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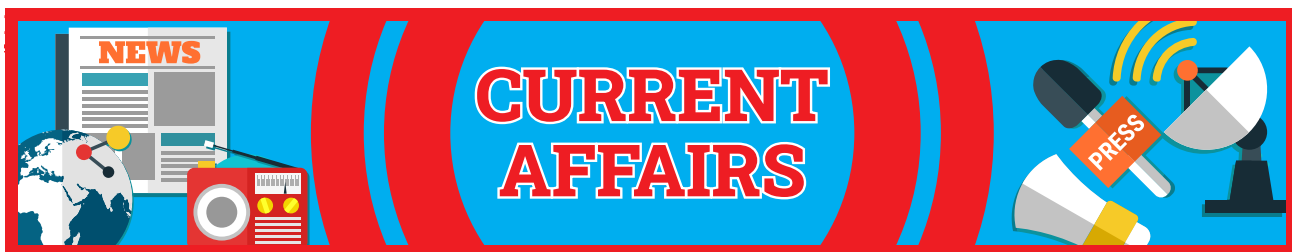
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## POLITY & GOVERNANCE

### 53RD GST COUNCIL MEETING

#### Introduction

- ⇒ The 53rd meeting of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council, held on June 25, 2024, approved several measures aimed at easing compliance for small businesses and introduced various exemptions and reductions in GST rates.
- ⇒ The Council also announced plans to reconvene in August 2024 to discuss restructuring the multiple tax rates under the seven-year-old GST system.

#### Key Highlights of the 53rd GST Council Meeting

##### Aadhaar-based Biometric Authentication:

- ⇒ The Council approved the nationwide rollout of biometric-based Aadhaar authentication to combat fraudulent input tax credit claims made through fake invoices.
- ⇒ This measure is intended to enhance tax compliance and reduce fraud.

##### Exemption for Hostel Accommodation:

- ⇒ Hostel accommodation services outside educational institutions are now exempt from GST for rents up to Rs 20,000 per person per month.
- ⇒ This exemption, previously subject to 12% GST, applies to stays up to 90 days, making accommodation more affordable for students and the working class.

##### Indian Railways Services:

- ⇒ Platform tickets for Indian Railways are now exempt from GST, easing the financial burden on passengers.
- ⇒ This decision is part of broader efforts to make railway services more affordable.

##### Reduction in GST Rate on Cartons:

- ⇒ The GST rate on various types of carton boxes has been reduced from 18% to 12%.
- ⇒ This change aims to benefit both manufacturers and consumers by lowering the overall cost of essential packaging materials.

##### GST Reduction on Milk Cans and Solar Cookers:

- ⇒ A uniform GST rate of 12% has been announced for all milk cans, regardless of whether they are made of steel, iron, or aluminium. This uniformity simplifies the tax structure for these items.

##### Waiver of Interest and Penalties for Non-Fraudulent Cases:

- ⇒ The Council recommended waiving interest and penalties for demand notices issued under Section 73 of the GST Act, which applies to cases not involving fraud, suppression, or misstatements. This aims to provide relief to businesses facing genuine compliance issues.

##### New Monetary Limits for Filing Appeals:

- ⇒ The Council has set new monetary thresholds for filing appeals by the department: Rs 20 lakh for the GST Appellate Tribunal, Rs 1 crore for High Court, and Rs 2 crore for the Supreme Court. This is expected to reduce government litigation.

##### Central Support and Conditional Loans to States:

- ⇒ The government introduced the 'Scheme for Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment', with some loans conditional on states implementing citizen-centric reforms and capital projects. This incentivizes states to meet the criteria to access these loans.



### Petrol and Diesel under GST:

- The central government expressed its intent to bring petrol and diesel under the GST regime, pending consensus among states on the applicable tax rate. This move aims at uniform taxation of fuel across the country.

### Overview of the GST Council

#### About:

- The GST Council is a constitutional body responsible for making recommendations on issues related to the implementation of GST in India.
- It was established to simplify the tax structure, making it more uniform across the country.

#### Constitutional Provisions:

- The 101st Amendment Act of 2016 introduced GST in India and inserted Article 279-A in the Constitution, empowering the President to constitute the GST Council.

#### Members:

- The Council includes the Union Finance Minister (Chairperson), the Union Minister of State (Finance), and state-nominated ministers in charge of finance or taxation.

#### Functions:

- The Council makes recommendations on GST-related issues such as tax exemptions, model GST laws, and GST rates.
- It also decides on rate slabs and special rates for raising additional resources during natural calamities or for specific states.

#### Working:

- Decisions are made by a majority of at least three-fourths of the weighted votes of the members present and voting.
- The Central Government's vote has a weightage of one-third, while the votes of all state governments combined have a weightage of two-thirds.
- A quorum of 50% of the total members is required to conduct a meeting.

#### Binding Nature:

- Initially considered binding, the recommendations of the GST Council are now deemed non-binding following the 2022 Supreme Court ruling in Union of India v. Mohit Minerals Pvt. Ltd, which established that both Parliament and State legislatures have "simultaneous" power to legislate on GST.

#### Conclusion

- The 53rd GST Council meeting introduced significant measures to simplify compliance and reduce the tax burden on various sectors.
- These decisions reflect the Council's ongoing efforts to refine the GST framework, enhance compliance, and support economic growth.
- The upcoming discussions on restructuring GST rates will further shape the future of India's tax system.

## 1975 EMERGENCY AND ITS IMPACT

### Introduction

- The 1975 Emergency in India is a significant event in the country's political history, marking a period of suspended civil liberties and heightened executive power.
- On June 25, 1975, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi declared a national emergency, citing internal disturbances.
- This period lasted until March 21, 1977, and had profound effects on the Indian polity, society, and constitutional framework.
- As we mark the 49th anniversary of this event, it is crucial to reflect on its causes, provisions, and lasting impacts.

### What is an Emergency?

- An emergency refers to legal measures and clauses within a country's constitution or laws that enable the government



to respond swiftly and effectively to extraordinary situations, such as war, rebellion, or other crises threatening the nation's stability, security, or sovereignty.

- ⇒ In India, these provisions are outlined in Articles 352 to 360 under Part XVIII of the Constitution, drawing inspiration from Germany's Weimar Constitution.

### Provisions in the Indian Constitution

The emergency provisions in the Indian Constitution include:

- ⇒ **Article 352:** Proclamation of Emergency
- ⇒ **Article 353:** Effect of Proclamation of Emergency
- ⇒ **Article 354:** Application of provisions relating to the distribution of revenues while a Proclamation of Emergency is in operation
- ⇒ **Article 355:** Duty of the Union to protect States against external aggression and internal disturbance
- ⇒ **Article 356:** Provisions in case of failure of constitutional machinery in States
- ⇒ **Article 357:** Exercise of legislative powers under proclamation issued under Article 356
- ⇒ **Article 358:** Suspension of provisions of Article 19 during Emergencies
- ⇒ **Article 359:** Suspension of the enforcement of the rights conferred by Part III during Emergencies
- ⇒ **Article 360:** Provisions as to Financial Emergency

### Types of Emergency in the Indian Constitution

#### National Emergency (Article 352)

- ⇒ Under Article 352, the President can declare a state of emergency if the security of India or any part thereof is threatened by war, external aggression, or armed rebellion.
- ⇒ The 44th Amendment replaced the term "internal disturbance" with "armed rebellion." The declaration allows the executive to suspend fundamental rights (except Articles 20 and 21) to address the crisis effectively.

#### Duration and Parliamentary Approval

- ⇒ The emergency proclamation must be approved by both houses of Parliament within one month.
- ⇒ If approved, it can continue for six months and be extended indefinitely with parliamentary approval every six months.
- ⇒ A proclamation can be revoked by the President or by a resolution passed by the Lok Sabha.

#### State Emergency or President Rule (Article 356)

- ⇒ Imposed in case of failure of constitutional machinery in a state, this type of emergency allows the President to assume the executive powers of the state government.
- ⇒ Judicial review of such proclamations has been established by landmark cases like S.R. Bommai vs. Union of India (1994), ensuring that the imposition of President's Rule is based on relevant material and not extraneous grounds.

#### Financial Emergency (Article 360)

- ⇒ A financial emergency can be declared if the President is satisfied that the financial stability or credit of India is threatened.
- ⇒ During this emergency, the President can direct the reduction of salaries and allowances of all or any class of persons serving in the state and central governments, including judges of the Supreme Court and High Courts.

### Impacts of the 1975 National Emergency

#### Constitutional Changes

- ⇒ The Emergency led to several constitutional amendments:
- ⇒ **39th Amendment (1975):** Placed disputes involving the President, Vice President, Prime Minister, and Speaker beyond the judiciary's scope.
- ⇒ **42nd Amendment (1976):** Increased central government control, limited judicial review, and extended the terms of Parliament and state assemblies.
- ⇒ **44th Amendment (1978):** Reversed the 42nd Amendment's changes, restoring judicial review and protecting the right to life and liberty under Article 21 even during emergencies.

