land registry”.
- Rural land-related actions will include assignment of unique land parcel identification numbers or Bhu-Aadhaar for all lands, digitisation of cadastral maps, survey of map sub-divisions as per current ownership, establishment of land registry, and linking to the farmers registry.
- Land records in urban areas will be digitised with Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping that facilitate improving the financial position of urban local bodies. An IT-based system for property record administration, updating, and tax administration will be established.

Opportunities – Proposal to scrap Angel tax on foreign investments received by start-ups to help “bolster the Indian start-up ecosystem, boost the entrepreneurial spirit, and support innovation”. Angel taxes are believed to curb foreign investment and deterred the growth of start-ups. Start-up funding fell 60 % in 2023 to \$10 billion.



Youth – The focus on empowering youth via education will help in reducing the financial burden on students and promoting enrolment in domestic institutions. This initiative will undoubtedly empower many aspiring students to pursue their academic goals without the burden of financial constraints and increase job opportunities.

- New loan scheme with transfer of e-vouchers to one lakh students every year to secure loans up to ₹ 10 lakh to pursue higher education in domestic institutions. The annual interest subvention will be 3 % of the loan amount. ₹ 10 lakh education loan with annual 3 % interest subvention.
- Model Skill Loan Scheme, a revamped version of the Skill Loan Scheme that was launched in 2015 to facilitate loans up to ₹ 7.5 lakh with a guarantee from a government-promoted fund expected to help 25,000 students every year. As per information provided by the Indian Banks Association with respect to 21 banks, a total skill loan of ₹ 29.06 Cr. was disbursed during the year 2018-19.



Middle Class – Tax rationalisation has been proposed to benefit the middle class. The tax restructuring would simplify capital gains taxation and the introduction of a 20 % tax on short-term gains is likely to reduce volatility, raise tax revenue, and bring long-term focus. A dramatic rise in derivative trading volumes has been witnessed since 2020. Retail investor participation in derivatives market surged from 2 % in 2018 to 41 % in 2023.

Regulators have expressed concerns that this surge in trading is leading to speculative behaviour that could be detrimental to individual investors and the broader economy. This change in tax policy should encourage retail investors to shift focus from speculative trading to long-term investments.

- Listed financial assets held for more than a year; unlisted financial assets and all non-financial assets would have to be held for at least two years are categorised as long-term instruments. Long-term gains on all financial and non-financial assets would attract a tax of 12.5%.
- Short-term gains on certain financial assets will henceforth attract a tax of 20%, while those on all other financial and non-financial assets would continue to attract the 15% tax rate.
- Unlisted bonds and debentures, debt mutual funds and market-linked debentures, irrespective of the holding period, would attract tax on capital gains at applicable rates.
- Proposal to increase the limit of exemption of capital gains on certain financial assets to ₹1.25 lakh a year benefit of lower and middle-income classes.
- Proposed to increase Securities Transaction Tax (STT) on Futures and Options contracts to 0.2% and 0.1%, respectively for deepening the tax base.



Energy Security – Nuclear energy is expected to form a very significant part of the energy mix for Viksit (developed) Bharat. Towards that pursuit, our government will partner with the private sector for setting up Bharat Small Reactors, research and development of Bharat Small Modular Reactors, and research and development of newer technologies for nuclear energy.

- Allocated nearly ₹ 10,000 Cr., more than twice the ₹4,970 Cr that was spent as part of the solar power (grid) last year for Pradhan Mantri Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojna to provide subsidised rooftop solar installations to 1 Cr households. The scheme offers 300 units of free electricity and, as The Hindu reported, Households with a suitable roof and an existing connection to the grid can secure a low-interest, collateral-free loan for setting up rooftop solar installations paying a minimum of ₹20,000 depending on the power capacity of the installed system.
- Proposal to invest in construction of Small Modular Nuclear Reactors (SMRs), compact versions of nuclear reactors and provide up to 300MW of power. A proposal from 2018 to develop an Advanced Ultra Supercritical (AUSC) thermal power



plant via a collaboration involving the National Thermal Power Corporation (NTPC) and Bharat Heavy Electricals Ltd. (BHEL) was also mentioned.



**New Generation Reforms** – Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's Budget speech, for the first time signalled those polluting industries such as iron, steel, and aluminium will have to conform to emission targets. A road map for moving the 'hard to abate' industries from 'energy efficiency' targets to 'emission targets' will be formulated. Appropriate regulations for transition of these industries from the current 'Perform, Achieve, and

Trade' mode to 'Indian Carbon Market' mode will be put in place". These directives come in the backdrop of the proposed India Carbon Market that has been in the works for a few years. A carbon market or an emission trading scheme works as a trading platform where carbon credits, created as a consequence of preventing carbon emissions, can be bought and sold on negotiated prices on a portal. The system only works if an industry is required to curb annual emissions.

- Proposal to set up an integrated technology platform to improve outcomes under the Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code (IBC) for achieving transparency, consistency, timely settlement and better oversight of all resolution cases. The IBC has resolved 1,000 companies resulting in direct recovery of ₹ 3.3 lakh Cr. to creditors. In addition, cases worth ₹ 10 lakh Cr have been disposed off even before admission.
- Set up additional National Company Law Tribunals (NCLTs) to expedite resolution of cases under the IBC, with some dedicated to resolve cases exclusively under the Companies Act.
- Improving outcomes under the IBC, extending the services of Centre for Processing Accelerated Corporate Exit voluntary closure of LLPs, strengthening of National Company Law Tribunals and establishing more debt recovery tribunals are positive for the banking sector as it enhances speed of recovery processes in the system.



**Technology** - Technological integration will help in identifying sources of delay and corrective measures needed for improving efficiency. The integration of all pillars of IBC ecosystem through a tech platform will increase the utility and efficiency of CIR process. The improvement in legislative framework and increased strength of tribunals is expected to bring more efficiency in the process

- Proposal to operationalise the Anusandhan National Research Fund for basic research and prototype development, and bring in provisions for enhanced private sector-driven research and innovation at a commercial scale, with a financing pool of ₹1 lakh Cr., in line with the announcement in the interim Budget.
- Allocation for the National Quantum Mission during the Budget 2023-24 that "aims to seed, nurture, and scale up scientific and industrial R&D and create a vibrant and innovative ecosystem in quantum technologies". The Union Cabinet approved it in April 2023 with a total outlay of ₹ 6,000 Cr over eight years.
- Additional allocation of ₹ 400 Cr. on innovation in defence through the Acing Development of Innovative Technologies with iDEX (ADITI) scheme to engage with start-ups/MSMEs and innovators to develop Def-Tech solutions and supply the Indian military with innovative and indigenous technological solutions. A grant of up to 50% of Product Development Budget with enhanced limit (Max) of ₹ 25 Cr per applicant will be awarded as per extant iDEX guidelines.
- The Ministry of Earth Sciences has been given ₹3,064.80 Cr – a modest increase over its actual expenditure of ₹2,879.02 Cr last year but a 7.6% cut from the budgeted value. The capital outlay on oceanographic research has increased by ₹53 Cr to ₹280 Cr whereas that for meteorology has dropped to ₹276.20 Cr.

#### **New scheme to focus on uplift of tribal villages**



Proposed the launch of PM Janjatiya Unnat Gram Abhiyaan modelled along PM-JANMAN with the aim of achieving full saturation of basic facilities among 5 Cr. Scheduled Tribe families across 63,000 villages in tribal-majority areas and aspirational districts. PM-JANMAN was launched to achieve saturation of basic facilities for Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups.

#### **Cancer drugs exempted from customs duty**



Announced exemption of customs duty on three cancer treatment drugs – Trastuzumab Deruxtecan, Osimertinib, and Durvalumab and proposed changes in the Basic Customs Duties (BCD) on X-ray tubes and flat panel detectors for use in medical X-ray machines under the phased manufacturing programme.

#### **A.P. to get ₹15,000 Cr. for capital Amaravati**



Special financial support of ₹ 15,000 Cr. through Multilateral Development Agencies (MDAs) for Andhra Pradesh to develop its capital Amaravati.  
Financial assistance for the Polavaram irrigation project.  
Grants for Backward Regions.

#### **Developmental assistance for Bihar**



Development projects worth ₹ 58,900 Cr. for Bihar, with ₹ 26,000 Cr. allocated for road projects, ₹ 21,400 Cr. to set up a 2,400-MW power plant in Pirpainti, and ₹ 11,500 Cr. for flood control.



### Border infrastructure maintenance and capital outlay sees hike



The Budget allocated ₹3,756 Cr. for the border infrastructure maintenance and capital outlay, increasing by ₹ 211 Cr. for the 2024-25 Budget compared with ₹ 3,545 Cr. last year, under the allocation for the Ministry of Home Affairs. The allocation for 'rehabilitation and relief for migrants', which includes Sri Lankan refugees and Tibetans, has been increased from ₹ 301 Cr. in the 2023-24 fiscal to ₹ 539.72 Cr. in 2024-25.

### MGNREGS allocation lower than last year's actual expenditure



For the financial year 2024-25, ₹ 86,000 Cr has been allocated for the MGNREGS, ₹ 26,000 Cr more than last year's allocation of just ₹ 60,000 Cr., but it is still ₹ 19,297 Cr less than the scheme's actual expenditure of ₹1.05 lakh Cr. in the financial year 2023-24. The Budgetary allocation for the MGNREGS is just 1.78 % of the budgetary allocation, a 10-year low in the scheme's funding.

### Allocation for science Ministries



The Department of Science and Technology (DST) received ₹ 8,029 Cr., a marginal increase over the ₹ 7,931 Cr from last year, but nearly two-thirds more than its utilisation of ₹ 4,891.78 Cr.

### Women-led development

The flagship schemes under the Ministry, including Saksham Anganwadi, POSHAN 2.0, Mission Vatsalya and Mission Shakti, have been given substantial funds to continue their efforts in improving nutrition, child protection, and women's empowerment. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announcing more than ₹ 3 lakh Cr. for schemes benefiting women and girls, and promised a look at further lowering duties for properties purchased by women.

Vatsalya', a contributory pension scheme will have contributions from parents and guardians. On the child attaining the age of majority, the plan can be converted seamlessly into a regular National Pension System (NPS) account.

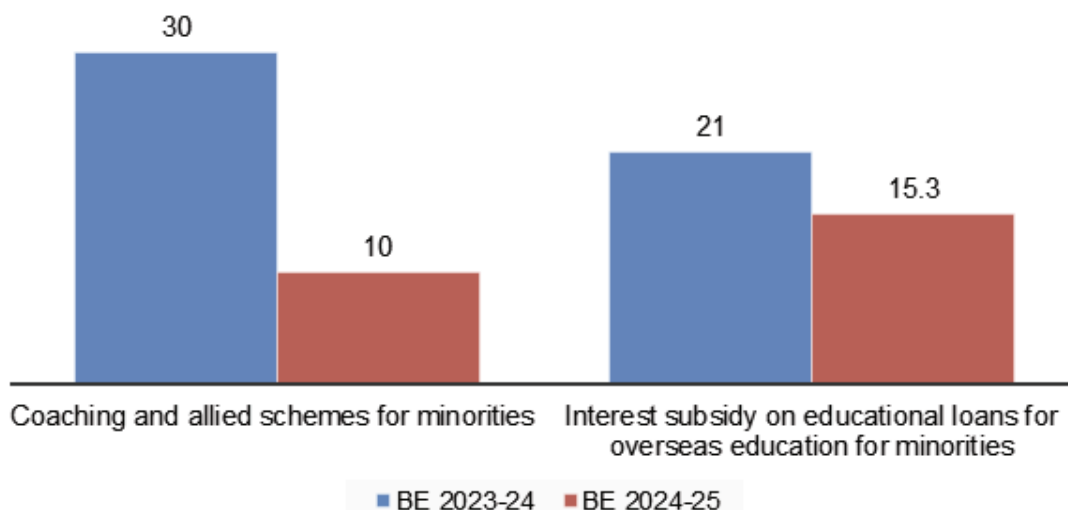
- Setting up of special working women's hostels and creches in collaboration with industries to facilitate women's employment, and promoting women-specific skilling programmes and support for women's self-help groups.
- Allocations for schemes coming under the Women and Child Development (WCD) Ministry, including 'Samarthya' (supporting projects such as women's hostels), 'Swadhar Greh', and 'Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana', have also been increased slightly.
- Lower stamp duty for women purchasing property is likely to drive the growth of more first-time home buyers. Digitisation of land records will improve transparency, boost revenue compliance and improve overall credit flow.

### Meagre increase in funds allocated for minority affairs



The Budget earmarked 0.07% of the government's total outlay for the Union Ministry of Minority Affairs, a mere 2.7% increase, from funds allocated in the previous year's Budget Estimate (BE), for the financial year 2024-25. This allocation is around 22% of the Revised Estimate (RE).

### Minorities



**FIGURE:** Column chart representation of the budgetary allocation for the Union Ministry for Minority Affairs.

# ECOLOGY





**PENCH TIGER RESERVE  
LAUNCHES AI FOR FIRE  
DETECTION**

**INDIAN GAUR**

**SAVE CHANGES TO THE ADOBE  
INDESIGN DOCUMENT “JULY-  
2024.INDD” BEFORE CLOSING?**

**URBANIZATION CAUSES 60%  
MORE NIGHT-TIME WARMING**

**TAMIL NADU CREATES 20  
COMMITTEES FOR MANGROVE  
PROTECTION**

**INDIA’S LARGEST LEOPARD  
SAFARI OPENS IN  
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**CITES SETS TRADE GUIDELINES  
FOR ROSEWOOD SPECIES**

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FOR ROSEWOOD SPECIES**



## PENCH TIGER RESERVE LAUNCHES AI FOR FIRE DETECTION

**CONTEXT:** The Pench Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra has introduced an advanced AI system for early detection of forest fires.

**BACKGROUND:** A state-of-the-art system with a high-resolution PTZ camera, installed on a tower on one of Pench's highest hills, can monitor over 350 sq km of the tiger reserve. Integrated with 15 commercial satellite services, the AI-powered Pantera platform provides real-time forest fire alerts within 3 minutes, enhancing fire management.

### AI-Enhanced Forest Fire Management at Pench Tiger Reserve

- **AI Detection System:** Pench Tiger Reserve deploys AI system distinguishing smoke from clouds with 24x7 Infra-Red capability.
- **Data Integration:** The system uses temperature, precipitation, and wind data to forecast future fire incidences.
- **Resource Tracking:** Integration with GPS-equipped water tanks and vehicles allows real-time fire incident management.
- **Rapid Response:** Swift detection and alert mechanisms aim to save vast forest areas and protect wildlife.
- **Collaborative Effort:** The project was a joint collaboration funded by Solar Industries India Ltd and the Maharashtra government.

## PENCH TIGER RESERVE

**LOCATION:** Situated in the Satpura hills, spanning Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra.

**NAME ORIGIN:** Named after the Pench River, flowing through the Reserve.

**COMPOSITION:** Includes Indira Priyadarshini Pench National Park, Pench Mowgli Sanctuary, and a buffer zone.

**HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE:** The setting for Rudyard Kipling's "The Jungle Book".

**TERRAIN AND VEGETATION:** Undulating terrain with diverse vegetation from moist valleys to dry forests.

**FLORA AND FAUNA:** Home to teak, saag, and numerous animals including tigers, leopards, and 325 bird species.



## INDIAN GAUR

**CONTEXT:** After several decades, an Indian Gaur was sighted in the Atmakur division of the Nallamala forest, exciting wildlife enthusiasts.

**BACKGROUND:** After several decades, the locally extinct Indian gaur has been spotted in Andhra Pradesh's Nagarjunasagar Srisaileam Tiger Reserve (NSTR). Telangana forest officials confirmed it is the same gaur that migrated from Amrabad Tiger Reserve last year.



# INDIAN GAUR

Largest Wild Cattle: The Indian Bison, or Gaur, is the largest in the wild cattle family.

Scientific Name: Known as *Bos gaurus*.

Distribution and Habitat: Indigenous to South and Southeast Asia, found in evergreen, semi-evergreen, and moist deciduous forests.

Physical Features: Length ranges from 240-340 cm, height 170-230 cm, and weight up to 1500 kg.

Horn Description: Both sexes have pale green or yellowish-brown horns with slight inward curvature.

Social Behaviour: Gaurs are social, typically living in groups of 30 to 40 individuals.



**Vulnerable**



**Appendix I**



**Schedule I**

### Nagarjunasagar-Srisaileam Tiger Reserve

- Location and Size: Located in Nallamalais hills, spanning 5937 sq. km across five districts.
- Habitat and Vegetation: Features plateaus, ridges, valleys, and dry deciduous forests with bamboo and grass.
- Floral Diversity: Hosts 1581 taxa, 29 grass species, and 353 medicinal plant species.
- Faunal Diversity: Home to 80 mammal species, 303 birds, 54 reptiles, and numerous other species.
- Tiger Population: Estimated tiger population ranges from 53-67 as per 2010 assessment.
- Corridor Connectivity: Crucial corridor spans 350 km from Srivenkateswara National Park to Gundlabrahmeshwaram Wildlife Sanctuary.

The  
More  
You Learn,  
The  
More  
You Earn





## THAZHAKARA PANCHAYAT RELEASES SECOND BIODIVERSITY REGISTER VOLUME

**CONTEXT:** Thazhakara panchayat has released the second volume of its People's Biodiversity Register, with three other panchayats in Kerala also updating their PBRs.

**BACKGROUND:** The second volume of the People's Biodiversity Register (PBR) for Thazhakara grama panchayat in Alappuzha reveals that the Indian black turtle, along with other species like Indian garden lizards and barn owls, has declined due to poaching and habitat loss. However, species like rock pigeons and rufous treepies have increased. The local area features 38 sacred groves, 10 paddy polders, and 35 ponds.

### Thazhakara's Comprehensive People's Biodiversity Register

- **PBR Update:** Thazhakara becomes first in Alappuzha and Kerala to update and publish a comprehensive People's Biodiversity Register.
- **261-Page Document:** The document details regional biodiversity, including resources, traditional knowledge, and climate change impacts.
- **Species Decline:** Indian black turtles, Indian garden lizards, barn owls, and certain plants have declined due to poaching and other factors.
- **Increased Species:** Rock pigeons, rufous treepies, and other species have seen increased numbers in the area.
- **Sacred Groves and Ponds:** The register documents 38 sacred groves, 10 paddy polders, and 35 ponds.
- **Future Projects:** Based on the PBR, Thazhakara is developing projects in agriculture, water, and waste management focusing on conservation.

### People's Biodiversity Register

- **Comprehensive Record:** PBR documents biodiversity, including habitats, land races, domesticated animals, and biological diversity knowledge.
- **Biological Diversity Act:** The 2002 Act mandates the creation of PBRs to document and safeguard bioresources and knowledge.
- **Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs):** Formed by local bodies, BMCs prepare PBRs to promote conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.
- **Local Body Role:** Local bodies, with BMCs, develop PBRs in consultation with communities to ensure accurate documentation.
- **Conservation Impact:** PBRs aid in conservation, sustainable resource use, and protection of traditional knowledge.

