ABHYAS

COMPLETE COVERAGE OF MONTHLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

SEP 2025



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Gyan Bharatam Mission



Context

- Launched by Ministry of Culture during an international conference on manuscript heritage.

Goal

- National initiative to preserve and digitise manuscripts, making them resources for education, research, etc.

Features

- Survey, document, conserve manuscripts; Create National Digital Repository of Indian **Knowledge Systems**; Public participation via programmes and Gyan-Setu AI Challenge.

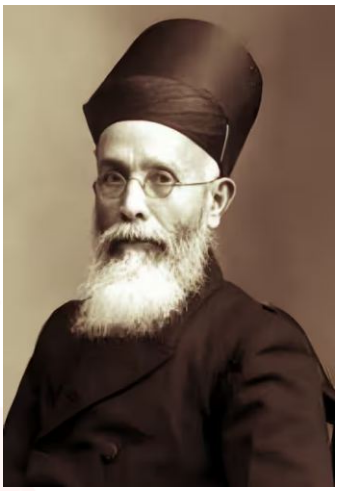
Portal

- Gyan Bharatam Portal launched for digitisation, preservation, and access.

Alignment

- Article 51A(f) (Fundamental Duty), NEP 2020 (Indian Knowledge Systems).
- Builds on: National Mission for Manuscripts (est. 2003).

200th Birth Anniversary of Dadabhai Naoroji



Context

- Recently, the 200th Birth Anniversary of Dadabhai Naoroji was celebrated across the nation.

About Dadabhai Naoroji (1825–1917):

- He was an Indian scholar, trader and politician.
- He was known as the "Grand Old Man of India" and "Unofficial Ambassador of India".
- He was a founding member and three-time president of the Indian National Congress (in 1886, 1893, and 1906).
- In 1906, He was elected as president of the Congress in order to bridge the differences between moderates and extremists.
- He became the first Indian to be appointed as Professor at Elphinstone and taught in the special classes held for the spread of women's education.
- In 1855, he left for London to join a business. He became Professor of Gujarati at University College London.
- In 1875, he was elected a Member of the Municipal Corporation, Bombay.

Key Contributions of Dadabhai Naoroji:

- **Social Reform**:
  - **Promoted Women's Education:** Founded the Student Literary and Scientific Society (1848), which established 6 schools for girls by 1849.
  - **Spread reformist ideas:** Founded Rast Goftar newspaper, Co-founded Rahnumai Mazdayasan Sabha (1851) to reform Parsi society.
- **Economic**:
  - **Drain of Wealth Theory:** Highlighted how British policies drained India's wealth through taxation, salaries, pensions, and remittances.
  - **Major Literary works:** Poverty of India, Poverty and Un-British Rule in India.
  - His efforts led to appointment of a Royal Commission, the Welby Commission (Chairman), to enquire into the financial policy of the India Government. (Dadabhai Naoroji was a member)
  - He also started a newspaper called '**Voice of India**'.

- **Political:**
  - **Moderate leader:** He was a firm believer in Parliamentary democracy and advocated constitutional and peaceful methods like petitions, prayers, and protests.
  - **Founded:** The London Indian Society in 1865 and the East India Association in 1866.
  - **First Indian MP in British Parliament:** Elected for the Liberal Party in Finsbury Central at the 1892 general election.
  - **Mentorship:** Naoroji played a crucial role in mentoring future INC leaders such as Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, and Mahatma Gandhi.
- **Ethical:**
  - He expounded the need for purity in thought, speech and action in his book 'The Duties of the Zoroastrians'.
- **Education**:
  - **Universalization of Elementary Education:** The first effective step in introducing compulsory Primary Education was taken by Dadabhai Naoroji.
    - He, along with Jyotiba Phule, put forward the demand for four years of compulsory primary education before the Indian Education Commission (Hunter Commission) in 1882.
  - Dadabhai Naoroji was a pioneering nationalist who combined social reform, economic critique, and political action to lay the foundations of India's freedom struggle. His Drain of Wealth theory and advocacy of Swaraj gave a clear direction to nationalist aspirations. Even today, his vision of equity, education, and self-governance continues to inspire India's democratic and developmental journey

Konkan Coast Geoglyphs

Art and Culture

Context

- Nominated for UNESCO World Heritage; may date back 24,000 years.
- Definition: Large designs on the ground using natural materials.



Discoveries

- Older than previous estimates (10,000 years), potentially up to 38,000 years based on Koloshi caves; depict extinct fauna (rhino, hippo) ; intricate compared to Nazca Lines etc..
- Sites: Kasheli, Barsu, etc. (Maharashtra) and Phansaymal (Goa).

100 Years of the Self-respect Movement

Art and Culture

Context

- This year marks the centenary of the **Self-Respect Movement** which changed the course of the political discourse in South India.

About Self-Respect Movement:

- **Launched by:** E.V. Ramaswamy (commonly known as Periyar) in 1925.
- **The concept of self-respect:** It is a theoretical idea that aims to establish an egalitarian society where any type of discrimination, hatred on the basis of caste, religion and gender cease to exist.
- **Described as:** Arivu Vidutalai Iyakkam, that is, a movement to liberate the intellect by Periyar.
- The objectives were outlined in two pamphlets: Namathu Kurikkol and Tiravitak Kalaka Lateiyam.

Features of the Movement:

- **Social Upliftment:** The movement opposed the Devadasi system, caste discrimination, and restrictions on widow remarriage, promoting social equality.
- **Self-Respect Marriages:** Legitimized marriages without priests, undermining the monopoly of Brahmin priests and reducing ritual costs.
- **Inter caste Marriages:** It opposed child marriage, encouraged love marriage and intercaste marriage.
- **Self-Respect Conference:** In 1929, Periyar held the first provincial conference at Chengalpattu, led by W.P.A. Soundara Pandian.

Significance of the Self-Respect Movement:

- **Challenged Brahminical Dominance:** Questioned the social and religious hierarchy that privileged upper castes and laid the foundation for anti-caste politics in Tamil Nadu.
- **Women's Rights:** Pioneered reforms in widow remarriage, right to property, right to divorce, and reproductive choices, setting early examples for gender justice.
- **Promotion of Rationalism:** Encouraged critical thinking, scientific temper, and rejection of superstition, helping to modernize social attitudes.
- **Language & Cultural Renaissance:** Strengthened the Tamil language, Dravidian culture, and local identity.
- **Educational Access:** Demanded mass literacy and education for marginalized sections, challenging the traditional denial of knowledge to non-Brahmins.
- **Economic Justice:** Linked caste inequality to economic exploitation and demanded proportionate representation in government jobs and resources.
- **Political Impact:** Provided the ideological foundation for the rise of Dravidian parties (Justice Party, DMK, AIADMK) and shaped Tamil Nadu's distinctive welfare-oriented politics.
- **Global Influence:** Inspired Tamil diaspora movements in Malaysia, Singapore and elsewhere, reinforcing identity and rights consciousness abroad.

Other Social Reform & Anti-Caste Movements:

- **Satyashodhak Samaj (1873):** Founded by Jyotirao Phule in Maharashtra to fight Brahminical domination, promote education for lower castes and women, and question religious orthodoxy.
- **(Shree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Movement (1903):** By Narayan Guru, and promoted the slogan "One Caste, One Religion, One God" for humanity; fought caste discrimination among Ezhavas in Kerala.
- **Bahishkrit Hitkarini Sabha (1924):** By Dr. B.R. Ambedkar to promote the education, social, cultural, and economic advancement of the Dalit community.
- **Vaikom Satyagraha (1924–25):** Social agitation in Travancore (Kerala) demanding temple-road entry for oppressed castes.
- **All India Depressed Classes Association (1930):** By Dr B.R. Ambedkar to fight for the social, economic, and political rights of the Scheduled Castes (Dalits).
- **All India Anti-Untouchability League (1932):** Set up by Gandhi Ji for the eradication of untouchability in society.

Seven Indian Sites Added to UNESCO's Tentative List

Art and Culture

Context

- 7 new natural sites added, total Indian properties on list now 69.
- Tentative List: Inventory for potential World Heritage nomination.

Sites:

- Deccan Traps (MH), St. Mary's Islands (KA), Meghalayan caves, Naga Hill Ophiolite (NL), Erra Matti Dibbalu (AP), Tirumala Hills (AP), Varkala Cliffs (KL).

India Nominated Sarnath for UNESCO World Heritage List

Art and Culture

Context

- Official nomination for 2025-26 list. On Tentative List since 1998.

Significance

- Site of Buddha's first sermon (Dhammachakkappavattana).

Features

- Dhamek Stupa (500 CE) , Dharmarajika Stupa (3rd BCE) , Chaukhandi Stupa (5th C) , Lion Capital of Ashoka (India's emblem) , Jain temples.
- **Rediscovery:** ASI planning plaque for Jagat Singh's role.

Census 2027 and Disability Inclusion

Indian Society

Context

- Opportunity to measure disability population after 17 years. Exclusion costs 4% GDP annually.

Challenges

- Low employment (23.8% of PwDs 15-59 employed); Low education (46% illiterate, <1% children enrolled); Census 2011 methodology flaws led to undercounting.

Significance

- Can mainstream disability in policies; Aligns with SDGs, RPWDA 2016.

Geo-Tagging of Buildings in Census 2027

Indian Society

Context

- Census 2027 will geo-tag buildings, replacing hand-drawn sketches.

Method

- Digital Layout Mapping assigns geo-referenced coordinates (lat-long) using GIS. Mobile apps for self-enumeration/monitoring via CMMS.

Significance

- Accurate enumeration, improved efficiency, address 2011 gaps.

Skilling India's Demographic Dividend

Indian Society

Context

- India's youth (800M+ under 35) strength risked by unemployment/skills gap.

Issues

- Outdated curricula; Low graduate employability (only 43% job-ready); Low career awareness (93% know only 7 options); Skilling initiative failures; Automation risk (~70% jobs impacted by 2030).

Way Forward

- Align curricula with emerging skills; Industry collaboration; Job formalisation; Women empowerment programs.

100 Years of Self-Respect Movement

Indian Society

Context

- 2025 marks centenary. Founded by Periyar (E.V. Ramasamy) in 1925.

Aim

- Secularize/modernize Tamil society, dismantle caste hierarchy, advance social justice. Linked self-respect (Maanam) with equality, freedom, communism. Prioritized gender equality & caste eradication.

Contributions

- Introduced self-respect marriages (legalized 1967); Empowered women (widow remarriage, divorce, property rights, abortion); Opposed misogyny, promoted contraception; Promoted inter-caste marriages.

Child Marriage in India

Society – Vulnerable Sections

Context

- SRS 2023 shows 2.1% females married before 18 (national avg). West Bengal highest (6.3%). NFHS-5: 23% women 20-24 married before 18.

Causes

- Poverty (financial burden, dowry); Cultural beliefs (honour, chastity); Patriarchy; Lack of Education (~47% rural girls complete secondary); Safety concerns (violence); Weak enforcement of PCMA 2006.

Measures

- PCMA 2006, Juvenile Justice Act 2015, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao 2015, Bal Vivah Mukt Bharat Campaign 2024, National Action Plan, State schemes (Kanyashree, Rupashree) .

Way Forward

- Combine cash benefits with skilling; Urban Adolescent Protection Cells; Link grants to schooling completion; Mandatory birth registration.

Elderly Women in India's Health Policy

Society – Vulnerable Sections

Context

- India Ageing Report 2023 (UNFPA): 20% Indians 60+ by 2050; women outlive men by 2.7 yrs, spend 25% more time in poor health.

Challenges

- (Health-Seeking) Family roles delay care, financial insecurity (60% no income), Digital divide, Facility gaps; (Disease Burden) Higher chronic disease risk (osteoporosis, arthritis etc), Under-diagnosis (uro-gynae, mental health), Caregiving burden; (Social/Structural) Reduced support systems (widowhood, nuclear families), Isolation (18.7% live alone).

Interventions

- NPHCE, Ayushman Bharat (limited geriatric focus), Atal Pension Yojana, Rashtriya Vayoshri Yojana, State Initiatives (Vayomithram, Kudumbashree in Kerala) .

Way Forward

- Geriatric care screening, Women-specific insurance packages, elder centres, Inflation-indexed pensions recognizing unpaid care.

Adi Karmayogi Abhiyan

Society – Vulnerable Sections

Context

- PM launched as part of Janjatiya Gaurav Varsh. World's largest tribal grassroots leadership programme (11 cr citizens, 1L villages). Embodies Seva, Samarpan, Sankalp.

Highlights

- Participatory governance (Villages co-create Tribal Village Vision 2030); Tech support (Adi Vaani App - AI language bridge); Adi Sewa Parv (campaign to draft Vision 2030 Action Plans linked to schemes); Youth Engagement (Adi Sahyogi, Student Chapters, Fellowship) . Links to Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan 2.0, PM JANMAN.

Separate Census Enumeration for PVTGs

Society – Vulnerable Sections

Context

- Tribal Affairs Ministry seeks separate count in Census 2027.

PVTGs

- Sub-category of STs, most marginalised. Identified based on Dhebar Commission recommendation (1960s); called PTGs 1975, renamed PVTGs 2006. 75 PVTGs across 18 states + 1 UT (A&N). Criteria: Pre-agricultural tech, Low literacy, Economic backwardness, Declining/Stagnant population. Schemes: PM JANMAN, PM-PVTG Development Mission.

- Need: Lack of data makes them invisible; Clubbing under ST leads to poor targeting; Enables precise interventions.

Transgender-Inclusive Education

Society – Vulnerable Sections

Context
- Social Justice & Education Ministries developing curricula after SC notice.

Points
- Early sensitisation needed; Legal framework (Transgender Persons Act 2019) has gaps; Programmes (Garima Greh shelters); Aligns with SDG 4 & 10.

Challenges
- Bureaucratic barriers (certificates); Admin gaps (sensitisation); Cultural resistance (sexuality education).

Significance
- Aligns with NEP 2020 (equity); Upholds human rights (equality, NALSA verdict 2014). NALSA recognized 'third gender'.

Gender Perspective on India's Economic Vulnerabilities

Society – Vulnerable Sections

Context
- 50% US tariffs threaten women's employment, highlighting strategic liability.

Landscape
- Female participation 37-41.7% (below global); 78% work in vulnerable sectors (apparel etc); Rural jobs mostly unpaid/low-productivity. Over 95% in informal jobs.

Need for Participation
- GDP potential (+27% if gap closed); Demographic dividend window (closes 2045); Export competitiveness; Poverty alleviation (SDGs).

Roadmaps
- China reforms (state care), Japan policy (labour reforms), Netherlands model (part-time work), Karnataka Shakti (bus ridership), Rajasthan IGUEG (jobs), Gig platforms (Urban Company) .

Gender Perspective on India's Economic Vulnerabilities

Society – Vulnerable Sections

Context
- SC ruled political parties not "workplaces" under POSH Act.

Workplace Definition
- Includes govt/private orgs, NGOs, hospitals, households etc, places visited during employment, virtual setups.
- POSH Act: Enacted 2013, statutory backing for Vishakha guidelines (1997). Aim: Safe working environment. Mandates Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs) (>10 employees). Complaint within 3 months (extendable). Defines sexual harassment broadly. Local Committees for small firms/informal sector. Resolution via Conciliation or Inquiry.

Women's Education

Society – Vulnerable Sections

Context
- Key to Viksit Bharat@2047 vision.

- **Need:** Economic impact (+ $700B GDP potential); Income gains (+10-20% lifetime earnings/yr schooling); Health benefits (lower infant mortality); Democratic deepening (SDG 4 & 5); Role models (women teachers boost girls' enrolment).
- **Progress:** Female literacy 8.86% (1951) -> 70.3% (2021); Girls' secondary enrolment 75.5% -> 78% (2023-24); Women 54.2% teachers; Female university enrolment rose 26% (2023-24); High retention rates.
- **Barriers:** Early marriage, Safety concerns, Economic barriers, Digital divide, social norms (esp rural ST girls).
- **Pathways:** Adolescent retention programs, Digital inclusion, Safety assurance, Teacher training, Community mobilisation (Team Balika model).

India's Contract for Deep-Sea Exploration

Geography

Context

- India first country to sign ISA agreement for polymetallic sulphides exploration in Carlsberg Ridge.

- **ISA:** UNCLOS body regulating mineral resource exploration/exploitation in international seabed areas.
- **Polymetallic Sulphides:** Deep ocean deposits rich in Mn, Co, Ni, Cu for clean energy tech.
- **Carlsberg Ridge:** Underwater range in Arabian Sea.

Previous Contracts

- Central Indian Ocean Basin (2002-2027), Indian Ocean Ridge (2016-2031).

Wastewater Management for Sustainable Water Crisis

Geography

Context

- India needs wastewater reuse due to water stress (below international threshold).

Statistics

- 18% global population, 4% freshwater; Per capita availability down ~73% since 1951; ~600M face water stress.

Wastewater

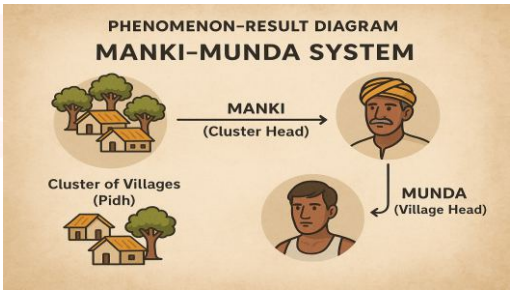
- Industrial effluents, Urban discharge (72,000 MLD daily) , Agricultural runoff.
- **Impacts:** Pollutes water sources, Public health issues (only 28% treated) , Ecological damage.
- **Treatment Benefits:** Augments supply, Pollution abatement, Resource recovery (nutrients, biogas) , Groundwater recharge.
- **Challenges:** Policy vacuum, capacity deficit (only 44% treatment capacity) , infra deficit, financial/social hurdles.
- **Initiatives:** Water Act 1974, National Water Policy 2012, Namami Gange, AMRUT, SBM 2.0 , Draft Rules 2024.
- **Way Forward:** Enforce rules, Decentralised systems (DEWATS) , PPP models , Technology mix.

Manki-Munda System

Geography

Context

- Ho tribe Adivasis protest administrative interference in Jharkhand.



System

- Ancient self-governance structure of Ho tribe. Munda heads village, Manki heads cluster (pidh). Handles customary disputes, not revenue/land. Codified under Wilkinson's Rules (1833-37).
- **Status:** Customary, not formal law (Patna HC 2000).
- **Ho Tribe:** ST group (Austroasiatic Munda family) ; mainly in Jharkhand ; follow Sarnaism (nature-worship).

Moran Community

Geography

Context

- Economic blockade in Assam demanding ST status.



Community

- Indigenous group in Assam/Arunachal Pradesh (Tibeto-Burman Kachari roots). Language now mainly Assamese. Follow Neo-Vaishnavism. Led Moamoria Rebellion (1769-1805).

Blood Moon

Geography



Context

- Total lunar eclipse witnessed in India.

Lunar Eclipse

- Earth between Sun and Moon, casting shadow. Safe to view directly.

Blood Moon Effect

- Moon appears coppery-red during totality due to Rayleigh scattering in Earth's atmosphere.

Extreme Nuclear Transients (ENT)

Geography

Context

- Identified as universe's most powerful explosions since Big Bang.

Definition

- Rare cosmic explosions when supermassive black holes tear apart massive stars (≥3x Sun's mass).

Energy

- Release more energy than most gamma-ray bursts (GRBs). Shine for decades.
- Vs. TDEs: ENTs rarer, involve larger black holes, more energetic.
- Vs. FXTs: ENTs brighter, longer-lasting, multi-wavelength.
- Vs. GRBs: ENTs usually emit greater energy, last longer.
- **Relevance:** Help uncover hidden black holes, study galaxy formation.

Ignite IAS

UN 'High Seas' Treaty

Context:

- Treaty for the Conservation and Sustainable Use of Marine Biological Diversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction (BBNJ agreement) also known as the High Seas Treaty is set to enter into force after ratification by 60th country.

About BBNJ Agreement:

- BBNJ treaty is aimed at ensuring the conservation and sustainable utilisation of marine biological diversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction, i.e. area beyond economic exclusive zone.
- It is an international treaty under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS).
- The BBNJ Agreement will be the third implementation agreement under UNCLOS, others are
- 1994 Part XI Implementation Agreement (which addresses the exploration and extraction of mineral resources in the international seabed area) and
- 1995 UN Fish Stocks Agreement (which addresses the conservation and management of straddling and highly migratory fish stocks).
- The Agreement also establishes a funding mechanism and sets up institutional arrangements, including a Conference of the Parties and various subsidiary bodies, a Clearing-House Mechanism and a secretariat.
- The treaty is mandated to enter into force 120 days after 60 countries ratified it.
- As on 30th September 2025, 145 countries signed, and 74 countries rectified the treaty.
    - India signed the treaty but not ratified yet.
    - Members not part of UNCLOS can also join BBNJ agreement.

Key Pillars of the Treaty:

- **Marine Protected Areas (MPAs):** The treaty will create a mechanism to establish MPAs and other conservation management tools on the high seas.
- MPAs are typically clearly defined geographical spaces, recognized, dedicated and managed, through legal or other effective means, to conserve marine biodiversity and ecosystems.
- **Marine Genetic Resources (MGRs):** Share financial and non-financial benefits from the commercial application of genetic material sourced from high-seas marine organisms such as bacteria, corals or deep-sea sponges, that can be used in medicine, cosmetics, food, and biotechnology.
- **Capacity Building and Transfer of Marine Technology:** It aims to assist developing countries in implementing the treaty by sharing knowledge, skills, and technology.
- **Environmental Impact Assessments:** High seas activities such as deep-sea mining in areas beyond national borders to conduct assessments and follow international standards, that can be shared transparently.