#### Social and Political Impacts

- ⇒ **Erosion of Democratic Values:** The Emergency period highlighted the fragility of democratic institutions. The suspension of civil liberties and the use of draconian laws like the Maintenance of Internal Security Act (MISA) led to widespread oppression.

- ⇒ **Grassroots Movements:** The control over media and suppression of dissent led to the emergence of grassroots movements and underground press advocating for human rights. Notable examples include the Navnirman Andolan in Gujarat and the Jayaprakash Narayan Movement in Bihar.
- ⇒ **Judicial Activism:** The judiciary's role fluctuated during the Emergency. While the ADM Jabalpur case (1976) upheld the suspension of fundamental rights, subsequent cases like Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India (1978) re-established the primacy of fundamental rights.

### Changes in Political Parties' Attitude

- ⇒ The Emergency united opposition parties, emphasizing the importance of a strong opposition in a democracy.
- ⇒ Political parties became more cautious about resorting to similar measures in the future, reinforcing democratic processes.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ The 1975 Emergency serves as a crucial reminder of the importance of democratic values and the need for checks and balances in governance.
- ⇒ The constitutional provisions and subsequent amendments highlight the resilience of India's democratic framework, ensuring that emergency powers are not misused.
- ⇒ As we reflect on this period, it is essential to continue safeguarding democracy, upholding the rule of law, and protecting individual rights, even in times of crisis.

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## A TOOL TO ENSURE COMPLETE VOTER ANONYMITY

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### Introduction

- ⇒ Devesh Chandra Thakur, a candidate from Janata Dal (United) in Sitamarhi, ignited controversy with remarks excluding nonsupporting Muslims and Yadavs, raising concerns about democratic principles and representative impartiality.
- ⇒ Ensuring voter secrecy and fair conduct in elections is pivotal to upholding democratic values.

### Importance of Voter Secrecy and the Model Code of Conduct

- ⇒ **Voter Secrecy:** Rule 56 of the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961, safeguards voter anonymity by rejecting marked ballot papers that identify voters, preventing retaliation or inducements based on voting patterns.
- ⇒ **Model Code of Conduct (MCC):** Enforced during elections, the MCC prohibits statements dividing communities or promising incentives for votes, ensuring fair electoral practices.



### Introduction of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs)

- ⇒ **Adoption:** EVMs replaced traditional ballot papers but posed challenges such as the inability to mix ballot papers, which exposed boothlevel voting patterns.

### Proposal for Totaliser System

- ⇒ **Purpose:** Introduced in 2007 to prevent identification of voting trends per booth, safeguarding voter privacy and curbing postelection victimization.
- ⇒ **Development:** Developed and demonstrated by EVM manufacturers and the Technical Experts Committee of the Election Commission of India (ECI) in 2008, gaining initial political party approval.

### Trial and Challenges

- ⇒ **Initial Trials:** Successfully trialed in 2009 byelections in Meghalaya and Uttar Pradesh, highlighting benefits in protecting voter confidentiality.
- ⇒ **Government Response:** Despite ECI and Law Commission of India recommendations, government delays hindered totaliser implementation.

### Legal and Political Challenges

- ⇒ **Writ Petitions:** Several petitions sought totaliser adoption to preserve voter secrecy and deter coercion.
- ⇒ **Political Dynamics:** Varying political party stances complicated adoption, with support from parties like Congress contrasting opposition from others like BJP.

**Debate Surrounding Totaliser Use**

- **Law Commission’s Backing:** Endorsed in its 255th Report, emphasizing totaliser’s role in safeguarding voter interests.
- **Political Parties’ Positions:** BSP, Congress, and NCP supported totaliser adoption, while others proposed phased introduction or outright opposition, citing concerns over data security and EVM reliability.

**Current Status and Future Prospects**

- **Ongoing Debate:** As of March 2018, unresolved discussions persist on balancing transparency, voter privacy, and electoral fairness.
- **Technological Advancements:** Discussions continue on leveraging technology to mitigate biases and enhance electoral processes.

**Conclusion**

- The debate on implementing the totaliser system underscores critical issues of electoral integrity, voter confidentiality, and the role of technology in democratic governance.
- Achieving a balance between transparency and privacy demands concerted efforts among judiciary, government, and political stakeholders to refine electoral practices and uphold democratic ideals.

**AMENDMENTS PROPOSED IN MSME ACT**

**Why in News?**

- Recently, on the occasion of International MSME Day (27th June, 2024), the Ministry of Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises (MSME) organized the 'Udyami BharatMSME Day' event and proposed amendments to the MSME Development Act, 2006 to improve dispute resolution for delayed payments and address the changing needs of the MSME sector.
- The event witnessed the launch of several initiatives by the Union Minister for MSME, including the proposed upgradation of the Samadhan Portal, proposed amendments in the MSME Development Act, 2006, the Team Initiative, and the Yashasvini campaign.

Micro Enterprise	Small Enterprise	Medium Enterprise
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investment in plant and machinery or equipment is upto Rs. 1 crore, AND</li> <li>• Turnover of the enterprise is upto Rs. 5 crore</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investment in plant and machinery or equipment is upto Rs. 10 crore, AND</li> <li>• Turnover of the enterprise is upto Rs. 50 crore</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investment in plant and machinery or equipment is upto Rs. 50 crore, AND</li> <li>• Turnover of the enterprise is upto Rs. 250 crore</li> </ul>

**Key Facts About MSME**

**About:**

- MSME stands for Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises. These are businesses that produce, process, and preserve goods and commodities.

**Classification:**

- **Micro Enterprises:** Investment in plant and machinery or equipment does not exceed INR 1 crore and turnover does not exceed INR 5 crores.
- **Small Enterprises:** Investment in plant and machinery or equipment does not exceed INR 10 crores and turnover does not exceed INR 50 crores.
- **Medium Enterprises:** Investment in plant and machinery or equipment does not exceed INR 50 crores and turnover does not exceed INR 250 crores.

**MSME Regulation in India:**

- The Ministry of SmallScale Industries and the Ministry of Agro and Rural Industries were merged in 2007 to form the Ministry of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises.
- The ministry develops policies, facilitates programs, and monitors implementation to support MSMEs and aid in their growth.
- The Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises Development Act of 2006 addresses various issues affecting MSMEs, establishes a National Board for MSMEs, defines the concept of "enterprise," and empowers the Central Government to enhance MSME competitiveness.

## Significance of the MSME Sector:

### Global:

- ⇒ According to the United Nations data, MSMEs account for up to 90% of businesses, over 60% to 70% of jobs worldwide, and half of global GDP.

### India:

- ⇒ **GDP Contribution and Employment Generation:** MSMEs currently contribute approximately 30% to India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), playing a crucial role in driving economic growth.
- ⇒ As per the data of the Udyam registration portal, more than 46 million MSMEs (second only to China's 140 million) and over 200 million jobs are registered with the MSME Ministry.
- ⇒ **Export Promotion:** Currently, MSMEs contribute nearly 45% of India's total exports.
- ⇒ The Indian handicraft sector, dominated by smallscale artisans and enterprises, has a global market and generates significant export revenue for the country.
- ⇒ **Contribution to Manufacturing Output:** MSMEs contribute significantly to the country's manufacturing output, particularly in sectors like food processing, engineering, and chemicals.
- ⇒ **Rural Industrialization and Inclusive Growth:** MSMEs play a pivotal role in driving rural industrialization and promoting inclusive growth.
- ⇒ The Khadi and Village industries sector, consisting of smallscale units, has been instrumental in providing employment opportunities in rural areas and empowering local communities.
- ⇒ **Innovation and Entrepreneurship:** The MSME sector fosters innovation and entrepreneurship, as it is often easier for small businesses to adapt to changing market conditions and introduce new products or services.

## International MSME Day 2024

- ⇒ It is observed on 27th June annually to recognize the significance of MSMEs and their contribution to the economy.
- ⇒ **Theme for 2024:** "Leveraging Power and Resilience of Micro, Small, and Mediumsized Enterprises (MSMEs) to Accelerate Sustainable Development and Eradicate Poverty in Times of Multiple Crises."
- ⇒ **History and Significance:** In April 2017, the United Nations designated the 27th June as Micro, Small, and Mediumsized Enterprises Day. The day aims to enhance national capacities for unleashing the full potential of MSMEs in achieving Sustainable Development Goals.

## Key Amendments Proposed in MSME Development Act, 2006

### MSME Development Act, 2006:

- ⇒ Provides a framework for the promotion and development of micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) in the country.