## URBANIZATION CAUSES 60% MORE NIGHT-TIME WARMING

**CONTEXT:** Research from IIT Bhubaneswar reveals urbanization has caused nearly 60% more night-time warming in over 140 major Indian cities compared to surrounding non-urban areas.

**BACKGROUND:** Research reveals that Ahmedabad, Jaipur, and Rajkot experience the highest urban heat island (UHI) effect, with Delhi-NCR and Pune ranking fourth and fifth, respectively. Urbanization contributes to the UHI effect by causing concrete and asphalt surfaces to retain and radiate heat, raising night-time temperatures.

### Urban Night-Time Warming Trends in India

- **Regional Variation:** Northwestern, northeastern, and southern cities show a pronounced increase in night-time temperatures compared to other regions.
- **Urbanisation Impact:** Eastern and central Indian cities, undergoing rapid expansion, exhibit a higher contribution to night-time warming.
- **Temperature Increase:** Night-time surface temperatures rose by about 0.53°C per decade, nearly doubling the national average increase of 0.26°C.
- **Urban Vulnerability:** Cities face severe impacts from urbanisation and climate change, including heatwaves and extreme weather events.
- **Mitigation Needs:** The study underscores the need for diverse strategies to manage urban warming effectively.

- **Future Urban Growth:** By 2050, India's urban population will double to 80 crore, stressing the need for sustainable city planning.

### Urban Heat Islands (UHIs)

Urban Heat Islands (UHIs) refer to localized areas in cities that experience significantly higher temperatures than their rural surroundings due to human activities and altered land surfaces.

### Causes of Urban Heat Islands

- **Urbanisation:** Increased concretisation and infrastructure absorb and retain more heat, elevating surface temperatures.
- **Lack of Greenery:** Reduced vegetation means less shade and cooling from natural processes, exacerbating heat retention.
- **Waste Heat:** Buildings and vehicles emit heat through energy use, contributing to elevated temperatures.
- **Building Materials:** Dark and heat-absorbing materials like asphalt and concrete increase heat retention in urban areas.
- **Heat Generation:** Industrial and commercial activities add to the heat load, enhancing the heat island effect.
- **Air Pollution:** Pollutants in the air can trap heat, leading to higher temperatures within urban environments.

## URBAN HEAT ISLANDS



Research from IIT Bhubaneswar reveals that urbanization has led to nearly 60% more night-time warming in over 140 major Indian cities compared to surrounding rural areas. This finding highlights the urgent need for sustainable urban planning and mitigation strategies to address the escalating effects of urban heat islands.

## TAMIL NADU CREATES 20 COMMITTEES FOR MANGROVE PROTECTION

**CONTEXT:** In its first global assessment, IUCN has classified mangroves in Tamil Nadu, Sri Lanka, and the Maldives as ‘critically endangered.’

**BACKGROUND:** According to an IUCN study released on May 22, only South India, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, and the warm temperate northwestern Atlantic region are classified as critically endangered among 36 global geographical areas spanning tropical, sub-tropical, and warm temperate coasts.

### Mangrove Conservation in South India

- Ecosystem Importance: Mangroves support biodiversity, provide essential services, and mitigate climate change impacts.
- Threats: Degradation stems from deforestation, shrimp farming, and climate change effects like sea-level rise and storms.
- Extent Increase: Tamil Nadu’s mangrove area grew from 23 sq.km. in 2001 to 45 sq.km. in 2021.
- Regional Comparison: Tamil Nadu’s mangrove degradation is less severe compared to neighbouring islands.
- Restoration Efforts: 25 sq.km. of mangroves restored; 15 sq.km. more planned under the Tamil Nadu Coastal Restoration Mission.
- Community Involvement: 20 village committees formed to involve locals in mangrove protection and sustainable use.

### Wetland and Mangrove Management Initiatives in India

- Project Implementation: MoEFCC’s ‘Wetlands management for biodiversity and climate protection’ at four Ramsar Sites in India.
- Climate Risk Assessment: CRA studies conducted at Pong Dam Lake, Renuka Lake, Bhitarkanika Mangroves, and Point Calimere.
- Guidance Publication: ‘Managing Climate Risks in Wetlands – A Practitioner’s Guide’ developed to aid wetland management.
- Financial Assistance: MoEFCC funds coastal States for mangrove conservation, shelterbelt plantation, and coral transplantation.
- Mangrove Cover: India’s mangrove area is 4,992 sq km, with a 17 sq km increase from 2019 to 2021.
- MISHTI Programme: ‘Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats & Tangible Incomes’ aims to restore mangroves and boost coastal livelihoods.



## OLDEST TERMITE MOUNDS IN SOUTH AFRICA STORE CARBON

**CONTEXT:** In South Africa's Namaqualand region, termite mounds known as heuweltjies cover about 20% of the Buffels River landscape, housing the southern harvester termite.

**BACKGROUND:** Radiocarbon dating of heuweltjies in Namaqualand revealed they are the world's oldest inhabited termite mounds, dating back 34,000 to 13,000 years. This discovery significantly surpasses the previous oldest known mounds, which were 4,000 years old from Brazil and 2,300 years old from central Congo.

# Namaqualand

**Location:** Namaqualand is a desert region in southwestern Africa, spanning from Namibia to South Africa.

**Area:** It covers an extensive 400,000 square kilometres, stretching from the Namib Desert to the Kalahari.

**Sections:** North of the Orange River is Great Namaqualand; south is Little Namaqualand.

**Climate:** The region is very dry, with succulents dominating the landscape due to their drought resistance.

**Rainfall and Flora:** Winter rains can lead to wildflower blooms in spring, transforming the plains temporarily.

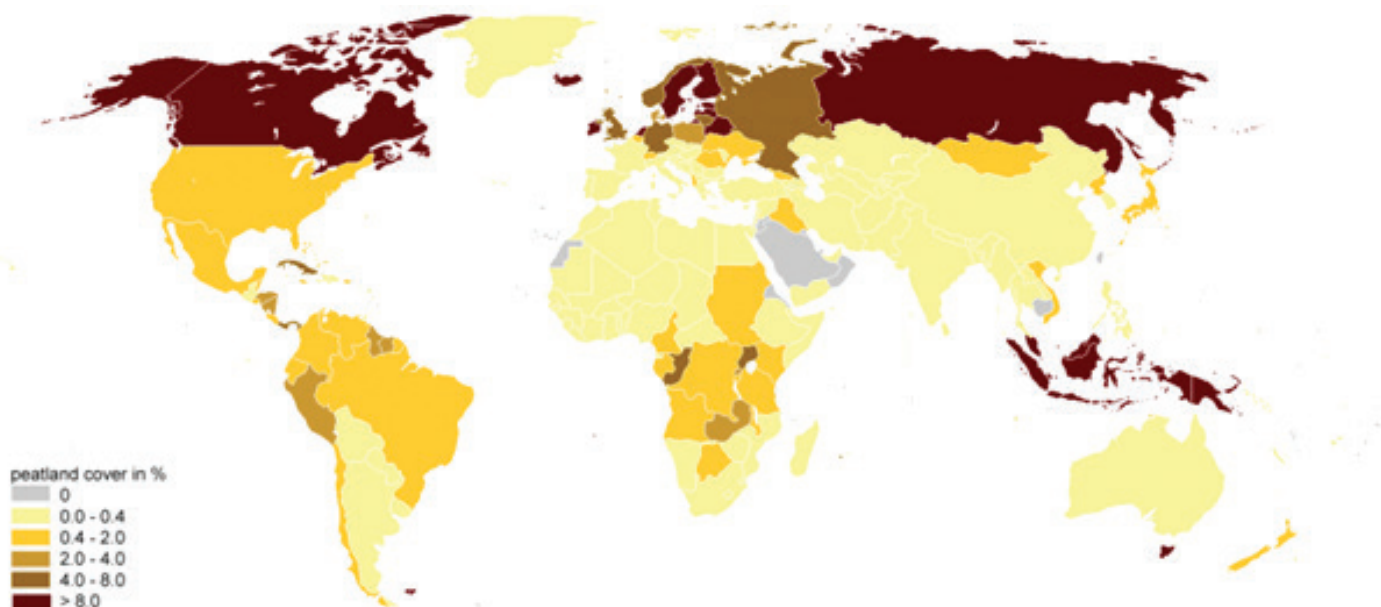
### Carbon Sequestration and Hydrology in Namaqualand Termite Mounds

- Namaqualand: Global biodiversity hotspot known for spring flowers, facing water scarcity and saline groundwater.
- Termite Mounds: Rare rainfall events utilize termite burrows to channel water and flush salts into the groundwater.
- Carbon Sequestration: Termites transport organic material deep into the soil, creating a long-term carbon sink.
- Inorganic Carbon: Termite tunnels move dissolved inorganic carbon (soil calcite) into groundwater, aiding carbon dioxide sequestration.
- Historical Accumulation: Radiocarbon dating reveals mounds have accumulated organic matter and carbon for tens of thousands of years.
- Climate History: Mound studies link higher rainfall periods with global climate cooling, showing carbon and mineral leaching.

### Importance of Peatlands in Climate Change Mitigation

- Peatlands: Critical wetlands that help mitigate climate change, preserve biodiversity, and ensure safe drinking water.
- Carbon Storage: Peatlands are the largest natural terrestrial carbon store, surpassing all other vegetation types combined.
- Greenhouse Gas Emissions: Damaged peatlands contribute nearly 5% of global anthropogenic CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, highlighting their impact.
- Restoration Benefits: Peatland restoration can significantly reduce greenhouse gas emissions and improve environmental conditions.
- International Agreements: Countries should include peatland conservation and restoration in their Paris Agreement and other climate commitments.





## UNESCO ADDS 11 NEW BIOSPHERE RESERVES

**CONTEXT:** UNESCO has approved 11 new biosphere reserves in 11 countries, including Belgium and Gambia, and two new transboundary biosphere reserves.

**BACKGROUND:** New biosphere reserves have been established in Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Italy, Mongolia, the Netherlands, the Philippines, South Korea, Slovenia, and Spain. Covering 37,400 km<sup>2</sup> – about the size of the Netherlands – the World Network of Biosphere Reserves now includes 759 sites across 136 countries.



- **Darién Norte Chocoano Biosphere Reserve**
- Location: Spans 3,016 km<sup>2</sup> in the Darien ecoregion, featuring diverse ecosystems from rainforests to marine areas.
- Wildlife: Home to emblematic species like the harpy eagle and poison dart frogs.
- Cultural Heritage: Includes an archaeological park and museum detailing early Spanish settlement history.
- Population: Hosts 24,287 people, primarily Indigenous and Afro-Colombian, with active community involvement in reserve management.
- Management: Plans focus on sustainable farming, improving agricultural marketing, and advancing Community Ecotourism.
- Madre de las Aguas Biosphere Reserve
- Location: Spans 9,374 km<sup>2</sup> across 11 provinces and 35 municipalities in the Dominican Republic.
- Population: Encompasses a diverse population of 472,526 people living within the reserve.



### Kempen-Broek Transboundary Biosphere Reserve

- Location: Spans 264 km<sup>2</sup> in Belgium and the Netherlands, blending natural and human history.
- Habitat: Features remnants of wetlands, including ponds, marshlands, and bog forests.
- Wildlife: Known for dragonfly habitats and diverse bird species across meadows, fields, and moorlands.
- Economy: Supports around 75,000 people with tourism and agriculture as key economic activities.
- Significance: First biosphere reserve designated in Belgium, shared with the Kingdom of the Netherlands.



- **Topography:** Features diverse landscapes including plateaus, waterfalls, and areas shaped by the Cordillera Central.
- **Biodiversity:** Home to 88 avian species, including 20 endemics and 17 threatened species like the Critically Endangered Sparrowhawk.
- **Local Impact:** Designation aims to resolve land conflicts and promote sustainable development through ecotourism and agriculture.

#### **Niumi Biosphere Reserve**

- **Location:** Stretches 1,937 km<sup>2</sup> along the north bank of the Gambia River, adjacent to Senegal's Delta de Saloum.
- **Ecosystems:** Features mangroves, red limestone formations, tropical forests, and open savannah woodland.
- **Conservation:** Protects West Africa's pristine mangrove forests, the Bao Bolong Wetland Reserve, and State forests.
- **Cultural Significance:** Includes Kunta Kinteh Island, a UNESCO World Heritage site historically linked to the transatlantic slave trade.
- **Population:** Home to 178,000 residents engaged in farming and fisheries, and is The Gambia's first biosphere reserve.

#### **Colli Euganei Biosphere Reserve**

- **Location:** Colli Euganei is in Veneto, northeastern Italy, featuring 81 volcanic hills, including Monte Venda.
- **Area and Population:** Spans 341 km<sup>2</sup> across 15 municipalities with a population of 111,368.
- **Features:** Known for its thermal spas and verdant plains with olive groves and vineyards.
- **Significance:** Largest thermal basin in Europe, with diverse endemic flora and fauna.
- **Management:** Focuses on sustainable agriculture, ecotourism, and participatory governance with university partnerships for environmental preservation.



#### **Julian Alps Transboundary Biosphere Reserve**

- **Creation:** Formed by merging Slovenian and Italian reserves designated in 2003 and 2019.
- **Size:** Encompasses 2,671 km<sup>2</sup>, with 735 km<sup>2</sup> core areas, 438 km<sup>2</sup> buffer zones, and 1,497 km<sup>2</sup> transition zones.
- **Population:** Home to 109,060 inhabitants across 20 municipalities.
- **Features:** Known for alpine mountains, karst plateaux, waterfalls, and pristine lakes.
- **Biodiversity:** Supports species like brown bears, lynxes, otters, and wildcats; developed with input from 176 institutions.

#### **Khar Us Lake Biosphere Reserve**

- **Location:** Covers 14,153 km<sup>2</sup> in Mongolia's Khovd Province, featuring diverse aquatic, desert, mountain, and steppe landscapes.
- **Zoning:** Includes a 703 km<sup>2</sup> core area, 7,800 km<sup>2</sup> buffer zone, and 5,650 km<sup>2</sup> transition area.
- **Governance:** Managed under Mongolian national legislation, balancing nature conservation with sustainable development.
- **Biodiversity:** Hosts rare and endangered species alongside cultural heritage of ethnic groups practicing sustainable animal husbandry.
- **Ecotourism:** Developing sustainable ecotourism in alignment with heritage-based tourism for economic diversification and conservation efforts.

#### **Apayao Biosphere Reserve**

- **Geography:** Divided into Upper Apayao (rugged terrain) and Lower Apayao (flatlands), spanning 180 km with Apayao River.
- **Biodiversity:** Includes Apayao Lowland Forest Key Biodiversity Area, home to endemic and critically endangered species like the Philippine eagle.
- **Cultural Significance:** Hosts ten Indigenous Cultural Communities; Isnag/Isneg community practices the Lapat system for resource management.



- **Population:** 124,366 residents primarily engaged in rice and corn cultivation; ecotourism is developing.
- **Area:** Spans 3,960 km<sup>2</sup>, featuring diverse flora, fauna, and cultural landscapes.

#### **Changnyeong Biosphere Reserve**

- **Location:** In central northern Gyeongsangnam-do, encompassing diverse habitats over 531 km<sup>2</sup>.
- **Biodiversity:** Features Mount Hwawang forests, Upo Wetland, and freshwater ecosystems, supporting species like the crested ibis.
- **Conservation:** Upo Wetland has successfully restored the crested ibis since 2008; recognized as a Ramsar Wetland City in 2018.
- **Economy:** Region focuses on agricultural diversification with local specialties and promotes ecotourism.
- **Population:** Majority lives in transition and buffer zones, balancing sustainable agriculture with conservation efforts.

#### **Val d'Aran Biosphere Reserve**

- **Location:** Located in the Catalan Pyrenees, spanning 632 km<sup>2</sup> with diverse climatic and biological landscapes.



- **Cultural Heritage:** Acts as a bastion of Occitan cultural and linguistic heritage.
- **Economy:** Traditionally involved in agriculture, crafts, and trade; recent concerns over re-introduced brown bears.
- **Biodiversity Protection:** Designation as a biosphere reserve aims to improve biodiversity and revitalize traditional practices.
- **Management:** Involves local village representatives focusing on tourism and animal husbandry for sustainable development.

#### **Irati Biosphere Reserve**

- **Location:** Located in the western Pyrenees, featuring

- expansive beech and beech-fir forests.
- **Size:** Spans 537 km<sup>2</sup>, encompassing the Salazar and Aezkoa valleys in Navarre.
- **Biodiversity:** Home to the second-largest beech forest in Europe, rich in biodiversity.
- **Community Involvement:** Local community plays a crucial role in management, with diverse stakeholder representation.
- **Management Plan:** The reserve's plan highlights community-driven conservation efforts and includes executive and advisory boards.

## **INDIA'S LARGEST LEOPARD SAFARI OPENS IN BANNERGHATTA**

**CONTEXT:** Environment Minister Eshwar Khandre inaugurated South India's first and the country's largest leopard safari at Bannerghatta Biological Park.

**BACKGROUND:** According to Central Zoo Authority guidelines, a 20-hectare area has been demarcated and fenced for a leopard safari, with eight leopards currently released into this open forest area. Bannerghatta officials emphasize that showcasing these top predators is essential, as the park hosts a significant population of free-ranging leopards (*Panthera pardus*).

#### **Leopard Safari and BBP Developments**

- **Leopard Safari Creation:** The safari area, costing ₹4.5 crore, features undulating terrain, rocky outcrops, and semi-deciduous forest.
- **Safety Measures:** The area is enclosed with a 4.5-metre-high vertical chain-link mesh and MS sheets angled at 30°.
- **Human-Animal Conflict:** Increasing conflicts have led to the rescue and raising of leopard cubs, educating visitors on protection.
- **Animal Acclimatization:** Four acres within the safari have a solar fence to help animals adjust to their environment.
- **Additional Initiatives:** New facilities include a renovated elephant weaning centre, babycare room, children's play area, and electric buggies.
- **Proposed Enclosures:** New enclosures for emus, rheas, cheetahs, baboons, and wolves are planned, costing ₹1.5 crore each.



#### **Bannerghatta National Park**

- **Location:** Situated near Bangalore, Karnataka, within the hills of the Anekal range.
- **National Park Status:** Declared a National Park in 1974 and became Bannerghatta Biological Park in 2002.
- **Unique Facilities:** Hosts India's first fenced forested elephant sanctuary and butterfly enclosure.
- **Water Source:** The Suvarnamukhi stream is the main water source for the park's animals.
- **Vegetation Types:** Includes Dry Deciduous Scrub Forests, Southern Tropical Dry Deciduous Forests, and Southern Tropical Moist Mixed Forests.
- **Diverse Fauna:** Home to endangered species like the Asian Elephant, Indian Gaur, Tiger, and many more.