Exceptions to agreement:

- Not apply to any warship, military aircraft or naval auxiliary.
- Not apply to fishing and fishing-related activities that are regulated under other relevant international law.
- The obligations concerning the utilization of MGRs and their digital sequence information do not apply to a Party's military activities, including those by government vessels and aircraft in non-commercial service.
- However, the obligations do apply to a Party's non-military activities.

Significance of the Treaty:

- **Fill Critical Gaps in Ocean Governance:** The agreement provides for the common governance of about half of the Earth's surface and 95% of the ocean's volume.
- Only about 1% of the high seas are currently protected.
- **To Promote Equity and Fairness:** Treaty aims to create a more just and equitable international order that considers the needs of all nations, especially developing States.
- For small island nations like Vanuatu, the treaty marks a major step toward inclusion in decision-making that has long been beyond their reach.
- **Lowering temperature:** The treaty offers guidance to tackle the adverse effects of climate change and ocean
- acidification. The treaty aims at strengthening resilience and contains provisions based on the polluter-pays principle as well as mechanisms for disputes.
- **Indigenous and Local Knowledge:** Agreement acknowledges the importance of traditional knowledge held by Indigenous Peoples and local communities and integrates it into its core principles and operational processes.

- **Vital for realizing 2030 Agenda:** It directly supports Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 14, which aims to prevent and significantly reduce all kinds of marine pollution.
- The treaty is essential to achieving the "30x30" target, an international pledge to protect 30% of the planet's land and sea by 2030.
- **Significance for India:** Reinforces India's long-standing support for UNCLOS as the "constitution of the oceans."
- Complements India's Blue Economy Policy and initiatives like Deep Ocean Mission.

Challenges:
- **Lack of Universal Ratification:** The treaty's strength is uncertain because some of the world's biggest players, the U.S., China, India, are yet to ratify.
- **Conflict with National Interests:** The treaty calls for setting up Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), which conflict with many states' territorial claims in disputed waters, such as the South China Sea.
- **Enforcement Difficulties:** The treaty does not establish its own punitive enforcement body; it largely relies on individual countries (flag states) to regulate their own vessels and companies that violate the rules.
- Treaty lacks enforceable accountability, as it does not compel high-income countries active in marine genetic research to disclose the resources accessed or the profits generated.
- **Limited Scope and Inconsistencies:** The treaty fails to include mechanisms to guarantee that developed countries fulfil their commitments regarding technology transfer and capacity-building for low- and middle-income countries.

Way Forward:
- **Encourage major maritime powers to ratify:** Use platforms like the UN General Assembly, G20, and UN Ocean Conferences to build diplomatic momentum.
- **Strengthening Enforcement Mechanisms:** Develop a global compliance and monitoring system under the UN.
- **Resolving Conflicts with National Interests:** Promote regional cooperation frameworks (like ASEAN for the South China Sea or IORA for the Indian Ocean) to harmonize MPAs with national claims.
- **Assured Support for Developing Countries:** Establish financial and technology transfer mechanisms through the Global Environment Facility (GEF), UNDP Oceans Programme, and the Green Climate Fund.
- **Strengthening Environmental Safeguards:** Expand Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) to include unplanned and accidental activities (oil spills, shipwrecks, deep-sea mining accidents).

Sustainable Development: Harmonizing Growth with People's Needs

Environment

Context:
- The Uttarakhand Government recently granted in-principal approval for the Netala bypass in the fragile Bhagirathi Eco sensitive Zone, despite earlier rejections by the Supreme Court's high-powered committee over ecological and social concerns.

Additional Information:
- Though the Ministry of Defence has classified the project as strategically important, concerns persist regarding project's impact.
- The recent Dharali flash flood and expert analysis strongly indicate that the proposed bypass alignment is prone to slope instability and subsidence.
- The decision highlights a potential conflict between national security/strategic project designations, sustainable development and people's needs.

Why is there conflict between Sustainable Development and People's needs:
- Economic Dependence of People on Natural Resources:
- **Livelihood Reliance:** Tribals, pastoralists, small farmers depend on forests, rivers, and grazing lands. E.g. National Parks restrict practices like grazing.
- **Small business:** Shutting down polluting industries like brick kilns or enforcing stricter regulations in the textile sectors reduces job opportunities for daily wage earners.
- **Development and Displacement:** More than 40% of the tribal population is being displaced by developmental activities like large Dam projects, renewable energy projects, etc.
- **For protecting national interest:** E.g., the Environment Ministry has exempted critical and atomic mineral mining from public consultation under the 2006 EIA Notification.

- Also, Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Amendment Rules, 2025, provide special dispensation to critical minerals sector for compensatory afforestation.

Policy and Governance Gaps:
- **Top-Down Decision Making:** Environmental regulations are often designed without local participation, ignoring poor people's needs.
- **Weak Social Safety Nets:** No direct support during "transition periods" (e.g., seasonal fishing bans, mining closure).
- **Environmental solutions are costly:**
  - **Limited Access to Cleaner Tech:** Solar pumps and electric vehicles requires upfront capital that poor households cannot afford.
  - **Credit Constraints:** Lack of affordable credit or microfinance to shift to greener livelihoods. E.g., Shifting from cheap plastic packaging after plastic ban.

Initiatives taken by Government to reduce conflict:
- The Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement (RFCTLARR) Act, 2013: It regulates land acquisition and lays down the procedure and rules for granting compensation, rehabilitation and resettlement.
- Social Impact Assessment is mandated under this act.
- **Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA):** It is mandated under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
- Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006: To undo the historical injustice that occurred to forest-dwelling communities.
- **Compensatory Afforestation Fund Act (2016):** Mandates using funds partly for community development.
- **District Mineral Foundation (DMF), 2015:** Created under the Mines and Minerals (Development & Regulation) Act to channel mining revenues to local communities for health, education, and skill development.

Way Forward:
- **Regional & Climate-Specific Planning:** Himalayas (landslide-sensitive infrastructure), Coastal Zones (mangrove buffers, cyclone shelters), Drylands (micro-irrigation, drought-resistant crops).
- **Strengthen Environmental Justice System:** Fast-track NGT, improve capacity of State Pollution Control Boards, and make EIAs more transparent.
- **Participatory Decision-Making:** E.g., Social audits can include local communities in project planning to balance needs and sustainability.
- **Green Livelihood Programmes:** Scale up eco-tourism, bamboo-based livelihoods, mangrove restoration, and forest produce value addition.
- **Just Transition Fund:** India can set up a fund for workers affected by mine closures, green shifts or seasonal bans (especially fisheries).

Public Consultation and Environment Impact Assessment (EIA)

Environment

Context
- Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) exempted mining projects involving Atomic, Critical, and Strategic minerals (like Rare Earth Elements) from Public Consultation under the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), 2006.

Additional Information:
- Exemption includes all mining projects of atomic minerals (e.g. uranium) and critical and strategic minerals (e.g. lithium) of 1st schedule of Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2023.
- Although exempted from Public Consultation, these projects will still undergo appraisal at the Central level.

Why have these projects been exempted from Public Consultation:
- **Ensuring Energy Security:** Exemption will enhance production of Uranium and Thorium minerals by operationalizing new deposits.
- Thorium extracted from Monazite (Beach sand mineral) will be used in the 3rd stage and Uranium in the 1st stage of the country's Nuclear Power Programme.

- **Strategic Applications:** E.g., in the defence sector, Rare Earth Elements (REEs) are used in production of surveillance and navigational aids (such as radar and sonar), communication and display aids (such as lasers), etc.
- Reducing Import Dependence and Vulnerability to Supply chain disruption: REEs are scarce in India and their production and supply is concentrated in limited geographies around the world.
- **Other:** Attract investments by reducing operationalization time, enabling speedy approvals, promoting economic competitiveness etc.

What is Public Consultation in EIA:
- **Definition:** It is a process by which the concerns of local affected persons and other stakeholders in the environmental impacts of the project or activity design are ascertained.
- Category of Projects: It is required for usually all Category A and Category B1 projects.

Two Components of Public Consultation:
- A public hearing at the site or in its close proximity.
- Obtaining written responses from concerned stakeholders
- **Conducting Agency:** State Pollution Control Board (SPCB) or Union Territory Pollution Control Committee (UTPCC)
- The proceedings must be sent to the concerned regulatory authority within 45 days of receiving the applicant's request.

Concerns associated with Exemption of Public Consultation:
- **Diluting Environmental Governance:** Undermines Legal Mandate under EIA 2006 and sets a precedent for dilution of EIA norms.
- Exemption weakens Environmental Democracy guaranteed under Article 21 (Right to Life, Clean Environment) and Article 48A (Protection of Environment).
- **Reduces Quality of Project Appraisal:** Local population raises site-specific concerns as they are more aware about their places.
  - E.g., Silkyara tunnel under Char Dham project (Uttarakhand) which collapsed in 2023, was exempted from EIA.
- **Triggers Conflict:** Absence of early engagement can lead to protests, litigation, or unrest. E.g., Closure of Sterlite Copper Plant in Tamil Nadu after violent protest.
- **Undermines Participatory Governance:** It is based upon citizens owning a voice in policy formulation and implementation that impact or influence them.
- Erodes transparency and accountability (Communities may remain unaware of projects).
- **Potential Violation of International Commitments:** Goes against principles of the Rio Declaration (1992) and Aarhus Convention (1998).
- 1998 Aarhus Convention concerns access to information, public participation in decision-making, and access to justice in environmental matters.
- Exemption of public consultation raises serious concerns of diluting environmental governance, undermining participatory democracy, etc. A balanced approach i.e. ensuring speedy approvals without compromising transparency, accountability, and sustainability is essential.

Environment Audit Rules, 2025

Environment

Context
- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) notified Environment Audit Rules, 2025.

What is an Environment Audit (EA)
- It is a systematic audit, verification, examination, inspection, or analysis of any project, activity or process having a bearing on the environment.
- EA differs from EIA, as the latter is conducted prior to the establishment of a project.
- It determines the extent to which the activities and programs conform to the approved Environmental Management Plan (EMP).
- In India, the concept of environmental auditing was introduced in 1992 through Rule 14 of the Environment (Protection) Rules.

- This rule mandates that entities engaged in industries, operations, or processes requiring consent under the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974, the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981, or authorization under the Hazardous Wastes (Management and Handling) Rules, 1989, must submit an annual environmental statement (Report).
- The report is to be submitted to the State Pollution Control Board (SPCB) each year.

About Environment Audit Rules, 2025:
- **Objective:** Creating a formal framework for environmental auditing across the country aimed at enhancing environmental compliance monitoring & ease of doing business.
- **Significance:** Strengthens compliance through third-party audits, aligns with global frameworks (Eco-mark, EPR, ESG, green bonds), generates reliable environmental data, and enables early risk detection and corrective action.
- These rules are developed under the Environment Protection Act (1986).
- Rules comply with legal safeguards under various laws including the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam (1980), the Wildlife Protection Act (1972), etc.
- **Certification and Registration:** Environment Auditors (EAs) will be certified and registered by Environment Audit Designate Agency (Notified by MoEFCC).
- EADA will also monitor their performance, take disciplinary action, facilitate capacity building, and maintain an online register.
- **Modes of Certification:**
  - Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) or National Certification Examination (NCE)

Responsibility:
- Compliance evaluation and related activities of sampling, analysis, compensation calculation, verification under Green Credit Rules, and under various other environment and forest related legislations.
- Registered EAs may also undertake auditing assignments by the Project Proponents (PPs) including for verification of self-compliance reports.
- Undertake environment audit under Environment Impact Assessment (EIA), 2006, Coastal Regulation Zone (CRZ), 2011, etc.
- The outcome of environmental audits will offer vital inputs for effective conservation and rejuvenation efforts, while also supporting India's climate commitments through the adoption of LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment) principles.

Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Amendment Rules, 2025

Environment

Context
- MoEFCC has notified the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Amendment Rules, 2025 marking significant changes in the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Rules, 2023.
- The rules are made by the Central Government under the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980 (Forest Conservation Act 1980).

Major highlights of the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Amendment Rules, 2025:
- **Compensatory Afforestation (CA):** The new rules make protected forest notification optional, allowing CA land to be either transferred to Forest Department or notified as protected area under Indian Forest Act, 1927 or other laws.
- Compensatory Afforestation means afforestation done in lieu of the diversion of forest land for non-forestry use under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980.
- **Provision for Critical & Strategic Minerals:** Mining of critical/strategic minerals (under MMDR Act, 1957) must undertake Compensatory Afforestation on degraded forest land, minimum double the extent.
- **Working Permission:** Rules allow state governments to grant initial 'working permission' for linear projects activities such as roadworks (other than blacktopping and concretization), laying railway tracks, and installing transmission lines.
- Previously, state governments could mobilize resources only after receiving in-principle or Stage-I approval for a project.

Evolution of Forest Conservation Act in India:
- Indian Forest Act 1865: It merely sought to establish the claims of state to the forests it immediately required, subject to the provision, that existing rights were not abridged.

- **Indian Forest Act 1878:** Act classified the forests into three – reserved forests, protected forests and village forests.
- It attempted to regulate the collection of forest produce by forest dwellers and some activities declared as offences and imprisonment and fines were imposed in this policy to establish the state control over forests.
- **Indian Forest Act of 1927:** It was a consolidation of previous forest laws aimed at establishing state control over forests and regulating the movement and duties on forest produce.
- **Pre 1980s Era:** Before the 42nd Constitutional Amendment of 1976, forests were a state subject, but the amendment transferred them to the Concurrent List.
- **Forest Conservation Act 1980:** It tried to stop deforestation by centralizing the process of forest land diversion.
- **Core Restrictions:** No State Government or authority can, without prior approval from the Central Government- Dereserve any reserved forest.
- Use any forest land for a non-forest purpose.
- Forest Conservation amendment act 1988: Amendment prohibited the assignment of forest land on lease to private entities and expanded the definition of activities considered a "non-forest purpose" Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act, 2023:

Definition of forest:
- Land declared or notified as a forest under any law (e.g., Indian Forest Act, 1927).
- Land recorded as forest in Government records (Revenue or Forest Dept.) on or after 25th October 1980.
- This does not include land which has been officially changed from forest use to use for non-forest purposes on or before 1996.
- In 2024, the Supreme Court directed States/UTs to follow the 1996 T.N. Godavarman case definition of "forest" until the identification of forest land under the 2023 Forest (Conservation) Act amendment is completed.
- Categories of land exempted from the provisions of this Act: Land within 100 km of India's border is exempted for projects related to national security, public roads leading to habitations.

Green Credit Program

Environment

Context
- The Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change (MOEFCC) has issued a new methodology for calculating Green Credit for tree plantation under the Green Credit Rules, 2023

Additional Information:
- Green Credit Rules, 2023, were enacted under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.
- These are provisions for Forest Departments of all States and Union territories to identify degraded land parcels under their control to enhance green cover.

Revised Green Credit Calculation Methodology with respect to Tree plantation:
- Claim of Green Credit: After 5 years of restoration on degraded forest land, and achieving a minimum 40% canopy density.
- 1 Green Credit = 1 new tree (over 5 years old).
- Credit Transfer: Credits are non-tradable and non-transferable and may be exchanged once but cannot be reused.

About Green Credits:
- Green Credit means a singular unit of an incentive provided for a specified activity, delivering a positive impact on the environment.
- These credits can be traded on a dedicated exchange, similar to how carbon credits are traded.

About the Green Credit Program:
- It is an innovative market-based mechanism to encourage voluntary plantation activity across the country for afforestation and water conservation.
- It is an initiative within the Lifestyle for Environment or LIFE movement.
- Mission LIFE (2021) is an India-led global mass movement to nudge individual and community action to protect and preserve the environment.
- **Established under:** "The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986" with MoEFCC as Nodal Agency.

Objectives:
- **Land Bank Creation:** Through registration of degraded forest lands by Forest departments.
- **Encourage Participation:** Of Government entities, Private companies, NGOs, Individuals/group of individuals (registered under the Societies Registration Act)

Governance Structure:
- Governance framework supported by an inter-ministerial Steering Committee.
- **Administrator:** Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE), responsible for program implementation, management, monitoring, and operation.
- User-friendly digital platform: To streamline Project Registration, Verification and Issuance of Green Credits.

Other Initiatives taken for Afforestation:
- Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats & Tangible Incomes (MISHTI) (2023): To restore and promote mangroves as a unique, natural ecosystem.
- **Compensatory Afforestation Fund Act, 2016:** Provides the legal framework to compensate for forest and ecosystem loss from diversion of forest land, as per the provisions of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980.
- **National Mission for a Green India (2014):** This scheme aims to undertake afforestation activities in degraded forest areas with people's participation.
- **National Bamboo Mission (2006):** It aims to promote holistic growth of the bamboo sector through region-specific strategies for cultivation and marketing.

National Policy on Geothermal Energy

Environment

Context
- The Union Ministry of New & Renewable Energy (MNRE) notified National Policy on Geothermal Energy (2025), India's first such Policy to reinforce efforts for an energy transition.

About Geothermal Energy:
- It harnesses heat stored within the Earth's crust.
- Key Sources and applications-
  - High-enthalpy (~200°C) resources: Like volcanic regions, geysers and hot springs suitable for electricity generation.
  - Low- to medium-enthalpy (100–180°C) resources: Like hot rocks and shallow ground layers suitable for direct use applications like heating and cooling, agri-food, aquaculture and geothermal heat pumps.
- **Estimated Potential in India:** 10,600 MW (Geothermal Atlas of India, 2022)
- GSI identified 381 hot springs and 10 geothermal provinces.

Challenges related to development of Geo Thermal Energy in India:
- **High Upfront Cost:** Exploration and drilling are capital intensive.
- **High investment risk:** Due to uncertainty of finding commercially viable reservoirs which deter private players.
- **Exploration & Data Gaps:** Limited deep drilling assessment and data with geological complexity (Himalayas, volcanic zones) making resource assessment more difficult.
- **Lack of Commercial Projects:** Only one 20 kW pilot plant (Manuguru, Telangana) exists and no utility-scale projects are established yet.
- **Technology & Skill Gaps:** India lacks indigenous drilling and reservoir management technology and expertise.
- **Environmental & Social Concerns:** Risks of land subsidence, seismicity, and water contamination if reinjection is not managed.

About National Policy on Geothermal Energy (NPGE, 2025):
- **Vision:** To establish geothermal energy as a major pillar of India's renewable energy mix, achieving net zero carbon emission by 2070.
- Nodal Ministry for implementation of GE based projects: MNRE
- Goals of NPGE, 2025
- Improve research on GE development and deployment, advanced exploration, drilling techniques, reservoir management & cost-effective power generation

- Collaborate with Ministries, international geothermal development bodies and national research institutes to incorporate global best practices
- Deploy geothermal heating and cooling solutions, and other direct-use applications to decarbonize buildings, agriculture, industries, etc.
- Build an enabling ecosystem with public-private partnerships, capacity building, and knowledge sharing.

Key features of the Policy:

- **Scope of policy**:
  - Geothermal Resource Assessment, Power Production systems, Direct use, Ground (geothermal) Source Heat Pump (GSHP) etc.
  - Emerging Innovative Technologies such as Enhanced Geothermal Systems (EGS), Advanced Geothermal Systems (AGS), geothermal energy storage, offshore geothermal wells etc.
  - Extracting GE from abandoned oil and gas wells.
  - Mineral by-products such as silica, borax, cesium, lithium, etc. subjected to rules and payment of royalty under MMDR Act.
  - Creation of a geothermal resource data repository: Through Intergovernmental/inter-agency collaboration, e.g., with Ministries of Mines, Earth Sciences etc.; institutes like Geological Survey of India (GSI), National Data Repository (NDR), etc.
  - Operators/developers will be permitted to conduct geothermal resource assessment surveys for R&D, assessment etc.
- **Developmental Model**:
  - Preference to indigenous geothermal technologies: By encouraging local innovation.
  - **Economic feasibility models:** like revenue sharing, milestone-based payment etc.
  - **Central funding assistance:** To Northeastern Region and special category states.
  - **Joint ventures:** Between oil and gas companies, mineral companies, and geothermal developers
  - **Repurposing oil and gas production facilities:** like pipelines, etc.
  - Pilot projects and Centres of Excellence (CoEs) for R&D and training.
- **Sustainability**:
  - Promotion of Technology for safe, non-polluting use of geothermal fluids or by-products.
  - Developing Environmental & Social Impact Assessment guidelines for geothermal projects.
- **Financing Mechanisms**:
  - Renewable Energy Research and Technology Development Programme (RE-RTD) provides up to 100% financial support to Government/non-profit research organizations and upto 70% to Industry, start-ups, private Institutes, entrepreneur, and manufacturing units
  - Long-term concessional loans, Sovereign Green Bonds, Viability Gap Funding (VGF), etc.
  - **Fiscal incentives:** GST/Import duty exemptions on equipment, services; Tax holidays etc.
  - **Support mechanisms:** Inclusion in Indian Carbon Credit Trading Scheme; Inter-State Grid Access; Open Access charges waiver; eligibility for Renewable Purchase Obligation (RPO) etc.

Guidelines for States and Union Territories:

- Responsible for granting geothermal exploration/development permit and land lease
- Exploration leases may be granted for 3 to 5 years.
- Lease for development for power generation or direct-use applications for up to 30 years.
- Single-window clearance mechanisms managed by designated state nodal agencies.
- Ensure stakeholder consultations and adequate compensatory measures, particularly in tribal and remote areas.
- The NPGE, 2025 directly addresses sector challenges by streamlining approvals, encouraging R&D and partnerships, and providing fiscal incentives and financial support. With mechanisms for local innovation, stakeholder consultation, and dedicated pilot projects, the policy creates a strong foundation for sustainable, reliable geothermal growth.

River Pollution in India

Environment

Context

- Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) released assessment report on "Polluted River Stretches for Restoration of Water Quality - 2025".

More on the News:

- CPCB executes National Water Quality Monitoring Programme (NWMP) in association with State Pollution Control Boards/ Pollution Control Committees for assessing the water quality of aquatic resources in the country.
- CPCB initiated the exercise of identifying polluted river stretches (PRS) in the country since 2009.