### Objectives:

- ⇒ Facilitating the promotion and development of MSMEs.
- ⇒ Enhancing the competitiveness of MSMEs.
- ⇒ Providing easy access to credit, marketing assistance, and other support services.
- ⇒ Promoting entrepreneurship and skill development.

### Key Amendments Proposed:

- ⇒ **Faster Payment Resolutions:** The Samadhan portal is proposed to upgrade from a grievance tracker to a fullfledged online dispute resolution platform for MSMEs. This empowers MSMEs to file complaints, receive responses, and participate in mediation all online, expediting payments.
- ⇒ **Strengthened MSME Representation:** The National Board for MSME will include representatives from all State Secretaries, fostering better policymaking that reflects ground realities and addresses MSME challenges across India.
- ⇒ **Modernising the Act:** The 2006 MSME Act requires updates to address contemporary issues like persistent delayed payments and the evolving support needs of MSMEs. Amendments aim to create a more responsive legal framework for their growth.

## Key Initiatives Announced by the Ministry of MSME

- ⇒ **MSME Trade Enablement & Marketing (TEAM) Initiative:** Aims to facilitate the onboarding of 5 lakh micro and small enterprises onto the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC). The government will provide

financial assistance for onboarding, cataloguing, account management, logistics, packaging material, and design. Half of the beneficiary MSEs will be womenowned enterprises.

- **Yashasvini Campaign:** A series of mass awareness campaigns for formalising womenowned informal micro enterprises and providing capacity building, training, handholding, and mentorship to womenowned enterprises. The campaigns will be organized by the Ministry of MSME in collaboration with other Central Ministries/Departments, State Governments, and Women Industry Associations, focusing on Tier 2 and 3 cities.

### 6 Pillars for the Government's MSME Initiatives:

- **Building a Stronger Foundation:** Focuses on formalising businesses and ensuring easier access to credit, vital for the growth and stability of MSMEs.
- **Expanding Market Reach:** The government aims to increase access to domestic and international markets for MSMEs, along with encouraging ecommerce adoption to expand their reach further.
- **Technological Transformation:** Emphasises leveraging modern technology to boost productivity and efficiency within the MSME sector.
- **Skilling the Workforce:** Enhancing skill levels and promoting digitalisation in the service sector are crucial for MSMEs to keep pace with the evolving market.
- **Going Global with Tradition:** The government will support traditional industries like Khadi, Village, and Coir to help them compete in the global marketplace.
- **Empowering Entrepreneurs:** Prioritises fostering enterprise creation among women and artisans, promoting inclusive growth within the MSME sector.

### Recent Government Initiatives Related to MSMEs

- Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance (RAMP) Scheme
- Credit Guarantee Trust Fund for Micro & Small Enterprises (CGTMSE)
- Interest Subsidy Eligibility Certificate (ISEC)
- A Scheme for Promoting Innovation, Rural Industry & Entrepreneurship (ASPIRE)
- Credit Linked Capital Subsidy for Technology Upgradation (CLCSS)
- Zero Defect & Zero Effect (ZED)
- CHAMPIONS Portal

### Challenges Faced by MSMEs

- **Limited Access to Finance and Credit:** MSMEs often struggle to obtain formal financing and credit facilities, hindering their growth and expansion. Only 16% of MSMEs have access to formal credit, leading many to rely on informal sources at higher costs.
- **Technological Deficiency:** There is a significant lack of technological advancements and limited digital infrastructure, which restricts their ability to innovate and compete effectively. Limited access to research and development facilities and challenges in adopting Industry 4.0 technologies further hinder their competitiveness.
- **Market Access and Competition:** MSMEs face limited market access and intense competition from largescale enterprises, which undermines their market share and profitability.
- **Skilled Labour Shortage:** Acquiring skilled labour and managing talent is a persistent issue, affecting the quality and efficiency of operations. A report by Assocham estimates that India has a skills gap of 23 million workers, making it difficult for MSMEs to find qualified employees, which impacts productivity and innovation.
- **Economic Vulnerability:** MSMEs are particularly vulnerable to economic downturns and market fluctuations, which can significantly impact their stability and growth prospects. During the Covid19 pandemic, around 21% of MSMEs in India permanently closed due to the economic impact, making them more vulnerable to economic downturns.
- **Raw Material Shortage:** MSMEs struggle with fluctuating raw material prices and limited financial capacity for bulk purchasing. This is particularly challenging for small textile units, which often face difficulties with cotton price volatility, impacting their profit margins and competitiveness.

### Issues With Current Litigation System

- The expensive legal process makes it hard for small businesses to seek justice.
- The current system takes too long to resolve disputes, worsening the financial difficulties of small businesses.
- The Samadhan portal only provides information for analysis and does not help directly resolve disputes.

### Way Forward

- **Financial Empowerment and Access:** Enhance access to formal credit through targeted schemes, collateral relaxation, and promoting alternative financing options like venture capital, angel investors, and peertopeer lending platforms.
- **Digital Transformation and Market Expansion:** Impart digital literacy, and technical skills, facilitate ecommerce integration, subsidise investments in digital infrastructure, and establish linkages with large enterprises for subcontracting.
- **Regulatory Reforms and Skilling:** Simplify regulations, implement single window clearance systems, conduct regulatory impact assessments, launch targeted skill development programs aligned with industry needs, and promote entrepreneurship education at all levels. Establish mentorship programs connecting successful entrepreneurs with inspiring MSME owners.
- **Infrastructure, Risk Management, and Policy Awareness:** Investing in developing reliable power, transportation, and communication infrastructure for MSMEs to thrive. Develop risk management strategies like insurance schemes and encourage product/market diversification to improve resilience.
- **Global Competitiveness and Quality Enhancement:** Promoting the adoption of quality management systems, and developing exportoriented MSME clusters can enhance global competitiveness and quality. Zero Defect Zero Effect (ZED) certification scheme, for example, has helped MSMEs improve quality and reduce environmental impact.

### ANSWER IS A QUESTION BANK

#### Context

- The NDA government has taken a significant step by appointing a committee led by Koppillil Radhakrishnan, former chairman of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), to propose reforms for the examination process and improve data security protocols for the National Testing Agency (NTA).
- This initiative reflects the government's commitment to addressing the longstanding issues within the examination system.
- Additionally, Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan made a bold move by cancelling the UGC-NET examination following revelations of malpractices.
- This decision underscores the government's willingness to take decisive actions to uphold the integrity of the examination process.



#### Vision of NEP 2020

- The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 aims to fundamentally transform the nature of learning assessments.
- It advocates for a shift from summative assessments, which primarily test rote memorization, to more regular and formative evaluations.
- These assessments focus on competency-based learning and test higher-order skills such as analysis, critical thinking, and conceptual clarity.
- This approach aligns with the broader agenda of the Ministry of Education, emphasizing the need for continuous improvement and modernization in the educational assessment landscape.

#### Challenges Identified by the Parliamentary Standing Committee

- The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth, and Sports, in its 336th report in 2021, highlighted several persistent challenges in the conduct of public examinations.
- These include issues like question paper leaks, administration of incorrect question papers, confusion regarding seating arrangements, rampant cases of copying, and the appointment of inappropriate examiners.
- The committee recommended that the examination management competency of institutions should be a mandatory criterion for accreditation.



- ⇒ This recommendation underscores the need for a robust and reliable examination system to maintain the credibility of educational assessments.

### The Question Bank System

- ⇒ The Question Bank system offers a promising solution to many of the identified issues.
- ⇒ By providing a category-wise pool of questions to students at the beginning of the academic year, the element of secrecy is removed.
- ⇒ This transparency reduces the risk of question paper leaks and other malpractices.
- ⇒ The system ensures that students are prepared holistically, rather than focusing on specific questions.
- ⇒ Additionally, it promotes comprehensive coverage of the syllabus by teachers, as the potential for selective teaching is eliminated.
- ⇒ The introduction of the Question Bank system can significantly enhance the fairness and integrity of public examinations.

### Need for Independent Educational Leadership

- ⇒ The issue of inadequate human resources for leadership positions in educational institutions is a significant concern.
- ⇒ There is a pressing need to develop an independent cadre, such as an Indian Education Service, to ensure quality control and effective institution-building.
- ⇒ Introducing specialized courses in school management, college management, and university management can prepare individuals for leadership roles in the education sector.
- ⇒ This approach will help in creating a pool of qualified professionals who can contribute to the improvement and modernization of educational institutions.

### Ensuring Trust and Transparency

- ⇒ The trust in the evaluation system and the guarantee of transparency, fairness, and justice are crucial for any educational assessment system.
- ⇒ The introduction of Question Banks, the evolution of alternative evaluation systems, and the development of institutional leadership will ensure that this trust remains intact.
- ⇒ These measures will contribute to creating a reliable and effective examination system that meets the highest standards of integrity and fairness, thereby fostering a culture of trust and transparency in the educational ecosystem.