## **CITES SETS TRADE GUIDELINES FOR ROSEWOOD SPECIES**

**CONTEXT:** CITES has issued guidelines for its members on the sustainable harvest and trade of rosewood specimens.

**BACKGROUND:** During the 27th Plants Committee meeting in July, guidelines were issued to enhance capacity-building efforts for CITES-listed rosewood species. The secretariat will target 13 high-priority and 14 medium-priority species identified in the Report on the Conservation and Trade of CITES-listed Rosewood Tree Species (*Leguminosae/Fabaceae*).

#### **Protecting *Pterocarpus erinaceus*: CITES Efforts and Challenges**

- **Threatened Species:** *Pterocarpus erinaceus*, or African rosewood, is severely threatened due to over-exploitation and illegal trade.

- **Trade Suspension:** CITES recommends trade suspensions for range states of *Pterocarpus erinaceus* due to sustainability and legality concerns.
- **Non-Detriment Findings (NDF):** Strengthening NDF connections is crucial for sustainable trade of CITES-listed tree species.
- **Importance of NDFs:** NDFs ensure sustainable trade, support livelihoods, and protect species from extinction, as emphasized by Paola Mosig Reidl.
- **TRAFFIC Report:** CITES published a TRAFFIC expert-based report detailing rosewood species trade, aiding range states in data collection and management.



### Dalbergia sissoo: A Versatile and Valuable Tree

- Native Habitat: Dalbergia sissoo, or Shisham, is native to the Himalayan foothills, thriving along riverbanks.
- Environmental Tolerance: It withstands temperatures from below freezing to nearly 50 °C and 2,000 mm annual rainfall.
- Soil Adaptability: Grows in diverse soils, from sand to rich alluvium, and tolerates slightly saline conditions.
- Uses: Used for firewood, timber, fodder, erosion control, windbreaks, and oil and tannin extraction.
- CITES Status: Listed in Appendix II, indicating controlled trade to prevent unsustainable exploitation.



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# **SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY**



**PROJECT-76**

**SEBEX 2**

**PROJECT NEXUS**

**SNOWBLIND MALWARE**

**FIRST BRAIN IMPLANT CONTROLS  
EPILEPTIC SEIZURES**

**ISRO'S ADITYA-L1 ACHIEVES FIRST  
HALO ORBIT**

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**SERUM INSTITUTE'S NEW MALARIA  
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**GAIA SPACECRAFT MAPPING STARS  
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**INDIA'S FIRST OVERSEAS JAN AUSHADI  
KENDRA OPENS IN MAURITIUS**

**ISRO CONDUCTS SUCCESSFUL  
SECOND AIR-BREATHING PROPULSION  
TEST**

**ROGUE WAVES**

**AOPHIS ASTEROID**



## PROJECT-76

**CONTEXT:** While procuring new submarines under P-75I, DRDO has initiated a preliminary study to design and develop an indigenous conventional submarine under Project-76.

**BACKGROUND:** The Defence Ministry has approved DRDO to conduct a preliminary study for a new project, expected to take up to a year. Following this, a formal proposal will be submitted to the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) for approval. This project continues the Advanced Technology Vessel (ATV) initiative, which includes building the Arihant series of SSBNs and another project for SSNs.



### India's Advancements in Indigenous Submarine Technology

- Substantial Indigenous Content: P-76 will include locally made weapons, missiles, sonars, and combat systems for enhanced self-reliance.
- 30-Year Submarine Program: The Navy aims to design and build conventional submarines indigenously post P-75I project.
- Air Independent Propulsion (AIP) Module: DRDO-developed AIP module for Scorpene submarines enhances submerged endurance and reduces detection chances.
- Phosphoric Acid-Based AIP: The DRDO AIP uses phosphoric acid with fuel cells generating up to 20 kW for future submarines like P-76.
- High-Performance Fuel Cells: AIP module features a stack of 24 fuel cells, ensuring redundancy and optimal performance for submarine requirements.

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	<b>Project 75I</b>	<b>Project-76</b>
<b>Design and Technology</b>	Builds on existing AIP technology and stealth features from Project 75.	Focuses on developing India's first fully indigenous conventional diesel-electric submarine.
<b>Indigenisation</b>	Targets 45% to 60% indigenous content across the first to sixth submarines.	Aims to drastically reduce reliance on foreign OEMs through complete indigenization.
<b>Submersion Capabilities</b>	Uses AIP technology, allowing submarines to stay submerged for up to two weeks.	Envisions AIP-equipped submarines with advanced lithium-ion batteries for extended submerged operations.
<b>Submarine Size</b>	May feature submarines larger than those under Project 75.	Designed to have a submerged displacement of 3,000 tons, surpassing predecessors.
<b>Construction Timeline</b>	Ongoing enhancements and gradual indigenisation.	Prototype construction targeted to begin by 2028, marking a major milestone in indigenous capabilities.

## SEBEX 2

**CONTEXT:** The Indian Navy has certified SEBEX 2, a new explosive claimed to be twice as lethal as standard TNT.

**BACKGROUND:** The Indian Navy has certified SEBEX 2, a new explosive claimed to be twice as lethal as standard TNT. Among the world's most powerful non-nuclear explosives, SEBEX 2 aims to revolutionize artillery shells and warheads by significantly enhancing their destructive power without increasing weight.





### SEBEX 2: Enhancing India's Explosive Capabilities

- Higher TNT Equivalence: SEBEX 2, with a TNT equivalence of 2.01, surpasses current conventional explosives, which range from 1.25 to 1.50.
- Developed by EEL: Created by Economic Explosives Limited under the Make in India initiative, utilizing high-melting explosive (HMX) technology.
- Increased Lethality: Enhances the lethality of munitions,

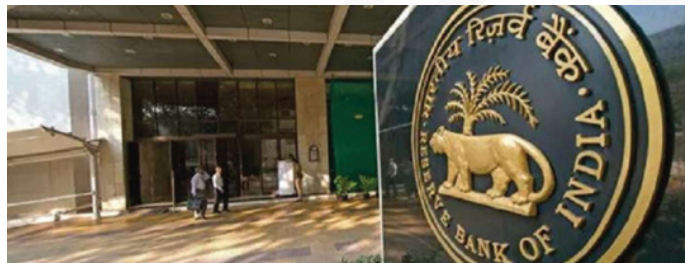
improving blast and fragmentation effects for greater destructive power.

- Extensive Testing: Certified by the Navy and under the Defence Export Promotion Scheme after rigorous testing and evaluation.
- Global Market Impact: Positions India as a significant player in the defence market, offering high-lethality explosives for global military upgrades.

## PROJECT NEXUS

**CONTEXT:** The Reserve Bank of India has joined Project Nexus, an international initiative to enable instant cross-border retail payments by linking domestic Fast Payment Systems.

**BACKGROUND:** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has joined Project Nexus, an international initiative to enable instant cross-border retail payments by linking domestic Fast Payment Systems (FPSs). India's UPI will connect with FPSs of Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. The platform may expand to include more countries in the future.



### Project Nexus: Revolutionizing Cross-Border Payments

- BIS Innovation: Project Nexus by BIS aims to connect global instant payment systems (IPS) for enhanced cross-border payments.
- RBI Collaboration: The Reserve Bank of India is linking UPI with various countries' FPS for cross-border Person to Person and Person to Merchant payments.
- Multilateral Approach: Nexus supports RBI's efforts by expanding international reach, connecting over 70 countries with near-zero cost domestic payments.
- Rapid Transactions: BIS states that Nexus enables cross-border payments within 60 seconds, leveraging the speed of existing IPS.
- Standardization Benefits: Nexus standardizes IPS connections, allowing operators to make one connection to reach all networked countries, accelerating cross-border payment growth.

## SNOWBLIND MALWARE

**CONTEXT:** A new banking malware, 'Snowblind,' targets Android users by exploiting a security feature to bypass anti-tamper protection in apps handling sensitive information.

**BACKGROUND:** A new banking malware, 'Snowblind,' is targeting Android users to steal banking credentials by bypassing app security features. According to security firm Promon, Snowblind repacks apps to evade detection of accessibility features used to extract sensitive information and gain remote access.



### Snowblind Malware: A New Threat Exploiting Android Security Features

- Snowblind Malware: Snowblind evades detection by repacking apps, preventing them from detecting accessibility feature usage for sensitive information extraction.
- Exploiting 'Seccomp': It utilizes 'seccomp', a Linux kernel feature, to bypass Android's anti-tampering measures.
- Code Injection: Snowblind injects code before seccomp activates, allowing it to use accessibility services to remotely view the victim's screen.
- Security Feature Bypass: The malware can disable biometric and two-factor authentication, undermining common banking app security measures.
- Regional Impact: While the number of affected devices is unknown, Snowblind is primarily active in Southeast Asia.

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## FIRST BRAIN IMPLANT CONTROLS EPILEPTIC SEIZURES

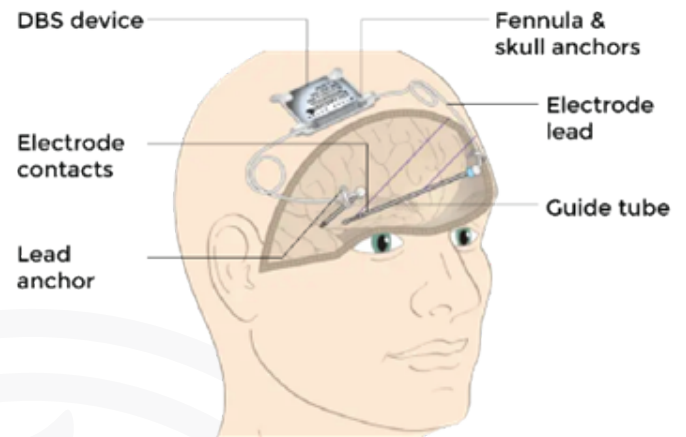
**CONTEXT:** UK teenager Oran Knowlson is the first person globally to receive a brain implant aimed at controlling epileptic seizures.

**BACKGROUND:** Oran Knowlson, a UK-based teenager, is the first person globally to receive a brain implant designed to control epileptic seizures. The deep brain stimulation (DBS) device, which sends electrical signals into the brain, has reduced his daytime seizures by 80%.

### How the Neurostimulator Device Works?

- **Neurostimulator Function:** Delivers electrical impulses to block abnormal seizure-causing brain signals.
- **Device Details:** Measures 3.5 cm square and 0.6 cm thick, implanted in the skull.
- **Surgical Procedure:** Electrodes are inserted into the thalamus and connected to the neurostimulator.
- **Activation:** Device is switched on post-surgery to start disrupting seizure signals.
- **Recharging:** Device is wirelessly recharged using a special headphone.

## DBS BRAIN IMPLANT



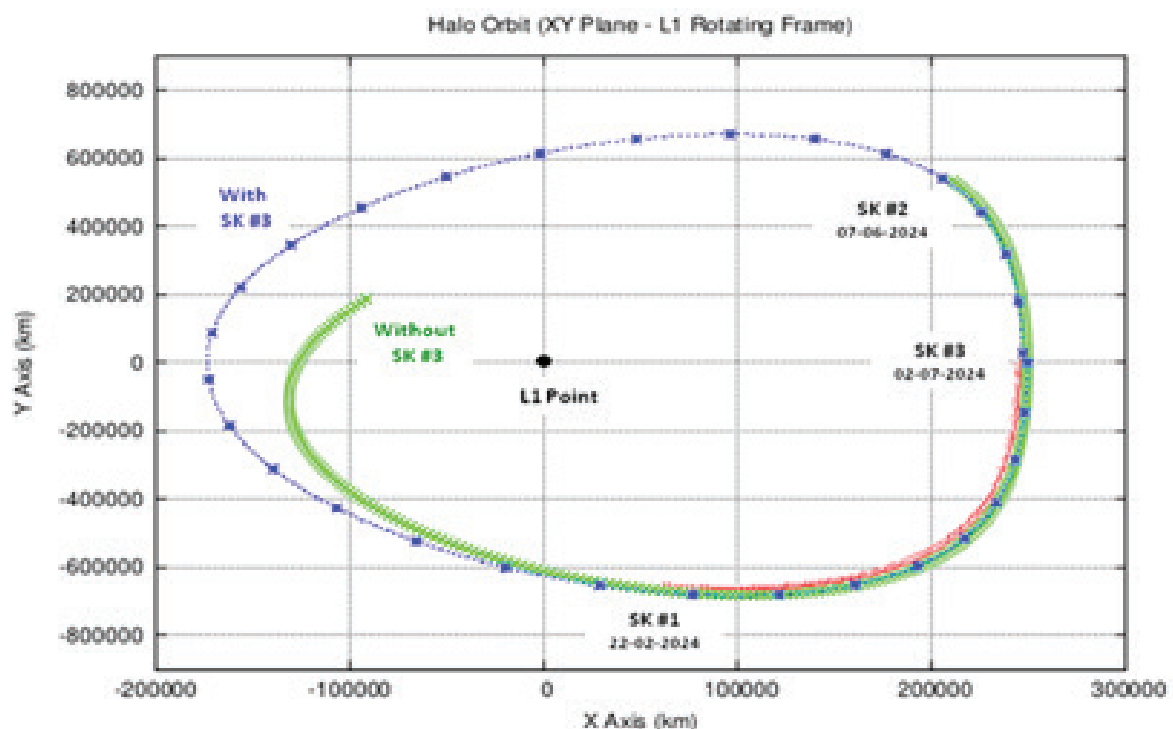
### EPILEPSY AND ITS IMPACT

- **Epilepsy Defined:** Epilepsy is characterized by recurring seizures due to abnormal brain electrical activity.
- **Symptoms:** Common symptoms include jerking limbs, temporary confusion, staring spells, or stiff muscles.
- **Causes:** No cause is found in 50% of cases; other causes include head trauma, tumors, infections, and genetics.
- **Risk Factors:** Epilepsy increases the risk of accidents, drownings, and falls.
- **Prevalence and Treatment:** In India, 3 to 11.9 per 1,000 people have epilepsy; 30% of patients resist available treatments.

## ISRO'S ADITYA-L1 ACHIEVES FIRST HALO ORBIT

**CONTEXT:** India's first solar mission, Aditya-L1, has successfully completed its first halo orbit around the Sun-Earth L1 point, according to ISRO.

**BACKGROUND:** The space agency confirmed that its station-keeping manoeuvre on Tuesday successfully transitioned the Aditya-L1 mission into the second halo orbit. Launched on September 2, 2023, the Indian solar observatory was placed in its targeted halo orbit on January 6, 2024.

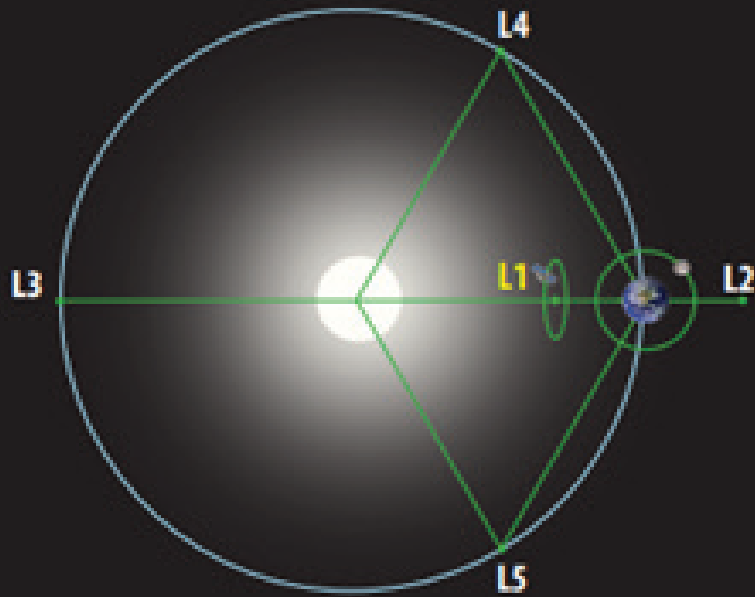




### Aditya-L1 Spacecraft Orbit and Manoeuvres

- Orbit Completion: Aditya-L1 completed its first halo orbit around the Sun-Earth L1 point on January 6, 2024.
- Orbit Duration: The spacecraft takes 178 days to complete one revolution in its halo orbit.
- Station-Keeping Manoeuvres: Two previous manoeuvres on February 22 and June 7 helped maintain its orbit.
- Third Manoeuvre: The third station-keeping manoeuvre on July 2 ensured the spacecraft stayed on the intended path.
- Flight Dynamics Validation: The manoeuvre validated the flight dynamics software developed by URSC-ISRO for accurate trajectory planning.

Fig 2 : Illustration of Lagrange points of the Sun-Earth system



Halo orbit insertion in L1

## ADITYA-L1 TRAJECTORY TO L1

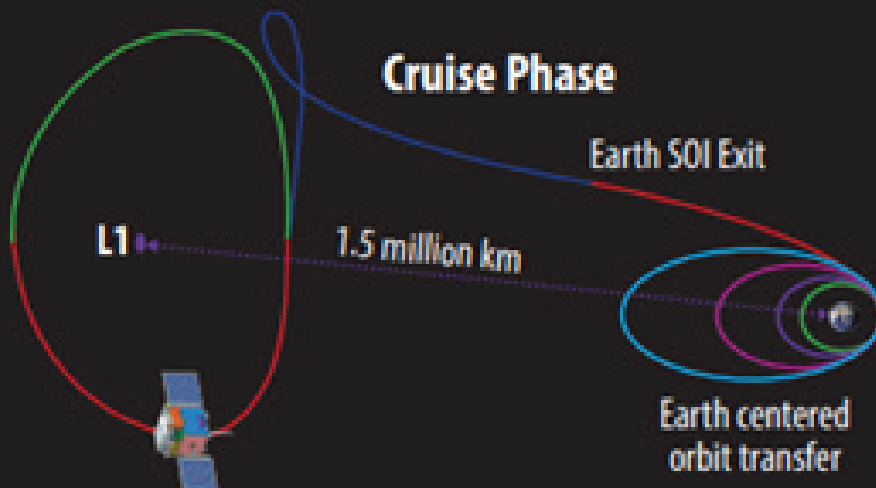


Fig 3: Aditya-L1 trajectory from Earth to L1.