About Polluted River Stretch:

- **Polluted River Stretch (PRS):** Two or more polluted locations identified on a river in a continuous sequence are considered as a stretch and identified as PRS.
- Criteria: Stretches where the Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD) exceeds 3 milligrams/litre (mg/L) are identified as polluted stretches by CPCB.
- BOD is a key indicator of water quality and it measures the oxygen needed to break down organic matter.
- **Categories:** PRS are categorized under five Priority Classes (I to V) on the basis of maximum BOD level observed. For e.g. Priority Class I: Monitoring locations exceeding BOD concentration 30.1 mg/L
- **Polluted Stretches:** 296 river stretches were polluted on 271 rivers (out of 645 rivers assessed) across 32 states and Union Territories.
- Total number of PRS has decreased from 351 (in 2018) to 296 (in 2025).
- **Geographic Distribution:** Maharashtra continues to have the highest number (54) of polluted river stretches.
- **Notable PRS:** Includes Yamuna in Delhi, Sabarmati in Ahmedabad, Chambal in Madhya Pradesh, Tungabhadra in Karnataka, and Sarabanga in Tamil Nadu.

Sources of River Pollution:

- **Untreated Sewage:** According to the CPCB, more than 60% of untreated sewage water is released into rivers daily.
- A CPCB National Inventory of Sewage Treatment Plants (2021) found that urban centres generate 72,368 MLD of sewage daily, far exceeding treatment capacities.
- **Untreated industrial effluents:** Industries such as those producing chemicals, sugar, paper, and tanneries generate wastewater that contains toxic chemicals, which poses serious risks.
- **Others:** Municipal solid waste, agricultural runoff, sand mining and illegal encroachments.

Framework for rejuvenation of rivers:

- **Legal Framework**:
  - **Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974:** Establishes the CPCB as the central unit for planning and regulating environmental matters and SPCB as a state-level major institution with the responsibility to enforce environmental standards.
  - **Environment (Protection) Rules:** Notified under the Environment Protection Act, 1986, these rules lay down standards for industrial discharge.
  - W**aste Management Rules:** Government has notified rules on solid waste, biomedical waste, E-waste, etc.
- **River Rejuvenation Programmes**:
  - **Namami Gange Programme:** Superseded Ganga Action Plan (GAP) – launched in 1985 – and is being implemented by the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG).
  - **Yamuna Action Plan:** Launched in 1993, it aims to clean the stretch of river Yamuna.
  - **Centrally Sponsored Scheme of National River Conservation Plan (NRCP):** NRCP is implemented in identified stretches of rivers, excluding those in Ganga basin, by providing financial and technical assistance to states/UTs.
  - **National Water Quality Monitoring Programme (NWQM):** Through its network of SPCBs, it advises central and State governments on prevention, control, abatement of water pollution and sets standards on water quality in streams and wells.
  - **Schemes for Sewerage Infrastructure:** Atal Mission for Rejuvenation & Urban Transformation (AMRUT), Smart Cities Mission, and Swachh Bharat Mission.

Key Recommendations:

- **Source control:** Like identification and management of polluting sources including functioning/ status of Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs) / Effluent Treatment Plants (ETPs) and solid waste management and processing facilities, etc.
- **Basin Management:** River catchment/basin management and flood plain zone protection and its management such as protection and management of Flood Plain Zones, rain water harvesting, maintaining minimum

environmental flow (e-flow) of river and plantation on both sides of the river.

- e-Flow is the quantity, timing, and quality of water flows required to sustain freshwater and estuarine ecosystems and the human livelihoods and well-being that depend on these ecosystems. (Brisbane Declaration, 2007)
- **Removing Encroachment:** Setting up of biodiversity parks on flood plains by removing encroachment shall also be considered as an important component for river rejuvenation.
- **Sewage Treatment:** Focus on proper interception and diversion of sewage carrying drains to the STP and emphasis should be on utilization of treated sewage so as to minimize extraction of ground or surface water.
- **Use of Technology:** Advanced technology, including AI, robotics, Remote sensing, etc., may be harnessed for real time monitoring and waste management.
- The declining number of polluted rivers stretches shows that collective efforts are beginning to yield results. By strengthening sewage and waste management, enforcing strict industrial compliance, and harnessing technology for real-time monitoring, India can transform its rivers into lifelines of prosperity.

Great Nicobar Island Project

Environment

Context

- Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs recently sought a factual report from the Andaman and Nicobar Islands administration on complaint that forest rights had not been settled under Forest Rights Act, 2006 before diverting forest land for Great Nicobar Island Project.

Additional Information:

- Tribal Councils in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands are statutory bodies established under the Andaman and Nicobar Islands (Tribal Councils) Regulation, 2009.
- They have limited advisory and executive powers, unlike autonomous councils under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution, which have legislative, executive and limited judicial powers and enjoy greater autonomy.
- Andaman and Nicobar Islands administration has maintained that it does not need to implement the Forest Rights Act (FRA), arguing that tribe's people's rights to the forest were already protected on the Islands under the Protection of Aboriginal Tribes Act, 1956 (PAT,56).
- PAT,56 gives the local administration unilateral authority to divert forest land, whereas the FRA mandates consent to be obtained from the Gram Sabhas concerned after recognising and vesting rights in them.

About Great Nicobar Island Project:

- **Genesis:** It is a massive Greenfield infrastructure project conceived by NITI Aayog and approved by the Union Cabinet in 2021.
- **Nodal Agency:** Andaman and Nicobar Islands Integrated Development Corporation (ANIIDCO), incorporated in 1988 as a Government Undertaking under the Companies Act 1956.
- **Project Components:**
  - International Transshipment Port – Galathea Bay: A deep-sea port to be developed at Galathea Bay on the island's southern coast.
  - Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW) will oversee transhipment port project.
  - A Greenfield international airport
  - A 450 MW power plant
  - A modern township.

Significance of the Project:

- **Strategic location:** Great Nicobar Island's geostrategic position makes it critically important for India's security and maritime influence.
- It is located at the mouth of the Malacca Strait, one of the world's busiest shipping lanes, accounting for passage of one-third of global sea trade.
- It is also close to Sunda Strait, Lombok Strait, and the Coco Islands, all of which are important choke-points in the Indo-Pacific region.
- **Regional maritime hub:** Transhipment port will attract cargo traffic that currently goes through Singapore or Colombo by leveraging Great Nicobar's proximity to the busy Malacca Strait.
- Currently, nearly 75% of India's transhipped cargo is handled at ports outside India.
- **Improving connectivity:** Island's connectivity to the Indian mainland and other destinations will improve, making the island more accessible for tourism, trade, and strategic logistics.

- Defence: By developing a naval-capable deep-water port and airfield on Great Nicobar, the project will bolster the existing tri-services military command in the Andaman & Nicobar Islands.
- The project will allow India to station ships, aircraft and drones closer to the strategic crossroads of the eastern Indian Ocean to monitor critical sea lanes and enhance India's security sphere in the region.
- **Economic growth and regional development:** Transhipment port will accrue significant benefits such as forex savings, foreign direct investment, increased economic activity at other Indian Ports, enhanced logistics infrastructure, etc.

Ecological, Social and Geological Concerns:

- **Tribal Rights:** There are concerns that project will negatively impact the tribes of Great Nicobar Island, Shompens (a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group) and Nicobarese.
- It can lead to displacement of the tribal population; large-scale migration of workers and settlers could expose the Shompen to infectious diseases against which they have no immunity, etc.
- **Ecological Concerns:** Great Nicobar is one of the richest biodiversity zones in India with over 85% still covered in tropical rainforest.
- **Impact on Species:** Galathea Bay, the site of new port, is a protected wetland under Ramsar Convention and is most important nesting site for endangered Leatherback Sea Turtle.
- Conservationists fear that constructing the port will require dredging millions of cubic meters of seabed, which could destroy coral reefs and seagrass meadows, and disturb the turtles' nesting beaches.
- **Deforestation:** Project will lead to the cutting of approximately 9.6 lakh trees and negatively impact the carbon sequestration capacity of the region.
- **Shoreline Changes:** Development also undermines natural coastal defences. e.g., the mangrove belts at Galathea that help buffer tsunamis and storms would be removed.
- **Geological and Disaster Risks:** Great Nicobar is located in a highly seismic zone and sits atop the same megathrust fault line that triggered the devastating Indian Ocean tsunami in December 2004.
- While Great Nicobar Project has the potential to strengthen connectivity, trade, and defence is undeniable, the ecological fragility, tribal rights, and disaster vulnerabilities of the island cannot be overlooked. A path forward lies in adopting a phased, ecologically sensitive, and community-inclusive model of development that safeguards biodiversity and cultural heritage, while ensuring national interests are advanced responsibly.

CAG Deploys AI to Uncover Fraud in Welfare Schemes

Polity

Context

- CAG reported AI/ML-based audits detected fraud, saved public funds. CAG expanding remote audits.
- Remote Audit: Tech-driven review of digitised records remotely.

CAG Basics

- Constitutional body (Art 148). Audits Union, State, PSU finances. Appointed by President; 6 yr term or age 65. Removal similar to SC judge. Independent (fixed tenure, charged expenses). Reports to President/Governors (Art 151), reviewed by PAC/COPU.

Criminalisation of Politics in India

Polity

Context

- A report by Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) has found that about 47% of Ministers in India, including in the Union Cabinet and State Cabinets, have declared criminal cases against themselves, out of which 27% are of a serious nature.

Causes of Criminalisation of politics:

- Criminalisation of politics refers to the entry and participation of persons with criminal backgrounds in the political and electoral process. The causes include:
  - **Politico-Criminal Nexus:** Criminals enter politics to gain immunity and legitimacy, while politicians and parties use them for their muscle and financial power, creating a vicious cycle of mutual benefit.
    - Vohra Committee Report (1993) highlighted the nexus of politicians, criminals and bureaucrats in the Indian administrative and political setup.
  - **"Winnable" Candidates:** ADR data 2024, indicates that the success rate for candidates with criminal charges was 15.3%, while candidates without any criminal cases had a much lower success rate of just 4.4%.
  - **High cost of elections:** To fund election campaigns, candidates and parties often rely on "black money" and funds from the mafia.
  - **Slow Justice system:** Poor conviction rate for MPs and MLAs, coupled with trial delays, does not deter political parties from giving tickets to candidates with a criminal background.
    - 55% rise in MPs with criminal records since 2009 (ADR Report 2024)
  - **Identity Politics:** Elections often prioritize caste/religion over criminal records.

Constitutional and legal provisions to reduce Criminalisation of politics:

- Representation of People Act, 1951
- Disqualification under Section 8: Individuals convicted of heinous crimes or sentenced to two years or more face disqualification.
- **Section 11:** Gives the EC the power to remove or reduce the period of disqualification. This power was utilized in September 2019 to reduce the disqualification period of Prem Singh Tamang.

Recent Initiatives:

- **130th Constitutional Amendment Bill:** Seeks to amend Articles 75 and 164. It proposes that a Minister arrested and detained for 30 consecutive days for an alleged offense punishable with imprisonment of at least five years, shall be removed from office.
- **Drivers:**
  - Electoral winnability overriding records;
  - Money & muscle power;
  - Vote bank politics (Robin Hood image, caste);
  - Media complicity;
  - State-crime nexus (immunity);
  - FPTP system loopholes,
  - lack of inner-party democracy.
- **Impact**
  - Erosion of rule of law
  - Policy capture
  - Weakening institutions

- Corruption & black money
- Governance deficit
- Electoral distortions
- Erosion of democratic trust.

- **Reforms**
  - Key Judgments (ADR 2002 - disclosure, PUCL 2004 - right to know, Lily Thomas 2013 - immediate disqualification, PIF 2018 - publicise records). ECI Measures (Affidavits, MCC, arms ban, poll cancellation power). Law Commission 2015 (Disqualify on charge framing for serious offences). Recent (SC hearing PIL on lifetime ban, ECI mandatory disclosure by parties).

Way Forward:
- **Enhanced Penalties for False Affidavits:** The punishment for filing false affidavits (recommended by 244th Law Commission Report, 2014) should be enhanced to a minimum of two years imprisonment, and this offense should also be made a ground for disqualification.
- **Dedicated Election Benches:** High Courts should set up dedicated election benches to hear petitions through day to-day trials, ensuring timely convictions before disqualification of candidates.
- **Review of Section 11 of RPA, 1951:** Convictions for serious crimes should be kept out of the Election Commission's power to reduce the period of disqualification.
- **Financial and Transparency Reforms:** Political parties should be brought under the RTI Act, 2005.

Deletion of Names from Electoral Rolls

Polity

Context
- Issue highlighted by alleged fraudulent applications in Karnataka.

Procedure
- Sec 22 RPA 1950 allows EROs to delete names after inquiry (suo motu/application). Grounds: Death, ceased residence, duplicate enrolment, ineligible. Citizens can submit Form 7. BLOs conduct ground verification. EROs issue final orders.

Safeguards
- Prior notice & hearing for affected voters; Appeal mechanism (DM -> CEO); OTP verification for online Form 7.

Nationwide Special Intensive Revision (SIR)

Polity

Context
- ECI assessed nationwide SIR.

What is SIR
- ECI-directed voter roll update in exceptional situations (errors, omissions). Objective: Correct flawed rolls, address migrant duplication, ensure accuracy. Legal Basis: Sec 21(3) RPA 1950. Methodology: Typically, house-to-house verification. 2025 exercise is first nationwide SIR in 20 years.

Rationale
- Roll synchronisation; Duplicate removal; Migrant mapping; Booth rationalisation (cap 1200 voters); Digital transparency (ECINET platform).

Challenges
- Document exclusion (Aadhaar/ration insufficient); Staff constraints (BLO vacancies); Digital access barrier; Migrant complexity (~400M internal migrants); Awareness deficit.

Way Forward
- Expand accepted proofs (Aadhaar, ration etc); Field reinforcement (recruit BLOs); Mobile booths; Awareness outreach; Population registry model (Sweden).

SC Allows Aadhaar as Identity Proof in Elections

Polity

Context

- SC directed ECI to accept Aadhaar as additional identity doc during Bihar SIR. Reiterate Aadhaar is identity proof, not citizenship proof (under Sec 23(4) RPA 1950). ECI retains authority to verify genuineness.

EVMs to Display Colour Photographs

Polity

Context

- ECI mandated colour photos on EVM ballot papers from 2025 Bihar polls (Rule 49B, Conduct of Elections Rules 1961). Enhances identification, reduces error.

Ladakh Statehood Protest

Polity

Context

- Protest for statehood & Sixth Schedule inclusion turned violent. Dissatisfaction with Central regulations under Art 240.

Art 240 Regulations

- Domicile for jobs (15yr residence/7yr schooling), 85% reservation, Official languages (Eng, Hindi, Urdu, Bhoti, Purgi), 1/3rd women reservation in Hill Councils.

Reasons for Unrest

- Legislative deficit (no assembly since 2019); Art 240 regulations revocable vs Sixth Schedule guarantees; Land ownership fears (outsiders); High unemployment (26.5% graduate); Cultural identity concerns.

About Ladakh

- Between Himalayan/Karakoram ranges; borders Pak/China. 97% ST population. UT without legislature since 2019. Districts: Leh, Kargil. "Cold desert", highest motorable pass (Umling La), Siachen Glacier. High solar radiation, geothermal potential.

Personality Rights in India

Polity

Context

- Aishwarya Rai Bachchan moved Delhi HC to protect rights against unauthorised use ("John Does").

Personality Rights

- Allow control over unauthorised use of personal attributes (name, image, voice). Part of privacy (Art 21) & property rights; also, publicity/celebrity rights. No explicit statute; relies on Art 21, Copyright Act, Trademarks Act.

John Doe Injunctions

- Preventive relief against unidentified infringers. Used against piracy, NFTs etc in India.

Rajasthan's Anti-Conversion Bill

Polity

Context

- Assembly passed Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Bill, 2025.

Features

- Includes marriages solely for conversion (can be annulled); Offences non-bailable; Penalty 7yrs to life, fine up to ₹25 lakh; Asset confiscation possible; Prior notice to DM required. Significance: Reinforces freedom of religion, prevents coercion. Concerns: Potential harassment, misuse.

Right to Education Exemptions for Minority Schools

Polity

Context

- SC reconsidering Pramati ruling (exempts minority schools from RTE Act 2009)

RTE Act 2009

- Guarantees free/compulsory schooling (6-14yrs, Art 21A); 25% reservation for disadvantaged (Sec 12(1)(c)); Mandates quality standards (teachers, infra); Prohibits screening, capitation fees etc.

Pramati Ruling (2014)

- Exempted all minority institutions (aided/unaided) from RTE. Held 25% quota alters minority character; State's Art 21A duty cannot burden Art 30 rights. Upheld Art 21A, Art 15(5).

Arguments for Exemption

- Autonomy (Art 30(1)); Protects cultural character; Avoids burden on schools; Judicial precedent (TMA Pai 2002).

Critiques of Exemption

- Shifts focus from child rights; Weakens regulatory accountability; Diminishes socio-economic integration; Risk of misuse by private schools; Exacerbates inequity (only 8.76% disadvantaged enrolment).

Way Forward

- Balance Art 21A & 30 via amendment; Independent oversight; Enforce uniform standards; Conditional funding.

Central Administrative Tribunal

Polity

Context

- 10th All India Conference held to discuss reforms.

CAT Basics

- Quasi-judicial body (Art 323A; Admin Tribunals Act 1985) adjudicating public servant service disputes. Main bench (Delhi) + 18 outlying; 69 Members (Judicial/Administrative). Functions on natural justice principles. Appeals via writs to HC (Art 226/227), then SC (Art 136).

Decriminalising Defamation

Polity

Context

- SC remark revives debate on balancing free speech (Art 19) vs reputation/dignity (Art 21).

Defamation

- False communication harming reputation (Libel-written, Slander-oral). Civil wrong (compensation) & criminal offence (punishment) in India. BNS 2023 Sec 356 (replaces IPC 499/500) prescribes up to 2 yrs jail/fine/community service. Non-cognisable, bailable, compoundable.

Arguments For Criminalisation

- Protects reputation (Art 21 dignity); Deters malicious acts, protects marginalised; Preserves public order.

Arguments Against Criminalisation

- Chills free speech (Art 19(1)(a)); Prone to misuse (SLAPP suits); Disproportionate penalty (imprisonment), burdens courts.

Judicial Precedents

- Subramanian Swamy 2016 (upheld criminal defamation as reasonable restriction); R Rajagopal 1994 (truthful publications on public records protected); Shreya Singhal 2015 (defamation valid ground to limit free speech).

Gender Imbalance in Supreme Court of India

Polity

Context

- Only 1 woman judge (J. Nagarathna) out of 34. Only 11 women (3.8%) appointed since 1950.

Barriers

- Opaque Collegium process (gender sidelined); Few elevations from Bar (only 1 woman vs 9 men); Late appointments (reduced tenure); No SC/ST/marginalised women judges appointed.

Implications

- Representation gap; Restricts diverse perspectives in adjudication; Weakens public trust.

Way Forward

- Institutionalise gender criterion; Collegium transparency; Elevate women from Bar; Promote diversity (caste/minority); Appoint younger women for longer tenure.

Judicial Pendency in India

Polity

Context

- SC pendency hits record 88,417 cases. Increased 7.8% from 2024. Civil cases 78.7%, Criminal 21.3%. Disposal efficiency ~88% in 2025.
- District Courts have nearly 4.6 crore pending cases and High Courts have nearly 63 lakh case pendency (National Judicial Data Grid).

Reasons for pendency of cases:

- **Inadequate Judge/population ratio:** India has just 21 judges per million people against the recommended Judge to Population ratio of fifty Judges per million (120th Law Commission).
- **Ineffectiveness of Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR):** ADR mechanisms have not been deployed effectively enough to meet the rising demands for justice.
- **Gram Nyayalayas (village courts)**, which were proposed to handle small claims in rural areas and reduce the main judiciary's workload, have not been effectively established in most states.
- **Systemic and Procedural Inefficiencies:** Judicial delays in India stem from multiple appeals, frequent adjournments, frivolous litigation, vague laws, weak compliance and poor case management.
- There is often no systematic grouping of similar cases or categorisation based on urgency, leading to inefficiencies.
- **Deficiencies in Judicial Infrastructure and technology:** India's judiciary faces challenges like shortage of support staff, lack of basic amenities in lower courts limited technological equipment and poor digital adoption.
- **Financial Constraints:** India spends only 0.1% of GDP on judiciary compared to 2% on defence.
- **Government as Litigator:** Government agencies are responsible for around 50% of litigation.

Impact of Judicial pendency:

- **Violation of Fundamental Rights:** The Supreme Court in Hussainara Khatoon Vs. State of Bihar (1979) held that the right to speedy trial is part of Article 21 (Right to Life and Liberty).

Social Implications:

- **Weakening Rule of Law:** Delay in criminal trials emboldens offenders and reduces deterrence.
- **Disproportionate impact on the poor:** Under trial prisoners (about 76% of prisoners in India) remain incarcerated without conviction.

Economic Implications:

- **Increased litigation cost:** Parties spend heavily on repeated hearings, adjournments, and lawyer fees.
- Stalled projects: Land acquisition and environmental clearance cases block infrastructure development.
- **Erosion of trust:** Citizens lose confidence in the judiciary and sometimes resort to extra-legal methods for dispute resolution (Black coat syndrome).
- The delay in delivering justice has become so systemic that it can be perceived as a "new defense", where prolonging a case becomes a strategic advantage for one party.