### What Steps Can Be Taken to Address the Challenges in the Examination System?

#### Focus on Understanding and Analytical Ability:

- ⇒ Examinations should assess students' comprehension and analytical skills.
- ⇒ Question papers should include various forms of questions to evaluate different abilities in line with the instructional objectives of each course.
- ⇒ Memory-based questions should be minimized to encourage deeper learning.

#### Subject and Skill-Specific Assessments:

- ⇒ Incorporate subject-specific and skill-specific assessments for a comprehensive evaluation of students' learning achievements.
- ⇒ Advocate for challenging assessments that distinguish students based on their academic attainments.
- ⇒ Proper importance should be given to practical components of the curriculum.
- ⇒ Practical exams should be designed to assess students' hands-on skills and application of theoretical knowledge.

#### Prevent Cheating:

- ⇒ Strict measures such as installing CCTV cameras, appointing vigilant invigilators, and providing adequate guidance to students on avoiding unfair means should be implemented to curb cheating.
- ⇒ Examination centers that fail to prevent cheating should be penalized or canceled.

#### Examinations as a Means, Not an End:

- ⇒ The primary purpose of examinations should be to facilitate learning and help students achieve educational objectives.
- ⇒ Examinations should not be treated as the final goal but as a tool to promote continuous learning and improvement.

### Leverage Technology for Credibility:

- ⇒ Utilize technology in assessments to enhance credibility, standardizing question papers and evaluations.
- ⇒ Explore market-available software solutions for both centralized and distributed assessment systems.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ By implementing these measures, the examination system can be transformed to better reflect students' true capabilities, foster a fair and transparent assessment environment, and ultimately enhance the quality of education in India.

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## DIGITAL JURISPRUDENCE IN INDIA, IN AN AI ERA

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### Context

- ⇒ The rapidly evolving technology of AI poses a significant challenge to existing legal frameworks and judicial precedents designed for a pre-AI world.

### Generative AI (GAI)

- ⇒ Generative AI (GAI) represents a transformative force with the potential to revolutionize society.
- ⇒ However, existing legal frameworks and judicial precedents may struggle to govern this technology effectively.
- ⇒ GAI refers to artificial intelligence capable of generating new content, such as images, text, music, and videos, based on patterns learned from existing data.
- ⇒ It is used in various applications, including art creation, drug discovery, and generating realistic human-like conversations.



### Safe Harbour and Liability Fixation

- ⇒ One of the most contentious issues in Internet governance is the liability of intermediaries for hosted content.
- ⇒ The landmark Shreya Singhal judgment upheld Section 79 of the IT Act, granting intermediaries 'safe harbour' protection against hosting content, contingent on meeting due diligence requirements outlined in Section 3(1)(b) of the Information Technology (Intermediaries Guidelines) Rules.
- ⇒ However, applying this to Generative AI tools remains challenging.
- ⇒ There are contrasting views on the role of GAI tools. Some argue that they should be considered intermediaries, akin to search engines, even though they do not host links to third-party websites.
- ⇒ Others view them as conduits for user prompts, where altering the prompt changes the output, making the generated content akin to third-party speech and attracting lesser liability for the generated content.
- ⇒ In the Christian Louboutin Sas vs Nakul Bajaj and Ors (2018) case, the Delhi High Court held that safe harbour protection applies solely to "passive" intermediaries, referring to entities functioning as mere conduits or passive transmitters of information.
- ⇒ However, distinguishing between user-generated and platform-generated content is increasingly challenging with Large Language Models (LLMs).
- ⇒ Liability for AI chatbots arises once the information is reposted on other platforms by the user; mere response to a user prompt is not considered dissemination.

### The Copyright Conundrum

- ⇒ Section 16 of the Indian Copyright Act 1957 stipulates that "no person" shall be entitled to copyright protection except by the provisions of the Act.
- ⇒ Globally, there is reluctance to provide copyright protection to works generated by AI.
- ⇒ The 161st Parliamentary Standing Committee Report found that the Copyright Act of 1957 is "not well equipped to facilitate authorship and ownership by Artificial Intelligence."
- ⇒ Under current Indian law, a copyright owner can take legal action against anyone who infringes on their work with remedies such as injunctions and damages.
- ⇒ However, it remains unclear who is responsible for copyright infringement by AI tools.

- ⇒ Classifying GAI tools as intermediaries, conduits, or active creators complicates the courts' ability to assign liability.
- ⇒ ChatGPT's 'Terms of Use' attempt to shift liability to the user for any illegal output, but the enforceability of such terms in India is uncertain.

### Privacy Concerns

- ⇒ The landmark K.S. Puttaswamy judgment (2017) by the Supreme Court of India established a strong foundation for privacy jurisprudence, leading to the enactment of the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 (DPDP).
- ⇒ While traditional data aggregators raise privacy concerns during the collection and distribution of personal information, Generative AI introduces a new layer of complexity.
- ⇒ The DPDP Act introduces the "right to erasure" and the "right to be forgotten."
- ⇒ However, once a GAI model is trained on a dataset, it cannot truly "unlearn" the information it has already absorbed.
- ⇒ This raises critical questions about data privacy.

### Steps to Pursue

#### Learning by Doing:

- ⇒ Consider granting GAI platforms temporary immunity from liability following a sandbox approach.
- ⇒ This allows responsible development while gathering data to identify legal issues that could inform future laws and regulations.

#### Data Rights and Responsibilities:

- ⇒ Overhaul the process of data acquisition for GAI training.
- ⇒ Solutions could include revenue-sharing or licensing agreements with data owners.

#### Licensing Challenges:

- ⇒ Licensing data for GAI is complex due to the lack of a centralized licensing body for web data.
- ⇒ A potential solution is the creation of centralized platforms, akin to stock photo websites like Getty Images, to simplify licensing and ensure data integrity against historical bias and discrimination.

### Way Forward

- ⇒ The jurisprudence around Generative AI (GAI) is still evolving and demands a comprehensive re-evaluation of existing digital jurisprudence.
- ⇒ A holistic, government-wide approach and judicious interpretations by constitutional courts are essential to maximize the benefits of this powerful technology while safeguarding individual rights and protecting them against unwelcome harm.

## FACIAL RECOGNITION TECHNOLOGY IN INDIA

### Introduction

- ⇒ Recently, the NITI Aayog, the premier public policy think-tank of the Government of India, has called for comprehensive policy and legal reforms to regulate the use of Facial Recognition Technology (FRT) in the country.
- ⇒ This move addresses growing concerns about privacy, transparency, and accountability.

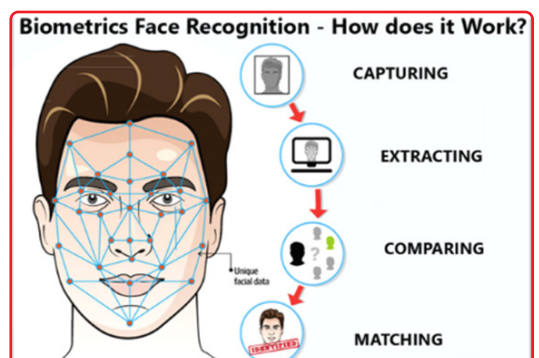
### Proposals to Regulate FRT in India

#### Current Status of Regulation in India

- ⇒ **Absence of Legal Framework:** Currently, India lacks a comprehensive legal framework to regulate the use of Facial Recognition Technology (FRT).

#### Need for Regulating FRT

- ⇒ **Multifaceted Challenges:** FRT presents distinct challenges compared to other technologies due to its ability to capture and process sensitive biometric data remotely. Existing regulations might not adequately address these specific concerns.



- ⇒ **Ensuring Responsible Development:** A comprehensive governance framework is essential to mitigate risks and ethical concerns associated with FRT, such as privacy violations, algorithmic bias, and surveillance abuse.
- ⇒ **International Thought Leadership:** Proactive regulation can position India as a global thought leader in FRT governance, shaping international discourse and policies.
- ⇒ **Promoting Public Trust:** Effective regulation will build public trust in the technology, facilitating its widespread adoption across various sectors.
- ⇒ **Balancing Innovation and Safeguards:** The reforms aim to balance promoting FRT innovation with necessary safeguards to protect individual rights and societal interests.

### Key Proposals

- ⇒ **Standardizing Liability:** Establishing a legal framework to impose liability and define damages for harms caused by FRT malfunctions or misuse, incentivizing responsible development and deployment.
- ⇒ **Ethical Oversight:** Creating an independent ethical committee with diverse expertise to oversee FRT implementation, addressing issues of transparency, accountability, and potential bias within the algorithms.
- ⇒ **Transparency in Deployment:** Mandating clear and transparent guidelines on the deployment of FRT systems, including public notification and obtaining consent where necessary.
- ⇒ **Legal Compliance:** Ensuring FRT systems comply with the Supreme Court's established legal principles in its judgment given in the Justice K. S. Puttaswamy (Retd) vs. Union of India case, which includes legality, reasonability, and proportionality.