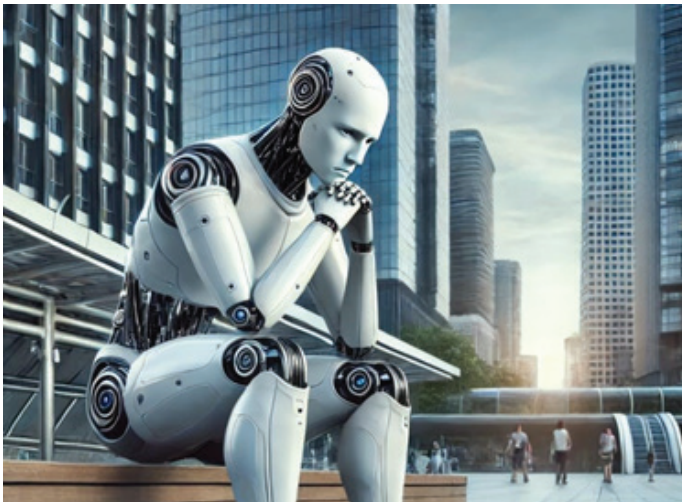
### ADITYA-L1 SOLAR MISSION

- Mission Objective: Aditya-L1 is India's first space-based solar observatory to study the Sun from the L1 point.
- Halo Orbit: Positioned 1.5 million km from Earth, it provides uninterrupted solar observation without occultation.
- Payloads: The spacecraft carries seven payloads to study the Sun's photosphere, chromosphere, and corona.
- L1 Advantages: Four payloads directly observe the Sun, while three conduct in-situ studies of particles and fields at L1.
- Scientific Goals: The mission aims to understand coronal heating, solar flares, space weather dynamics, and particle propagation in the interplanetary medium.

## ROBOT SUICIDE

**CONTEXT:** A robot employed by the Gumi City Council in South Korea was found unresponsive at the bottom of a two-meter staircase, sparking claims of the country's first robot "suicide."

**BACKGROUND:** A robot named 'Robot Supervisor,' made by Bear Robotics, exhibited erratic behaviour before it "took its own life" around 4 pm, according to The Daily Mail. City officials retrieved and analysed the shattered robot, but the cause of its behaviour remains unclear.



- **Malfunction Concern:** Media speculated whether the robot's malfunction was related to its workload.
- **No Replacement:** Gumi city council has no plans to replace the "demised" Robot Supervisor.
- **Previous Incident:** In 2017, security robot Steve in Washington, DC, drowned in a fountain after skidding on a brick.

### Robot Suicide

- **Definition:** Robot suicide refers to a robot intentionally ending its own operational existence or life.
- **Ethical Concerns:** Raises ethical questions about robot autonomy and the potential consequences of self-directed harm.
- **AI Programming:** Involves complex AI programming decisions, potentially including algorithms that allow self-termination under certain conditions.
- **Legal Implications:** Might necessitate legal frameworks to address accountability and responsibility for robot self-destruction.
- **Human Impact:** Could influence human attitudes toward AI, impacting future designs and ethical considerations in robotics.

### Robot Supervisor's Role and Demise in Gumi City

- **Robot's Duties:** The Robot Supervisor handled document deliveries, city promotion, and information dissemination in Gumi city hall.
- **High Robot Density:** South Korea has one industrial robot per ten human employees, indicating high automation.

## DIGITAL BHARAT NIDHI

**CONTEXT:** Department of Telecommunications released draft rules for the Digital Bharat Nidhi, aiming to boost telecom connectivity in rural areas.

**BACKGROUND:** Digital Bharat Nidhi will replace the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF), which collected 5% from telecom operators' Adjusted Gross Revenue (AGR). The new fund aims to expand telecom networks in remote and rural areas, where private companies may be reluctant to provide services due to low profitability.

## Digital Bharat Nidhi (DBN)

**Replacement of USOF:**  
DBN replaces the Universal Service Obligation Fund (USOF), previously funded by a 5% levy on AGR.

**CFI Contributions:**  
Telecom companies' contributions to DBN first go into the Consolidated Fund of India (CFI).

**Fund Utilization:**  
DBN funds support telecom expansion, R&D, pilot projects, and connectivity improvements, including underserved areas.

**Targeted Access:**  
DBN aims to provide telecom access to underserved groups, including women and economically weaker sections.

**Administration and Funding:**  
The Centre will appoint an administrator to manage DBN funds and select implementers through bidding.



### Digital Bharat Nidhi: Key Objectives and Procedures

- Consolidated Fund of India (CFI): Telecom contributions to Digital Bharat Nidhi (DBN) are first credited to the CFI.
- Fund Utilization: DBN funds support telecommunication services in underserved areas, R&D, pilot projects, and innovation.
- Government Deposits: The Centre deposits collected DBN funds into the fund periodically.
- DBN Criteria: Funds must promote next-gen tech, affordability, innovation, and standardization in telecom services.
- Support for Start-ups: DBN aims to encourage start-ups and the manufacturing of telecom equipment.

## MEDEVIS PLATFORM

**CONTEXT:** The World Health Organization has launched MeDevIS, an online platform offering users access to information on medical devices.

**BACKGROUND:** MeDevIS, a platform to aid in the selection, procurement, and use of medical devices, supports decision-making in disease prevention, diagnosis, and treatment. It includes 2,301 types of devices for various health areas, such as reproductive health, noncommunicable diseases (cancer, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes), and infectious diseases like COVID-19.



# World Health Organization

### WHO's MeDevIS: A Global Clearing House for Medical Devices

- Introduction of MeDevIS: WHO launched MeDevIS, an online platform to aid decision-making on medical devices for diagnostics and treatment.
- Device Information: MeDevIS includes data on 2301 types of devices for various health issues like cancer, cardiovascular diseases, and COVID-19.
- Simplified Access: The platform centralizes information, replacing multiple sources and simplifying navigation for healthcare practitioners and patients.
- Naming Systems: MeDevIS uses EMDN and GMDN naming systems to standardize medical device registration, procurement, and tracking globally.
- Policy Support: MeDevIS aids national policymakers in updating procurement lists and developing health insurance policies, enhancing universal health coverage.

## E-FAST INDIA INITIATIVE

**CONTEXT:** NITI Aayog and WRI India have launched the country's first national electric freight platform, e-FAST India (Electric Freight Accelerator for Sustainable Transport – India).

**BACKGROUND:** Supported by the World Economic Forum, CALSTART, and RMI India, the platform unites stakeholders across the freight ecosystem. It aims to enhance partnerships and promote innovative freight solutions, focusing on freight electrification through on-ground pilot demonstrations and evidence-based research.



# e-FAST INDIA: DRIVING ZERO EMISSION FREIGHT IN INDIA



### e-FAST India Initiative: Decarbonizing Freight Transportation

- **Objective:** e-FAST aims to decarbonize road-based freight transportation in India to meet its 2070 net zero commitments.
- **Launch Date:** The initiative was launched in September 2022 to promote cleaner and greener freight transport.
- **Collaborative Platform:** It facilitates collaboration between national and international stakeholders, supporting scalable pilot programs and technology integration.
- **Stakeholder Engagement:** e-FAST engages government, OEMs, logistics providers, shippers, and experts to develop and adopt electric freight technology.
- **Support System:** The initiative is supported by the efforts of 12 knowledge partners, fostering debates, deliberations, and collaborations.

## U-WIN PORTAL

**CONTEXT:** The U-WIN portal, a digital platform for recording vaccinations, will launch nationwide by August's end, creating an electronic registry for routine immunizations under the UIP.

**BACKGROUND:** U-WIN, part of India's Universal Immunisation Programme under the NHM's Reproductive and Child Health Program, was highlighted in the interim 2024-2025 Budget. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman stressed the swift rollout of the U-WIN platform to manage immunisations and support Mission Indradhanush.



### U-WIN: Capturing India's Immunization Efforts

- **Program Overview:** India's Universal Immunization Programme (UIP) is part of the Reproductive and Child Health (RCH) Program under the National Health Mission (NHM).
- **Scale:** UIP is one of the world's largest public health programs, providing free vaccinations to all pregnant women and children.
- **Vaccination Coverage:** Vaccines are provided against 12 diseases, including Diphtheria, Pertussis, Tetanus, Polio, Measles, and others, with Japanese Encephalitis covered in endemic districts.
- **U-WIN Platform:** The U-WIN platform captures every vaccination event for pregnant women and children under UIP.
- **Data Capture:** U-WIN ensures comprehensive tracking of vaccination events, enhancing the effectiveness and reach of the immunization program.

## SERUM INSTITUTE'S NEW MALARIA VACCINE LAUNCHES IN AFRICA

**CONTEXT:** A new high-efficacy malaria vaccine, R21/Matrix-M, co-developed by Serum Institute of India and the University of Oxford, was rolled out in Côte d'Ivoire.

**BACKGROUND:** Approved by the WHO last year, the new vaccine underwent rigorous regulatory and clinical evaluations, proving to be highly effective and affordable. Its low-dose formulation allows for rapid and scalable production, which is crucial for controlling the spread of the mosquito-borne disease.



### R21/Matrix-M Malaria Vaccine: Key Updates

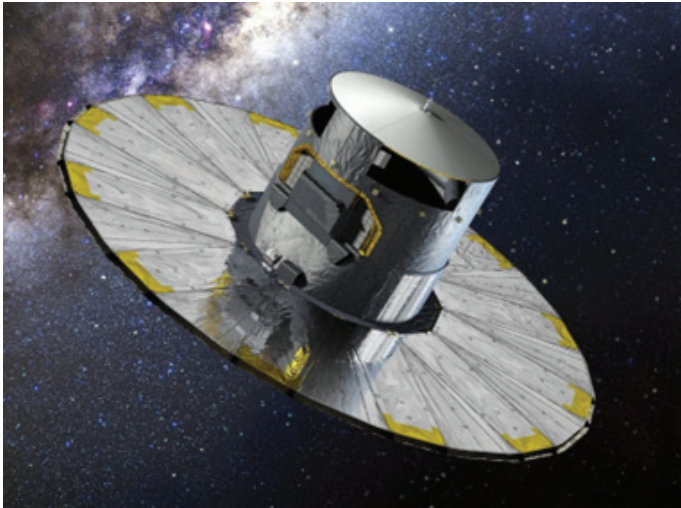
- **Development:** R21/Matrix-M, co-developed by the university and SII, uses Novavax's Matrix-M adjuvant technology.
- **WHO Prequalification:** In December 2023, WHO granted prequalification status after trials showed the vaccine had a good safety profile.
- **Malaria Statistics:** Despite a decline in deaths from 3,222 in 2017 to 1,316 in 2020, malaria remains a major health issue in Côte d'Ivoire.
- **Vaccine Distribution:** 656,600 doses have been received, aiming to vaccinate 250,000 children aged 0-23 months across 16 regions in Côte d'Ivoire.
- **Authorization:** The R21/Matrix-M vaccine is also authorized in Ghana, Nigeria, Burkina Faso, and the Central African Republic.



## GAIA SPACECRAFT MAPPING STARS HIT BY MICROMETEOROID

**CONTEXT:** The European Space Agency's Gaia spacecraft, launched in December 2013, has recently overcome major challenges while mapping over a billion stars in the Milky Way.

**BACKGROUND:** Despite its location 1.5 million kilometers from Earth at the L2 point, the Gaia space observatory has faced significant challenges. A micrometeoroid impact in April damaged its protective cover and a CCD failure in May led to false star readings, coinciding with a powerful solar storm.



### Gaia Mission: Mapping the Milky Way

- **Mission:** Gaia surveys nearly two billion objects, monitoring their positions, movements, and brightness to create a 3D map of the Galaxy.
- **Discovery:** Expected to find hundreds of thousands of celestial objects, including extra-solar planets, brown dwarfs, asteroids, and distant quasars.
- **Precision:** Measures star positions to 24 microarcseconds accuracy, equivalent to observing a human hair from 1000 km away.
- **Data:** Provides detailed insights into Galactic structure, dark matter distribution, and star origins, contributing to fundamental physics research.
- **Spacecraft:** Launched from French Guiana, Gaia operates from the L2 Lagrangian point, ensuring stable, unobstructed observations of the cosmos.

## INDIA'S FIRST OVERSEAS JAN AUSHADI KENDRA OPENS IN MAURITIUS

**CONTEXT:** The Union External Affairs Minister has inaugurated India's first overseas Jan Aushadi Kendra in Mauritius, highlighting strong bilateral cooperation in the health sector.

**BACKGROUND:** India's first overseas Jan Aushadi Kendra was inaugurated in Mauritius by Union External Affairs Minister and Prime Minister Pravin Kumar Jugnauth. This milestone reflects the strong health sector collaboration between the two countries, according to the Ministry of External Affairs.

### Jan Aushadi Kendra and Mediclinic: Enhancing Healthcare in Mauritius

- **Jan Aushadi Kendra:** A health project providing cost-effective, Made-in-India medicines to improve public

healthcare in Mauritius.

- **Inauguration:** External Affairs Minister Jaishankar and PM Kumar Jugnauth inaugurated the first overseas Jan Aushadi Kendra in Mauritius.
- **Mediclinic Project:** Funded by Indian assistance, this project at Grand Bois will serve approximately 16,000 people with secondary healthcare.
- **Commitment:** Jaishankar emphasized India's dedication to people-centric policies and the importance of accessible healthcare under PM Modi's leadership.
- **Impact:** Small projects like these significantly enhance community health needs and overall well-being, according to Jaishankar.

## ISRO CONDUCTS SUCCESSFUL SECOND AIR-BREATHING PROPULSION TEST

**CONTEXT:** ISRO successfully completed its second experimental flight demonstrating Air Breathing Propulsion Technology at the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, advancing India's space propulsion capabilities.

**BACKGROUND:** ISRO'S RH-560 sounding rocket was used to test Air Breathing Propulsion systems, mounted symmetrically on the rocket. The flight, which monitored 110 parameters, successfully ignited the propulsion systems, providing valuable data for advancing this technology and demonstrating the rocket's satisfactory performance.



### ISRO's Successful Air Breathing Propulsion Test

- **Successful Test:** ISRO conducted the second experimental flight for Air Breathing Propulsion Technology at 07:00 am today.
- **Rocket Details:** Propulsion systems were mounted on an RH-560 Sounding rocket, launched from Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota.
- **Performance Monitoring:** Nearly 110 parameters were tracked to assess the flight performance and ignition of propulsion systems.
- **Development Support:** Flight data will aid the next phase of Air Breathing Propulsion system development, following extensive ground tests.
- **RH-560 Rocket:** The RH-560 is a two-stage, solid motor-based sub-orbital rocket, ISRO's heaviest sounding rocket for advanced technology testing.



## ROGUE WAVES

**CONTEXT:** University of Maryland mathematicians have trained an AI program to predict rogue waves up to five minutes in advance using data from 172 ocean buoys.

**BACKGROUND:** University of Maryland mathematicians Thomas Breunung and Balakumar Balachandran have developed an AI model to forecast rogue waves, which are unusually large and dangerous. By analyzing data from 172 ocean buoys, their system can now predict rogue waves up to five minutes in advance.



### Advancements in Rogue Wave Prediction Using AI

- **AI Training:** Breunung and Balachandran used 20-minute ocean buoy samples to train AI for predicting rogue waves.
- **Prediction Accuracy:** The AI predicted about 75% of rogue waves one minute in advance and 73% five minutes

in advance.

- **Universal Capability:** The tool successfully predicted rogue waves at new buoy locations not included in the training data.
- **Improvement Potential:** Incorporating physical factors like water depth and wind speeds could enhance the AI's prediction accuracy and warning time.
- **Future Prospects:** More advanced AI and data may lead to near-perfect rogue wave predictions in the future.

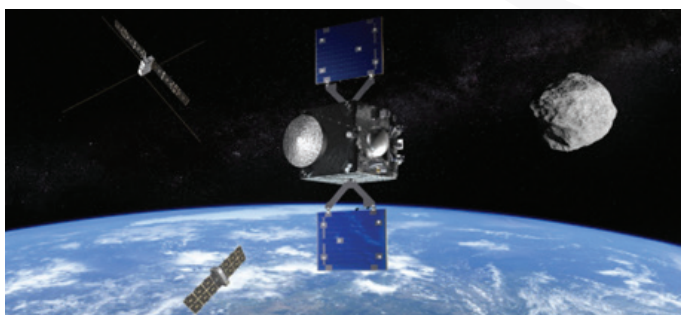
### Understanding Rogue Waves

- **Rogue Waves:** Historically considered folklore, rogue waves are now recognized as real by scientists; they exceed twice the size of surrounding waves.
- **Appearance:** Extreme storm waves, or rogue waves, appear as towering "walls of water" with steep sides and deep troughs.
- **Measurement Challenges:** Due to their rarity, measuring and analyzing rogue waves is difficult, with their exact formation still under investigation.
- **Constructive Interference:** Rogue waves can form when swells traveling at different speeds and directions reinforce each other, creating towering waves.
- **Energy Focusing:** Waves can also become rogue when interacting with opposing currents, like the Gulf Stream or Agulhas current, leading to large, persistent waves.

## APOPHIS ASTEROID

**CONTEXT:** The European Space Agency has announced a mission to study the Apophis asteroid as it approaches Earth closely in 2029.

**BACKGROUND:** ESA has become the second major space agency, after NASA, to plan a mission to Apophis, an asteroid once thought to be on a collision course with Earth. Apophis will approach within 32,000 km of Earth in 2029, a rare event occurring once every 5,000 to 10,000 years.



### Upcoming Space Missions and Earth Protection from Asteroids

- **Ramses Mission:** The Ramses spacecraft will study a 375-meter-wide asteroid as it approaches Earth, similar to NASA's OSIRIS-APEX mission.
- **Asteroid Study Growth:** The increasing number of space missions aims to study asteroids, which were previously underexplored.
- **Impact Risks:** Asteroids frequently enter Earth's atmosphere; large collisions could cause widespread damage, as seen with dinosaur extinction 6.5 million years ago.
- **Earth Défense:** NASA's 2022 DART mission demonstrated the ability to alter an asteroid's trajectory through a head-on collision.
- **Future Protection:** Developing asteroid deflection capabilities is crucial for protecting Earth from potential future impacts.

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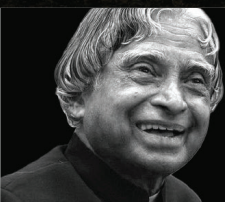
## Comparison of OSIRIS-REx and Hayabusa2

	OSIRIS-REx	Hayabusa2
Mission Focus	Studies asteroid Benu to understand planetary formation and life origins, with a sample return goal.	Investigated asteroid Ryugu, focusing on the Solar System's origins and evolution, with multiple sample collections.
Launch Date	Launched by NASA on September 8, 2016.	Launched by JAXA in December 2014.
Sample Collection	Aims to collect at least 2.1 ounces (59.5 grams) of material from Benu.	Successfully collected samples during two touchdowns on Ryugu in 2019.
Extended Missions	Will extend its mission to orbit asteroid Apophis in 2029.	Continued to the small asteroid 1998 KY26 for an extended mission after returning Ryugu samples.
Previous Missions	First U.S. mission to collect a sample from an asteroid.	Follows Japan's original Hayabusa mission, the first to collect samples from an asteroid.