Schemes/Initiatives by Government to reduce case pendency:

- **National Mission for Justice Delivery and Legal Reforms (NMJDLR- 2011):** Reduction of arrears & delays, infrastructure, procedural reforms.
- **Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) for Development of Infrastructure for Judiciary:** Court halls, residential units for judges, lawyer halls, toilets, digital facilities in courts.
- **e-Courts Mission Mode Project (Phase I, II, III):** Computerisation of courts, e-filing, videoconferencing, virtual courts, Virtual Justice Clock, JustIS App for judges.
- **Commercial Courts (under Commercial Courts Act, 2015):** Faster disposal of commercial disputes, lowering pecuniary jurisdiction, electronic case management.
- **Fast Track Courts (FTCs):** Disposal of long pending and heinous criminal cases. E.g. NIA courts, POCSO courts etc.
- **Alternate Dispute Resolution (ADR) Mechanisms:** Settling disputes outside regular courts, reducing burden through Lok Adalats, Mediation, Arbitration etc.

Way forward:

- **Establishment of a Central Authority:** The establishment of the National Judicial Infrastructure Authority (NJIA), as proposed by former CJI Justice N.V. Ramanna in 2021, is needed to plan, create, manage, and maintain functional infrastructure for Indian Courts.
- The potential of AI in case management should be explored.
- **Appoint Ad-hoc Judges:** Articles 128 and 224A of the Constitution should be invoked to appoint experienced retired judges as ad-hoc judges in the Supreme Court and High Courts.
- **Setting Targets and Timelines:** High Courts and subordinate courts should set annual targets for disposing of old cases and conduct bi-monthly or quarterly performance reviews to ensure accountability.
- **Controlling Adjournments:** The practice of granting adjournments on flimsy or technical grounds, which wastes significant judicial time, should be strictly regulated.
- **Reforming Litigation Practices:** Reduce government litigation, draft clear laws, ensure timely compliance, and deter frivolous cases.
- **Prioritizing ADR Mechanisms:** Expand ADR and promote local resolution to reduce unnecessary litigation.
- The Legal Services Authorities should undertake pre-litigation mediation on a large scale to regulate the number of new cases being filed.

SC Calls for Nationwide Firecracker Policy

Polity

Context

- SC held bans must extend beyond Delhi-NCR. Emphasised right to clean air (Art 21) applies uniformly. Dismissed 'green cracker' emission claims (only ~30% reduction vs 90% claim).

Issues

- Unequal enforcement; Partial bans encourage hoarding/illegal sales; Industry impact (Sivakasi jobs); "Green crackers" lack scaled testing/certification.

Current Rules

- Delhi-NCR year-round ban. Other states vary (Bengaluru timed green crackers, Chennai Diwali slots, WB total ban).

Way Forward

- Phased transition to certified green alternatives; Industry support (reskilling, subsidies); Time & zone regulation; Integrated pollution control strategy; Scientific oversight (CSIR-NEERI).

50 per cent Ceiling Debate in Reservations

Polity

Context

- Bihar's 85% proposal, Maharashtra's Maratha benefits revive debate. SC sought Centre's views on creamy layer for SCs/STs.

Constitutional Provisions

- Art 15 & 16 (equality). Current Central Quotas: OBC 27%, SC 15%, ST 7.5%, EWS 10 per cent (Total 59.5%).
- Judicial Stand: Balaji 1962 (capped at 50% - formal equality); NM Thomas 1975 (substantive equality concept);

Indra Sawhney 1992 (upheld OBC quota, reaffirmed 50% cap with exceptions, introduced creamy layer for OBCs); Janhit Abhiyan 2022 (upheld EWS quota, held 50% cap applies to backward classes not EWS).

Issues

- Formal vs Substantive equality debate; Unfilled reserved posts (40-50% vacant in Centre); Concentration of benefits (Rohini Comm: 97% OBC benefits to 25% sub-castes); Creamy layer for SC/ST debate.

Way Forward

- Data-driven approach (use Census 2027); Sub-categorisation (implement Rohini report); Sub-quotas for marginalised within SC/ST; Focus on skill development beyond quotas.

Almatti Dam

Polity

Context

- Karnataka's proposal to raise height reignites Krishna water dispute. Plan stayed by SC.

About

- Lal Bahadur Shastri Dam on Krishna River (N Karnataka). Main reservoir of Upper Krishna Project. SC capped FRL at 519.6m. multi-purpose (hydro, irrigation, water supply, flood control).

Issues

- Judicial challenge (land acquisition vs SC order); Telangana objection (reduced share, scarcity); Maharashtra concern (border flooding, reduced downstream flow).

Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025

Polity

Context

- Act enforced, replaces four old laws, overhauls system.

Features

- Bureau of Immigration gets statutory backing; Centre can delegate functions to states but retains override; Centre decides exemptions; Notified immigration posts for entry/exit; Mandatory foreigner registration; Reporting by hotels, universities etc; Digital database created; Power to close premises frequented by foreigners; Power to restrict foreigners; Arrest without warrant by Head Constable+; Graded fines, some offences compoundable; Limited appeal mechanism.

Gains

- Replaces fragmented laws; Digital tracking enhances transparency; Uniform exemptions reduce ambiguity; Faster resolution via compounding; Clear roles.

Concerns

- Excessive centralisation
- Unequal fines risk discrimination
- Weak appeals (no specialised tribunals)
- Data privacy risks
- Potential impact on talent/tourism.

Way Forward

- Digital border (EU EES model)
- Pre-arrival vetting (ETIAS style)
- Independent Appeals Tribunal (UK FTT model)
- Regional forum (Bali Process model).

Monetary Bail Framework in India

Polity

Context

- US "cashless bail" debate brings focus to India's system. BNSS 2023 governs bail via Monetary deposit, Surety bond, Personal Recognizance.

Types

- Monetary Bail (Cash deposit, refundable, poverty bias); Surety Bail (Third party guarantee, solvency verified, most common); Personal Recognisance (PR Bond - written promise, courts hesitant, usually petty offences).

Need for Reform

- Monetary exclusion of poor; Undermines fair trial right (Art 21); Violates equality (Law Comm view); Discriminatory (wealthy get quick release).
- Way Forward: Wider PR bond use; Proactive legal aid (DLSAs); Dedicated Bail Act; Digital oversight (e-prisons).

SC Interim Order on Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025

Polity

Context

- SC partially stayed the Act. Put on hold: 5-yr Islam practice rule for creating waqf; Collector's power to decide waqf vs govt land. Ordered max 3 non-Muslims on State Boards, 4 on Central Board for now.

Act Basics (UMEED Act)

- Passed by Parliament. Waqf: Property donated by Muslims for religious/charitable use, owned by God. Permanent status once declared.
- **Key Provisions Stayed:** See above.
- **Provisions Upheld:** Abolition of 'Waqf by user' (prevent encroachment); Application of Limitation Act 1963 to waqf property recovery (ensure parity). Other Act features: Protection of tribal lands (no Waqf on Sch V/VI land); non-Muslim inclusion on boards/tribunals; Representation for women, different sects; Inheritance protection; Reduced contribution (7%->5%); Digital database mandate; District Committees; Mandatory audits; Appeal to HC.

SC on Anticipatory Bail in Caste Crimes

Polity

Context

- SC cancelled Bombay HC order granting anticipatory bail in caste crime case. Upheld Sec 18 of SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act 1989 which bars anticipatory bail if prima facie case exists. Stressed judges shouldn't conduct "mini-trial" at bail stage.
- **SC/ST Act 1989:** Applies to offences by non-SC/ST against SC/ST. Provides relief/rehab. Special Courts for speedy trials. Offences cognisable. Anticipatory bail barred.

Anticipatory Bail

- Under Sec 438 CrPC (now 482 BNSS). Allows bail before arrest for non-bailable offence. Prevents unnecessary detention. Granted by Sessions/High Court.

Significance of Ruling

- Reinforces SC/ST Act shield; Affirms anticipatory bail exclusion is constitutional; Strengthens protection in electoral contexts.

National Medical Commission (NMC)

Polity

Context

- The National Medical Commission (NMC) recently completed five years.

The National Medical Commission:

- Establishment: A statutory body constituted under the National Medical Commission Act, 2019; came into force on 25 Sept 2020.
- Replaced the Medical Council of India (MCI), and the Board of Governors was dissolved.

- The Commission consists of the following persons to be appointed by the Central Government, namely
  - a chairperson
  - ten ex officio Members
  - twenty-two part-time Members
- **Four Autonomous boards under NMC**:
  - Under- Graduate Medical Education Board
  - Post- Graduate Medical Education Board
  - Medical Assessment & Rating Board
  - Ethics and Medical Registration Board.

Issues With NMC
- Governance Gap: Weak accountability due to a body dominated by doctors; it lacks public health experts, social scientists, or citizen voices.
- NMC also allows appeals only from registered medical practitioners, systematically rejecting patients' complaints despite no legal bar.
- Fee Regulation: Controls fees for only 50% of private seats; others remain prone to exorbitant charges, excluding poor students.
- Ethics Oversight: Misconduct cases handled without judicial expertise or timelines, raising concerns of impartiality.
- National Medical Register (NMR): The process for updating and verifying the credentials of practicing doctors in the NMR has been very slow, leading to concerns about unqualified individuals practicing medicines.

Conclusion:
- While the NMC marks a step towards modernizing medical governance in India, addressing concerns of accessibility, ethical oversight, and inclusivity remains vital to build a transparent, accountable, and globally competitive healthcare system.

Visakhapatnam Declaration

Polity

Context
- The Declaration adopted at the 28th National Conference on e-Governance, called for a whole-of-government approach to strengthen civil services with digital competencies, and agile & data-driven frameworks.

Key Proposals of the Vishakhapatnam Declaration:
- **National Vision:** Inclusive, citizen-centric, and transparent governance.
- **Technology-Driven Governance:** Adoption of AI, ML, Blockchain, GIS, IoT, and Data Analytics to deliver multilingual, real-time, and sector-specific citizen services, emphasizing the need for ethical and transparent adoption.
  - E.g. Digital India BHASHINI, Digi Yatra, NADRES V2, etc.
- **Replication of Successful Models:** Focus on nationwide scaling of models like SAMPADA 2.0 (MP), eKhata (Bengaluru), Rohini Gram Panchayat (Maharashtra), Drone Analytics Monitoring System (DAMS) by NHAI, etc.
- **Grassroots and Inclusive Development:**
  - **Geographical Outreach:** To regions with connectivity challenges, like NorthEast and Ladakh, under the NeSDA framework.
  - Nationwide expansion of successful Panchayat digital models, launching digital literacy programs targeting women, youth, etc.
- **Cybersecurity and Resilience:** Focus on Zero-Trust architecture, post-quantum security and AI-enabled monitoring in priority sectors like transport, defence and citizen services platforms.
- **Agriculture and Sustainability:** National Agri Stack for better access to credit, advisories, and markets.
- **Other:** Collaboration between government, industry, for scalable digital solutions; Regional Hub Development (E.g. Visakhapatnam as IT and innovation hub).

Ceasefire Renewal & Inter-District Connectivity in Manipur

Governance

Context

- MHA renewed Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreement; announced "free movement" on NH-02.

SoO Agreement

- Tripartite ceasefire pact (Centre, Manipur govt, Kuki groups KNO & UPF) signed 2008, lapsed 2024. Renegotiated terms include territorial integrity respect, camp relocation, arms deposition etc.
- **NH-02:** Connects Imphal valley with hill districts; reopened for commuters/goods.

Facial Recognition in Anganwadis

Governance

Context

- MoWCD mandated Facial Recognition Software (FRS) integrated with Poshan Tracker app.

Anganwadis

- Established 1975 under ICDS; provide preschool education, health services, rations. ~1.4M centres.

Concerns with FRS

- Technical issues (phone capacity, internet, mismatch); Worker strain; Stigmatisation risk; Rights violation (presumes guilt).
- Way Forward: Verification alternatives (manual registers), worker training, structural reforms (transparency, decentralised production via SHGs).

Government Allows Transition from UPS to NPS

Governance

Context

- Finance Ministry allows Central Govt employees option to shift from Unified Pension Scheme (UPS) to National Pension System (NPS).

Details

- Option allowed up to 1 year pre-superannuation/3 months pre-voluntary retirement; Switch is irreversible; Exclusions for disciplinary cases. UPS merges features of OPS and NPS, guarantees 50% last salary as pension (min 25 yrs service).

Household Finance & Farm Assessment Surveys

Governance

Context

- NSO (under MoSPI) to conduct All-India Debt and Investment Survey (AIDIS) and Situation Assessment Survey (SAS) from July 2026-June 2027.

AIDIS

- Measures household debt, savings, asset distribution (rural/urban). Used by RBI, MoSPI, NITI Aayog.
- SAS: Evaluates farm household well-being (income, expenditure, debt, production, tech adoption, scheme access). Covers all agricultural households.

India to Host 3GPP RAN Meetings

Governance

Context

- TSDSI hosting 3GPP RAN meetings in Bengaluru for 6G standardisation (Release 20). First time India hosts.

3GPP

- Develops global mobile communication standards. 7 organizational partners including TSDSI.
- **TSDSI:** India's Standards Development Organisation for telecom.

Internet Users in India

Governance

Context

- Subscribers crossed 100 crores (TRAI report Mar-Jun 2025).

Highlights

- Total 100.28 cr (up 3.48%); Broadband 97.97 cr; Urban 57.94 cr, Rural 42.33 cr; Monthly data use 24.01 GB.

Swasth Nari Sashakt Parivar Abhiyaan

Governance

Context

- PM to launch along 8th Poshan Maah.

Led by

- MoHFW, MoWCD, Ministry of Ayush.

Objective

- Strengthen health services (preventive, promotive, curative) for women, adolescent girls, children. Uses Whole-of-Government/Society approach. 1 lakh+ health camps planned.

BharatNet Driving Digital Inclusion

Governance

Context

- Rural broadband mission highlights infra-benefit gap.

About

- Renamed from National Optical Fibre Network in 2015 (Min of Communications). Objective: Broadband via optical fibre to all GPs. Managed by BSNL.

Achievements

- World's largest rural broadband project; 2.18L+ GPs covered; 12.2L+ FTTH connections; 1.04L+ Wi-Fi hotspots.

Challenges

- Ownership void, obsolescence, bureaucratic legacy, neutrality gap.

Way Forward

- Local RFPs, DBT subsidy, Tech mix, shift focus from infra to services.

GST on Delivery Services Through E-Commerce

Governance

Context

- 56th GST Council meeting levies 18% GST on delivery services via e-commerce operators.

Framework

- Delivery charges via e-comm taxed at 18 per cent; Restaurant food via e-comm still 5%; Restaurant's own delivery + food taxed 5% composite.

Objectives

- Tax clarity, revenue expansion, compliance shift to operators.

Challenges

- Consumer burden, worker impact, competitive distortion (vs restaurant self-delivery).

Ladakh's Statehood Demand

Governance

Context

- Sonam Wangchuk's hunger strike revives demand for statehood & Sixth Schedule inclusion.

Demands

- Statehood for democratic governance; Sixth Schedule for land, culture, language, job protection.

Background

- Became UT in 2019. President notified regulations (jobs reservation, domicile etc) in 2025.

Sixth Schedule

- Provides autonomous admin in tribal areas (Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, Mizoram) via Autonomous District Councils (ADCs). ADCs have legislative, executive, judicial powers on specific subjects.

Recognising India's Waste Workers

Governance

Context

- Informal waste workers recycle ~20% urban waste but face exclusion.

Contribution

- Save disposal costs, High plastic recycling rate (60%) , Emission reduction , Urban resilience.

Vulnerabilities

- Low earnings, marginalised demographics, occupational hazards, social stigma.

Challenges

- Displacement by privatisation/mechanisation, policy neglect (EPR inclusion), poor SWM Rules 2016 implementation.

Models

- SWACH Cooperative (Pune) , Dry Waste Centres (Bengaluru) , NAMASTE Scheme , CSR initiatives.

The Govt of UP to Curb Caste-Based Practices

Governance

Context

- UP govt prohibits caste-based rallies, glorification, signboards following Allahabad HC directive. Exception for SC/ST Act cases. Constitutional Safeguards: Art 17 (untouchability) , Art 15(2) (access) , Art 46 (promotion) , Protection of Civil Rights Act 1955 , SC/ST Act 1989.

Draft Civil Drones Bill 2025

Governance

Context

- Aims to supersede Drone Rules 2021 with stricter framework.

Features

- Broad applicability (citizens, foreigners, manufacturers etc); Security drones exempt; DGCA oversight; UIN mandate; Anti-tampering clause; Mandatory third-party insurance; Pilot certification required; Zonal classification (Green, Yellow, Red); Fixed liability (₹2.5L death, ₹1L injury); Motor Accident Claims Tribunals adjudicate; Penalties up to 1yr jail/Rs 1L fine.

Online Gaming Regulation Act, 2025

Governance

Context

- Parliament passed bill banning Real Money Games (RMGs), promoting e-sports/social gaming.

Provisions: Categories

- E-sports (prize money allowed), Social Gaming, RMGs (banned). Penalties: Up to 3 yrs jail/₹1 cr fine for promoters/enablers (not players). Offences cognisable/non-bailable.

Rationale

- Addiction, suicide links; Financial fraud, money laundering, terror funding, GST evasion risks; Algorithm manipulation concerns.

Economic Impact

- Market size $3.7B (2024), projected $9B (2029); Supports 1L+ jobs; Potential GST loss Rs 15-20k cr/yr.

Challenges

- Federal overreach (Betting/Gambling is State List); Ambiguity vs SC rulings on skill games (Rummy); Violates Art 19(1)(g).

Innovation Corridors for Viksit Bharat

Governance

Context

- Needed for Viksit Bharat 2047 vision.

Definition

- Integrated clusters of research, design, manufacturing, talent accelerating tech.

Need

- Lessons from pandemic (collaboration) , Reduce import dependency , Harness demographic dividend.

Advantages

- Anchor value chains, high-skill jobs, economic multipliers.

Challenges

- Institutional silos, funding gaps, infra deficit, regulatory constraints, regional imbalance.

Way Forward

- University-Industry linkage (ANRF) , Domestic fab labs , Corporate convergence, Cluster integration, Regional decentralisation.

Draft National Data Centre Policy

Policies & Schemes

Context

- MeitY published draft policy.

Measures

- Proposes 20-year tax holiday, input tax credit on capital assets under GST, 'Permanent Establishment' status for foreign firms (≥100 MW), earmarking land, power coordination, renewable energy storage guidelines.

Data Centres

- Facilities housing servers for data processing/management, enabling cloud computing, AI, e-governance. Importance for sovereignty, cybersecurity. Limitations: High costs, land acquisition, power needs. India's market is emerging but growing (24% CAGR since 2019).

National Agriculture Conference - Rabi Campaign

Policies & Schemes

Context

- Conference held to discuss 2025-26 Rabi season strategies.

Theme

- "One Nation, One Agriculture, One Team". Target: 362.50 MT food grain production for 2025-26.

Initiative

- Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan ("Lab to Land") starts Oct 2025. Farmer Support via Kisan Call Centres, PMFBY, KVKs stressed.
- 2024-25 Output: Record 353.96 MT foodgrains (up 6.5%).

World Food India 2025

Policies & Schemes

Context

- MoFPI to host 4th edition in New Delhi.

Objective

- Position India as a global hub for food innovation, sustainability; foster international collaboration. Involves 100+ countries. Partner Nations: New Zealand, Saudi Arabia; Focus Countries: Japan, Russia, UAE, Vietnam.

PM SVANidhi Scheme

Policies & Schemes

Context

- Scheme extended until March 31, 2030. Changes include enhanced loan amounts, cashback, RuPay UPI-linked credit cards, capacity building.

Scheme Basics

- Launched 2020 (MoHUA & DFS). Central Sector micro-credit scheme providing collateral-free working capital loans (up to ₹50,000 in tranches) to street vendors. Implemented by SIDBI. Coverage expanded to census towns/peri-urban areas. Promotes digital transactions with cashback.

Additional LPG Connections Under PMUY

Policies & Schemes

Context

- Govt approved 25 lakh additional LPG connections under Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY), reaching 10.58 crore households.

Scheme Basics

- Launched 2016 (Ministry of Petroleum & Natural Gas). Central Sector Scheme providing deposit-free LPG connections to women in poor households. Objective: Ensure clean cooking fuel, lower indoor pollution, safeguard health. Implemented by MoPNG with OMCs & state govts. Eligibility: Adult women without LPG

connection, priority for BPL, SC/ST, etc.. Phase I (2016-19) achieved 8 cr; Phase II (Ujjwala 2.0, 2021-22) added 1.6 cr. Achievements: 10.33+ cr connections by Mar 2025; 238+ cr subsidised refills; Distributor network grew 83%.

Swachhata Hi Seva 2025

Policies & Schemes

Context
- 9th edition initiated under Swachh Bharat Mission for citizen cleanliness campaigns.

Agencies
- MoHUA & Dept of Drinking Water and Sanitation (Min of Jal Shakti).

Focus
- Revamping Cleanliness Target Units (CTUs) - hard-to-reach unclean areas.
- **Theme:** "Swachhotsav".
- **Five Pillars:** CTU Transformation, Clean Public Spaces, SafaiMitra Suraksha Shivir, Clean Green Festivities, **Advocacy.**
- **Mass Shramdaan:** "Ek Din, Ek Ghanta, Ek Saath" campaign.

MGNREGS Funding Constraints

Policies & Schemes

Context
- Funding shortages as Q1 FY 2025-26 funds nearly exhausted. MoF limited spending to 60% of budget for H1 Fy26.

Issues
- Liability burden (38% of 2025-26 funds for FY25 arrears); Employment deficit (avg 47-52 workdays vs 100-day guarantee); Wage liabilities (₹17,259 cr pending Apr 2025); Governance gaps (misappropriation, few ATRs submitted).

National Industrial Classification (NIC) 2025

Policies & Schemes

Context
- MoSPI released draft NIC 2025, updating NIC-2008.

Background
- India's first SIC 1962; updates align with UN ISIC. Update needed due to tech/structural changes & ISIC Revision 5 (2024).

Features
- Aligned with ISIC 5 (4-digit level); Increased Sub-Classes (~1900 vs 1304); Greater detail in Finance, Agri, IT etc.; Includes new sectors (Renewable Energy, Fintech, E-comm, Digital Economy).