## Understanding Facial Recognition Technology (FRT)

### About

- ⇒ **Algorithm-Based Technology:** FRT creates a digital map of the face by identifying and mapping an individual's facial features, matching it against a database.

### Working

- ⇒ **Capture and Reconstruction:** The facial recognition system captures facial features through a camera and uses software to reconstruct these features.
- ⇒ **Database Integration:** The captured face is stored in a database, which can be integrated with software used for security, banking, etc.

### Uses

- ⇒ **Verification:** Matching a person's facial map against a database to authenticate their identity (e.g., unlocking phones).
- ⇒ **Identification:** Matching a facial map from a photograph or video against a database to identify a person (e.g., law enforcement).

### Concerns Regarding the Use of FRT Technology

- ⇒ **Inaccuracy, Misuse, and Privacy Concerns:** Misidentification, particularly across racial and gender demographics, and surveillance clash with data privacy and protection objectives.
- ⇒ **Racial and Gender Biases:** Disparities in FRT accuracy based on race and gender can exclude deserving candidates and reinforce societal biases.
- ⇒ **Exclusion from Essential Services:** Failures in biometric authentication, such as under the Aadhaar system, have excluded individuals from accessing essential government services.
- ⇒ **Absence of Data Protection Laws:** Lack of comprehensive data protection laws makes FRT systems vulnerable to misuse, with inadequate safeguards for biometric data.
- ⇒ **Ethical Concerns:** FRT raises questions about balancing public safety with individual rights, potential misuse for social control, and suppression of dissent.

### FRT Regulation in Other Countries

- ⇒ **European Union (EU):** The EU's AI Act categorizes FRT systems as "high risk" and subjects them to strict compliance requirements, alongside GDPR and the Data Protection Directive.
- ⇒ **UK, US, Canada, and Australia:** Regulation of FRT is governed by respective data protection and privacy laws.

### Way Forward

- ⇒ **Robust Legal Framework:** Establish dedicated laws governing FRT deployment by both public and private actors, clearly defining lawful purposes, emphasizing proportionality, and establishing accountability.

- ⇒ **Ethical Oversight and Governance:** Create independent ethical oversight committees to assess FRT deployments, prescribe codes of practice, and ensure compliance.
- ⇒ **Transparency and Data Protection:** Mandate public disclosure of FRT deployments and align FRT governance with India's upcoming data protection framework to ensure robust data protection safeguards.
- ⇒ **Addressing Bias:** Develop guidelines promoting fair and non-discriminatory use of FRT, especially in high-stakes applications.
- ⇒ **Global Leadership:** Actively participate in international discussions on FRT governance to shape global standards and leverage India's technological leadership to champion responsible AI development on the world stage.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ The regulation of Facial Recognition Technology in India is crucial to ensure responsible development and deployment while addressing privacy, ethical, and bias concerns.
- ⇒ A robust legal and ethical framework, along with international collaboration, will enable India to harness the benefits of FRT while safeguarding individual rights and societal interests.

## GRANTING GREATER AUTHORITY TO PANCHAYATS

### Introduction

- ⇒ The decentralization of power to local bodies has long been a cornerstone of India's governance structure, aimed at fostering inclusive and sustainable development.
- ⇒ However, a recent World Bank working paper has highlighted the need for granting greater authority to Panchayats and strengthening their fiscal capacity to counteract a trend of recentralisation.
- ⇒ This call for reform comes at a time when the efficiency and autonomy of Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) are crucial for effective grassroots governance.



### Context and Current Challenges

- ⇒ Recentralisation is a phenomenon observed with the increasing adoption of online payment systems, Management Information Systems (MIS)-based beneficiary selection, and digital beneficiary tracking.
- ⇒ These centralized systems have inadvertently diminished the decision-making power of local bodies.
- ⇒ The World Bank paper notes that Gram Panchayat (GP) council members often spend excessive time at Block Development offices and District Collectorates, serving as intermediaries rather than empowered decision-makers.

### Recommendations for Empowering Panchayats

The working paper outlines several recommendations to enhance the authority and efficiency of Panchayats:

- ⇒ **Enhanced Fiscal Capacity:** Increasing the financial resources available to Panchayats is essential. This includes improving local tax capacity, filling bill collector vacancies, digitizing property records, and granting GPs more autonomy to levy taxes and cesses.
- ⇒ **Broader Decision-Making Authority:** Empowering Panchayats with greater decision-making power will improve governance. This includes granting ward members (WMs) within village councils financial resources to execute their roles effectively.
- ⇒ **Building Local Tax Capacity:** A critical aspect of Panchayat autonomy is the ability to generate and manage local revenue. Improved tax collection mechanisms and financial autonomy will enable better planning and execution of local development projects.

### The Panchayati Raj System in India

The Panchayati Raj system in India was institutionalized through the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act of 1993, following recommendations from the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee in the 1950s. It established a three-tier system of governance at the grassroots level:

- ⇒ **Gram Panchayat:** The most basic level, representing village councils.
- ⇒ **Block Panchayat:** Overseeing a group of villages.

⇒ **Zila Panchayat:** The district council, managing a larger area.

This system aims to decentralize power and promote local self-government, facilitating grassroots development and democratic participation.

### Significance of Panchayati Raj

The Panchayati Raj system holds significant importance for several reasons:

- ⇒ **Decentralization of Power:** It empowers local communities to manage their own affairs, making decisions on local development issues.
- ⇒ **Promotion of Local Self-Government:** It provides a platform for villagers to participate in decision-making processes, directly affecting their lives.
- ⇒ **Inclusive Development:** It ensures the involvement of marginalized groups, such as women, Scheduled Castes (SCs), Scheduled Tribes (STs), and other backward classes in local governance.
- ⇒ **Accountability and Transparency:** It offers a mechanism for citizens to voice their concerns and hold local representatives accountable.
- ⇒ **Political Empowerment:** It serves as a training ground for grassroots leaders, encouraging political participation and preparing citizens for higher levels of governance.

### Challenges Facing Panchayati Raj Institutions

Despite their significance, PRIs face several challenges:

- ⇒ **Unequal Capacity and Resources:** Disparities in financial resources, infrastructure, and skilled personnel among Panchayats affect their ability to perform effectively.
- ⇒ **Political Interference:** Interference from higher political authorities or local vested interests undermines the autonomy and decision-making power of local representatives.
- ⇒ **Weak Financial Autonomy:** Dependence on state and central government funds, which can be delayed or insufficient, hampers local development projects.
- ⇒ **Social and Cultural Factors:** Entrenched social hierarchies, caste dynamics, and gender biases influence local governance, affecting the effectiveness of PRIs.
- ⇒ **Infrastructure and Service Delivery:** Many rural areas still face challenges related to inadequate infrastructure, healthcare, and educational facilities.

### Way Ahead

Addressing these challenges requires sustained efforts from both government authorities and civil society organizations. Strengthening the Panchayati Raj system involves:

- ⇒ **Enhancing Financial Autonomy:** Ensuring equitable distribution of resources and enabling local tax generation.
- ⇒ **Promoting Inclusive Governance:** Empowering marginalized groups and ensuring their active participation in decision-making processes.
- ⇒ **Building Local Capacities:** Providing training and resources to enhance the capabilities of Panchayat members.
- ⇒ **Ensuring Accountability and Transparency:** Strengthening mechanisms for local accountability and citizen engagement.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ Granting greater authority to Panchayats and strengthening their fiscal capacity are essential steps toward fostering effective and inclusive grassroots governance in India.
- ⇒ By addressing the current challenges and empowering local bodies, India can harness the full potential of decentralized governance, promoting sustainable development and improving the quality of life for its rural population.

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## HOW THE PESA HAS BOOSTED FOREST CONSERVATION IN INDIA

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### Introduction:

- ⇒ The policy approach to conservation in India has long grappled with two types of conflicts: conservation versus resource extraction by local communities, and conservation versus 'economic development'.
- ⇒ These conflicts often lead to a balancing act where conservation goals are weighed against the demands of economic growth and the needs of local communities.

**The Approach:**

- The state has historically adopted a piecemeal approach to conservation, sometimes prioritizing resource extraction and at other times conservation.
- This direction is often influenced by the competing interests of political elites at national, state, and local levels.
- Centralization of political power tends to favor the interests of big capital over those of local communities, leading to deforestation driven by activities such as mining, power projects, commercial timber extraction, and the construction of large dams.
- Conversely, when conservation initiatives do occur, they frequently follow a top-down approach, which can restrict local communities' access to traditional forest lands essential for their livelihoods.