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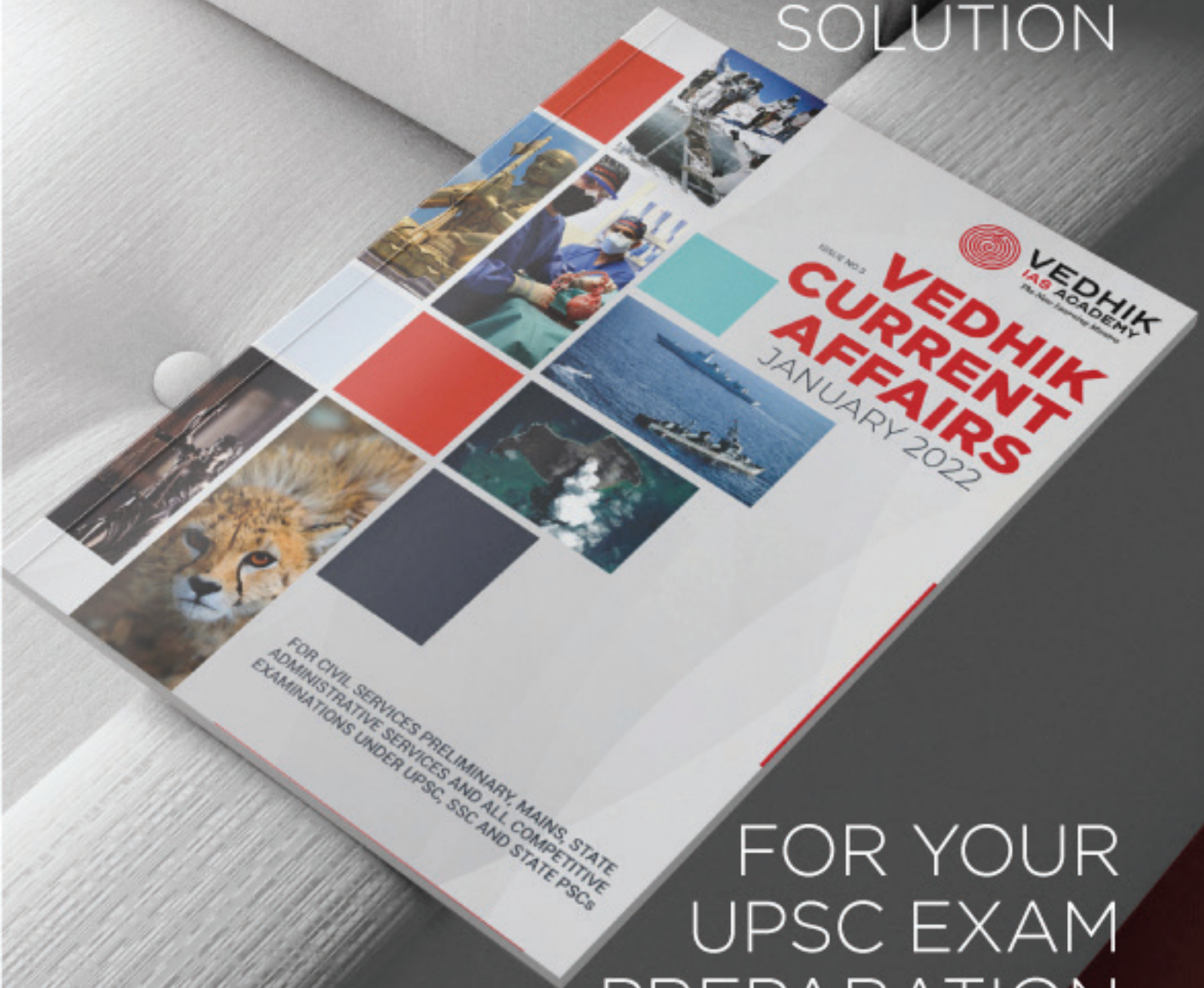
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- A. P. J. ABDUL KALAM



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A close-up photograph of a person's hands clasped together, wearing a dark blue suit jacket. The background is a solid, lighter blue color. The text 'CSAT' is overlaid in the center in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

**CSAT**



## READING COMPREHENSION



## READING COMPREHENSION

*"I can explain it to you, but I can't comprehend it for you" -Ed Koch*

### Introduction

In reading comprehension, it is one's capacity to understand and reasoning ability that is being assessed. The skills to hone are one's ability to grasp the main ideas from a passage, linking the various ideas in a given passage and being able to infer and draw conclusions. For this one requires an extensive vocabulary and advanced reading skills. Since there is no syllabus to fall back on, aspirants have to rely on their skills to be able to tackle passages they have never seen. There needs to be a **focus on grammar**, at least in the initial stages of preparation as it is the first step to understanding any language. A strong grammatical basis provides a foundation to build advanced skills on. Once the candidates have a strong hold on their grammar, the focus should shift to reading comprehension. For this the more one reads, the more their confidence will increase.

One thing aspirant must remember even before reading a passage is **recognising the difference between an author's opinion and their own thoughts about a subject**. Unless the passage asks for it, it is the author's opinion the aspirants must stick to. What is being assessed here is the ability to comprehend and assimilate information presented in front of the reader. This might take some practice as students are often hardwired to stick to their preconceived thoughts. Since too much time cannot be spent on a single passage to differentiate between author's opinion and student's thoughts, the passages should be approached in a blank manner, only taking in what the passage is giving.

### Steps to Approach a Passage:

1. Read the questions carefully: In the questions, the aspirant will get instructions regarding what to look for in the passage.
2. Read the passage with the questions in mind: reading the passage after having read the questions streamlines the process. The passage should be approached according to the demand in the question.
3. Consider the Options: the aspirant should look at the options next and correspond them with their answer to find the closest match.

### Terminology to Remember

Assume: to accept something as true without proof

Assumption a thing that is accepted as true without proof

Conclude: to arrive at an end

Conclusion: the final outcome or result

4. Crux: the most important point of an issue
5. Imply: indicating/ pointing towards something that is not explicitly stated
6. Implication: to draw a conclusion from something although it is not explicitly stated
7. Inference: to draw a conclusion based on evidence.

### Types of Questions

#### Assumptions of the author

The questions are based on the author's opinions and thoughts while writing the passage. The answer in this case is not directly in the passage and requires critical thinking on the part of the student. It is important to note that it is the author's opinion that is being asked and aspirants need to remove

their thoughts and opinions and focus solely on the author. It is important to note the writing style while trying to solve these questions; how the author is describing things, whether he is making a statement or posing questions. The key words to look out for in these types of questions are "assumed", "assumptions made", "According to the passage/author".

#### Example Passage:

**A central message of modern development economics is the importance of income growth, which means growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In theory, rising GDP creates unemployment and investment opportunities. As incomes grow in a country where the level of GDP was once low, households, communities, and governments are increasingly able to set aside some funds for the production of things that make for a good life. Today GDP has assumed such a significant place in the development lexicon, that if someone mentions "economic growth", we know they mean growth in GDP.**

#### 1. With reference to the above passage, the following assumptions have been made:

1. Rising GDP is essential for a country to be developed country
2. Rising GDP guarantees a reasonable distribution of income to all households.

Which of the above assumptions is/are valid?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

#### Answer and Explanation:

The passage is discussing the perceived importance of GDP in today's world. Since the question has asked for assumptions made, you need to focus on the opinions of the author instead of your own thoughts. Of the two assumptions given as part of the question, the first seems to be reflected in the passage. The second option has the word 'guarantees' meaning an assurance or a promise. However the passage has the phrase "in theory" which is used in describing something that is supposed to happen but may or may not happen. The connotation or implication is usually towards the negative. So option no. 2 is not an assumption. Option no. 1 is the only assumption that has been made by the author. The answer thus is (a).

**Note:** Make sure to read the question carefully. It could ask what assumptions have been made and also what assumptions can be made. The first indicates assumptions of the author; the second refers to assumptions that can be made after reading the passage (by you). The answer may differ based on this technicality.

#### Explicit Information

These are direct questions and perhaps the easiest to solve because of their direct nature. The answers are fact based and are found within the passage itself. For these questions the details need to be focused on. It is also important to read the question properly as many times they are negative. The question may ask what the passage is NOT saying. Either



way, for these questions the second reading of the passage needs to be detail oriented. The questions are direct or may ask which of the given options are true.

#### Example Passage

The sugar maple is a hard maple tree. It can grow as tall as 100 feet and as wide as 4 feet. The sugar maple is commercially valued for its sap, which is used in making maple syrup. Two north-eastern states, Vermont and New York, rank as major producers of maple syrup. In Canada, Quebec's annual syrup production surpasses 2.5 million gallons. To make pure maple syrup, holes are made in the trunk of the tree at the end of winter or in early spring. The water-like sap seeps through the holes and runs through a plastic spout that is put into the hole. Afterwards, the collected sap is transferred into tubes that are hooked up to a tank kept in the sugar house. Then, the sap goes through the boiling process. Boiling enhances flavour and adds colour to the sap. Once the sugar content of the sap is about 65%–66%, the sap is ready to be strained and marketed. Maple syrup found in supermarkets, however, is usually not pure and has other additives. The colour of pure maple may range from golden honey to light brown. Between 35 to 50 gallons of sap is needed to produce 1 gallon of maple syrup. Also, popular for the strength and finish of its wood, the sugar maple tree has been put to use in furniture, interior woodwork, flooring, and crates.

#### 2. According to the passage, which of the following periods is ideal for sapping?

- End of winter or in early spring
- Beginning of winter or in early spring
- End of winter or late spring
- Throughout the year

#### Answer and Explanation

This is a question where the answer is explicitly given in the passage. So after reading the passage a cursory reading, re-read the passage carefully looking for the answer. These questions are a sure way to score some marks. Based on the information in the passage, sapping takes place at the end of winter and in early spring. Hence, the correct answer is (a).

#### Implicit Information

This is the direct opposite of explicit information in that the answers to these types of questions are not given directly within the passage. They need to be deduced from the passage after a close reading. They test the aspirant's reasoning ability along with their comprehension skills. The implied idea will not be found by merely evaluating the options. The key words to look out for are "implied" or "implications". While reading the passage, the aspirant should think about the consequences of the passage, what the passage is saying and also what the passage is not saying.

#### Example Passage

In the immediate future, we will see the increasing commodification of many new technologies— artificial intelligence and robotics, 3D manufacturing, custom made biological and pharmaceutical products, lethal autonomous weapons and driverless cars. The moral question of how a driverless car will decide between hitting a jaywalker and swerving and damaging the car has often been debated, the

answer is both simple- save the human life - and complex. At which angle should the car swerve- just enough to save the jaywalker or more than enough? If the driverless car is in Dublin, who would take the decision? The Irish Government, or the car's original code writer in California, or a software programmer in Hyderabad to whom maintenance is outsourced? If different national jurisdictions have different fine print on prioritising a human life, how will it affect insurance and investment decisions, including transactional ones?

#### 3. Which of the following statements best reflect the rational, plausible and practical implications that can be derived from the passage given above?

- Too much globalisation is not in the best interest of any country.
- Modern technologies are increasingly blurring the economic borders.
- Innovation and capital have impinged on the domain of the State.
- Public policy of every country should focus on developing its own supply chains.
- Geopolitics will have to reconcile to many ambiguities and uncertainties.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- 1, 4 and 5 only
- 1,2,3 and 5 only
- 2,3 and 5 only
- 1,2,3,4 and 5

#### Answer and Explanation

This passage is about the moral conundrum of new technologies. It is full of examples and you need to focus on the main idea. It is important to note that the passage is not criticising new technologies, nor is it offering any solutions. It is merely stating that new technologies have caused new problems. Option 1 is a direct critique of globalisation. Since the passage is not a critique of globalisation, Option 1 gets immediately negated. All the options except (c) have option 1 in them. So the third option is the correct answer.

#### Inference/Conclusion based questions

These questions ask the aspirant to infer from the information given in the passage or draw a conclusion. The conclusion could be directly given in the passage or it could be that the aspirant needs to draw the inferences themselves. Inferences can usually be drawn from anywhere within the passage while conclusions will focus on the last few lines. The words to look out for are "concluding remarks", "infer", "inference".

#### Example Passage

Our cities are extremely vulnerable to climate change because of large concentrations of populations and poor infrastructure. Moreover, population densities are increasing in them but we have not yet developed the systems to address climate change impacts. Our cities contribute to 65 percent of the GDP, but there are not enough facilities to address the issues of air quality, transport, etc., that are vital to identifying sustainable solutions. We need to involve citizens in city planning and create an ecosystem that meets the needs of the people.



4. Which of the following is the most logical and rational inference that can be made from the passage given above?

- a. Our cities need to have well-defined administrative set-up with sufficient autonomy.
- b. Ever increasing population densities is a hindrance in our efforts to achieve sustainable development.
- c. To maintain and develop our cities we need to adopt sustainability related interventions.
- d. Public-private Partnership mode of development is the viable long-term solution for the infrastructure and sustainability problems in India.

**Answer and Explanation**

This passage is about cities that are being affected due to climate change. Since inference-based questions require critical thinking by you, you need to read the passage very carefully to determine the most logical inference. After reading the passage, think about what the passage is indicating since the answer is not directly there in the passage. Here while options a), b) and d) are all true statements, option c) is the most appropriate option.

**Vocabulary**

By now it should be clear to you how important having a strong vocabulary is. To have even a basic understanding of comprehension passages it is important to first understand the words. However, building up one's vocabulary requires rigorous practice.

- **Read, Rinse and Repeat:** Reading is an essential, unavoidable step of the process. In order to get familiar with important words that might come up in comprehension passages, making a habit of reading newspapers is helpful. Some good examples include Indian Express, The Times of India and The Hindu. Every time you come across a new word, it is a good idea to underline or highlight it and relate it to your own life. Make a note of each new word you come across to refer to later.
- **A Separate Notebook:** It is a good idea to have a separate space to write down all the new words that you come across. As you come across more words, it is likely that some might escape your memory. Having them all written down in one place for reference later can be particularly helpful for active recall.
- **Construct Sentences:** Memorising a list of new words will only get you so far. Writing sentences with unfamiliar words you come across makes you actively engage with each word, which each in turn helps retain it in your memory for much longer. It is also extra grammar practice that will help you write better essays in future.
- **Flashcards:** Flashcards help in active recall which has been proven to improve one's memory.
- **Word games:** Playing word games could be a way to build your vocabulary while relaxing. However, be careful to not use this as an excuse to use your phone to procrastinate.

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ETHIC





**ETHICAL DISASTER OR  
NATURAL DISASTER?  
IMPORTANCE OF ETHICAL  
ISSUE IN DISASTER  
MANAGEMENT**



## ETHICAL DISASTER OR NATURAL DISASTER? IMPORTANCE OF ETHICAL ISSUE IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT

### Abstract

**Background:** Since modern disasters, natural or human-made occur more frequently, causing more deaths, affecting more people and increasing economic loss. This becomes making difficult on healthcare system and personnel while assisting and ensuring the lives of the disaster population because of lack of medical resources in conjunction with a mass casualty situation, that can present specific ethical challenges in disaster management. Understanding the nature of the ethical challenges specific to disaster settings is becoming more important to prevent ethical conflicts are to be helpful to all parties to find the least negative option for action under severe conditions.

**Objective and Method:** The purpose of this paper is to describe the importance of ethics in disaster management. The reviewed literature for this paper was based on the related data sources of ethics of disaster management, extensive review ethics and disaster medicine, public health and disasters in CINAL plus, Google scholar and research gate.

**Discussions:** This paper will discuss about the authorized person who can make ethical decisions in disaster, the ways of making ethical decision and the principles and values that guide on ethical decision making in disaster. Conclusion: As Ethical decision making in disaster cannot be carried out by any one person or community. It requires open discussion and a commitment between the experiences and perspectives of those who are different in the community. Mutual critique will lead to a more adequate ethical foundation in guiding our action in the management of disasters.

**Keywords:** ethical issue, disaster management, disaster, authority, ethical decision

### I. Introduction

Ethics is a complex area. If it is concerned with the kind of people we are, this could be “ethic of being” or if it is concerned with the things we do or fail to do, this could be “ethics of doing”. Therefore, ethics focus on what we do, and how we decide what we ought or ought not to do. Ethics is about right and wrong in human conduct. Ethics is about choices, dilemmas and grey areas. Ethics is the study of standards of conduct and moral judgments as well as the study of what is right or acceptable behaviour and what is considered wrong. Moreover, Professional ethics are the accepted principles or moral codes that are applied to the practice of a specific profession, and ethical behaviour is behaviour that conforms to the accepted standards of that profession. Disaster ethics are concerned with all issues related to moral decision-making and actions taken within the context of disasters. The distinctive characteristic of disaster ethics is found in the specific challenges presented by disasters and the way in which they differ from everyday situations. Because disasters pose unique and unusual problems and place people in unfamiliar situations, ethical issues often come to the front of the management of such diverse and constantly changing situations. According to the World Medical Association (WMA) (2010), disasters, regardless of cause, are characterized by a sudden and, for the most part, unexpected occurrence that demands timely

actions to alleviate the situation. Disasters have unfavourable effects on public health due to pollution, risk of the epidemic, and psychosocial issues. Disasters require a coordinated multidisciplinary response to ensure that the necessary relief, which can include transportation, food and water, and medical supplies, arrives at the right place at the right time. The three-pronged approach to disaster response involves medical treatment in the form of paramedics, physicians and nurses, fire department personnel, and security forces that can include the military. Disaster responders can be faced with unusual situations in which the professional ethics that apply in routine emergencies and health care situations may be tested. According to the WMA, it is necessary for all disaster responders to ensure that the treatment of disaster survivors conforms to basic ethical tenets and is not influenced by other motivations. While insufficient and often disordered medical resources, in conjunction with the mass casualty situation, can present specific ethical challenges, it is important that the basic ethics of beneficence and respect for autonomy and justice complement the individual ethics of the health care provider despite the chaos of the situation.

### II. Methods

The purpose of this paper is to describe the importance of ethics in disaster management. The reviewed literature for this paper was based on the related data sources of ethics of disaster management, extensive review ethics and disaster medicine, public health and disasters in CINAL plus, Google scholar and research gate.

### III. Discussion

#### 3.1 WHY ETHIC IS IMPORTANT IN DISASTER MANAGEMENT?

Disasters are unpredictable, acute situations which cause extensive damage, destruction, and suffering, and which often cannot be dealt with by the local community on its own. The people responding to disasters (victims, health care personnel, humanitarian aid workers or military personnel) often record disillusionment and a kind of ethical frustration with making ethical decisions during disasters. Ethical practices help to provide stability for organizations in a rapidly changing and increasingly complex world. In contrast to day-to-day emergencies, disasters are characterized by a relative lack of time and resources and many people are trying to do quickly what they do not ordinarily do, in an environment with which they are not familiar. According to reports, electricity was lost, the basement was flooded, the temperature was over 100 F, backup power failed and the ventilators could no longer be operated, and the lights were out. In such circumstances, the very ethical foundations of routine, patient, and family-focused health care are threatened. Therefore, it is important to understand such ethical concepts as utility, justice, and fairness. Disaster management requires that the health care providers go beyond the standard of bioethical principles and consider the codes of ethics and ethical conduct to guide decision making at the patient, provider, and societal levels.