CSIR Scheme on Capacity Building and Human Resource Development

Policies & Schemes

Context
- Cabinet approved scheme for 15th Fin Com Cycle (2021-26).

About
- Umbrella program by CSIR to strengthen R&D ecosystem. Covers national institutions/universities, provides STEMM career opportunities. Components: Fellowships, research support, awards, travel grants. Significance: Aligns with SDG 9, improves global innovation performance.

CSIR
- Est 1942 (Min of S&T); leading autonomous R&D org. PM is ex officio President. Achievements: 1st parallel computer, 1st Indian genome sequence, TKDL.

Context

- The 56th meeting of the GST Council has approved Next-Gen GST reform (GST 2.0) that includes rate rationalization with a simplified two-slab structure.

Evaluation of GST 1.0:

- About GST: It is a single indirect tax on the supply of goods and services across India.
- It was Introduced by the 101st Constitutional Amendment Act, 2017.
- Main components of GST: Central GST (CGST), State GST (SGST), Union Territory GST (UTGST) and Integrated GST (IGST).
- CGST, SGST and UTGST are on intra-state transactions; IGST is on inter-state transactions, collected by the Centre and shared with states
- Destination-Based Tax: Revenue goes to the state/UT where the goods or services are finally consumed.

GST 2.0: Key Reforms and Recommendations:

- The New Rate Structure:
  - Two-slab system of 5% and 18%, removing the earlier 12% and 28% rate.
  - A 40% Special De-Merit Rate applies to 'sin' goods and select luxuries, replacing the compensation cess levy.
  - The median tax rate effectively moves from 12% to 5%.
- **Dispute Resolution:** The Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT) is set to be operational for appeals before the end of September 2025.
- It has been formally launched by the government (See in the next article).
- **Registration Ease:** A simplified, optional GST registration scheme is recommended for small and low-risk businesses, guaranteeing automated registration (operational from November 1, 2025).
- Simplified registration for small suppliers using e-commerce operators (ECOs) has also been approved in principle.
- **Export Benefits:** Recommended that the place of supply for "intermediary services" will be determined as per the location of the recipient of such services (earlier it was decided by Place of supply).
- This will help Indian exporters of such services to claim export benefits.
- Intermediary services involve facilitating the supply of goods or services between two parties without altering them.

Benefits of the Recent Changes:

- **Social Protection:** Exemption of GST on insurance and essential medicines strengthens household security and access to healthcare.
- **Lower Prices, Higher Demand:** Cheaper goods and services increase household savings and stimulate consumption.
- The boost to nominal GDP growth is estimated at 20-30 basis points (bps).
- **Support for MSMEs:** Reduced rates on inputs like cement, auto parts, and handicrafts lower costs and make small businesses more competitive.
- **Ease of Living:** A two-rate structure means fewer disputes, quicker decisions, and simpler compliance.
- **Wider Tax Net:** Simpler rates encourage compliance, expanding the tax base and improving revenues.

Key Challenges in recent changes:

- **Revenue foregone:** It could lead to a revenue loss of ~ 48,000 crore (on the FY23-24 consumption base), as per the Finance Ministry.
- **Removal of input tax credit (ITC):** From goods such as healthcare products and insurance.
- Earlier, insurance companies used ITC to reduce GST on premiums by adjusting it against GST paid on inputs.
- Now, with no GST on policyholders, they can't claim this set-off, leading to higher costs.
- **Compliance Complexity and Technological Integration:** Despite rationalized tax slabs, businesses continue to face transitional challenges such as adjusting pricing structures and upgrading billing systems.
- **Issue of Inverted Duty Structure (IDS):** In some cases, the GST on raw materials is higher than on the final product. For example, bicycles are taxed at 5%, but inputs like plastic and steel are taxed at 18%.
- **Anti-Profiteering Mechanism:** National Anti-Profiteering Authority (under Section 171 of the CGST Act, 2017) was established to ensure that the reduction in rate of tax or the benefit is passed on to the recipient.

- It was dissolved and integrated with the Competition Commission of India (CCI) in 2022.
- There is a lack of NAA or a similar dedicated body, as GST 2.0 involves large rate changes, and profiteering is a tax compliance issue.
- The simplified GST structure with lower rates marks a new phase in India's tax system, aiming to boost affordability, business competitiveness, and compliance, while driving inclusive growth and economic transformation. Regular rate reviews, fiscal monitoring, and taxpayer awareness will further build trust, expand the tax base, and enhance revenue sustainability.

GSTAT and GSTAT E-Courts Portal Launched

Economy

Context

- About Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT)
- It is a second appellate authority established under Section 109 of the Central Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017.
- When a taxpayer has a dispute, the first appeal lies within the tax administration.

Purpose

- To hear appeals against orders passed by the GST Appellate Authorities and to provide taxpayers with an independent forum for justice.

Benches

- It will function through a Principal Bench in New Delhi and 31 State Benches across 45 locations in India, ensuring accessibility and nationwide reach.

Structure

- Each Bench of the GSTAT will comprise two Judicial Members, one Technical Member (Centre), and one Technical Member (State).

Significance

- Structure reflects the spirit of cooperative federalism and is designed to deliver impartial and consistent decisions.

About GSTAT e-Courts Portal:

- It is a digital platform to enable taxpayers to file appeals online, track the progress of cases, and participate in hearings through digital mode.
- **Developed by:** Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN) in collaboration with National Informatics Centre (NIC).

India's Semiconductor Ecosystem

Economy

Context

- A 2 nm chip is being designed in India for the first time after inauguration of ARM's new semiconductor design office in Bengaluru.

Why is 2nm chip significant

- Semiconductors are the fundamental components of modern electronics devices.
- The semiconductor materials are used to create microchips that store, process, and transfer information.
- Each chip contains millions of micro-scale switches called transistors, which control electrical signals much like brain cells pass messages.
- Thinner chips mean more processing capacity in less space hence lighter products.
- Smaller transistors enable greater efficiency and reduced power consumption.
- They hold strategic importance for national security, space exploration and defence applications.
- The global semiconductor industry is projected to reach USD 1 trillion by 2030. This is dominated byy Taiwan, South Korea, Japan, China and the United. Taiwan produces over 60 per cent of the world's semiconductors and nearly 90 per cent of the most advanced chips.
- With supply chains concentrated in a few geographies, India is positioning itself as a trusted and reliable partner in diversifying global manufacturing.

Major ongoing Initiatives for Semiconductor Industry in India

- **India Semiconductor Mission (ISM):** Launched in 2021 with following schemes-
- **Semiconductor Fabs Scheme:** Targets advanced nodes such as 28nm or below, as well as mature technologies and provides up to 50% fiscal support for setting up semiconductor wafer fabrication (fab) units in India.
- **Display Fabs Scheme:** Offers financial assistance of up to 50% of project cost to set up display fabrication units in India and covers technologies such as AMOLED and LCD displays.
- **Compound Semiconductors & ATMP/OSAT Scheme:** Supports compound semiconductors, silicon photonics, MEMS/sensors, discrete semiconductors.
- **Design Linked Incentive (DLI) Scheme:** Promotes design startups & MSMEs through incentives up to Rs 15 crore per company.
- **Semicon India:** It is one of eight annual SEMICON expositions worldwide that bring together executives and leading experts in the global semiconductor design and manufacturing ecosystem.
- Semicon India, 2025 (4th edition) was co-hosted by India Semiconductor Mission (ISM) in partnership with SEMI (Semiconductor Equipment and Materials International), with the theme 'Building the Next Semiconductor Powerhouse'.

Skilling & Talent Development Programs:

- **AICTE VLSI curriculum:** Courses updated to match industry requirements.
- Skilled Manpower Advanced Research and Training (SMART) Lab (NIELIT Calicut): To train 1 lakh engineers.
- **Chips to Startup(C2S) program:** For developing Specialized Manpower in Very Large-Scale Integration (VLSI)/Embedded System Design domain
- **Future Skills Program:** 20,000 engineers in Madhya Pradesh.
- Global Collaboration: India- U.S. Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET) in deepening strategic cooperation across key technology sectors, including, semiconductors.

Promotion of Design & R&D:

- 3 nm chip design centres in Noida & Bengaluru inaugurated in 2025.
- Move towards Silicon Carbide (SiC) & 3D Glass packaging for EVs, defence & aerospace.
- Vikram 32-bit processor, India's first fully indigenous 32-bit microprocessor, qualified for use in harsh launch vehicle conditions.

Challenges in Semiconductor ecosystem:

- **Limited Core IP and Indigenous Product Development:** Indigenous research and innovation remain weak, with few original patents in advanced chip technologies, AI chips, or quantum computing.
- **Geopolitical Risks:** E.g., Export controls by major powers (especially the US) may limit India's access to critical technologies and chipmaking equipment.
- **Low focus on advanced fab facilities:** Most Indian fabs/facilities target mature technology nodes (>28nm), while global market is shifting towards 3nm, 5nm, and specialized chips for AI and quantum computing.
- **Underdeveloped supply chain:** India lacks domestic sources for key materials like silicon wafers, specialty chemicals, and ultrapure gases needed for advanced chip manufacturing.
- **High Capital and R&D Costs:** Semiconductor fabs require billion-dollar investments; design costs are prohibitively expensive for many startups etc.

Other issues:

- Fragmented Collaboration and Ecosystem Creation between manufacturers, design houses, fabs, research unit
- Shortage of specialized manufacturing talent.
- Slow project execution and delays in regulatory approvals.
- Inadequate logistics and transport infrastructure.
- Environmental concerns as Semiconductor fabs consume huge water and energy.

Way Ahead:

- **Enhance Indigenous R&D and Intellectual Property Creation:** Increase public and private funding for semiconductor R&D; strengthen IP registration and enforcement for an indigenous IP base etc.
- **Leverage Geopolitical Shifts:** Position India as a secure, transparent investment destination amidst supply chain realignments.
    - E.g., India can pursue alliances like joining U.S. led “Chip 4” alliance.

- **Expand incentives and R&D for advanced nodes:** Through joint ventures and technology transfer with global leaders. E.g., 12 MoUs were announced during Semicon India 2025.
- **Improve Manufacturing Infrastructure:** Establish an initial refurbished fab for training and fabrication access; incentivize private investments with tax breaks and infrastructure support etc.
- **Enhance production of raw material:** Establish local manufacturing plants for specialty chemicals etc.; Fast-track regulatory approvals for raw material industries etc.
- **Promote collaboration:** Across Original Equipment Manufacturer (OEMs), design houses, fabs, and testing units to build a complete semiconductor value chain.
- **Build Skilled Workforce:** Update academic curricula with practical semiconductor training; set up dedicated training centers including refurbished fabs for hands-on experience.

Prime Minister Mega Integrated Textile Region and Apparel (PM Mitra) Scheme

Economy

Context

- Recently, the Prime Minister laid the foundation stone of PM MITRA Park in Dhar District in Madhya Pradesh.

About PM MITRA Scheme:

- **Launched:** By the Ministry of Textile with an outlay of Rs 4,445 crore from 2021-22 to 2027-28.
- **Objective:** To establish large-scale textile manufacturing hubs with world-class infrastructure and facilities. In 2023, 7 sites were identified across India (refer map).
- These parks will facilitate total value-chain of the textile industry including spinning, weaving, processing, garmenting, textile manufacturing, and processing & printing machinery industry at one place.
- Vision: "5F" vision (Farm → Fibre → Factory → Fashion → Foreign) to integrate and scale up the textile ecosystem.

Goals

- Attract investment of about Rs.70,000 crore
- Generate nearly 20 lakh direct and indirect jobs.
- **Eligibility and Selection Criteria for States:** Contiguous and encumbrance-free land parcel (at least 1000 acres), a conducive textile and industrial policy and traditional strengths in the textile sector.

Structure & Implementation

- Each MITRA Park is to be developed under a Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) jointly owned by the Centre (49% equity) and the respective State Government (51% equity).
- The mode is largely public-private partnership (PPP), with a master developer selected to build and maintain infrastructure.
- **Financial Incentives & Support:** Ministry of Textiles will provide financial assistance up to Rs 800 crore per park for Greenfield projects and up to Rs.500 crore per park for Brownfield projects in the form of
- **Development Capital Support (DCS):** Up to 30% of project cost
- **Greenfield Park (fresh development):** Support capped at Rs.500 crore per park.
- **Brownfield Parks (upgrading existing infrastructure):** Support up to Rs.200 crore for remaining infrastructure development.
- **Competitiveness Incentive Support (CIS):** Additional incentive of up to Rs.300 crore per park to encourage early setup and incentives for turnover etc.
- Convergence with other Government of India schemes (for power, skill development, logistics) to enhance incentives and reduce duplication.
- A small portion (up to ~10% in area) is allowed as commercial development (real estate, services) to help generate revenue for maintenance and sustainability of common assets.

- The Government of India today announced the sites for setting up of 7 PM Mega Integrated Textile Regions and Apparel (PM MITRA) Parks for the Textile industry. The Parks will come up in Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra.
- Inspired by the 5F vision of the Hon'ble Prime Minister (i.e. Farm to Fibre to Factory to Fashion to Foreign), the PM MITRA Parks are a major step forward in realising the Government's vision of making India a global hub for textile manufacturing and exports. It is expected that these parks will enhance the competitiveness of the textiles industry by helping it achieve economies of scale as well as attract global players to manufacture in India.

Why PM MITRA Scheme was launched:

- **Fragmentation & Lack of Complete Value Chains:** Many units (especially MSMEs / small firms) handle only one or two stages (e.g. spinning, or weaving, or garmenting) rather than a full integrated chain. This hinders economies of scale, slows down response times, increases logistics cost, reduces quality control, etc.
- **Infrastructure Bottlenecks:** Poor processing & finishing units, lack of eco-friendly effluent treatment, standardization (testing, quality labs), power supply, etc. affects export competitiveness.
- Incubation centres, design labs, and training hubs within the parks can drive product innovation and skilled manpower, especially for emerging areas like technical textiles.
- Centralized effluent treatment plants in the parks ensure sustainable pollution control, addressing stricter global environmental norms and buyer requirements (e.g. in Europe).
- **Obsolete Technology & Low Productivity:** Many current textile units have older machinery, under-efficient dyeing/processing, and low automation. This raises cost, reduces competitiveness against global players, such as China and Vietnam.
- With plug-and-play factories and fiscal incentives, the parks create an ecosystem to draw domestic and foreign investors, similar to how SEZs attracted electronics manufacturing.
- **Underinvestment & Poor Scale:** Existing schemes like SITP (Scheme for Integrated Textile Parks) have not achieved size and scale needed for global competitiveness.
- **Multiplier Effect:** As a labour-intensive and export-oriented sector, integrated parks can generate large-scale jobs, raise rural incomes, and strengthen raw material linkages, creating broad economic impact.
- **Conclusion**: The PM MITRA Scheme seeks to transform India's textile sector into a globally competitive hub by integrating the entire value chain, reducing logistics costs, and upgrading technology. With strong PPP support, fiscal incentives, and job potential, it can boost investment, strengthen exports, and promote sustainable, inclusive growth, advancing the 5F vision.

National Logistics Policy, 2022

Economy

Context

- Union Ministry of Commerce and Industry commemorated third anniversary of the National Logistics Policy (NLP), 2022.

About National Logistics Policy (NLP), 2022:

- **Genesis:** It was launched to complement the PM Gati Shakti National Master Plan (PMGS-NMP).
- **Vision:** To develop a technologically enabled, integrated, cost-efficient, resilient, sustainable and trusted logistics ecosystem for accelerated and inclusive growth.
- NLP addresses the soft infrastructure and logistics sector development aspect such as process reforms, improvement in logistics services, digitization, human resource development and skilling.
- While, PMGS-NMP addresses integrated development of the fixed infrastructure and network planning.

Targets:

- Reduce cost of logistics in India to be comparable to global benchmarks by 2030.
- Improve the Logistics Performance Index ranking: Endeavour is to be among top 25 countries by 2030.
- Create data driven decision support mechanism for an efficient logistics ecosystem.
- Implementation through Comprehensive Logistics Action Plan (CLAP): It divided into 8 key action areas.

Key achievements under the National Logistics Policy (2022-2025):

- Logistics Ease Across Different States (LEADS)
- **Index:** Played a crucial role in promoting competitive federalism among states and supporting India's rise in the World Bank's Logistics Performance Index 2023.
- LEADS Index assesses logistics performance across States and Uts.
- LEADS 2025 introduces performance assessment of 5–7 key corridors (journey time, truck speed, waiting periods) and API-based evaluation of section-wise speeds on major road corridors.
- **Unified Logistics Interface Platform (ULIP):** It has facilitated secure API integration across more than 30 digital systems, enabling over 160 crore digital transactions as of August 2025.
- ULIP is a digital platform that brings together data from various logistics-related ministries and departments on a single interface.

- **Improved Digital Integration:** Ease of Logistics Services (E-Logs) portal has onboarded 35+ logistics and industry associations, and has successfully resolved 100 out of 140 issues submitted by stakeholders.
- **Logistics at regional level:** 27 States and Union Territories have formulated State Logistics Policies, 19 States have granted industry status to logistics, enabling tax benefits and incentives.

Other initiatives to Improve Logistics Sector in India:
- **Grant of Infrastructure status:** It has enabled access to cheaper, long-term funding, similar to roads and railways, further solidifying its significant role in the growth story of India.
- **Integrated State and City Logistics Plans:** Under the SMILE programme in collaboration with the Asian Development Bank (ADB).
- **Strengthening Multimodal and Integrated Logistics Ecosystem (SMILE) Program** aims to improve India's logistics infrastructure, reducing logistics costs, and increasing efficiency.
- **Logistics Data Bank (LDB) 2.0:** It enables enhanced real-time tracking of container movements, introducing export container tracking on high seas along with multi-modal shipment visibility.
- **Others:** Multi-modal Logistics Park under Bharatmala Pariyojana, Unified Logistics Interface Platform, Dedicated Freight Corridors, Gati Shakti Vishwavidyalaya, introduction of e-Way bills, etc.

Challenges still persist related to Logistics sector:
- **Modal imbalance:** Railways and road transport's modal share of freight traffic is 18% and 71%, respectively. (NITI Aayog, 2021)
- **Dominance of unorganized sector:** Highly fragmented logistics industry with domination of several small and unorganized players (~90%). (KPMG, 2022)
- **Digital literacy:** Digital adoption among smaller logistics firms and independent operators remains uneven, especially outside urban centres.
- **Regulatory complexity:** Overlapping state and Union regulations, inconsistent implementation of GST for logistics, and varied licensing norms create operational uncertainties for both digital startups and established companies.

Way Forward:
- **Promote efficient modal mix:** Expedition of the completion of Dedicated Freight Corridors (DFCs), promoting Inland Waterways, promoting RORO (Roll-On/Roll-Off) service, etc., can reduce logistics cost and improve efficiency.
- **Adaptation to evolving formats:** With the rise of e-Commerce, logistics and warehouse companies can strategies and manage their operations as per the evolving formats such as omnichannel retail, quick commerce and other models such as Buy Online, Pick up in store (BOPIS).
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** Collaborations between startups like Rivigo and small fleet operators to provide affordable, plug-and-play digital solutions.
  - E.g., Rivigo's AI algorithms suggest optimal routes, reducing travel distance, fuel consumption, and delivery costs.
- **Technological integration:** Process-oriented automation systems that leverages scanners, barcodes, to streamline the data collection and integration process, on-demand warehousing through app-based tools, etc.

Conclusion:
- As India aspires to become a global manufacturing hub and achieve its sustainability goals, logistics will play the role in reducing costs, enhancing competitiveness, and fostering inclusive development. A forward-looking, innovation-driven and collaborative approach can turn India's logistics sector into not just a facilitator of commerce, but a strategic driver of national progress.

SARFAESI ACT, 2002

Economy

Context
- Recently, the Supreme Court in a judgement highlighted anomaly in the SARAFESI Act, 2002 and SARFAESI Rules 2002.

Key Observation of Supreme Court:
- SC highlighted a contradiction between Section 13(8) of the SARFAESI Act, 2002 and Rules 8 & 9 of the SARFAESI Rules, 2002.

- **Contradiction:**
  - **Section 13(8) (post-2016 amendment):** Borrower loses their statutory right to pay back the debt in full and recover the secured asset, once the auction notice is published.
  - **Rules 8 & 9:** Indicate borrowers still have a window to redeem even after publication, up until the auction date.
- **Court's Interpretation:**
  - "Publication of notice" under Section 13(8) must be read in line with the procedural steps under the Rules.
  - Borrower's right to redeem extinguish only after proper publication (newspaper, personal service, email, etc.) of auction notice.
  - Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest (SARFAESI) Act, 2002
- **Objectives:**
  - Recovering the financial institutions' and banks' non-performing assets (NPAs) in a timely and effective manner.
  - Cooperative Banks are also covered under it.
  - Allows financial organisations and banks to sell residential and commercial assets at auction if a borrower defaults on his or her debt.

Key Features of the Act:
- NPA Classification and Notices: Loans are classified as NPAs per RBI guidelines, with a mandatory 60-day demand notice to borrowers before action to recover the asset.
- **Key Methods of Recovery:**
  - **Securitisation:** Involves transactions where risk of recovery in stressed assets is distributed, among investors, by repackaging such assets into tradable securities with different risk profiles.
  - **Asset reconstruction:** Act provides for the creation of the Asset Reconstruction Companies (ARCs), registered and regulated by RBI.
- ARC is a financial institution that buys the Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) or bad assets from banks and financial institutions so that the latter can clean up their balance sheets.
- **Court-Free Enforcement:** Secured creditors like banks and financial institutions, can take possession and sell assets except for agricultural land under Section 13 without judicial approval.
- **Central Database:** Established Central Registry for registration of transaction of securitisation and reconstruction of financial assets.
- **Borrower Rights:** Borrowers can approach the Debt Recovery Tribunal (DRT) to rectify their grievances against the creditor or authorised officer.
  - DRT are established under the Recovery of Debts and Bankruptcy Act, 1993.
- **Working:**
  - After the declaration of the account or asset as NPA, banks or financial institutions direct defaulting borrowers to discharge their liabilities within a 60 days period.
  - When failed to comply with the notice, then the bank or financial institution takes action.