**The PESA Act:**

- The Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act (PESA), passed in 1996, extends the framework of local government councils to Scheduled Areas.
- These areas, designated under the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution, are regions predominantly inhabited by tribal populations whose customary rights are recognized.
- While the 73rd Amendment in 1992 formalized local self-government through Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) in non-Scheduled Areas, it did not mandate representation for Scheduled Tribes (STs).
- PESA, however, introduced an electoral quota reserving all chairperson positions and at least half the seats on each local government council for ST individuals.
- States that have poorly implemented PESA, such as Gujarat, often lack mandated ST representation in gram sabha committees.

**Equitable Representation:**

- Studies tracking the increase and decrease of tree and vegetation cover in forested areas have shown that mandated formal representation for STs leads to an average annual increase in tree canopy by 3% and a reduction in deforestation rates.
- These positive effects are more pronounced in areas with substantial forest cover at the start of the study period.
- The data indicates that the rise in tree canopy and decrease in deforestation began after the introduction of PESA elections with ST quotas.
- Merely having PRIs or local self-government without mandated ST representation did not result in conservation benefits.

**On Democratic Decentralization:**

- The study also compared the impacts of PESA with the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (FRA), which aimed to strengthen ST rights to forest lands.
- It found that FRA had no significant additional impacts on conservation beyond those caused by PESA.
- The study highlights a key theoretical distinction between administrative decentralization (focused on efficient execution) and democratic decentralization (emphasizing representative, downwardly accountable local actors with autonomous decision-making power). True democratic decentralization involves empowering local councils with discretionary power and resources to make significant decisions affecting people's lives.

**Conclusion:**

- In conclusion, mandated political representation for marginalized communities is one institutional mechanism that can enhance conservation outcomes.
- Another mechanism, according to the study, is vesting power in a single umbrella institution that empowers marginalized voices.
- Such an institution, rather than multiple ones with different mandates, can better balance the dual policy objectives of development and conservation, consolidating power into a more substantive and meaningful democratic authority.

## INDIA GRANTS RECORD PATENTS

### Introduction

- India has made significant strides in intellectual property rights, particularly in the realm of patents.
- Recently, the Union Minister of Commerce and Industry announced that India issued around one lakh patents in 2024, marking a substantial increase in patent approvals.
- This milestone highlights India's growing emphasis on innovation and research.



### What is a Patent?

#### About:

- A patent is a legal right granted for an invention, providing the patent holder exclusive rights to use, replicate, or sell the invention without interference from others.
- Patent protection is territorial, meaning it is effective only within the jurisdiction where it is granted.
- The Indian patent system is governed by the Patents Act, 1970, with regular amendments to adapt to changing environments, the latest being the Patents (Amendment) Rules, 2024.

#### Criteria of Patentability:

- An invention must be novel, non-obvious, and capable of industrial application to be patentable.
- It should not fall under the exclusions of sections 3 and 4 of the Patents Act, 1970.

#### Patents Act, 1970:

- This principal law came into force in 1972, replacing the Indian Patents and Designs Act of 1911.
- The Act was amended by the Patents (Amendment) Act, 2005, extending product patents to all fields of technology, including food, drugs, chemicals, and microorganisms.
- The amendments also introduced compulsory licensing and provisions for pre-grant and post-grant opposition.

#### Key Changes Under Patents (Amendment) Rules, 2024

- **Reduced Timeline for Filing a Request for Examination (RFE):** From 48 months to 31 months from the priority date.
- **Introduction of 'Certificate of Inventorship':** Recognizes inventors' contributions by identifying them for their patented inventions.
- **Frequency of Filing Statements:** Reduced from once a financial year to once every three financial years.
- **Amendments in Pre-Grant and Post-Grant Opposition Procedures:** Adjusted time frames for submission of recommendations by an Opposition Board and the response time for applicants.

#### Global Innovation Index (GII) 2023

- In the GI 2023 rankings by the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), India secured the 40th position out of 132 countries, an improvement from the 46th position in 2021 and the 81st rank in 2015.
- Additionally, a WIPO study indicated a 31.6% rise in patent applications in India in 2022, surpassing growth rates in China and the UK.

#### Significance of Granting Patents

- **Encouraging Innovation and Research:** Patents provide exclusive rights, incentivizing inventors to innovate.
- **Attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI):** Strong intellectual property protection attracts more FDI, offering confidence to foreign investors that their innovations will be safeguarded.
- **Creating a Knowledge-Based Economy:** Protecting intellectual assets in literature, arts, music, and branding fosters a knowledge-based economy.

#### Challenges in the Patenting System

- **Lengthy Approval Process:** Patent examinations can take months or years, delaying the securing of rights.
- **Backlog of Patent Applications:** High volumes of applications lead to backlogs, extending approval times.
- **Limited Awareness and Education:** Many inventors lack knowledge about the patenting process, hindering effective protection of inventions.



- ⇒ **Resource Constraints:** The patenting process can be expensive, posing a barrier for inventors with limited resources.
- ⇒ **Stringent Patentability Criteria:** Exclusions under Section 3 of the Patents Act can hinder innovation in certain areas.
- ⇒ **Enforcement Issues:** Enforcing patent rights against infringers can be costly and time-consuming.
- ⇒ **Biopiracy and Traditional Knowledge Issues:** Ensuring fair access to genetic resources and protecting traditional knowledge is complex.

### Steps Needed to Improve the Patenting System

- ⇒ **Simplifying Procedure:** Streamline the application process with online filing and user-friendly interfaces. Provide clear guidelines for patent drafting and prosecution.
- ⇒ **Simplify Approval Process:** Increase resources in patent offices for faster examination and offer expedited options for critical inventions.
- ⇒ **Clearing Backlog:** Implement efficient case management to reduce backlog.
- ⇒ **Creating Awareness:** Integrate IP education in academic curricula and establish IP support centers for small businesses.
- ⇒ **Provision of Subsidies:** Introduce subsidies and fee reductions for individual inventors and startups. Promote patent pools and collaborative research.
- ⇒ **Relaxing Patentability Criteria:** Harmonize patentability criteria with international standards and offer pre-filing consultations.
- ⇒ **Strengthen Legal Mechanism:** Enhance IP enforcement mechanisms, including specialized courts and faster adjudication. Promote alternative dispute resolution (ADR).
- ⇒ **Protecting Traditional Knowledge:** Implement stricter regulations against biopiracy and develop a national database of traditional knowledge.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ India's record number of patents in 2024 reflects its growing focus on innovation and intellectual property rights.
- ⇒ The ongoing improvements in the patenting system, including streamlined processes, increased awareness, and enhanced legal mechanisms, are essential for sustaining this growth.
- ⇒ By addressing the challenges and implementing the necessary steps, India can continue to foster an environment conducive to innovation, attract more foreign investments, and build a robust knowledge-based economy.

## INDIA IMPLEMENTS NEW LAWS, REPLACES COLONIAL ERA CODES

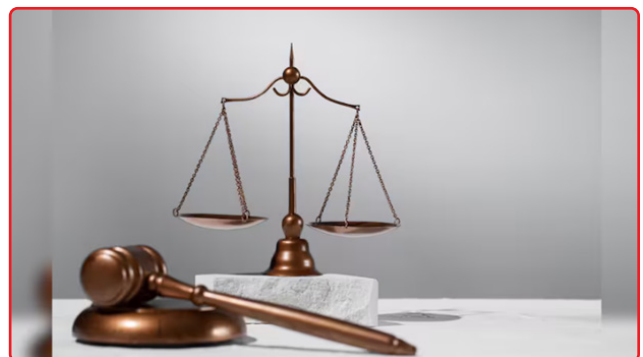
### Introduction

- ⇒ On July 1, 2023, India marked a significant transformation in its legal framework by enacting three new crime laws, replacing the colonial era codes with updated legislation that reflects Indian values and social norms.
- ⇒ This overhaul aims to modernize the criminal justice system, ensuring it aligns with contemporary societal needs and human rights standards.

### New Legal Framework

The newly implemented laws are:

- ⇒ **Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 (BNSS):** This law replaces the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC), altering the rules and procedures for handling criminal cases.
- ⇒ **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS):** Replacing the Indian Penal Code (IPC), this legislation revises definitions and penalties for various crimes, reducing the number of sections from 511 in the IPC to 358.
- ⇒ **Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam:** This law replaces the Indian Evidence Act, aiming to simplify and modernize the standards for evidence in court proceedings.



### Objectives and Impact

- The primary objective of these laws is to eliminate remnants of colonial rule from the Indian judicial system.
- Beyond punitive measures, the new laws focus on ensuring justice, protecting human rights, and enhancing civil rights protections.
- A key goal is to reduce delays in the criminal justice process.