### **3.2 WHO HAS THE AUTHORITY TO MAKE ETHICAL DECISION IN DISASTER?**

Ethical management of disaster and emergencies is a complex business that involves communication, education and training, awareness building, resource acquisition, and planning and allocation as part of the disaster management cycle of mitigation, planning, response, and recovery. When disaster does occur, a timely, effective, culturally sensitive, and gender-appropriate response must be enacted. Such a response must recognize that those affected by the disaster may have standards of justice and ethical traditions that differ from those of the responder. This point is especially true in the international environment. Recognition and appreciation of such differences help to maintain the dignity of the victim and helps to work toward sustainable recovery. There is also a discernible conflict here between the professional and personal choices made by health care professionals, humanitarian aid workers, members of emergency and disaster relief teams, and other professionals involved in disaster relief. All professionals are tied by their professional goals and norms, but, according to Schweitzer's view, they must be humans first; humans with their own moral standards. Professional norms need not always correspond to the personal values and norms of the professional and vice versa. Professionals at some point in their careers make decisions based on professional conduct rather than on their own ethical ideals, simply because they are professional and act professionally. Yet the ethical guidelines are important for disaster relief teams and related professionals as they state the required minimum of professional ethical conduct like an accepting cultural difference when helping in countries with the different cultural and religious backgrounds.

### **3.3 HOW SHOULD ETHICAL DECISION BE MADE?**

Disaster ethics are usually addressed in three phases such as pre-disaster, disaster and post-disaster phase. Although each phase may pose different ethical dilemmas, the main topics of interest in these phases can be summarized as follows: preventive ethics, disaster triage, informed consent, communicable disease surveillance, risk communication, quarantine/ isolation, vaccinations, refusal of medical treatment, euthanasia, allocation of resources, linguistic, religious, and cultural differences, vulnerable groups, community participation, division of labour, healthcare workers' duty to treat, obligations to disaster relief workers, participation of health-care workers in war crimes/torture/death penalty, relations with industry and media, disaster response and development, and disaster research. Developing a preventive ethics approach in this pre-disaster phase, also helps to reduce conflicts during the crisis phase. Within this scope, capacity building to increase knowledge and skills of disaster relief professionals and the populations at risk, developing disaster recovery plans, practicing and updating these plans as needed, building strong partnerships among organizations and institutions with potential duties in disaster relief, preparing legislations and manuals as to better respond to the ethical conflicts in disasters as well as informing all partners about this ethical framework are crucial. During disasters, there is often a need to track the responsibility of professional organizations or governmental bodies for the ethical decisions and actions they make. In the chaos of disaster,

there is a need to establish order and the basic mechanism for relieving the community from the negative effects of the disaster (e.g. setting up camps, organizing disaster relief and health care teams, collecting resources, materials and food). Many decisions are made collectively. In focusing on Disaster Ethics, the following phases in dealing with disasters will be discussed: Prevention, Preparation, Response, and Mitigation. At present, disasters are unpredictable, so it is not possible to prevent them for the most part. In addition, the variation in what we consider to be disasters means that it is difficult to make a detailed list of what to do and what ethically ought to be done to prevent all disasters. However, those in political power and groups such as healthcare professionals together have the ethical responsibility to discuss issues that may create or add to the possibility of a disaster. The government and other parties that are involved with planning and responding to disasters have an ethical obligation to do no harm and plan to lessen the harm to citizens in a disaster; the concept of a risk: benefit ratio must be used. By using the ethical principle of distributive justice, so that burdens and benefits are shared fairly in society. Health care professionals commit to an ethical code of "do no further harm". Even in disaster scenarios where resources are limited, health providers may be required to limit the care given to mitigate any potential harm. To achieve the greater good, the basic rights of another should not be violated. On the other hand, a lot of barriers and drawbacks regarding ethical decisions in disaster management. The mass media mindset and public authorities' attitude have been the irritating issue, stating that images of dead and wounded people might be published without any respect to personhood rights. In addition, public authorities facilitate hiding the sensitive information from the public such as outbreaks of cholera, H1N1. International relief organizations might approach in a paternalistic and imperious manner to local organizations, health care workers, and society. They might act inattentively for referrals of patients to other provinces or abroad, neither sharing information nor writing epicrisis. Unjust resource allocation and mismanagement due to unpreparedness that become the situation more complicated in disasters where access to services is already diminished in addition to the pre-existing availability and accessibility problems. In this condition, implementation of the ethical principles is strictly linked to disaster management. One of the main reasons for mismanagement is stated as the lack of rapid health assessment to determine actual needs, which can cause misallocation of resources while excessive and useless resources pile up in one place, but no care in another, eventually leading to preventable suffering and death. In addition to lack of rapid health assessment, the participants emphasize that the other dimension of unpreparedness is the lack of disaster-specific organization. Therefore, when a disaster strikes health care workers (HCWs) and resources are sent to the area "without thinking" which contributes to chaotic conditions.

### **3.4 WHICH PRINCIPLES AND VALUES SHOULD GUIDE THOSE ENGAGED IN ETHICAL DECISION MAKING IN DISASTER?**

Main ethical principles in the provision of health services during the event and an early response phase of disasters are the principles of non-maleficence, beneficence,



justice, and the respect for autonomy. In this phase, reaching the disaster site as quickly as possible is the most crucial step. In line with the principles of the ethical practice of public health, public health institutions should act in a timely manner on the information they have within the resources and the mandate given to them by the public. Triage, as the second most crucial step, is often considered critical in the distribution of limited medical resources, where highest priority should be given to the principles of beneficence and justice. Informed consent, which is used frequently in daily medical practice, is another important ethical challenge in disasters. The WMA Declaration of Lisbon on the Rights of the Patient (1981) states that "If the patient is unconscious or otherwise unable to express his/her will, informed consent must be obtained, whenever possible, from a legally entitled representative. If a legally entitled representative is not available, but a medical intervention is urgently needed, consent of the patient may be presumed, unless it is obvious and beyond any doubt based on the patient's previous firm expression or conviction that he/she would refuse consent to the intervention in that situation". On the other hand, there might be exceptions to informed consent, such as in disaster and other public health emergency situations. According to Last (2004), scientists working in emergency situations like an epidemic, have an ethical duty to be open in dealing with the public. Last (2004) argues that the public has the right to know what the experts know. Within this scope, implementing the principles of risk communication to avoid unnecessary fear and anxiety among the public is of vital importance. One of the ethical issues that arises in risk communication is the risk of stigmatization in certain sub-groups. The ethical approach should be to minimize generalizations about the high-risk groups, whenever possible. The ethical guide includes ten substantive values, which are; individual liberty, protection of the public from harm, proportionality, privacy, equity, duty to provide care, stewardship, solidarity, trust, and reciprocity. Allocation of resources, as mentioned in guidelines, also create ethical dilemmas in disasters. The division of labour among organizations is considered as one of the ethical aspects of disaster response. Accordingly, every effort should be made to assign labours according to the expertise of each organization. According to the UNDP (1997), relief institutions have special ethical obligations to their staff during humanitarian emergencies. Adequate preparation and training beforehand, and effective counselling and support during and after operations are strongly advised. Respect for diverse values, beliefs, and cultures in the community constitutes

one of the principles of the ethical practice of public health. Besides interfering with optimal health care; cultural, religious and linguistic barriers may also have significance with respect to creating ethical dilemmas. If health care professionals and patients do not speak the same language, every effort should be made to find interpreters. According to the WMA Statement on Medical Ethics in the Event of Disasters (1994), the physician must respect the customs, rites and religions of the patients. In this respect, community participation in disaster relief efforts is a useful approach in planning services, which are ethically sound and widely accepted by the affected community. Ensuring an opportunity for input from community members is also one of the principles of the ethical practice of public health. In line with the ethical principle of justice, it is also crucial for relief workers to try avoiding actions that may cause stigmatization and discrimination of vulnerable groups. According to the principles of the ethical practice of public health, public health institutions should protect the confidentiality of information that can bring harm to an individual or community. WMA Statement on Medical Ethics in the Event of Disasters (1994) states that the physician has a duty to each patient to ensure confidentiality when dealing with third parties. All ethical values and principles that were mentioned in pre-disaster and an early response phase should also be recognized in the aftermath of disasters. In the post-disaster period, the needs of survivors must be considered. Many may have lost family members and may be suffering psychological distress. The dignity of survivors and their families must be respected.

#### IV. Conclusion

Disasters vary considerably with respect to their time, place and extent; therefore, ethical questions in these situations may not always have one-size-fits-all answers. On the other hand, embedding ethical values and principles in every aspect of health-care is a vital importance in disasters. For the very reason, reviewing legal and organizational regulations, developing healthcare related guidelines, protocols and disaster recovery plans by taking potential ethical dilemmas into account, establishing on-call ethics committees as well as adequate in-service training of healthcare workers for ethical competence are among the most critical steps to take in pre-disaster phase. These measures should be taken both at the local level as well as the country level. In conclusion, it is not only by making great efforts before disasters but also should have a positive attitude is necessary during disasters that ethical challenges can be minimized in disaster responses

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# TOPICS OF THE MONTH







**SOCIAL MEDIA IS INHERENTLY A SELFISH MEDIUM**

**- DR. Alexander Jacob IPS**

**WE MAY BRAVE HUMAN LAWS BUT CAN NOT RESIST NATURAL LAWS**

**-DR. Babu Sebastian**

**FULFILLMENT OF 'NEW WOMAN' IN INDIA IS A MYTH**

**-DR. G. Prasanna Kumar IAS**

**JOY IS THE SIMPLEST FORM OF GRATITUDE**

**- DR. Muhammed Basheer**



## SOCIAL MEDIA IS INHERENTLY A SELFISH MEDIUM

*I think there should be regulations on social media to the degree that it negatively affects the public good.*

*—Elon Musk*

Social media has become an ubiquitous aspect of modern life, reshaping the way individuals communicate, consume information, and present themselves to the world. Platforms like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and TikTok have transformed personal interactions and societal dynamics, often emphasising self-expression, personal branding, and individual narratives. While social media offers numerous benefits, such as connectivity, information dissemination, and community building, it also fosters a culture of self-promotion and narcissism.

Social media platforms provide users with tools to carefully curate and control their online personas. This self-presentation, often referred to as impression management, allows individuals to highlight their achievements, physical appearance, and social status. The desire to project a favourable image can lead to behaviours that prioritise personal gain over genuine interaction. For example, users may post selectively edited photos, share accomplishments, and engage in performative activism to enhance their reputation.

The architecture of social media platforms, with features such as likes, comments, and shares, reinforces a feedback loop of validation and approval seeking. The pursuit of these digital affirmations can become addictive, driving users to prioritise content that garners attention over meaningful engagement. This need for validation can foster a self-centred mindset, where the primary goal is to receive recognition rather than contribute to authentic conversations or relationships.

Studies have shown a correlation between social media use and increased levels of narcissism and self-esteem issues. Narcissistic individuals are drawn to social media as it offers a stage for self-admiration and public acknowledgment. Conversely, those with low self-esteem may use social media to seek external validation, often resulting in a cycle of comparison and envy. This dynamic emphasises individualism and self-focus, further entrenching social media as a medium that caters to selfish tendencies.

Modern Western societies, particularly those influenced by neoliberal ideologies, celebrate individualism and personal success. Social media amplifies this cultural trend by providing platforms where personal achievements and lifestyles are broadcasted to a wide audience. This focus on individualism can detract from collective values and community-oriented thinking, promoting a selfish mindset where personal branding and self-interest take precedence.

Social media fosters an environment of constant social comparison. Users are frequently exposed to idealised representations of others' lives, leading to feelings of inadequacy and envy. This competitive atmosphere can drive individuals to engage in one-upmanship, where the emphasis is on outdoing others rather than fostering genuine connections. The result is a culture that values personal success and recognition over communal well-being.

The rise of influencer culture on social media exemplifies the commodification of the self. Influencers build personal brands and monetize their online presence, often

blurring the lines between personal expression and commercial interests. This trend highlights the inherently selfish nature of social media, where the self becomes a product to be marketed and consumed. The pursuit of followers, sponsorships, and monetisation opportunities can overshadow authentic self-expression and community engagement.

Social media platforms operate within an attention economy, where user engagement is monetised through advertising revenue. The business models of these platforms incentivise behaviours that maximise user attention and time spent online. This often involves algorithms that prioritise sensational, emotionally charged, or controversial content, encouraging users to engage in self-promotional and attention-seeking behaviours. The economic incentives of social media companies thus align with and reinforce the selfish tendencies of users.

The collection and monetisation of user data is the core aspect of social media business models, often described as surveillance capitalism. Users' online activities, preferences, and behaviours are tracked and analysed to deliver targeted advertisements and personalised content. This practice prioritises profit over user privacy and well-being, reflecting a broader trend of self-interest within the industry. The exploitation of personal data for commercial gain underscores the selfish motivations driving social media platforms.

Social media heavily influences consumer behaviour and lifestyle choices, often promoting materialism and conspicuous consumption. Influencers and targeted advertisements shape users' desires and aspirations, encouraging them to purchase products and services that align with their curated online personas. This consumerist culture fosters a focus on personal gratification and status symbols, reinforcing the selfish nature of social media interactions.

The emphasis on self-presentation and validation seeking can erode the quality of relationships on social media. Authentic connections require vulnerability, empathy, and reciprocity, which are often compromised by the performative nature of social media interactions. Users may prioritise maintaining an idealised image over genuine communication, leading to superficial relationships and decreased emotional intimacy.

The pursuit of validation and constant social comparison on social media can have detrimental effects on mental health. Studies have linked excessive social media use to increased levels of anxiety, depression, and loneliness. The pressure to conform to idealised standards and the fear of missing out (FOMO) contribute to these negative outcomes, highlighting the psychological costs of a selfish social media culture.

Social media algorithms that prioritise engagement often amplify divisive and polarising content, creating echo chambers where users are exposed to information that reinforces their existing beliefs. This can lead to a fragmented and polarised society, where constructive dialogue and mutual understanding are undermined by self-serving behaviours and confirmation bias. The selfish tendencies of users, combined



with the profit-driven motives of platforms, exacerbate societal divisions and hinder collective problem-solving.

Educating users about the psychological and sociological dynamics of social media can help mitigate its selfish tendencies. Digital literacy programs that emphasise critical thinking, media literacy, and ethical online behaviour can empower individuals to use social media more mindfully and responsibly. By fostering awareness of the impact of social media on self-perception and relationships, users can make more informed choices about their online activities.

Social media companies have a role to play in addressing the selfishness inherent in their platforms. Designing ethical social media platforms that prioritise user well-being, privacy, and genuine connections can help counteract the negative effects of selfish behaviours. This could involve implementing features that promote positive interactions, limit addictive usage patterns, and protect user data from exploitation.

Initiatives that promote community engagement and collective action can help shift the focus from individualism to communal values on social media. Campaigns that encourage users to support social causes, participate in community projects, and engage in meaningful conversations can foster a sense of solidarity and shared purpose. By leveraging the connectivity of social media for collective good, users can counterbalance its inherent selfish tendencies.

Selfie With Daughter campaign, initiated by the Indian government, encouraged people to share selfies with their

daughters on social media. It aimed to promote gender equality and raise awareness about the importance of daughters in society.

The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Clean India) campaign utilised social media to mobilise millions of Indians to participate in cleanliness drives. People shared their efforts and progress on platforms like Twitter and Facebook, creating a collective movement towards a cleaner India.

Digital India initiative aimed to transform India into a digitally empowered society and knowledge economy. Social media played a crucial role in spreading awareness and encouraging participation in various digital literacy programs, e-governance initiatives, and online services.

Social media is a complex and multifaceted medium that reflects and amplifies the values and behaviours of its users. While it offers numerous benefits, it also fosters a culture of self-promotion, validation seeking, and individualism. The psychological, sociological, and economic factors that contribute to the selfish nature of social media highlight the need for a more mindful and ethical approach to its use. By promoting digital literacy, designing user-centric platforms, and encouraging community-oriented initiatives, society can harness the positive potential of social media while mitigating its inherent selfishness. In doing so, social media can evolve into a tool that not only connects individuals but also strengthens the social fabric and promotes collective well-being.

## **WE MAY BRAVE HUMAN LAWS BUT CAN NOT RESIST NATURAL LAWS**

***In law a Man is Guilty when He Violates the Rights of Others. In Ethics He is Guilty if He Only Thinks of Doing So.***

**—Immanuel Kant**

The distinction between human laws and natural laws is both profound and enlightening. Human laws, crafted by societies, govern behaviour, organization, and justice within human communities. These laws are mutable, subject to change, and often reflect the prevailing moral and ethical standards of the time. On the other hand, natural laws are immutable principles governing the natural world, dictated by physics, chemistry, biology, and other sciences. While humans can challenge, alter, and occasionally defy their own laws, natural laws remain inviolable and absolute.

Human laws are social constructs designed to maintain order, protect rights, and promote justice within a community. These laws vary significantly across different cultures and eras, shaped by historical contexts, religious beliefs, and societal values. For instance, laws concerning marriage, property, and personal conduct have evolved dramatically over centuries. The legal systems of ancient Rome, medieval Europe, and modern democratic societies each reflect their unique cultural contexts and priorities.

Human laws can change through reforms and revolutions. They evolve through legislative amendments, court decisions, and societal shifts. India recently witnessed a significant overhaul of its criminal justice system. Three new laws, the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam, replaced colonial-era legislations. These changes aim to modernize the justice system and address various aspects. Criminal case judgments must now be delivered within 45 days after the trial ends, and charges must be framed within 60 days of the first hearing. A

new chapter in the law specifically addresses crimes against women and children. Buying or selling a child is classified as a heinous crime, punishable by severe penalties. Gangrape of a minor can result in a death sentence or life imprisonment. Victims of crimes against women are entitled to receive regular updates on their cases within 90 days, and hospitals must provide free first-aid or medical treatment to them. Incidents can now be reported via electronic communication, eliminating the need to visit a police station. The introduction of Zero FIR allows individuals to file a First Information Report at any police station, regardless of jurisdiction. India's legal landscape has been shaped by landmark cases. The Nanavati case led to the abolition of the jury system.

The Nirbhaya case spurred the enactment of the Juvenile Justice (Care and Protection of Children) Act, 2015 addressing crimes against minors.

In stark contrast, natural laws are the fundamental principles governing the physical universe. These laws, discovered through scientific inquiry, describe the behaviour of matter and energy, the principles of motion, the forces of gravity, the conservation of energy, and much more. Unlike human laws, natural laws are not subject to human will or societal changes, they remain constant regardless of time, place, or culture.