Key Issues/challenges associated with the SARFAESI Act:
- **Exclusion of Certain Borrowers:** The Act is not applicable on loans under 1 lakh and in cases where 80% of the loan has already been repaid.
- **Procedural and judicial delays:** Borrowers often approach Debt Recovery Tribunals (DRTs) to seek a stay on possession proceedings.
- **Complexities in Asset Recovery:** Lenders face challenges in identifying and liquidating collateral, e.g. transfer of assets to third parties.
- **Sub-optimal performance of the ARCs:** Banks and FIs could recover only about 14.29% of the amount owed by borrowers in stressed assets sold to ARCs from FY04 to FY13.
- **Socio-Economic Impact:** Forced asset dispossessions can lead to loss of livelihoods, increased indebtedness, and social instability, highlighting the need for a balanced recovery framework.
- **Other:** Infringement of Borrowers' Rights (Misusing of powers by creditors), disputes in valuation of the assets, exclusion of unsecured creditors etc.

Way Forward:

- **Harmonise Law and Rules:** SC has urged the Ministry of Finance to make necessary changes to resolve anomaly issues.
- **Harmonization with IBC:** The SARFAESI Act should be harmonized with the IBC to ensure a cohesive and comprehensive framework for the resolution of stressed assets.
- Technological Integration: Leverage AI and data analytics for asset valuation and monitoring.
- **Specialized Debt Recovery Tribunals (DRTs):** With enhanced operational capacities to expedite the resolution of disputes.
- **International Best Practices:** E.g. United Kingdom's Insolvency Act incorporates debtor protection measures alongside creditor rights, ensuring that recovery does not disproportionately harm individuals/small businesses.

Conclusion:

- The Supreme Court's ruling clarifies redemption rights and reinforces purchaser protections under SARFAESI, but inconsistencies between the Act and its Rules continue to create uncertainty. Streamlining these provisions, strengthening institutional mechanisms like DRTs and ARCs, etc. is essential to ensure quicker resolution of NPAs.

Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana

Economy

Context

- Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) completed 5 years of its launch.

About PMMSY:

- **Genesis:** Launched in 2010 by Department of Fisheries, under the Union Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying.
- **Objective:** To address the critical gaps in fish production and productivity, quality, technology, post-harvest infrastructure and marketing.
- **Duration:** It is implemented in all States and UTs for a period of five years from FY 2020-21 to FY 2024-25 (extended up to FY 2025-26).
- **Nodal Agency:** National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB) for implementing the training, awareness and capacity-building programmes.
- **Structure and Components:** It is an umbrella scheme with two separate components as below:
- **Central Sector Scheme (CS):** Fully funded and implemented by Central Government.
- **Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS):** Partially supported by the Central Government and implemented by the states.
    - Enhancement of Production and Productivity.
    - Infrastructure and Post-harvest Management.
    - Fisheries Management and Regulatory Framework.

Important Key Initiatives under PMMSY:

- **Empowering Women in Fisheries:** By providing up to 60% of total project cost as financial assistance (up to Rs 1.5 crore/project) under beneficiary-oriented activities and the Entrepreneur Model.
- **Building Climate Resilience:** Department of Fisheries has identified 100 coastal fishermen villages as Climate Resilient Coastal Fishermen Villages (CRCFV).
- **Boosting Productivity through Biofloc Technology:** It is a sustainable aquaculture method that recycles nutrients in water using beneficial microbes.
- Strengthening Post-Harvest and Marketing
- **Ecosystems:** 2,195 fisheries cooperatives as Fish Farmers Producer Organizations (FFPOs) have been supported with a project outlay of Rs 544.85 crore.
- **Strengthening Value Chains and Resilience:** Pradhan Mantri Matsya Kisan Samridhi Sah-Yojana (PMMKSSY), a Central Sector Sub-scheme under PMMSY launched in 2024 for four years.

Challenges persist in Fisheries Sector:

- **Governance issues:** Unlike Marine fisheries (fisheries beyond territorial waters), inland fisheries are a State subject resulting in variations in legislations and policies across States and gets neglected, despite their key contributions in livelihoods and nutritional security.

- **Global challenges:** Transport disruptions and shipping route instability due to global conflicts are pressuring Indian seafood exporters to maintain competitiveness against China, Vietnam, Indonesia and Ecuador.
- **Disease management:** e.g., shrimp farming industry in Andhra Pradesh is facing a serious threat from Enterocytozoon hepatopenaei (EHP), a microsporidian parasite.
- During FY 2024-25, frozen shrimp remained the major export item accounting for a share of 40.19% in quantity and 66.12% in value of total seafood export basket.
- Environmental damage from disasters / accidents: e.g., MSC Elsa-3 shipwreck off Kochi coast contaminated water & sediments, affecting plankton, benthos, fish eggs and larvae, and higher marine life.

Way Forward:
- Promote Research-farmer partnership: E.g., ICAR-CIBA organized a training programme on effective management of shrimp diseases such as Hepatopancreatic Microsporidiosis (HPM).
- **Promote sustainability in global market:** Centre has initiated steps to secure global eco-labelling tag for Lakshadweep tuna fisheries using traditional fishing methods. Lakshadweep tuna can fetch premium prices, benefiting artisanal fishers.
- Parliamentary Standing Committee on Agriculture recommended to:
- Establish the Indian Council for Fishery and Aquaculture Research (ICFAR) to facilitate focussed and in-depth research, but also address the challenges faced by the fishery sector.
- Enforce Minimum Legal Mesh Size (MLS) regulations uniformly and ban destructive fishing methods.
- To ensure the sustainable use and conservation of fisheries while balancing economic, social, and environmental priorities, it is recommended to focus on capacity building and adopt a participatory management approach supported by interdisciplinary and inter-institutional cooperation and collaboration.

Banking & Finance

Economy

Account Aggregator (AA) Framework
- Completed four years, enabling secure, consent-based sharing of financial data across 2.2 billion accounts for 112 million users. Operates as RBI-regulated NBFCs, acting only as data intermediaries. Recognized as part of India's Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI).

e-Rupee (CBDC)
- Expansion discussed alongside UPI growth and GST reforms. Potential benefits include enhanced financial inclusion (wallets without bank accounts), improved tax compliance via blockchain traceability, cheaper remittances, and targeted subsidy delivery.

Foreign Capital Inflows
- Despite robust GDP growth, net capital inflows were weak in FY 2024-25. Net FDI plummeted to $0.4 billion, FPIs sold $15 billion in equities, though government bonds attracted $19 billion. Reasons include IPO exits, weak corporate earnings, tariff uncertainty, and high valuations. Weak inflows pressure the Balance of Payments (BoP), reserves, and currency.

Development & Growth

Economy

- **State Public Debt (CAG Report):** Combined state debt tripled from 2013-14 to 2022-23, reaching Rs 59.60 lakh crore (22.17% of GDP). Debt-to-GSDP ratio rose to 22.96%. 11 states breached the 'Golden Rule' by using borrowings for current expenditure.
- **Disposable Income Outlook:** Chief Economic Advisor projected an increase in household disposable income in 2025, driven by disinflation, tax relief (Budget 2025-26), expected GST simplification, and strong rural demand outpacing urban demand.
- **Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) Ranking (EY Report):** India projected to become the world's second-largest economy in PPP terms by 2038 (USD 34.2 trillion) and third-largest by Market Exchange Rate (MER) by 2028. India's strengths include a youthful population and high savings rates.
- **Transforming India into a Product Nation:** Emphasis on manufacturing high-value, IP-driven goods for strategic leverage, value capture, high-skill job creation, and export resilience. Challenges include design deficits, high logistics costs (8-9% of GDP), non-compliance with standards, and skill gaps. Initiatives include PLI, Semicon India, National Missions (Quantum, AI), and AICTE efforts.

Employment & Labour Market

Vocational Education and Training (VET)

- Need emphasized for productivity enhancement. India has 14,000 ITIs but only 48% seat utilization. Only 3.8% of the workforce is formally trained. Challenges include employment gaps, faculty shortages, outdated curricula, lack of school integration, and social stigma. Policy interventions include PMKVY, NAPS, Skill Hubs, ITI upgrades, SANKALP, and STRIVE.

Formalisation Trends (Quess Corp Report)

- Shift towards formal employment noted, though ~85% remain informal. Formal workforce is 13.1%. EPFO saw record net new subscribers (139.78 lakh) in FY25, with >61% under age 29. Female LFPR rose to 41.7%. Government initiatives supporting formalisation include Make in India, ELI Scheme, Labour Codes, PLI Schemes, Udyam Assist Portal, Skill India, Shram Suvidha Portal, and GST reduction for staffing.

Gig Economy

- Projected to grow to 23.5 million workers by 2029-30. Offers flexibility but challenges include precarious livelihoods, algorithmic management, weak legal safeguards, and social erosion. Need for social security, fair frameworks, and policy alignment with SDG 8 highlighted.

Exports & Trade

Make in India

- 11th anniversary commemorated. Launched in 2014 to make India a global design and manufacturing hub. Aims for 12-14% industrial growth, 100 million jobs, and 25% manufacturing share in GDP by 2025. Supported by PLI, GatiShakti, India Semiconductor Mission, NLP etc.

US Tariff Hike Impact

- US raised tariffs to 50% on several Indian goods, potentially cutting exports to the US by 43% in FY26. MSMEs (~45% of exports), textiles/apparel (RMG tariffs up to 61%), diamonds/jewellery (tariffs up to 52.1%), and seafood (shrimp tariffs up to 60%) are heavily impacted. GDP growth may slip. Mitigation involves support schemes, market diversification (EU, Gulf, East Asia), and digital push.

Smartphone Exports

- Crossed Rs 1 trillion in Apr-Aug FY26 (55% YoY growth). India became 2nd largest mobile producer by FY25. Exports grew rapidly, driven by PLI schemes, China+1 strategy (Apple's shift), supportive policies (100% FDI), and domestic market saturation. Domestic value addition improved to 19% in FY25.

De-Dollarisation

- Gradual diversification away from the US dollar in global reserves noted. Dollar's share fell to 57.7% (2025) from 65.5% (2016). Alternatives like Euro, Yen, Renminbi rising; central banks increasing gold shares (India to 13.1%, China to 6.7%). Drivers include sanctions risks, US fiscal strains, trade shifts, and rising gold preference.

Industry & Manufacturing

India Entering 4th Industrial Revolution (Industry 4.0)

- Marked by indigenous semiconductor chip launch (Vikram). Industry 4.0 involves fusion of physical, digital, biological domains driven by AI, IoT, robotics. Semiconductors are key. India has advantages (youth, market scale, design strength, startups) but faces constraints (infra gaps like fabs, skill deficits, import dependence). Government interventions include ISM, PLI, Digital India, Skill Development, Quantum Mission, AIM.

India's First Indigenous Chip 'Vikram'

- Developed by ISRO, unveiled at Semicon India 2025. A 32-bit processor qualified for launch vehicles, marking progress in self-reliance. Supported by India Semiconductor Mission (2021), PLI, and DLI schemes.

Industry 5.0

- India focusing on human-machine collaboration. Requires upskilling in AI, robotics, data analytics, alongside

creativity and critical thinking. AICTE initiatives focus on AI training. Way forward involves smart manufacturing, regional innovation hubs, ethical governance, and sustainable exports.

Involution in China's EV Sector

Economy

- China facing a cycle of price wars eroding profits despite rising EV output. Driven by trade barriers (US/EU tariffs) and domestic oversupply. Creates an opportunity for India to attract investment and expand domestic EV manufacturing (FAME, PLI).
- PLI for White Goods: Application window reopened. White goods include large appliances like refrigerators, ACs. The PLI scheme (launched 2020) aims to boost domestic manufacturing across 14 sectors. The White Goods PLI (started 2021) attracted investment and created jobs, enabling domestic component manufacturing.

Inflation & Monetary Policy

Economy

- **Inflation Targeting Framework:** RBI discussion paper reviewing the framework (adopted 2016, next review 2026). India targets 4% headline CPI inflation within a 2-6% band. Retail inflation fell to 1.55% (July 2025), core inflation eased to 4.1%. Food inflation remains volatile.

Securities Market

Economy

- **SEBI EODB Measures:** Reforms approved to ease foreign investment and streamline market access.
- **SWAFAT-FI:** Single window access for trusted foreign investors (Sovereign funds, Public Retail Funds).
- **India Market Access Portal:** Digital single-window for FPI registration/compliance.
- **Asset Reclassification:** REITs as "equity," InvITs as "hybrid" for mutual fund investment.
- **Reduced IPO Offer Size:** Minimum public offer reduced for large-cap firms for easier listing.
- **New AIF Category:** For accredited investors with lighter compliance.
- **Reduced Mutual Fund Exit Load:** Maximum fee lowered from 5% to 3%.

Taxation (GST)

Economy

- **GST Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT):** Formally launched, hearings from Dec 2025. Quasi-judicial body under CGST Act, 2017 to settle disputes. Acts as second-tier forum and first common body for Centre-State disputes. Principal Bench (Delhi) + 31 State Benches. E-Courts portal launched for online filings.
- **GST Exemption on Insurance:** GoM proposed scrapping 18% GST on life insurance premiums. Concerns raised about blocked Input Tax Credit (ITC) for insurers, potentially raising base premiums. Government later removed GST on individual health and term insurance premiums, but not group plans. This blocks ITC, potentially pressuring insurer margins.
- **New GST Rates for Agriculture:** Rationalised to mostly 0% or 5%. Farm equipment (tractors, etc.) and bio-inputs at 5%. Aims to lower costs, curb adulteration (dairy), reduce complexity. Faster (90%) provisional export refunds mandated.
- **Next Generation GST Reforms:** Approved at 56th Council meeting. Key features include:
- **Two core slabs (5%, 18%) + 40% sin/luxury rate**.
- GSTAT established.
- Export duty inversion corrected; intermediary services exempted.
- Automated refunds (90% provisional).
- Exemptions for essentials, medicines, education, insurance.
- Reduced rates for farm inputs, RE devices, labour-intensive sectors.
- Expected to boost consumption/GDP, reduce inflation, cut litigation, but may cause fiscal shortfalls initially.
- **Pink Tax:** NCDRC ruled against gender-based price discrimination. Pink tax refers to women paying more for similar products/services due to gendered branding/marketing, not an official tax. Widens economic gender gap.
- **Waiver of Cotton Import Duty:** CBIC waived 11% duty to mitigate US tariff impact on the textile sector, stabilise prices, and boost competitiveness. India's textile exports to US had dropped. Cotton supports ~35 million jobs.

Urbanization & Infrastructure

Economy

- **Building Climate-Resilient Cities:** Need highlighted as urban population grows. Cities face risks like flooding, extreme heat. Challenges include vulnerable housing, transport risks, weak municipal services, and governance/finance gaps. Way forward includes smart zoning, green infra, resilient transport, and climate finance.
- **India-ADB Partnership (Assam Urban Development):** Loan agreement signed to improve urban liveability and climate resilience in Assam. ADB is a regional development bank (HQ: Manila) with 69 members; India is a founding member.

Polymetallic Sulphides

Economy

Context

- India has signed a 15-year contract to explore polymetallic sulphides (PMS) with ISA in Carlsberg Ridge in Indian Ocean. It is India's third exploration contract with International Seabed Authority (ISA), and second for PMS.
- Previous exploration contracts are Polymetallic Nodules in the Central Indian Ocean Basin and PMS in the Indian Ocean Ridge.
- Polymetallic nodules, also called manganese nodules, are rock concretions formed of concentric layers of iron and manganese hydroxides around a core, such as a shark tooth or shell.
- This is the first licence granted globally for exploring polymetallic sulphur nodules in the Carlsberg Ridge.
- The Carlsberg Ridge is a 3,00,000 sq km area in the Indian Ocean, specifically in the Arabian Sea, northwest Indian Ocean.
- It forms the boundary between the Indian and Arabian tectonic plates, extending from near Rodrigues Island to the Owen fracture zone.
- Previously, India has also applied for the Afanasy-Nikitin Sea (ANS) mount which is yet to be approved.
- ANS is located in the Central Indian Ocean and the territory has been claimed by Sri Lanka for exploration rights.

About Polymetallic sulphides (PMS):

- These deposits are rich sources of metals such as copper, zinc, gold, and silver, found on the ocean floor. These deposits occur in regions where hot, mineral-rich fluids from the Earth's mantle mixed with cold Ocean waters, leading to the precipitation of metal sulphides.

Crops

Agriculture

- Bharat International Rice Conference (BIRC) 2025:
- To be held in New Delhi, recognized as the world's largest rice-focused event.
- Aims to showcase India's rice diversity, strengthen global trade links (B2B & B2G), and support India's goal of doubling agri-exports. India is the world's largest rice exporter, contributing 40 per cent of global trade.

India's Tea Industry

Agriculture

- India is the second-largest global producer and consumer of tea.
- Opportunities exist in improving quality for better export value, expanding to new markets (South America, Africa), and boosting domestic consumption.
- Challenges include lower export revenue per kg compared to competitors, over-reliance on traditional markets, and low per capita consumption (840g/year vs. Turkey's 3kg/year).
- The Tea Board of India is a statutory body under the Ministry of Commerce & Industry.

Pulses (NITI Aayog Roadmap)

Agriculture

- India is the world's largest producer, consumer, and importer of pulses.
- Significant progress made: Output increased 59.4% (2015-16 to 2022-23), yield improved by 38%, and import dependency decreased from 29% to 10.4%.

Mission Atmanirbharta

- A 6-year program focusing on pigeonpea (tur), black gram (urad), and lentil (masoor).
- Recommendations include promoting crop clustering, deploying region-specific tech, ensuring seed security via Farmer-Producer Organisations (FPOs), and focusing on 111 high-potential districts.

Opium Cultivation

Agriculture

- The 2025-26 licensing policy will include new cultivators, increasing licenses by 23.5%.
- Cultivation is legally permitted only in notified areas of MP, Rajasthan, and UP under the NDPS Act, 1985.
- India is the only country globally permitted by the UN (1961 Convention) to produce gum opium legally for alkaloids (morphine, codeine) used in medicine.
- Regulation is handled by the Central Bureau of Narcotics (CBN), Gwalior.

Wheat Stock Limits

Agriculture

- The government reduced stock limits for traders (to 2,000 MT) and retailers (to 8 MT) to curb hoarding, stabilize prices before festivals, and ensure PDS supply. India is the world's second-largest wheat producer.

Dairy Sector

Agriculture

Status

- India remains the world's largest milk producer (nearly 25% of global output). The sector contributes ~3.5% to India's GDP and supports ~80 million rural households.

Challenges

- Low average yield per cow, rising labour costs, fodder shortages, high costs of automation, climate stress (heat, diseases like lumpy skin), and dominance of smallholder's limit scale economies.

Initiatives & Way Forward

Agriculture

- Inauguration of a Sex Sorted Semen Facility in Purnea, Bihar, under the Rashtriya Gokul Mission (RGM) using indigenous 'Gausort' technology to benefit small farmers.
- Focus on genetic upgrades (AI, IVF, sex-sorted semen via RGM), affordable mechanisation, strengthening animal health programs (NADCP), and supporting FPOs/producer companies.

Fisheries

Agriculture

Lakshadweep Tuna

- Government advocating for global eco-labelling for Lakshadweep's sustainable pole-and-line tuna fisheries to boost exports and fisher incomes. Eco-labels certify environmental sustainability.

Blue Ports

- India signed a Technical Cooperation Programme with the FAO to strengthen Blue Port infrastructure, starting with pilot projects in Vanakbara (Diu) and Jakhau (Gujarat). Blue Ports are sustainable, tech-advanced fishing harbours supporting the Blue Economy.

Sustainability & Policy

Agriculture

Food Diversification

- FAO data shows improvement, but 40.4% of Indians still couldn't afford a healthy diet in 2024. Diversification beyond cereals is needed to combat malnutrition (35.5% stunting), ensure farmer income stability, create jobs, and enhance climate resilience (nearly 30% land degraded). Supports SDG 2 (Zero Hunger).

Shifting Monsoon Patterns

- 2025 saw monsoon variability (early onset, premature retreat, excess rain). This impacts reservoir levels, crop cycles (benefits Rabi but frost risk), food security (potential high wheat output but harvest rain risk), and farm incomes. Requires scaling weather advisory services, crop insurance, water management, and climate-resilient practices.

National Agriculture Conference (Rabi Campaign 2025)

- Focused on strategies for the 2025-26 Rabi season with the theme "One Nation, One Agriculture, One Team". Set a national food grain target of 362.50 million tonnes. Launched Viksit Krishi Sankalp Abhiyan for the "Lab to Land" vision.

Agri-Economy

Agriculture

- GST Rates: The GST Council rationalized rates for the agriculture sector to predominantly 0% or 5%. Farm equipment (tractors, etc.) and bio-inputs are now at 5%. Dairy products are mostly exempt or at 5%. Aims to lower input costs, reduce complexity, and curb adulteration. Faster provisional (90%) GST refunds for exporters mandated.This is known as notification of variety.

Anganwadis within Primary Schools

Social Issues, Health, and Education

Context

- Centre issued guidelines to co-locate anganwadis with primary schools (joint move by MoWCD & MoE).
- Supports NEP 2020 mandate (entry to Class 1 at age 6). Benefits 11 crore children <6 yrs & mothers. Strengthens Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE).

Gender Imbalance in IITs

Social Issues, Health, and Education

Context

- 2018 supernumerary quota halted decline but didn't significantly improve balance. Female enrolment rose to 19-21% but proportion stayed around 20%.

Challenges

- Infra gap (hostels, washrooms), Psychological barriers (stress, isolation), Cultural barriers (few girls opt for PCM/JEE).