### Revised Sections and Key Offences

The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) has renumbered and amended several prominent sections of the IPC:

- **Murder (Section 103 BNS):** Formerly Section 302 IPC.
- **Attempt to Murder (Section 109 BNS):** Previously under Section 307 IPC.
- **Rape (Section 63 BNS):** Replacing Section 375 IPC.
- **Cheating (Section 318 BNS):** Renumbered to remove the negative connotation associated with "420," formerly Section 420 IPC.

### About Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita

- The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita or "Indian Code of Justice" draws from historical Indian texts like Manusmriti and Arthashastra, integrating civil, criminal, and procedural law.
- Emphasizing dharma (moral duty), the Nyaya Sanhita includes sections on royal responsibilities, inheritance, and contract law, highlighting a blend of law, philosophy, and ethics.
- It prefers restorative justice over punitive measures and is one of the earliest examples of legal pluralism in Indian jurisprudence.

### About Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita

- The Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (Indian Civil Protection Code) proposes a comprehensive framework to enhance public safety and security laws.
- This code aims to unify various national and statelevel laws into a single, cohesive legislation covering crisis management, public health emergencies, civil defense, and internal security.
- The goal is to modernize response systems and improve preparedness for different situations, ensuring coordinated action across government levels, informed by lessons from recent disasters and crises.

### About Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam

- Reflecting advancements in technology, Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam (BSA) updates the 1872 Indian Evidence Act.
- The revised law addresses the challenges of handling evidence in an era where technology permeates legal processes.
- It treats digital documents as equivalent to paper records, making them admissible and enforceable.
- The BSA expands the scope of secondary evidence to include mechanical reproductions, verified copies, and counterparts of unsigned documents.
- Testimony from witnesses who can verify documents through hash # matching is also recognized as secondary evidence.
- This legal reform ensures that the handling of evidence is robust and technologically relevant.

### Conclusion

- The enactment of these new laws signifies a pivotal moment in Indian legal history, replacing outdated colonialera codes with modern legislation that aligns with Indian values and current societal needs.
- The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam collectively aim to streamline legal procedures, enhance justice delivery, and ensure that the criminal justice system is equipped to handle contemporary challenges.
- These reforms are poised to strengthen India's legal framework, promoting a more efficient, just, and human rightscentric approach to law enforcement and judicial proceedings.

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## INDIA NEEDS THE ANCHOR OF A NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY

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### Introduction

- The new National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government in India is confronted with pressing national security challenges, including key decisions on military investments and strategic partnerships.
- Experts advocate for the creation of a comprehensive National Security Strategy (NSS) to ensure coordinated, long-term planning and efficient resource utilization, thereby bolstering India's global standing.

### Need for a Holistic Approach

To effectively manage national security, the government must adopt a holistic approach. This involves:

- Moving beyond piecemeal and haphazard reforms and relationships.
- Developing a new framework for decision-making, specifically by formulating an NSS.

### Lack of a National Security Strategy

Unlike many major powers, India does not publish an NSS. This results in:

- Capability investment decisions being made through internal negotiations among military services.
- Plans and priorities becoming entrenched and rarely re-evaluated.
- Grand strategic vision being confined to a few top officials and often overshadowed by other political considerations.



### Strategic Risks

- India must proactively address strategic risks rather than reacting to them. Global challenges such as climate change, pandemics, and China's rapid naval buildup require decades of coordinated policy effort.
- Conflicts in regions like Ukraine and Gaza could introduce new technologies and tactics to India's neighborhood. Regular processes are needed to understand and plan for these challenges.

### Benefits of a National Security Strategy

#### Comprehensive Strategic Assessment

- An NSS would mandate a thorough review of threats and opportunities, forcing India to address evolving challenges, like the growth of the Chinese navy, before they become severe threats.

#### Coherent Framework for Long-Term Planning

- An NSS would provide a coherent framework for long-term planning. Strategic competition requires extensive peacetime work to conceptualize security measures, develop military capabilities, and form international partnerships.
- An NSS would help the government make informed decisions on resource allocation, such as choosing between a new aircraft carrier or a new infantry division.

#### Instrument for Signalling Intent

- An NSS would signal India's strategic intent to both friends and adversaries, clarifying its role as a net security provider in the Indian Ocean and its commitment to countering armed coercion against smaller countries.
- It would also communicate India's policies to its partners, highlighting areas of converging interests and explaining cooperation limits.

#### Synchronization of Government Efforts

- An NSS would synchronize efforts across various government arms, aligning the work of the Indian Army, Indian Air Force, and Indian Navy.
- It would also improve coordination among national security agencies, including the Ministries of Defence, External Affairs, Home Affairs, and intelligence agencies.

#### Accountability and Transparency

- An NSS would introduce a new accountability tool, ensuring the bureaucracy adheres to the political leadership's intent.
- It would make the government's national security policies transparent to Parliament and the public, ensuring citizens understand how their government plans to safeguard national security.

### Characteristics of an Effective National Security Strategy

An effective NSS should:

- Be a public document issued with the imprimatur of the Prime Minister.
- Synchronize efforts across the government and signal the government's political intent domestically and internationally.

- ⇒ Identify trade-offs and opportunity costs, enabling political leaders to make rational decisions for long-term growth.
- ⇒ Provide the intellectual framework necessary for India to become one of the world's leading powers.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ The new NDA government must address national security challenges with a holistic and strategic approach.
- ⇒ Developing and implementing an NSS is essential for coordinated, long-term planning and effective resource use.
- ⇒ By doing so, India can better manage its national security, address evolving threats, and strengthen its position as a global power.

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## JOINT SITTING OF PARLIAMENT AND LEADER OF HOUSE

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### Introduction:

- ⇒ In the intricate framework of India's parliamentary democracy, certain mechanisms and roles hold significant importance in ensuring the smooth functioning and resolution of legislative processes.
- ⇒ Among these are the joint sittings of Parliament and the position of the Leader of the House.
- ⇒ Recently, the President of India addressed the joint sitting of both houses of Parliament, highlighting the relevance and procedural nuances of such events.



### What is the Joint Sitting of Parliament?

#### About:

- ⇒ A joint sitting involves both houses of Parliament, the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, meeting together to deliberate and make decisions on crucial legislative matters.

### Types of Joint Sittings in the Constitution:

#### Presidential Address under Article 87:

- ⇒ The President addresses both Houses of Parliament at the beginning of the first session after each general election and at the beginning of the first session of each year.
- ⇒ The Constitution (First Amendment) Act of 1951 modified Article 87 to specify that the President addresses "the first session after each general election to the House of the People and at the commencement of the first session of each year."

#### Resolution of Legislative Deadlocks under Article 108:

- ⇒ Joint sittings can be convened when a bill is passed by one house but rejected or not returned by the other, when the President returns a bill for reconsideration, or when more than six months have elapsed without the bill being passed by the other House.

#### Significance of Joint Sitting:

- ⇒ Joint sittings serve as a crucial platform for resolving legislative impasses and facilitating comprehensive discussions on important national issues.
- ⇒ They provide the President an opportunity to outline the government's policy priorities and legislative agenda, particularly after general elections, reflecting the mandate and priorities of the newly elected government.

#### Key Provisions for Joint Sittings:

- ⇒ **Chairmanship:** The Speaker of the Lok Sabha chairs the joint sittings.
- ⇒ **Rules of Procedure:** The proceedings follow the Lok Sabha's rules of procedure.
- ⇒ **Quorum:** One tenth of the total members from both houses form the quorum.
- ⇒ **Purpose:** Joint sittings are used as a last resort to resolve legislative deadlocks.

#### Exceptions to Joint Sittings:

- ⇒ Money Bills (Article 110)
- ⇒ Constitution Amendment Bills (Article 368)

**Historical Context:**

Since 1950, only three bills have been passed through joint sittings:

- ⇒ Dowry Prohibition Bill, 1960
- ⇒ Banking Service Commission (Repeal) Bill, 1977
- ⇒ Prevention of Terrorism Bill, 2002

**Who is the Leader of the House (LOH)?****Current LOH in Rajya Sabha:**

- ⇒ Health Minister Jagat Prakash Nadda was recently appointed as the Leader of the House in the Rajya Sabha.

**Legal Backing:**

- ⇒ The term Leader of the House is defined in the Rules of Procedure for both the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha.

**Appointment Process:**

- ⇒ The LOH is a minister and a member of the Rajya Sabha, nominated by the Prime Minister.
- ⇒ The Leader of the House can appoint a Deputy Leader of the House.
- ⇒ In the United States, a comparable position is known as the 'majority leader.'

**Responsibilities:**

- ⇒ Conducts the overall process, especially debates and discussions.
- ⇒ Maintains harmony among members.
- ⇒ Upholds the respect of the Rajya Sabha.
- ⇒ Ensures standard proceedings during parliamentary debates.

**LOH in Lok Sabha:**

- ⇒ Typically, the Prime Minister if they are a house member.
- ⇒ If not, it's a Minister who is a member and is nominated by the Prime Minister for this role.
- ⇒ By convention, the Prime Minister is always the Leader of the Lok Sabha.