Natural laws dictate the limits of human capabilities and the boundaries within which life and matter operate. For example, the law of gravity governs the motion of planets, the flight of birds, and the fall of apples. The principles of thermodynamics dictate energy transfer and transformation



in all physical and biological processes. These laws are not subject to negotiation or alteration, they are inherent properties of the universe.

While human laws govern societal conduct, they often intersect with natural laws, particularly in areas such as technology, medicine, and environmental policy. Understanding and respecting natural laws is crucial in these fields to avoid adverse outcomes and promote sustainable progress.

Human activities continue to release excessive greenhouse gasses into the atmosphere. The consequences of rising global temperatures, extreme weather events, and melting ice caps underscore the importance of respecting the Earth's delicate balance. The Kyoto Protocol and subsequent agreements aim to curb emissions, but challenges persist in achieving sustainable practices. Clearing forests for agriculture, urbanization, or logging disrupts ecosystems. The loss of biodiversity affects not only plant and animal species but also human well-being. Efforts like reforestation and conservation are crucial to maintaining ecological balance.

Ignoring fishing quotas and unsustainable practices deplete fish populations and harm marine ecosystems. The collapse of fisheries can disrupt food chains and livelihoods. Disregarding engineering principles can lead to catastrophic failures. Space missions generate debris that orbits Earth. Ignoring responsible space practices could lead to collisions, endangering satellites and future missions. Initiatives like the Space Debris Mitigation Guidelines aim to minimize this risk.

Medical science operates at the intersection of human and natural laws. The principles of biology and chemistry underpin our understanding of health and disease. Medical interventions, from pharmaceuticals to surgical procedures, must align with these principles to be effective. The discovery of antibiotics, vaccines, and genetic therapies demonstrates the successful application of natural laws to improve human health.

Indian doctors have developed a technique that has become the global standard for treating basilar invagination, a condition where the second cervical vertebra migrates upward, potentially compressing the brain stem. Advancements in healthcare and regenerative medicine led to breakthroughs in the development of a system for quick bug identification, aiding in disease diagnosis and treatment. Researchers in India have explored innovative methods to change eye colour permanently, which could have implications for both aesthetics and medical conditions.

Environmental policy is another domain where human and natural laws intersect. Ecosystems operate according to ecological principles that dictate the balance of species, energy flow, and nutrient cycling. Human activities that disregard these principles, such as deforestation, pollution, and overfishing disrupt ecological balance and lead to environmental degradation. Sustainable development requires policies that respect and work within the bounds of natural laws.

Human history is replete with examples of the dire consequences of ignoring natural laws. Environmental disasters, technological failures, and medical setbacks often result from a lack of understanding or respect for these fundamental principles. Natural disasters serve as powerful reminders of the need to respect ecological balance and adopt sustainable practices. Floods are the most common

natural disaster in India. The heavy southwest monsoon rains cause rivers like the Brahmaputra to overflow, often flooding surrounding areas. While they provide rice paddy farmers with natural irrigation and fertilization, floods can also kill thousands and displace millions of people. Almost all of India is flood-prone, and extreme precipitation events have become increasingly common, coinciding with rising temperatures. Tropical cyclones are particularly common in the northern reaches of the Indian Ocean, especially around the Bay of Bengal. Cyclones bring heavy rains, storm surges, and strong winds that can cut affected areas off from relief and supplies. Landslides are common in the Lower Himalayas due to the young age of the region's hills, making rock formations susceptible to slippages. Deforestation from logging and tourism exacerbates the severity of landslides. Avalanches also occur in regions like Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, and Sikkim.

Understanding the distinction between human and natural laws also carries an ethical dimension. Humans have a duty to respect and preserve the natural world. This moral obligation is highlighted in environmental ethics, which emphasize the protection of ecosystems, biodiversity, and the sustainable use of natural resources.

Environmental ethics emphasizes the intrinsic value of nature and the moral obligation to protect it. This ethical framework argues that human actions should not disrupt ecological balance or degrade natural habitats. The concept of "sustainable development" embodies this principle, advocating for economic progress that does not compromise the ability of future generations to meet their needs.

Bioethics deals with the ethical implications of biological and medical research and practices. It emphasizes the importance of respecting natural processes and the dignity of all living beings. Issues such as genetic engineering, cloning, and euthanasia raise profound ethical questions about the manipulation of natural laws and the boundaries of human intervention.

Technological ethics examines the moral dimensions of technological innovation and its impact on society and the environment. It advocates for the responsible use of technology, ensuring that advancements align with ethical principles and do not cause harm. The development of artificial intelligence, for example, raises questions about the ethical use of autonomous systems and their alignment with human values and natural laws.

The distinction between human and natural laws underscores a fundamental aspect of the human condition: our ability to shape our societies through laws and regulations, while simultaneously being bound by the immutable laws of nature.

Human laws reflect our collective aspirations for justice, order, and progress, but they are inherently fallible and subject to change. Natural laws, in contrast, are unchanging principles that dictate the behaviour of the physical world. Our ability to navigate this relationship by aligning human laws with natural laws and respecting the boundaries set by nature is essential for the well-being of our societies and the planet. This understanding calls for a balanced approach that harmonizes human ingenuity with the wisdom of nature, ensuring a sustainable and ethical future for all.



## FULFILLMENT OF 'NEW WOMAN' IN INDIA IS A MYTH

**A Woman with a Voice is by Definition a Strong Woman. But the Search to Find that Voice Can be Remarkably Difficult.**  
– Melinda Gates

The term 'New Woman' emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, symbolizing a shift in women's roles and identities in society. It represented women who were breaking away from traditional roles, gaining education, entering the workforce, and demanding equal rights. In India, the concept has taken on unique dimensions, influenced by cultural, social, and economic factors. While there have been significant strides towards gender equality, the fulfilment of the 'New Woman' ideal remains elusive, mired in persistent myths and realities that reveal a complex landscape of progress and regression.

The idea of the 'New Woman' in India can be traced back to the late colonial period when social reform movements aimed at improving women's status gained momentum. Reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar advocated for women's education, abolition of practices like Sati, and widow remarriage. The independence movement further catalyzed women's participation in public life, with figures like Sarojini Naidu and Kasturba Gandhi playing crucial roles. Post-independence, the Indian Constitution enshrined equality for all citizens, laying a foundation for women's rights.

Despite these advancements, traditional patriarchal norms continued to dominate the Indian society. The idea of the 'New Woman' clashed with deep-rooted cultural expectations, leading to a complex interplay between modernity and tradition.

Education is a critical determinant of women's empowerment. In recent decades, India has made remarkable progress in improving female literacy rates. According to the National Statistical Office (NSO), the female literacy rate in India increased from 53.7% in 2001 to 70.3% in 2011. However, these statistics mask significant regional disparities and the quality of education. Rural areas, particularly in states like Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, still lag behind, and girls often drop out of school due to poverty, early marriage, or household responsibilities.

Employment opportunities for women have also expanded, with more women entering diverse fields like engineering, medicine, and business. However, the overall female labor force participation rate remains low, hovering around 20.3% in 2019-2020, as per the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS). Cultural expectations, lack of safe working environments, and inadequate support systems like childcare facilities contribute to this disparity. Many women who work are employed in the informal sector, where they face exploitation, low wages, and job insecurity.

Political participation is another crucial aspect of the 'New Woman' ideal. India has seen women rise to prominent political positions, with figures like Indira Gandhi, the first female Prime Minister, and Pratibha Patil, the first female President, breaking significant barriers. Additionally, the 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments mandated one-third reservation for women in local government bodies, significantly increasing their political participation at the grassroots level.

However, representation at higher levels of government remains inadequate. Women hold only about 14%

of the seats in the Lok Sabha, the lower house of Parliament, as of 2020. Political parties often hesitate to field women candidates, and those who do run for office face significant challenges, including violence, discrimination, and lack of financial support. Moreover, the women who do attain political power are often from influential families, highlighting the role of dynastic politics in their rise.

Social and cultural norms continue to be major impediments to the fulfilment of the 'New Woman' ideal. Traditional gender roles and expectations still dictate many aspects of women's lives, from household duties to career choices. The pervasive influence of patriarchy means that women often have to navigate a delicate balance between personal ambitions and societal expectations.

Marriage and motherhood are still seen as primary roles for women, with societal pressure to conform to these roles being immense. The concept of honour and family reputation often dictates women's behaviour, leading to restrictions on their mobility and choices. Practices like dowry, though illegal, persist in many parts of the country, leading to financial and emotional burdens on women and their families. The media and popular culture also play a role in reinforcing traditional gender norms. While there are increasing representations of strong, independent women, these often coexist with stereotypical portrayals that reinforce outdated notions of femininity and women's roles in society.

Violence against women is a grave issue that undermines the progress towards the 'New Woman' ideal. India has seen a rise in reported cases of sexual harassment, domestic violence, and other forms of gender-based violence. The 2012 Nirbhaya case brought national and international attention to the issue of women's safety, leading to legal reforms and increased activism. Despite these efforts, the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) reported that in 2022, there were 4,45,256 cases of crime against women.

Laws alone are insufficient to address this issue. Implementation is often lax, and societal attitudes towards victims of violence are frequently unsupportive. Victim-blaming and stigma can deter women from reporting crimes, while the legal process can be long and arduous, leading to low conviction rates. Creating a safer environment for women requires not only legal reforms but also cultural and societal change to challenge and change deep-seated attitudes towards gender and violence.

Economic independence is crucial for the empowerment of women and the realization of the 'New Woman' ideal. Women who earn their own income can achieve greater autonomy and decision-making power within their families and communities.

However, the gender pay gap is a persistent issue, with women earning significantly less than men for the same work. Women are also underrepresented in higher-paying, leadership positions, often facing a glass ceiling that limits their career advancement.

- In addition to formal employment, entrepreneurship is a growing avenue for women's economic empowerment.



Initiatives like the Self-Help Group (SHG) movement and government schemes like Stand-Up India and the Mudra Yojana aim to support women entrepreneurs. However, access to credit, training, and markets remains limited, particularly for women in rural areas.

Health and well-being are fundamental to the fulfilment of the 'New Woman' ideal. Women's health in India has seen improvements, with reductions in maternal mortality rates and increased access to healthcare services. However, significant challenges remain, particularly in rural areas where healthcare infrastructure is inadequate.

Reproductive health is a critical area of concern. Despite legal access to contraception and abortion, many women lack the necessary information and services to make informed choices about their reproductive health. Societal attitudes towards women's sexuality and reproductive rights often lead to stigma and discrimination.

Mental health is another important but often neglected aspect of women's well-being. The pressures of balancing multiple roles, dealing with discrimination, and experiencing violence take a toll on women's mental health. Access to mental health services is limited, and the stigma associated with mental illness further complicates the issue. The experiences of women in India are not monolithic. Intersectionality, the idea that various forms of social stratification, such as race, class, and gender, intersect, plays a crucial role in shaping women's lives. Caste, religion, ethnicity, and socio-economic status all influence the extent to

which women can achieve the 'New Woman' ideal.

Dalit women, for instance, face compounded discrimination due to their caste and gender, experiencing higher levels of violence and economic exploitation. Women from minority religious communities may also face specific challenges related to their identity. The experiences of urban and rural women differ significantly, with rural women often facing greater barriers to education, employment, and healthcare.

The fulfilment of the 'New Woman' ideal in India remains a complex and multifaceted issue. While significant progress has been made in areas like education, political participation, and legal rights, deep-seated social, cultural, and economic barriers continue to hinder true gender equality. The realization of the concept of the 'New Woman' requires sustained efforts across multiple dimensions, policy, societal attitudes, and individual empowerment.

Achieving this ideal involves addressing the structural inequalities that limit women's opportunities and autonomy. It requires a concerted effort to challenge and change patriarchal norms, improve access to education and healthcare, ensure safety and security, and promote economic independence. Only through a holistic and inclusive approach can the 'New Woman' truly thrive in India.

*We cannot All Succeed When Half of Us are Held Back.*

—Malala Yousafzai

## JOY IS THE SIMPLEST FORM OF GRATITUDE

**Let us Rise Up and be Thankful, for if We didn't Learn a Lot Today, at Least We Learned a Little**

**- Gautama Buddha**

Gratitude is often depicted as a grand gesture or profound acknowledgment of something deeply meaningful, but at its core, gratitude can be distilled into the simplest form of human emotion i.e., joy. By understanding joy as a direct, unadulterated response to positive experiences and moments of connection, we can appreciate how it embodies gratitude in its purest form.

Joy is an immediate, often spontaneous, feeling of happiness or pleasure. It is a universal emotion that transcends cultural, social, and personal boundaries. Unlike happiness, which can be sustained over a longer period and often linked to a broader context, joy is typically more transient, arising from specific moments or events. It is these moments of joy that reveal the presence of gratitude in its most elemental state.

Gratitude involves recognizing and appreciating the good in our lives. It is a mindful acknowledgment of the benefits we receive, whether from other people, nature, or circumstances. Gratitude can be expressed through words, actions, or thoughts, and it encompasses a spectrum of emotions from mild contentment to profound appreciation. The common thread in all expressions of gratitude is the sense of acknowledging something positive that enhances our lives. At the heart of the relationship between joy and gratitude is the recognition that joy is often a direct manifestation of gratitude. When we experience joy, it is usually because we have encountered something or someone that enriches our lives, even if only momentarily. This recognition of enrichment

is a fundamental aspect of gratitude. For instance, the joy a child feels when receiving a gift is an expression of gratitude for the kindness and thoughtfulness of the giver. Similarly, the joy we experience in nature reflects a deep appreciation for its beauty and tranquillity.

From a psychological standpoint, joy and gratitude are closely linked emotions that contribute to overall well-being. Research has shown that individuals who regularly practice gratitude tend to experience higher levels of joy and satisfaction in life. Gratitude exercises, such as keeping a gratitude journal, have been found to increase positive emotions, including joy. This suggests that cultivating gratitude can lead to more frequent and intense experiences of joy.

Positive psychology, a branch of psychology focused on the study of positive emotions and traits, emphasizes the importance of joy and gratitude in enhancing mental health. According to positive psychology, both joy and gratitude are essential for fostering a sense of fulfilment and resilience. By focusing on what we are grateful for, we open ourselves to more joyful experiences, creating a positive feedback loop that enhances our overall well-being.

Mindfulness plays a crucial role in the interplay between joy and gratitude. Mindfulness involves being present in the moment and fully experiencing our thoughts, feelings, and surroundings without judgment. By practicing mindfulness, we become more aware of the sources of joy in our lives and more attuned to the gratitude they inspire.

When we are mindful, we are more likely to notice



the small, everyday moments that bring us joy. Whether it is the warmth of the sun on our skin, the taste of a delicious meal, or the smile of a loved one, these moments of joy are opportunities to practice gratitude. By being present and attentive, we can fully appreciate these moments and the joy they bring, reinforcing our sense of gratitude.

Different cultures and philosophical traditions have long recognized the connection between joy and gratitude. In many spiritual and religious practices, gratitude is seen as a pathway to experiencing joy and a more meaningful life. For example, in Christianity, gratitude is often expressed through prayers of thanks giving, which are intended to cultivate a joyful appreciation for God's blessings. Similarly, in Buddhism, mindfulness and gratitude are key practices that lead to a state of joyful contentment and enlightenment.

Philosophically, the Stoics viewed gratitude as a vital component of a good life. They believed that by recognizing and appreciating what we have, we can cultivate a sense of joy and contentment, regardless of external circumstances. This perspective aligns with the idea that joy is the simplest form of gratitude, as it arises from an appreciation of the present moment and the good it contains.

Understanding the relationship between joy and gratitude can have practical implications for our daily lives. By consciously seeking out and savouring moments of joy, we can foster a greater sense of gratitude. This can be achieved through various practices, like regularly writing down things we are grateful for can help us focus on the positive aspects of our lives and increase our awareness of the joy they bring. Practicing mindfulness meditation can enhance our ability to be present in the moment and appreciate the sources of joy in our lives.

The connection between joy and gratitude extends to our relationships with others. When we experience joy in the presence of others, it often strengthens our bonds and deepens our sense of gratitude for those relationships. Joyful moments shared with family members, such as celebrations, holidays, and everyday interactions, create a sense of gratitude for the support and love we receive.

Joyful experiences with friends, whether through shared activities, conversations, or mutual support, foster a deep appreciation for the companionship and understanding they provide.

Joyful moments in romantic relationships, such as shared laughter, affectionate gestures, and meaningful conversations, enhance our gratitude for the emotional connection and intimacy we share with our partners.

Joyful experiences within a community, such as participating in communal events, volunteering, or engaging

in social activities, reinforce our gratitude for the sense of belonging and mutual support.

By recognizing and valuing the joy that our relationships bring, we can cultivate a deeper sense of gratitude for the people in our lives. This, in turn, strengthens our connections and contributes to our overall happiness and well-being.

Even in times of adversity, joy can serve as a powerful form of gratitude. During challenging periods, moments of joy can provide a much-needed respite and a reminder of the good that still exists in our lives. This is particularly evident in situations where individuals face significant hardships but find joy in small victories, acts of kindness, or simple pleasures. For example, individuals who endure illness or loss may experience joy through the support and compassion of others. This joy, though fleeting, reflects a profound sense of gratitude for the love and care they receive. Similarly, in difficult economic times, people may find joy in acts of generosity, community solidarity, or personal achievements, highlighting their gratitude for the resilience and strength of the human spirit.

By recognizing and embracing these moments of joy, even in adversity, we can maintain a sense of gratitude that sustains us through difficult times. This perspective aligns with the idea that joy is the simplest form of gratitude, as it arises from an appreciation of the good that persists despite challenges.

Joy, in its simplest form, is an immediate and authentic expression of gratitude. It arises from the recognition and appreciation of the positive aspects of our lives, whether they are profound or mundane. By understanding the intricate relationship between joy and gratitude, we can cultivate a greater sense of well-being and fulfillment.

Through mindfulness, positive reflection, and the practice of gratitude, we can enhance our capacity to experience joy and appreciate the good in our lives. By valuing the joy that our relationships, experiences, and moments of connection bring, we can deepen our sense of gratitude and strengthen our bonds with others.

Even in the face of adversity, joy can serve as a powerful reminder of the resilience and goodness that persist in our lives. By embracing joy as the simplest form of gratitude, we can navigate life's challenges with a greater sense of hope, appreciation, and contentment.

In essence, joy and gratitude are two sides of the same coin, each enhancing and reinforcing the other. By fostering a mindset that seeks and savours joy, we can cultivate a profound and enduring sense of gratitude that enriches our lives and the lives of those around us.

*I Slept and Dreamt that Life was Joy. I Awoke and Saw that Life was Service. I Acted and Behold, Service was Joy.*

— Rabindranath Tagore

*"Be not afraid of greatness. Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and others have greatness thrust upon them."*

- WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE



# **MODEL QUESTION PAPER-MCQ**







1. With reference to the Competition Commission of India (CCI), consider the following statements:

1. The Competition Commission of India (CCI) is a statutory, quasi-judicial body constituted under the Companies Act, 1952.
2. The Competition Commission of India (CCI) consists of 1 Chairperson and 6 Members appointed by the Central Government.