Way Forward

- Pedagogy reform, Role models, Mentoring schemes (Vigyan Jyoti, UDAAN), STEM exposure for girls.

Himachal Pradesh Declared "Fully Literate" State

Social Issues, Health, and Education

Context

- HP becomes 5th fully literate region (after Ladakh, Goa, Mizoram, Tripura). Defined as 95%+ adult literacy (15+) under ULLAS Scheme.

Literacy in India

- Census Definition (7+ read/write); Functional literacy (incl digital/financial skills); NIPUN Bharat (Grade 3 by 2027); NEP 2020 (100% youth/adult by 2030). Trends: Overall 80.9% (up from 74.04% in 2011); Gender gap persists (Male 87.2%, Female 74.6%); Regional divide (Urban 88.9%, Rural 77.5%).

ULLAS Scheme

- Centrally sponsored (MoE); For adults 15+ lacking formal education; Aims for universal literacy by 2030; 5 components (Foundational literacy, Life skills etc); Uses volunteers (Kartavya Bodh); DIKSHA portal for e-content; FLNAT for assessment.

India's Declining Academic Freedoms

Social Issues, Health, and Education

Context

- FIRs/notices against researchers/institutions (Lokniti, CSDS) highlight decline. India ranks in bottom 20% of 2024 Academic Freedom Index.

Issues

- Disproportionate response to errors; Coordinated pressure (funding cuts, probes); Silencing dissent undermines governance/trust.

NIRF Rankings 2025 / Under Scrutiny

Social Issues, Health, and Education

Context

- MoE released 10th edition; new SDG-based sustainability category added. NIRF est. 2015.

Toppers

- Overall/Engineering (IIT Madras), Management (IIM Ahmedabad), University (IISc Bengaluru), Colleges (Hindu College, Delhi), Medical (AIIMS Delhi).

Scrutiny

- Criticism for manipulation/lack of transparency (cases from Andhra Uni, IIM Mumbai); Methodology issues (self-reported data prone to misuse). Recommendations: Random audits, mandatory data disclosure, open-access raw data.

Personalised Adaptive Learning (PAL)

Social Issues, Health, and Education

Context

- Study in Andhra Pradesh (by Michael Kremer) found PAL doubled learning rates.

About PAL

- Software-based individualised learning based on student needs/abilities. Often gamified. Based on Bloom's "mastery learning". Helps bridge learning gaps (ASER 2024 data cited).

Study Findings

- Significant learning gains (1.9 yrs extra schooling); Girls gained more (used software longer); Weaker students gained most.

UDISE+ 2024-25 Report

Social Issues, Health, and Education

Context

- MoE released report on school education.

Highlights

- Teacher strength crossed 1 crore (up 6.7%); Pupil-Teacher Ratio improved; Dropout rates declined, retention rose; Gross Enrolment Ratio increased; Female teachers 54.2%, girls' enrolment 48.3%; Near universal access to drinking water, improved digital infra.

Universal Access to Research Knowledge

Social Issues, Health, and Education

Context

- Delhi HC order to block Sci-Hub highlights copyright vs access dilemma.

State of Publishing

- High costs for institutions (₹1500 cr/yr); High publisher profits (30-35%); Researchers pay fees ($17M); ~60% use shadow repositories; ~Half global articles open access.

Arguments for Access

- Public funding justification, Equity, Innovation catalyst, No author royalties, Checks monopoly.

Constraints

- Copyright mandate, Quality assurance risk, financial viability of publishers, Piracy risk, Disruption.

Way Forward

- Rights retention policies, Flexible models (pay-per-article), Indigenous publishing, Open Access funding, Collaboration.
- **One Nation One Subscription (ONOS):** Central Sector Scheme (MoE) for unified journal access via INFLIBNET portal; Monitored by ANRF.

AdFalciVax Malaria Vaccine

Social Issues, Health, and Education

Context

- ICMR seeks partners to commercialise India's first indigenous multi-stage malaria vaccine. Targets P. falciparum. Uses food-grade bacterium L. lactis. Dual objective (prevent human infection, block mosquito transmission). Thermally stable. Recombinant chimeric structure.

Malaria in India

- 1.4% global cases
- 0.9% deaths
- Case decline (11.69L 2015 -> 2.27L 2023)
- Exited WHO High Burden list 2024.

Enteromix mRNA Cancer Vaccine

Social Issues, Health, and Education

Context

- Russian scientists report mRNA vaccine with 100% trial efficacy. Uses modified mRNA to produce tumour-specific antigens. Uses non-pathogenic viruses to destroy cells/activate immunity. Initially targets colorectal cancer.

mRNA Vaccines

- Use mRNA to instruct cells to produce viral antigens; Train immunity without pathogen exposure; Rapid design, scalable, precise targeting; Limitations: Cold-chain, durability, long-term safety data. GEMCOVAC-19 was India's first mRNA vaccine.

Mapping India's Cancer Burden

Social Issues, Health, and Education

Context

- Analysis reports 15.6L cases, 8.74L deaths (2024). Registries cover only 10-18% population. Coordinated by ICMR-NCDIR.

Trends

- Women majority cases (51.1%), lower deaths (45%). Breast/cervical = 40% female cases. Lung/gastric drive male mortality. Oral cancer most common in men. Breast cancer most common overall. NE states highest incidence. Lifestyle cancers rising, infection-linked declining. Lifetime risk 11% (below global ~20%).

Artificial Sweeteners & Cognitive Decline

Social Issues, Health, and Education

Context

- Study links frequent intake to accelerated cognitive deterioration. Found in diet sodas, sugar-free products etc. Aspartame "possibly carcinogenic" (WHO 2023); Erythritol linked to blood clotting.

GLP-1 Drugs Added to WHO Essential Medicines List

Social Issues, Health, and Education

Context

- Added for treating type-2 diabetes/related conditions. Diabetes/obesity affect 800M+; High prices limit access. Essential medicines address priority needs, chosen for safety/efficacy/affordability.

GLP-1 Drugs

- Receptor agonists lower blood sugar, support weight loss by mimicking GLP-1 hormone. Benefit adults with diabetes (esp with obesity/heart/kidney issues).
- **Essential Medicines in India:** Listed in DPCO 2013 Schedule I, price controlled by NPPA. India has own National List (NLEM), updated 2022. Distributed via Jan Aushadhi.

Gut-Brain Impact of Antibiotics

Social Issues, Health, and Education

Context

- India's antibiotic overuse linked to mental health burden via gut microbiome disruption. India among largest consumers; ~50% unapproved formulations (Lancet 2022) worsening AMR. Overuse alters microbiota, disturbs neurotransmitters, linked to depression/anxiety.

Health Insurance Schemes in India

Social Issues, Health, and Education

Context

- PMJAY & State schemes highlight insurance-led challenges for Universal Health Coverage (UHC).

Trends

- Cover ~80% citizens; Combined outlay Rs 28k cr (FY24); Low utilisation (only 35% used benefits); Public hospitals 51% empanelled, get 1/3rd payouts.

Significance

- Inclusive coverage, System relief, infra growth, Poverty reduction, social legitimacy.
- **Challenges:** Private bias (funds flow to private), Hospitalisation skew (neglects primary care), Payment delays, Unequal treatment, Fraud cases.
- **Reforms:** Raise public spending (to 2.5% GDP); Gatekeeping (Thailand model); Non-profit hospital funding (Canada model); Timely payments (NHA); Fraud control (AI) .

India's Growing Obesity Epidemic

Social Issues, Health, and Education

Context

- UNICEF report (based on NFHS) shows sharp rise in child/adolescent obesity. India projected 11% global burden by 2030.

Findings

- Overweight children <5 doubled (2006-21); 36% <5 stunted; 57% women anaemic; Poor maternal diet passes deficits.
- **Causes:** Ultra-processed food consumption; Sedentary lifestyles; Cultural norms; Cheap, calorie-dense diets for poor.

Initiatives

- Fit India, Eat Right India, POSHAN Abhiyaan 2.0. Recommendations: Recognise undernutrition & obesity; Focus beyond calories; Invest in fitness infra; Check marketing to children; Extend interventions to all age groups.

Out-of-Pocket Expenditure (OOPE) in India

Social Issues, Health, and Education

Context

- OOPE at 39.4% of Total Health Expenditure (THE) drives impoverishment, hinders UHC. NHA defines as direct household payments.

Data

- OOPE fell from 62.6% (2014-15) to 39.4% (2021-22); Govt health exp increased to 41.4% THE (2019-20); Still nearly double global average (18-20%).

Factors

- Limited public funding (~2% GDP vs WHO 5%); Private reliance (~70% outpatient, 60% inpatient); Expensive medications (~60% outpatient OOPE); Insurance gap ("missing middle" ~40 cr); Weak PHCs.

Consequences

- Catastrophic spending (17% households >10% income); Poverty induction (~55M/yr); Debt cycle; Care denial; Inequality expansion.

Way Forward

- Integrated data (NSS, CES, CMIE); Increase public spending (2.5% GDP target); Holistic insurance (incl outpatient); PHC empowerment (free meds/diagnostics); Price regulation (NPPA) .

5th National Pharmacovigilance Week

Social Issues, Health, and Education

Context

- Inaugurated by Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission (IPC), the National Coordination Centre. Focus on patient participation. India top global ADR contributor. Awards given.

IPC: Autonomous body (MoHFW)

- Sets drug standards (publishes Indian Pharmacopoeia - IP, National Formulary - NFI).

Equalising Primary Food Consumption in India

Social Issues, Health, and Education

Context

- NSS HCES 2024 data allows fresh poverty estimates. World Bank: Extreme poverty fell to 2.3% (2022-23).

Thali Metric

- Realistic measure of balanced food. Crisil: Thali costs ₹30. Data: 50% rural, 20% urban couldn't afford two thalis/day; Even with PDS, 40% rural / 10% urban lack minimum. Pulses under-consumed.

PDS Role/Limits

- Equalised cereal consumption; Subsidies misdirected (richest get nearly same as poorest in rural); Cereal consumption saturated (only 10% household exp).

Proposal

- Trim excess cereal entitlements; Expand PDS to pulses; Rationalise subsidies; Target PDS to raise poorest consumption.

Global Food Regulators Summit 2025

Social Issues, Health, and Education

Context

- 3rd summit organised in New Delhi by FSSAI (under MoHFW). Theme: "Evolving Food Systems Yatha Annam Tatha Manah".

Objective

- Global platform for harmonisation, innovation, tech exploration involving WHO, Codex, FAO etc.

- **FSSAI:** Autonomous statutory body under FSS Act, 2006; regulates food safety.

Rising Chronic Disease Deaths in India

Social Issues, Health, and Education

Context

- Lancet study finds India saw increase in NCD deaths (2001-19) while most countries saw decline. NCDs caused 61.8% deaths in 2016 (up from 37.9% in 1990). "Big four": cardiovascular, cancers, chronic respiratory, diabetes.

Causes

- Lifestyle transitions (smoking, alcohol, junk food, inactivity); Weak preventive healthcare reach; High healthcare expenditure burden (>75%).

Way Forward

- Strengthen primary healthcare (Ayushman Bharat, NP-NCD); Targeted interventions (women >40, rural elderly); Lifestyle reforms (Poshan Abhiyaan, Fit India); Tobacco/Alcohol policy; Strengthen data systems (CRS, NCD registries).

PM's Visit to Japan / 15th India-Japan Annual Summit

International Relations

Context

- Reaffirmed Special Strategic Partnership.



Key Pillars

- Defence/Security (2+2 Dialogue, Logistics Agreement, Exercises, Intel sharing); Trade/Investment/EconSec ($23B trade, Japan 5th FDI source, EconSec Dialogue); Development/Infra/Energy (Japan largest ODA donor, Bullet Train, Clean Energy Partnership); Multilateral/Regional (Quad, SCRI, G20, ISA, CDRI, IPEF); Space (LUPEX mission); People/Culture/Education (Academic links, TITP/SSW programs, Diaspora).

Summit Outcomes

- Joint Vision (10-yr priorities); Security Declaration upgrade; Japan doubles investment pledge (~$68B); SME Forum; Digital Partnership 2.0; AI Initiative; Mineral Resources MoC; ISRO-JAXA Lunar Arrangement; Joint Crediting Mechanism (decarbonising tech); Hydrogen Declaration; HR Exchange Action Plan.
- **Convergence:** Indo-Pacific (Act East/IPOI align with FOIP); UNSC Reform advocacy.
- **Divergences:** China policy approach, Russia stance, Digital rules (Osaka Track).

India-Morocco Defence Cooperation

International Relations

Context

- MoU signed on Defence Cooperation.

Significance

- Strengthens India's North Africa footprint, boosts defence exports (Atmanirbhar Bharat), fosters joint maritime security/counter-terrorism efforts. MoU provides institutional framework, covers industry collab, joint exercises, training.

India-Singapore Comprehensive Strategic Partnership

International Relations

- Context: INDIA-SINGAPORE Prime Minister of Singapore paid an official visit to India.
- The visit commemorated 60 years of India-Singapore diplomatic relations, reaffirming the shared legacy of friendship, trust, and mutual respect.

Key Outcomes: -

- Both countries adopted a forward-looking and substantive roadmap for Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (CSP) aims to deepen cooperation in eight critical areas:
- **Economic Cooperation:** · Both sides will continue to engage in dialogue and make progress on initiation of the 3rd review of Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) and achieve substantial review of the ASEAN India Trade in Goods Agreement (AITIGA) in 2025.
- Supporting India's semiconductor industry, enhance India-Singapore capital market connectivity
- **Space:** Promote joint collaborations between Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (INSPACe) and the Office for Space Technology & Industry, Singapore
- **Defence and Security Cooperation:** Deepening defence technology cooperation in emerging areas like Quantum Computing, AI, Automation, and Unmanned Vessels.
- Reaffirmed strong commitments to combat terrorism, including cross-border terrorism and terror financing.
- **Digitalisation:** Strengthening of Digital Finance and Fintech cooperation, cybersecurity, and capital market linkages.
- Expanding and maximizing the potential of the UPI-PayNow Linkage for cross-border payments.
- **Skills Development:** Jointly developing a National Centre of Excellence in Advanced Manufacturing in Chennai, Tamil Nadu.

- **Sustainability:** Collaborating on green initiatives in multilateral frameworks like the International Solar Alliance and Global Biofuels Alliance.
- Step up cooperation in green hydrogen and ammonia production, exploring urban water management and civil nuclear domain cooperation.
- **Connectivity:** Supported the establishment of an India-Singapore Green and Digital Shipping Corridor (GDSC) between the Port of Singapore and ports in India.
- **Healthcare and Medicine:** Deepening collaboration in digital health, disease surveillance.
- **People-to-People and Cultural Exchanges:** Strengthening social, cultural, and people-to-people linkages.
- **Focus Areas:** Economic (semiconductors, industrial parks, capital markets, RE exports); Defence/Security (Malacca Strait Patrol support, quantum/AI collab); Connectivity (PSA Mumbai terminal, Aviation/MRO, SAF); Digital (fintech, cybersec, GIFT City, UPI-PayNow link); Skills (Centre of Excellence Chennai).

International Electrotechnical Commission 2025

International Relations

Context

- India (via BIS) to host 89th IEC General Meeting in New Delhi. India hosted previously in 1960, 1997, 2013.
- IEC: Founded 1906 (Geneva HQ); leading global body for electrical/electronic standards. 170 members.

25th Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit

International Relations

Context

- PM attended summit in Tianjin, China



Theme

- "Upholding the Shanghai Spirit: SCO on the Move").

Outcomes

- Endorsed SCO development bank; Proposed border CBMs; Kyrgyzstan takes presidency; Supported Palestine settlement; Reaffirmed Iran nuclear deal (UNSCR 2231); Adopted Tianjin Declaration.

Tianjin Declaration

- **Denounced terrorism;** Emphasised Global South empowerment; Rejected coercive measures.
- **India at Summit:** Backed "civilisational dialogue"; First Modi-Xi bilateral since 2020 (agreed border talks, flights, visas); US criticism of Modi-Xi-Putin images. India maintains strategic autonomy.

SCO Basics

- Eurasian security alliance (HQ Beijing); Evolved from Shanghai Five (2001); 10 members (India joined 2017). RATS (Tashkent) is security arm.

Shift in OPEC+ Production Strategy

International Relations

Context

- 'Voluntary Eight' to raise oil production, focusing market share over price.

Voluntary Eight

- Core group including Saudi Arabia, Russia, Iraq, UAE etc.

Reasons for Shift

- Regain market share from non-OPEC; Quota breaches weakened credibility; Uneven demand recovery; Geopolitical pressures.

OPEC+

- Created 2016 (OPEC + 10 non-OPEC); Supplies ~40% global crude.

India's Trade Deficit with China

International Relations

Context

- 2024-25 deficit at $99.2B (~35% of India's total).

Concern

- Structural dependence (pharma, electronics, RE, etc); Critical inputs supply dominated by China (e.g., 97.7% erythromycin, 82.7% solar cells); Everyday goods dependence.

Risks

- China can weaponise supply chains; India's export share fallen; Discourages domestic manufacturing.
- **Impact:** Forex pressure, currency depreciation, risk of hollowing out industry.
- **Measures Taken:** PLI schemes, Quality standards, Supply diversification, Import monitoring, Anti-dumping duties.

Panchsheel Doctrine for India-China Ties

International Relations

Context

- China underscored its relevance in Modi-Xi meeting.

Doctrine

- Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, codified in 1954 Tibet agreement. Principles: Mutual respect for sovereignty/territory, non-aggression, non-interference, equality/mutual benefit, peaceful coexistence.

History

- Integrated into Bandung Conf (1955), UNGA Resolution (1957), NAM Summit (1961).

Relevance

- Supports India's strategic autonomy, multilateral diplomacy (BRICS/SCO), conflict resolution framework.

Challenges

- Border tensions (Doklam, Galwan); Trade asymmetry ($100B deficit); Sovereignty concerns (BRI/CPEC); Geopolitical balance (India's Quad ties); Enforcement gap.

India-EFTA Trade and Economic Partnership Agreement

International Relations

Context

- Signed, effective Oct 1, 2025. EFTA: Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland.

Market Access

- EFTA offers 92.2% tariff lines cover (99.6% India exports); India offers 82.7% lines cover (95.3% EFTA exports, mostly gold). Sensitive sectors excluded. Duty-free access for Indian rice.

Features

- EFTA commits $100B investment in India (15 yrs, 1M jobs); First FTA with binding labour/environment/human rights clauses; Enhances legal certainty.
- Stats: India is EFTA's 5th largest partner (2023); Bilateral trade $25B.

India-Myanmar Rare Earth Engagement

International Relations

Context

- India exploring rare earth supplies from Myanmar's Kachin Independence Army (KIA) to reduce China dependence. KIA controls Chipwe-Pangwa mining belt (global heavy rare earth source). Unusual engagement with non-state armed group.

Challenges

- Terrain, security risks, refining capacity, diplomatic sensitivities.

Sawalkote Hydroelectric Project

International Relations

Context

- Environmental clearance reviews ongoing after Indus Waters Treaty suspension.

Project

- 1,856 MW run-of-river project on Chenab River (Ramban dist, J&K). Largest in J&K. Executed by NHPC. Delayed due to IWT limits.

Significance

- Generate 7k MU annually, reduce J&K winter shortage, supply northern grid; Mitigate floods, improve irrigation/water supply.

Concerns

- Forest diversion (846 ha), tree felling (2.22L+); Alters flows, disrupts ecology despite 'run-of-river' tag.

H-1B Visa Fee Hike

International Relations

Context

- US imposes one-time $100k fee on new H-1B petitions (from Sep 2025) under Presidential Proclamation. Excludes renewals; potential waivers for critical sectors.

H-1B Basics

- Allows US employers to hire foreign professionals in speciality occupations. Valid 3 yrs, extendable to 6. Indians got 71% approvals Fy24.

Reasons for Hike

- Political pressure (immigration concern); Fiscal target ($100B+ revenue); Labour protection (H-1B wages below US median); National security (visa fraud misuse); Skill realignment.

Implications for India

- (Positive) Talent retention, IT industry evolution (offshore models) , Strategic leverage. (Negative) Export slowdown, Humanitarian disruption, Project constraints.

Way Forward

- Scale GCCs, Local hiring in US, Alternative visa pathways (O-1, EB-1A), Policy engagement, Domestic innovation.

US Withdraws Sanctions Waiver for Chabahar Port

International Relations

Context

- Waiver revoked under Iran Freedom & Counter-Proliferation Act (IFCA), effective Sep 29, 2025.

India's Role

- Developing since 2002; 2016 Trilateral Agreement (India-Iran-Afghan); IPGL operates Shahid Beheshti terminal. Progress slowed by sanctions.

Implications for India

- Connectivity setback (access to Afghan/Central Asia); Economic impact (shipments hindered, INSTC delays); Geopolitical challenge (balancing US/Iran ties); Regional security (weakens Afghan presence).

Chabahar Importance

- Deep-water port on Gulf of Oman; Bypasses Pakistan for access; Part of INSTC; Counterbalance to China's Gwadar/BRI.

International Criminal Court (ICC)

International Relations

Context

- Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger withdraws citing selective justice. Withdrawal effective 1 year after UN notification.

ICC Basics

- Permanent judicial body (The Hague), est. under Rome Statute 1998 (operational 2002). Purpose: Court of last resort. 125 members (Ukraine 125th). India not a member. Separate agreement with UN. Structure: Presidency, Judicial Chambers, Office of Prosecutor, Registry. Prosecutes genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, aggression. Operates on complementarity principle (acts when national courts unable/unwilling).

United Nations Human Rights Council

International Relations

Context

- India criticised Switzerland (2025 presidency) for comments on Indian minorities.