Which among the above statement(s) regarding the Competition Commission of India (CCI) is / are true?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

2. Consider the following organisations:

1. Competition Commission of India.
2. National Financial Reporting Authority.
3. National Anti-Profiteering Authority.

Which among the above serve as a body subordinate to the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) with regard to disposal of appeals?

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 1 and 3 only
- c. 2 and 3 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3

3. With reference to the 'Scheme for Capacity Building in Textiles Sector', consider the following statements:

1. The Union Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship launched the Scheme for Capacity Building in Textiles Sector.
2. Samarth is a demand-driven and placement-oriented umbrella skilling programme formulated under the broad skilling policy framework.

Which among the above statement(s) regarding the Scheme for Capacity Building in Textiles Sector is / are true?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

4. With reference to foreign-owned e-commerce firms operating in India, consider the following statements:

1. The foreign-owned e-commerce firms, operating in India can sell their own goods in addition to offering their platforms as marketplaces.
2. The degree of ownership foreign-owned e-commerce firms operating in India on big sellers selling on their platforms is limited.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

5. With reference to the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), consider the following statements:

1. Public-Private Partnership (PPP) initiative led by the Union Ministry for Finance.

2. Interoperable platform to facilitate direct payments linked to a bank account.
3. Manages multiple bank accounts into a single mobile application of any participating bank.
4. Merge several banking features, facilitating seamless fund routing & merchant payments.

Which among the above statement(s) is / are features of the Unified Payments Interface (UPI)?

- a. 1, 2 and 3 only
- b. 1, 3 and 4 only
- c. 2, 3 and 4 only
- d. 1, 2, 3 and 4

6. With reference to the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), consider the following statements:

1. The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) is a for-profit company founded in 2008 under the Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007.
2. The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) is an initiative by the RBI and the Indian Bank's Association (IBA) to operate retail payments and settlement systems in India.
3. The NPCI International Private Ltd (NIPL) is the subsidiary of NPCI to popularise domestic payment technologies such as UPI and RuPay abroad and co-create payment technologies with other countries.

Which among the above statement(s) is / are true?

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 2 and 3 only
- c. 1 and 3 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3

7. Which of the following is the most likely consequence of implementing the 'Unified Payments Interface (UPI)'?

- a. Mobile wallets will not be necessary for online payments.
- b. Digital currency will totally replace physical currency in about two decades.
- c. FDI inflows will drastically increase.
- d. Direct transfer of subsidies to poor people will become very effective.

8. According to India's National Policy on Biofuels, which of the following can be used as raw materials for the production of biofuels? (UPSC 2020)

1. Cassava
2. Damaged wheat grains
3. Groundnut seeds
4. Horse gram
5. Rotten potatoes
6. Sugar beet

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

- a. 1, 2, 5 and 6 only
- b. 1, 3, 4 and 6 only
- c. 2, 3, 4 and 5 only
- d. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6

9. Consider the following statements:

1. India is the second largest exporter of sugar after Brazil.
2. India is the world's largest producer and consumer of sugar.



Which among the above statement(s) is / are true?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

10. With reference to the current trends in the cultivation of sugarcane in India, consider the following statements: (UPSC 2020)

1. A substantial saving in seed material is made when 'bud chip settlings' are raised in a nurse and transplanted in the main field.
2. When direct planting of setts is done, the germination percentage is better with single-budded setts as compared to setts with many buds.
3. If bad weather conditions prevail when setts are directly planted, single-budded setts have better survival as compared to large setts.
4. Sugarcane can be cultivated using settlings prepared from tissue culture.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 3 only
- c. 1 and 4 only
- d. 2, 3 and 4 only

11. The Union Ministry for Petroleum and Natural Gas has constituted the Kirit Parikh committee in 2022 to

- a. review the export profile of natural gas to India.
- b. recommend measures regarding the feasibility of blending of Hydrogen to Compressed Natural Gas
- c. recommend measures regarding the feasibility of introduction of piped natural gas for households
- d. review the existing pricing formula for domestically produced natural gas in India.

12. Since May last year, RBI has been pursuing a policy of 'monetary tightening'. With reference to the monetary tightening, consider the following statements:

1. Increase in existing EMLs for home/car/business loans.
2. Prevent the "second-order effects" of high inflation.
3. Improve the supply of those goods and services.

Which among the above is / are likely to be a consequence of a policy of 'monetary tightening'?

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 1 and 3 only
- c. 2 and 3 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3

13. With reference to the Foreign Trade Policy, 2023, consider the following statements:

1. Achieve merchandise exports of US \$ 1 trillion by 2023.
2. Position India as a leader in specific manufacturing-based sectors.
3. Promote a digital economy and leverage technology to enhance competitiveness of Indian exports.

Which among the above is / are objectives of the Foreign Trade Policy, 2023?

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 1 and 3 only
- c. 2 and 3 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3

14. With reference to the Micro Units Development & Refinance Agency (MUDRA) Ltd., consider the following statements:

1. Regulates the Micro Financial Institutions (MFIs) engaged in micro-lending activities.
2. Drive efforts to ensure Last Mile Credit delivery in micro-lending sector.
3. Lend directly to micro-entrepreneurs / individuals.

Which among the above statement(s) is / are true?

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 1 and 3 only
- c. 2 and 3 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3

15. Pradhan Mantri MUDRA Yojana is aimed at (UPSC 2016)

- a. bringing small entrepreneurs into the formal financial system
- b. providing loans to poor farmers for cultivating particular crops
- c. providing pensions to old and destitute persons
- d. funding the voluntary organizations involved in the promotion of skill development and employment generation

16. With reference to the Biotech – KISAN, consider the following statements:

1. The Union Ministry of Agriculture & Farmer's Welfare launched the Biotech – KISAN.
2. Provide counselling and solutions to farmers on problems related to water, soil, seeds, and marketing.
3. Stimulates entrepreneurship and innovation in farmers in both genders.

Which among the above statement(s) regarding the Biotech – KISAN is / are true?

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 1 and 3 only
- c. 2 and 3 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3

17. With reference to the Farmer-Producer Companies (FPC), consider the following statements:

1. Hybrid between cooperative societies and private limited companies,
2. Entities registered under the Companies Act 2013.
3. Entities owned and operated by farmers.

Which among the above is/ are features of Farmer-Producer Companies (FPC)?

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 1 and 3 only
- c. 2 and 3 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3

18. FAME India is a part of the National Electric Mobility Mission Plan. With reference to the FAME India Scheme, consider the following statements:

1. FAME India covers incentives in form of upfront subsidy payments for both hybrid & electric technologies like mild-hybrid, strong-hybrid, plug-in hybrid & battery Electric Vehicles.



- Incentives under the FAME India are applicable to vehicles used for public transport or registered for commercial purposes only.
- FAME India scheme seeks to establish necessary charging Infrastructure for electric vehicles.

Which among the above statement(s) regarding the FAME India Scheme is / are true?

- 1 and 2 only
- 1 and 3 only
- 2 and 3 only
- 1, 2 and 3

19. With reference to the Prevention of Cruelty to Animal Act, 1960, consider the following statements:

- First law enacted to safeguard the rights of animals and protect them from pain and suffering caused by humans.
- Include guidelines for experimenting on animals for scientific purposes and the exhibition of performing animals.
- Constituted the Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI).

Which among the above statement(s) is / are true?

- 1 and 2 only
- 1 and 3 only
- 2 and 3 only
- 1, 2 and 3

20. Goods and Services Tax (GST) was introduced on July 1, 2017 a unified indirect tax across the country on products and services. With reference to the Goods and Services Tax (GST), consider the following:

- Multi-stage collection mechanism.
- Inverted duty structure.
- Destination-based consumption taxation approach.

Which among the above is / are features of the Goods and Services Tax (GST)?

- 1 and 2 only
- 1 and 3 only
- 2 and 3 only
- 1, 2 and 3

21. Consider the following statements:

- The Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is appointed by the Central Government.
- Certain provisions in the Constitution of India give the Central Government the right to issue directions to the RBI in the public interest.
- The Governor of the RBI draws his power from the RBI Act.

Which of the above statements are correct?

- 1 and 2 only
- 1 and 3 only
- 2 and 3 only
- 1, 2 and 3

22. The establishment of 'Payment Banks' is being allowed in India to promote financial inclusion. Which of the following statements is/are correct in this context?

- Mobile telephone companies and supermarket chains that are owned and controlled by residents are eligible to be promoters of Payment Banks.

- Payment Banks can issue both credit cards and debit cards.
- Payment Banks cannot undertake lending activities.

Select the correct answer using the code given below.

- 1 and 2 only
- 1 and 3 only
- 2 and 3 only
- 1, 2 and 3

23. Consider the following countries: (2018)

- Australia
- Canada
- China
- India
- Japan
- USA

Which of the above are among the 'free-trade partners' of ASEAN?

- 1, 2, 4 and 5
- 3, 4, 5 and 6
- 1, 3, 4 and 5
- 2, 3, 4 and 6

24. With reference to the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), consider the following statements:

- Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway and Switzerland founded the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) was constituted in in 1960 as an intergovernmental organization.
- The secretariat of the European Free Trade Association was located in Brussels.
- The mandate of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) was to promote free trade and economic cooperation among its member states and with other countries.

Which among the above statement(s) is / are true?

- 1 and 2 only
- 1 and 3 only
- 2 and 3 only
- 1, 2 and 3

25. With reference to the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, 2003, consider the following statements:

- The World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) treaty adopted by the 56th World Health Assembly held in Geneva in 2003 is the first World Health Organization treaty adopted under article 19 of the WHO.
- The Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, 2003, a legally binding treaty aims to reduce smoking via taxation and rules on labelling and advertising.

Which among the above statement(s) is / are true?

- 1 only
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

26. With reference to the Direct Seeding Method (DSR), consider the following:

- Reduces water requirement by about 50 %.



- Requires fewer labourers for nursery preparation and transplantation
- Higher yields due to improved crop management
- Helps prevent the development of hard crust beneath the plough layer
- Better management of crop residue.

Which among the above is / are benefits of the Direct Seeding Method (DSR) compared to traditional methods?

- 1, 3, 4 and 5 only
- 3, 4 and 5 only
- 2, 3, 4 and 5 only
- 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

27. With reference to the PM Matsya Sampada Yojana (2020), consider the following statements:

1. The PMMSY is being implemented by the Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Government of India.
2. The PM Matsya Sampada Yojana is being implemented in all the States and Union Territories of India.

Which among the above statement(s) regarding the PM Matsya Sampada Yojana is / are true?

- 1 only
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

28. Consider the following pairs:

1. Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana: Promote organic farming
2. Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana: Improve water use efficiency in agriculture
3. Pradhan Mantri Kisan Sampada Yojana (PMKSY): Develop agri-processing clusters and infrastructure to increase value addition and reduce post-harvest losses

Which among the above pair(s) is / are correctly matched?

- 1 and 2 only
- 1 and 3 only
- 2 and 3 only
- 1, 2 and 3

29. With reference to chemical fertilisers in India, consider the following statements:

1. At present, the retail price of chemical fertilisers is market-driven and not administered by the Government.
2. Ammonia, which is an input of urea, is produced from natural gas.
3. Sulphur, which is a raw material for phosphoric acid fertiliser, is a by-product of oil refineries.

Which of the statements given above is / are correct?

- 1 and 2 only
- 1 and 3 only
- 2 and 3 only
- 1, 2 and 3

30. With reference to the Indian economy, consider the following statements:

1. The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India was established on 1st October 2016 under the Insolvency

and Bankruptcy Code, 2016 (Code).

2. The code consolidates and amends the laws relating to reorganization and insolvency resolution of corporate persons, partnership firms, and individuals.
3. It is done in a time-bound manner for maximization of the value of assets of such persons, to promote entrepreneurship, availability of credit and balance the interests of all the stakeholders.

Which of the statements given above are correct?

- 1 and 2 only
- 1 and 3 only
- 2 and 3 only
- 1, 2 and 3

31. Consider the following statements about the Sagarmala Programme:

1. The Sagarmala Programme is aimed at promoting port-led development in India by enhancing the performance of the country's logistics sector.
2. One of the key components of the Sagarmala Programme is to develop coastal economic zones (CEZs) to attract investments and create job opportunities.

Choose the correct statements:

- 1 only
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2

32. Second Thomas Shoal Island, recently seen in the news, is located in?

- Sea of Azov
- Drakes Strait
- South China Sea
- Yellow Sea

33. Which of the following countries does the Mekong River flow through?

1. China
2. Thailand
3. Cambodia
4. Malaysia

Choose the correct options:

- 1, 2, and 3 only
- 1, 2, 3, and 4
- 2, 3, and 4 only
- 1 and 2 only

34. Consider the following statements about the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA):

1. The AfCFTA is the largest free trade area in the world in terms of the number of participating countries.
2. The main objective of AfCFTA is to boost intra-African trade by reducing tariffs and other trade barriers.

Choose the correct statements:

- 1 only
- 2 only
- Both 1 and 2
- Neither 1 nor 2



35. Which strait connects the Red Sea to the Gulf of Aden?

- a) Bab-el-Mandeb
- b) Strait of Malacca
- c) Strait of Hormuz
- d) Bosphorus Strait

36. Consider the following statements about the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI):

- 1. The BRI is an economic and infrastructure development strategy initiated by China to enhance connectivity and cooperation across Asia, Europe, and Africa.
- 2. The BRI includes both the Silk Road Economic Belt and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road.

Choose the correct statements:

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

37. Consider the following statements about MERCOSUR:

- 1. It is an economic and political bloc of Latin America created in 2001 by signing the Treaty of Asunción.
- 2. All the 12 countries of South America are the members of MERCOSUR.
- 3. India and MERCOSUR signed the Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) in 2014 to forge closer economic ties.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

- a) Only one
- b) Only two
- c) All three
- d) None

38. Consider the following statements about the World Trade Organization (WTO):

- 1. The WTO was established in 1995 as a successor to the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT).
- 2. The WTO has 164 member countries as of 2023.
- 3. The WTO's primary focus is on setting international regulations for labor standards.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

- a) Only one
- b) Only two
- c) All three
- d) None

39. Consider the following statements about international marine treaties:

- 1. The International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships (MARPOL) aims to minimize pollution of the oceans and seas, including oil spills, chemical releases, and sewage discharges.
- 2. The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) includes provisions specifically for the conservation of marine biodiversity.
- 3. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) establishes guidelines for maritime navigation and defines territorial waters and exclusive economic zones.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

- a) Only one

- b) Only two
- c) All three
- d) None

40. Consider the following statements about the NIPUN Bharat Mission:

- 1. The mission aims to achieve foundational literacy and numeracy for every child in India by the end of Grade 2.
- 2. It includes a tracking and monitoring system to ensure progress towards its goals.
- 3. The NIPUN Bharat Mission is a part of the National Education Policy 2020.

How many of the statements given above are correct?

- a) Only one
- b) Only two
- c) All three
- d) None

41. Consider the following statements about Lok Adalat:

- 1. Lok Adalats are an integral part of the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA).
- 2. Lok Adalat awards have the same legal status as a decree of a civil court.
- 3. Only retired judges can preside over Lok Adalats.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) Only one
- b) Only two
- c) All three
- d) None

42. Consider the following statements about the expunging of remarks made by a Member of Parliament (MP) by the presiding officer:

- 1. The presiding officer has the authority to expunge any remarks made by an MP that are deemed unparliamentary.
- 2. Expunged remarks remain part of the official parliamentary records but are marked as expunged.
- 3. The decision of the presiding officer to expunge remarks can be challenged in a court of law.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) Only one
- b) Only two
- c) All three
- d) None

43. Consider the following statements about the powers of the presiding officer in the Indian Parliament:

- 1. The presiding officer has the power to decide on questions of disqualification under the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution.
- 2. The presiding officer can suspend members for unruly behavior.
- 3. The presiding officer has the authority to refer bills to parliamentary committees.

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- a) Only one
- b) Only two
- c) All three
- d) None



44. Consider the following statements about the Clarion-Clipperton Zone (CCZ):

1. The Clarion-Clipperton Zone is located in the Pacific Ocean between Rhode island and Mexico.
2. The CCZ is known for its rich deposits of polymetallic nodules, which contain metals like nickel, copper, and cobalt.
3. The International Seabed Authority (ISA) is responsible for regulating mineral exploration in the CCZ.

Which of the statements given above is/are incorrect?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) 3 only
- d) None

45. The "Weddell Sea" has recently been in the news due to significant scientific research activities. It is located in which of the following regions?

- a) Arctic Ocean
- b) Atlantic Ocean
- c) Southern Ocean
- d) Indian Ocean

46. Pench Tiger Reserve, a significant wildlife sanctuary known for its rich biodiversity and conservation efforts, is located in which Indian states?

- A. Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra
- B. Gujarat and Rajasthan
- C. Karnataka and Kerala
- D. Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh

47. With reference to 'Indian Gaur' often seen in news, consider the following statements.

1. They are indigenous to the South and Southeast parts of Asia.
2. They are listed as 'critically endangered' under IUCN Redlist.
3. They are protected under 'schedule 1' under Wild Life Protection Act, 1972

How many of the above statement/s is/ are correct?

- A. Only One
- B. Only Two
- C. All the Three
- D. None of the above

48. Consider the following statements:

Statement-I: Biodiversity Management Committees prepare PBRs to promote conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity.

Statement-II: The 2002 Act mandates the creation of PBRs to document and safeguard bioresources and knowledge. Which one of the following is correct in respect of the above statements?

- A. Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is the correct explanation for Statement-I.
- B. Both Statement-I and Statement-II are correct and Statement-II is not the correct explanation for Statement-I.
- C. Statement-I is correct but Statement-II is incorrect.
- D. Statement-I is incorrect but Statement-II is correct.

49. Consider the following statements.

1. Urban heat islands cause city temperatures to be 1 to 5 degrees Celsius higher than surrounding rural areas.
2. Concrete and asphalt in urban areas absorb and retain more heat compared to natural surfaces, exacerbating UHI effects.

Identify the correct statement/s.

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

50. The Bhitarkanika Mangroves, known for their unique ecosystem and diverse flora and fauna, are located in which Indian state?

- A. Odisha
- B. West Bengal
- C. Andhra Pradesh
- D. Tamil Nadu



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**OMR ANSWER SHEET**

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**Invigilator Sign**

**INSTRUCTIONS FOR FILLING THE SHEET**

1. This sheet should not be folded or crushed.
2. Use only blue/black ball point pen to fill the circles.
3. Use of pencil is strictly prohibited.
4. Circles should be darkened completely and properly.
5. Cutting and erasing on this sheet is not allowed.
6. Do not use any stray marks on the sheet.
7. Do not use marker or white fluid to hide the mark.

WRONG METHODS



CORRECT METHOD



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