UNHRC

- Intergovernmental UN body (Geneva HQ), formed 2006 (replaced Commission). Promotes/protects human rights. 47 seats, regional distribution. Members elected by UNGA (3-yr term, 2 consecutive term limit). India member 2019-21, 2022-24. Mechanisms: Universal Periodic Review (UPR) , Advisory Committee.

India - Israel Bilateral Investment Agreement

International Relations

Context

- Signed in New Delhi to boost investments. Replaces 1996 agreement. Israel first OECD member to sign under India's revised framework. Significance: Better investor protection, expand trade.

India-Israel Relations

- Recognised 1950, full ties 1992. Strategic partnership since 2017 PM visit. Defence (India largest arms buyer) , Counterterrorism collab , Agriculture support , Trade expansion.

International Recognition of Palestinian Statehood

International Relations

Context

- France, Australia, Canada, UK, Portugal recognise Palestinian statehood. 147 of 193 UN members already recognise (incl India, China, Russia).
    - The four western nations, United Kingdom, Canada, Portugal and Australia, joined over 140 UN member states in recognizing Palestine as a state.
    - India recognized the Palestinian State in 1988.
    - Recently, India voted in favour of a resolution in the UN General Assembly endorsing the 'New York Declaration' on the peaceful settlement and implementation of the Two-State Solution.

Recognition of States

- The process in which a state acknowledges another entity as a state is known as recognition.
- Article 1 of the 1933 Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States defines the criteria for statehood: Permanent population, definite territory, government and capacity to enter into relations with other states.

Effects of State Recognition

- It acquires the capacity to enter into diplomatic relations with other states.
- It acquires the capacity to enter into treaties with other states.
- The state is able to enjoy the rights and privileges of international statehood.
- The state can become a member of the United Nations organisation.
- Palestine is a UN "Permanent Observer State," not a full member.

Famine in Gaza

International Relations

Context

- UN-backed IPC declared famine in Gaza Governorate. First official famine in West Asia.

Famine Definition (IPC Phase 5)

- Most severe acute food insecurity. Criteria (all must be met): ≥20% households face extreme food shortage; Acute malnutrition affects ≥30% children; Crude mortality rate ≥2/10k/day OR ≥4 under-five deaths/10k children/day.

Gen Z-Led Protests in Nepal

International Relations

- Context: PM Oli resigned amid violent youth anti-corruption protests triggered by social media ban. Gen Z: Born 1995-2010.
- Reasons: Ban seen as censorship; Denounced corruption/nepotism; Political stagnation (dynastic leaders); Job crisis (84% informal).

India Reaffirms WTO-Centred Trade Order

International Relations

Context:

- Stated at SCO Trade Ministers' Meeting.

Highlights

- Called for WTO reforms (permanent solution public stockholding, restore dispute settlement); Supply chain diversification, improved logistics; Pushed Mission LIFE, opposed discriminatory climate trade measures; Showcased creative economy role (AVGC).

Israel's Airstrike on Doha

International Relations

Context

- Israeli jets strike Doha targeting Hamas leaders; first direct attack on Gulf Arab state. Aim: Disrupt US-led ceasefire talks.

Impact

- Shows Israel's unilateral power; Arab states may shift focus to countering Israel; Growing international criticism.

Implications for India

- Energy security risks (Qatar major LNG supplier); Diaspora concerns (7L+ Indians in Qatar); Diplomatic balancing challenge.

Strategic Significance of International Borders

International Relations

Context

- Shape geopolitics, trade, security.

Countries with most Borders

- Russia (16) , China (14) , Brazil (10) , DRC (9) , Germany (9).

India's Position

- 7 land, 2 maritime neighbours; strategic crossroads. Challenges: Difficult terrain, neighbour turmoil.

India-UAE Joint Task Force on Investments

International Relations

Context

- 13th meeting held in Abu Dhabi. Established 2013.

Highlights

- Non-oil trade reached $38B (H1 2025, up 34% YoY due to CEPA); Bharat Mart Project reviewed (hub for Indian exporters in UAE); Progress on bilateral trade in local currencies, payment system integration, CBDC cooperation.

Pakistan-Saudi Arabia Defence Pact

International Relations

Context

- Signed "Strategic Mutual Defence Agreement". Key Clause: Aggression against one is aggression against both. India assessing implications.
- The agreement aims to develop aspects of defence cooperation between the two countries and strengthen joint deterrence against any aggression. It states that "any aggression against either country shall be considered an aggression against both".

Impacts of the Agreement

- **Nuclear Warfare:** It further raises the fears of nuclear warfare, as Pakistan extends its nuclear umbrella to Saudi Arabia, in the already tense region of West Asia.
- **Shifting power dynamics:** For Saudi Arabia, it strengthens defences against threats from Iran, Yemen's Houthi militias and Israel.
- It signifies a move away from traditional role of US as security guarantor in the region due to US ally Israel's war on Gaza and its strikes on regional neighbours.
- This could create a strategic vacuum for China to deepen its clout in the region.
- **Implications for India:** Pakistan may see the pact as strategic deterrence against India in future military confrontation, especially in response to cross border terrorism.

India-Saudi Arabia Relations

- Strategic partnership was formalised in 2010 via Riyadh declaration.
- **Economic:** India is the second largest trade partner of Saudi Arabia, whereas Saudi Arabia is the fifth largest trading partner of India.
- Bilateral trade in 2023 was 42.98 billion and India remained a net importer
- In 2024, Saudi Arabia contributed 6.7% of India's total inward remittances.
- **Energy Partnership:** Saudi Arabia is third largest crude oil supplier to India.

80th Session of the UN General Assembly

International Relations

Context

- General debate focused on women's empowerment/gender equality. Marks 30yrs Beijing Declaration, 15yrs UN Women, 80yrs UN. UN Sec-Gen promoted UN80 reform initiative.

Beijing Declaration (1995):

- Landmark global agreement for gender equality.
- UN80: Reform effort (launched 2025) for UN effectiveness, transparency, accountability.

China to Launch K Visa Amid H1-B Crackdown

International Relations

Context

- Introduced K visa for young foreign S&T talent.

K Visa

- For STEM graduates/professionals from reputable global/Chinese universities. Features: Flexible entry/duration, expanded activities, no local employer sponsorship needed. Difference with H-1B: No cap, cheaper, free job movement.

New Initiatives for Global AI Governance

Context

- Recently, UN General Assembly (UNGA) announced to establish two mechanisms within the UN to promote international cooperation on the governance of Artificial Intelligence (AI).
- It builds on the "Pact for the Future" and the "Global Digital Compact," outlining a significant step towards international, non-military AI governance.

About the new mechanisms

- Independent International Scientific Panel on Artificial Intelligence: To promote scientific understanding of AI by issuing evidence-based scientific assessments synthesizing and analysing existing research related to the opportunities, risks and impacts of AI.
- **Global Dialogue on AI Governance:** To serve as a platform to discuss international cooperation, share best practices and lessons learned, and to facilitate open, transparent and inclusive discussions on AI governance.

Other UN Mechanisms for Global AI Governance

- **Pact for the Future:** Adopted at the Summit of the Future in September 2024 to chart a path toward achieving the SDGs and responding to emerging challenges and opportunities.
- **Global Digital Compact:** Annexed as part of the Pact for Future, it is a comprehensive global framework for digital cooperation and AI governance.
- AI for Good Global Summit (organized by ITU since 2017): Identified AI applications to advance on the SDGs and scale such applications for global impacts.
- **Others:** Adoption of the first global standard on AI ethics in 2021; UNESCO Recommendation on the Ethics of AI, etc.

Context

- India joins Health AI Global Regulatory Network (GRN) to strengthen oversight of AI in healthcare.

Additional Information:

- HealthAI is a Geneva-based, independent non-profit organization that aims to advance development and adoption of Responsible AI solutions in health through collaborative implementation of regulatory mechanisms and global standards.
- GRN members have exclusive access to the 'Global Public Repository of AI-related Registered Solutions for Health', where participating regulatory authorities can showcase AI-related registered solutions from their countries.
- Indian Council of Medical Research -National Institute for Research in Digital Health and Data Science (ICMR - NIRDHDS) & IndiaAI will work with HealthAI alongside fellow GRN members, such as UK and Singapore.
- It supports IndiaAI strategy, which aims to build a comprehensive and inclusive AI ecosystem.
- IndiaAI operates under Ministry of Electronics & Information Technology (MeitY) via the Digital India Corporation. It aims to position India as a leader in AI innovation and development.

Need for strengthening oversight of AI in Healthcare:

- **Patient Safety and Risk Minimization:** AI in healthcare directly impacts diagnosis and treatment, so regulation is required to ensure safety, minimize risks, and prevent harm.
- **Data Privacy and Security:** Healthcare AI uses sensitive patient data, making regulation vital to protect privacy and ensure data security. India's ICMR ethical guidelines emphasize safeguarding personal health data at various stages.
- **Ethical Use and Fairness:** AI can exhibit biases based on training data, risking unfair discrimination. Regulations are needed to ensure fairness, non-discrimination, and ethical deployment of AI tools.
- **Transparency and Accountability:** Many AI systems operate as "black boxes" i.e. they generate results without explaining how they arrived at them. Regulators are likely to insist manufacturers explain how these devices arrive at decisions.
- **Managing Liability:** The potential utilization of AI in healthcare has raised substantial concerns regarding the assignment of liability for medical errors arising from AI-augmented healthcare delivery.

Ethical Challenges:

- **Justice and Fairness:** AI should enable equitable access and unbiased decisions, preventing the widening of healthcare inequalities.
- **Patient Consent and Privacy:** AI must safeguard sensitive health data with strong consent and protection mechanisms.
- **Misinformation and Dehumanization:** AI errors or overreliance can spread misinformation and reduce meaningful patient-provider interactions.

Inclusivity and Access Challenges:

- Representation bias: Representation bias is present when samples from urban, wealthy, or connected groups lead to the ignoring of samples from rural, indigenous, or disenfranchised groups
- Resistance and Trust: Healthcare professionals may resist AI adoption due to limited understanding, fear of job loss, or doubts about AI reliability.

Recommendations for integrating AI in Healthcare in India:

- **Improving data diversity and reducing bias:** Training AI on diverse socio-economic, geographic, and demographic datasets enhances accuracy and reduces bias.
- **Bridging the Urban-Rural Divide:** E.g.: AI-powered telemedicine connects urban doctors with rural communities, expanding equitable healthcare access.
- **Embrace regulatory sandboxes approach:** Countries like the USA, Canada, Japan, and Indonesia use sandboxes to foster regulatory innovation and evaluate AI-driven digital health solutions.
- Use 'Human in The Loop' model of AI technology which gives room for humans to oversight the functioning and performance of the system.

WHO's guiding principles for use of AI in Healthcare:

- Protect Autonomy
- Promote Human Well-being, Human Safety, and the Public Interest
- Ensure Transparency, Explainability, and Intelligibility
- Foster Responsibility and Accountability
- Ensure Inclusiveness and Equity
- Promote AI That Is Responsive and Sustainable
- AI offers transformative potential for diagnostics, treatment, and healthcare access, but must be regulated to address challenges of safety, bias, privacy, and inclusivity. Coordinated efforts in innovation, capacity building, ethical governance, and international collaboration will enable India to harness AI for improved healthcare outcomes at scale.

Oncolytic & Personalized MRNA Vaccines

Science & Technology

Context

- Russia is developing oncolytic vaccine Enteromix and Personalized mRNA cancer vaccines for cancer treatment.

About oncolytic vaccine Enteromix:

- Oncolytic vaccines are a type of cancer therapy that uses oncolytic viruses (OVs) to directly kill cancer cells and stimulate an anti-tumor immune response.
- Enteromix is based on a combination of four non-pathogenic viruses that have the ability to destroy malignant cells and simultaneously activate the patient's antitumor immunity.
- Vaccine showed 100% success in preclinical trials.
- Initial target of vaccine is colorectal cancer, Moreover, promising progress has been made in developing vaccines for glioblastoma and specific types of melanoma.

About Personalized mRNA Vaccines:

- Personalized Vaccine: Based on the genetic analysis of each patient's tumor, a unique vaccine is created that can "teach" the immune system to recognize cancer cells.
- mRNA vaccines are a type of vaccine that use a small piece of messenger RNA (mRNA) to instruct our cells to produce a protein specific to a virus.
- mRNA delivers genetic material, encapsulated in lipid nanoparticles, into body to prompt protein production that match up with parts of pathogen called antigens.
  - E.g., the mRNA vaccine for COVID-19 directed cells to produce copies of a protein on the outside of the coronavirus known as the spike protein.
- Immune system sees these foreign antigens as invaders, dispatching defenders called antibodies and T-cells and training immune system for potential future attacks.

Challenges of mRNA vaccines:

- Storage requirements: Require ultra-cold storage, making distribution difficult.
- Short-term side effects: E.g. fever, fatigue, and soreness at the injection site.
- Long-term safety: mRNA vaccines are relatively new, so long-term effects are still being studied.

World's Largest Neutrino Detector Activated

Science & Technology

Context

- The detector, known as the Jiangmen Underground Neutrino Observatory, or JUNO, is located in China.
- The observatory is situated 700 meters underground.
- Most of the neutrino observatories are underground, as the physical bulk of the Earth's crust helps block most other interfering particles, like muons (elementary subatomic particles similar to the electron).

Main goals of the JUNO:

- Mass Hierarchy: To determine the hierarchy of masses between the three neutrino types.
- The three neutrino types are the Electron neutrino, Muon neutrino, and Tau neutrino, each associated with its respective particle.

- Oscillation Frequency: To measure the frequency of neutrino oscillation (how often the neutrino types shift, or change, from one type to another).

About Neutrinos:
- **Nature:** Subatomic particles (often called ghost particles) that have zero electrical charge, zero size and tiny mass.
- **Occurrence:** Second-most abundant particle after photons (particles of light) and most abundant among particles found in the universe.
- **Detectability:** Difficult to detect as they only interact with matter via weak nuclear force and gravity.
- **Features:** Undisturbed by even the strongest magnetic field, Travel in straight lines from their source, Travel at nearly the speed of light, etc.

India's Largest Lithium-Ion (li-Ion) Battery Manufacturing Plant

Science & Technology

- **Context**: India's Largest Lithium-ion (Li-ion) Battery Manufacturing Plant was inaugurated in Haryana.
- When fully complete, it will produce about 20 crore battery packs every year, covering nearly 40% of India's annual requirement of 50 crore packs.
- It was established under the Centre's Electronics Manufacturing Cluster (EMC) scheme.

About Li-ion Battery:
- It is a type of rechargeable battery where lithium ions move between a negative electrode (graphite) and a positive electrode (Li transitional metal oxides) through a non-aqueous electrolyte during charging and discharging.

Benefits of Lithium-ion Batteries:
- **High energy density:** At 75-200 Watt-hours /KG, stores more energy compactly, and offers longer cycles between charges.
- **Lightweight and Lower Toxic Heavy Metals:** Compared to older lead-acid batteries, it is much lighter due to use of less toxic and lightweight Li and carbon electrodes.
- **Excellent performance:** They provide good cycle stability, efficiency, and reliability, with low self-discharge and generally no memory effect (slow-down due to repeated charging).

Challenges:
- **Supply Chain Vulnerability:** E.g. China controls half of global Li production and 70% of Li-ion battery production.
- India imported Li-ion batteries worth US$ 1.2 billion (2018-2022).
- **Safety hazards:** They contain a flammable electrolyte, which can lead to explosions if manhandled.
- **Environmental impact:** E.g., Lithium mining is water-intensive (Apprx. 2,000 tonnes per tonne of lithium).
- Lack of Recycling Units exacerbates the issue of safe disposal.

Scarborough Shoal

Persons, Places & Issues

Context

- The Philippines strongly condemned China's move to set up a nature reserve at Scarborough Shoal.

About:

- Scarborough Shoal, also called Huangyan Island in China and Panatag Shoal in Philippines, is a small atoll in the South China Sea.
- Both China and the Philippines consider it part of their territory.

Grey Rhino Event

Persons, Places & Issues

Context

- A study has revealed that Wayanad landslides were grey rhino event.

What is a Great Rhino Event:

- Grey Rhinos are defined as highly probable, high impact but yet neglected systemic disruptions.
- These are not random surprises (like Black Swan events) but occur after clear warnings and accumulating evidence.

Why Waynad landslides were Great Rhino Event:

- As per the study, Wayanad landslide happened in an area that has been categorised as a landslide-prone area, repeatedly hit by landslides in the recent past, yet ignored by government.

Bagram Air Base

Persons, Places & Issues

Context

- United States is in talks with Afghanistan to regain the control of the Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan.

About Bagram Air Base:

- The largest air base in Afghanistan located north of the capital Kabul.
- Originally built by the Soviets in 1950s and after Soviet withdrawal in 1990s, it became a frontline in war between Taliban and Northern Alliance fighters.
- After 2001 terror attack on USA, it became the centre of US operations in their war against terror in Afghanistan.
- US and NATO troops pulled out of Bagram in 2021.

State Finance Report 2022-23

Persons, Places & Issues

Context

- The report was released by released by the Comptroller and Auditor General.
- The report is first of its kind, providing comprehensive data, analysis, and trends on fiscal parameters for all 28 states over a 10-year period (2013-14 to 2022-23).

Key Findings:

- States' total debt in 2022-23 was 22.17 % of the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP).
- **Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM)Act (2003) benchmark:** State Government Debt shall be 20% of GDP by 2024-25
- **Debt-to-GSDP Ratio:** Highest ratio of 40.35 per cent was recorded in Punjab, followed by Nagaland (37.15 per cent) and West Bengal (33.70 per cent)
- **Fiscal Deficit:** All 28 States in deficit; ranged from Gujarat (0.76% of GSDP) to Himachal Pradesh (6.46%).
- **FRBM benchmark:** States needed to achieve a fiscal deficit of 3.5 % of GSDP in FY 2022-23.
- **Wide gaps in revenue capacity:** States' Own Tax Revenue (SOTR) share 70% in Haryana and as low as 9% in Arunachal Pradesh.

Super Typhoon

Context

- Philippines was affected by Super Typhoon Ragasa.

About Super Typhoon:

- It is a tropical cyclone with maximum wind speed exceeding 185 kph or more than 100 knots.
- Tropical cyclones are warm-core low pressure systems associated with a spiral inflow at the bottom level and spiral outflow at the top level.
- They always form over oceans where sea surface temperature is greater than 26°C.
- They develop at latitudes usually greater than 5° from the equator.

Terms for Tropical Cyclones:

- Hurricane – North Atlantic, Eastern North Pacific and South Pacific Ocean.
- Cyclone – Indian Ocean.
- Typhoon – Western North Pacific Ocean.
- Willy-willy: Eastern part of the Southern Indian Ocean.

Annual Survey Of Industries (ASI) Results or 2023-24 Released

Context

- It is released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI).
- It aims to provide meaningful insights into changes in the composition, growth, and structure of manufacturing industries, including output, value added, employment, and capital formation.
- The ASI is conducted annually under the Collection of Statistics (Amendment) Act, 2017.
- ASI covers factories registered under the Factories Act, 1948, Bidi and cigar units under the Bidi and Cigar Workers (Conditions of Employment) Act, 1966, and electricity undertakings not registered with the Central Electricity Authority (CEA).
- Defence establishments, oil storage and distribution depots, departmental units such as railway workshops, gas storage, etc., are not covered under ASI.
- The results are prepared at the state and major industry level.

Key highlights of the survey:

- The top 5 industries in terms of Gross Value Added (GVA) are Basic metal, Motor vehicles, Chemical and Chemical products, Food Products, and pharmaceutical products.
- The top 5 States in respect of employment are Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, and Karnataka.
- Gross Value Added (GVA) grew by 11.89% over the previous year.
- Industrial output increased by more than 5.80% over the previous year.
- Average emoluments per person engaged grew by 5.6% compared to 2022-23.

First Overseas Defence Manufacturing Plant

Context

- Recently, the Defence Minister inaugurated India's first overseas defence manufacturing plant in Morocco.
- The facility will produce the indigenously developed Wheeled Armoured Platform (WhAP) 8x8, jointly designed by Tata Advanced Systems Limited (TASL) and DRDO.

About Wheeled Armoured Platform (WhAP):

- India's First Amphibious Infantry Combat Vehicle (Wheeled): Designed for optimised survivability, all-terrain performance and increased lethality.
- Critical Technologies Used: Integrated power pack with automatic transmission, floatation and propulsion.

Operation Black Forest

Context

- 'Operation Black Forest' is the biggest anti-Naxal operation ever conducted on Karregutta hill situated along the Chhattisgarh-Telangana border.

Other anti-Naxal mission:

- **Mission Sankalp:** launched on sprawling hills of Karregutta and adjoining hills along the Chhattisgarh-Telangana border
- **Operation Green Hunt:** Began in late 2009. It takes place across five states - West Bengal, Jharkhand, Bihar, Orissa and Chhattisgarh.

Magsaysay Award

Context

- Educate Girls NGO becomes first Indian organisation to win Ramon Magsaysay Award, in 2025.

About Ramon Magsaysay Award (Established, 1957):

- **First Award:** 1958. It is Asia's highest honor, the Asian version of the Nobel Prize.
- **Awarded:** Annually.
- It celebrates the memory and leadership example of the third Philippine president, Ramon Magsaysay.
- **Recognises and honours:** individuals and organisations in Asia, regardless of race, creed, gender, or nationality, who have achieved distinction and have helped others generously without aiming for public recognition.

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INTER	DEGREE
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IGNITE IAS FOUNDATION COURSE

COURSE FEATURES

PEDAGOGUE METHOD

- Teachers with expert domain knowledge
- Systematic and well-framed subject sequence
- Focus on conceptual clarity and with keen eye on recent exam pattern

COURSE MATERIAL

- Daily Newspaper Analysis and a monthly Current Affairs Astra Magazine
- Primer NCERT series
- Prelims and Mains exhaustive standard material

NOVEL FEATURES

- Daily answer writing practice
- Topic-wise consolidation tests
- Essay writing sessions
- Exam centric approach

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