**Conclusion:**

- ⇒ The joint sittings of Parliament and the role of the Leader of the House are pivotal in maintaining the integrity and efficiency of the legislative process in India.
- ⇒ They ensure that even in the face of political stalemates, there is a structured mechanism to move forward and address critical national issues.
- ⇒ The recent presidential address to the joint sitting of the newly elected 18th Lok Sabha underscores the ongoing relevance of these parliamentary procedures in shaping the country's legislative agenda and governance.

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**MADHYA PRADESH CM LAUNCHES 'LOKPATH MOBILE APP' FOR ROAD ISSUES**


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**Introduction**

- ⇒ On July 6, 2024, Chief Minister Mohan Yadav of Madhya Pradesh launched the Lokpath Mobile App, a digital initiative aimed at addressing road issues reported by citizens within seven days.
- ⇒ The app was unveiled at a media event in the Bhopal state assembly building, marking a significant step towards improving road maintenance and accountability in the state.

**Purpose and Functionality of the App**

- ⇒ The Lokpath Mobile App enables citizens to directly report road problems such as potholes or other damage.
- ⇒ Developed by the Madhya Pradesh State Electronic Development Corporation Limited, the app ensures a robust mechanism for reporting and resolving issues.



- ⇒ Users can take a picture of the road problem and upload it through the app, which then sends the report directly to the relevant authorities.
- ⇒ This system enhances transparency, accountability, and efficiency, mandating the resolution of each reported issue within seven days.

### Operational Mechanism and Officer Accountability

- ⇒ Upon receiving a complaint through the app, the designated officer is responsible for rectifying the road defect within the stipulated seven days.
- ⇒ The process is monitored closely, with the app providing updates and feedback to the complainant on the final resolution.
- ⇒ This not only expedites the response time but also increases the accountability of public officers involved in the process.

### Implementation Stages and Coverage

- ⇒ The rollout of the Lokpath Mobile App is planned in two stages.
- ⇒ The first phase, which began on July 2, covers national highways, state highways, and major district roads.
- ⇒ The second phase will extend to other district and rural roads.
- ⇒ The app encompasses all roads under the Public Works Department's jurisdiction, from state roads to national routes.

### Future Impact and Enhancements

- ⇒ Chief Minister Yadav emphasized that the app is a crucial component in enhancing the state's Road Information and Management System.
- ⇒ The Lokpath Mobile App aims not only to facilitate swift road repairs but also to support the overarching goal of maintaining high-quality infrastructure.
- ⇒ By leveraging advanced technology and promoting proactive road maintenance, the initiative is expected to significantly improve approximately 40,000 kilometers of roads across the state.
- ⇒ Through the centralization of complaints and resolutions via the mobile app, Madhya Pradesh is setting a precedent in using technology for public benefit and infrastructure accountability.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ The launch of the Lokpath Mobile App by Chief Minister Mohan Yadav represents a major advancement in road maintenance and public accountability in Madhya Pradesh.
- ⇒ By allowing citizens to report road issues directly and ensuring prompt resolution, the app enhances transparency, efficiency, and officer accountability.
- ⇒ This initiative not only addresses immediate road repair needs but also contributes to the broader goal of maintaining high-quality infrastructure throughout the state.
- ⇒ Through innovative use of technology, Madhya Pradesh is leading the way in fostering public participation and ensuring infrastructure reliability.

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## MERCY PETITION

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### Introduction:

- ⇒ The recent denial of a mercy petition by the President of India for a Pakistani national sentenced to death for the 2000 Red Fort terrorist attack has highlighted the importance and complexities of mercy petitions in India.
- ⇒ This article provides a comprehensive examination of the concept, constitutional framework, philosophy, judicial review, and significant judgments related to mercy petitions, as well as a comparison with international practices.



### What is a Mercy Petition?

#### About:

- ⇒ A mercy petition is a formal request made by a convict sentenced to death or imprisonment, seeking clemency from the President or the Governor.

- ⇒ This mechanism exists in several countries, including the USA, UK, Canada, and India.
- ⇒ Article 21 of the Indian Constitution, which guarantees the right to life, forms the basis for the concept of mercy petitions.

### Philosophy Behind Mercy Petitions:

- ⇒ The philosophy of pardoning powers in India is rooted in the recognition that no judicial system is infallible and that there must be mechanisms to rectify potential judicial errors.
- ⇒ This safeguard serves as a corrective measure against miscarriages of justice, helping maintain public trust in the criminal justice system.
  - **Rectification of Judicial Errors:** The pardoning power acts as a final check to prevent the miscarriage of justice due to judicial errors.
  - **Maintaining Public Trust:** Ensuring that the criminal justice system is perceived as fair and just is essential for maintaining public confidence.

### Constitutional Framework:

- ⇒ **Article 72:** Empowers the President to grant pardons, reprieves, respites, or remissions of punishment, or to suspend, remit, or commute the sentence of any person convicted of an offense:
  - In all cases where the punishment or sentence is by a Court Martial.
  - In all cases where the punishment or sentence is for an offense against any law relating to a matter to which the executive power of the Union extends.
  - In all cases where the sentence is a sentence of death.
- ⇒ **Article 161:** Grants similar powers to the Governors of states, allowing them to pardon, reprieve, respite, or remit punishment for offenses against state laws.

### Process of Making a Mercy Petition:

- ⇒ Although there is no statutory written procedure, typically, a convict or their relative submits a written petition to the President, which is then forwarded to the Ministry of Home Affairs for comments and recommendations. The process involves several steps:
  - **Submission:** The convict or their representative submits a written petition to the President.
  - **Review:** The President's Secretariat forwards the petition to the Ministry of Home Affairs.
  - **Recommendation:** The Ministry of Home Affairs reviews the petition and submits its recommendations to the President.
  - **Decision:** The President makes the final decision based on these recommendations.

### Grounds for Filing a Mercy Petition:

Mercy or clemency may be granted based on various grounds, including:

- ⇒ **Health:** The convict's physical or mental health condition.
- ⇒ **Family Conditions:** The financial and social condition of the convict's family, especially if the convict is the sole breadwinner.
- ⇒ **Humanitarian Grounds:** Circumstances that evoke a sense of compassion or justice.

### Judicial Review:

- ⇒ The Supreme Court of India has established that the exercise of pardoning power can be judicially reviewed on limited grounds.
- ⇒ This ensures that the process remains just and is not misused. The grounds for judicial review include:
  - **Non-application of Mind:** If the decision appears to have been made without proper consideration.
  - **Malafide Intentions:** If the decision is influenced by corrupt motives or personal vendettas.
  - **Exclusion of Relevant Material:** If significant information was ignored or excluded in the decision-making process.

### Important Judgments Related to Mercy Petitions:

- ⇒ **Bachan Singh v. State of Punjab (1980):** The Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the death penalty but emphasized that it should be awarded only in the "rarest of rare" cases.
- ⇒ **Maru Ram v. Union of India (1981):** Clarified that the power to grant pardons under Article 72 is exercised on the advice of the Council of Ministers.
- ⇒ **Kehar Singh v. Union of India (1989):** Examined the President's pardoning power, noting that convicts do not have the right to an oral hearing for mercy petitions.
- ⇒ **Shatrugan Chauhan v. State of U.P. (2014):** Held that inordinate delays in deciding mercy petitions can lead to commutation of death sentences.

### Types of Pardoning Power:

- ⇒ **Pardon:** Completely absolves the convict, erasing the conviction and all penalties.
- ⇒ **Commutation:** Substitutes a harsher punishment with a lighter one.
- ⇒ **Remission:** Reduces the period of the sentence without changing its nature.
- ⇒ **Reprieve:** Temporarily postpones the execution of a sentence.
- ⇒ **Respite:** Temporarily postpones the execution of a sentence, often for medical reasons.

### International Practices:

- ⇒ **USA:** The President can grant reprieves or pardons for federal offenses, while state governors hold similar powers for state offenses.
- ⇒ **UK:** The Constitutional monarch can pardon or reprieve offenses on ministerial advice.
- ⇒ **Canada:** The National Parole Board can grant relief under the Criminal Records Act.

### Conclusion:

- ⇒ The mercy petition system is a vital component of the Indian justice system, serving as a crucial check against judicial errors and upholding humanitarian principles.
- ⇒ To enhance the effectiveness and fairness of the process, the following measures could be implemented:
  - **Transparency:** Establish clear guidelines for considering petitions and defining timeframes for decisions.
  - **Legal Representation:** Ensure that petitioners have access to legal representation during the process.
  - **Public Trust:** Promote transparency and accountability to maintain and enhance public trust in the system.

### Way Forward:

- ⇒ By balancing the system's strengths and addressing its shortcomings, India can ensure a more humane and effective application of this extraordinary power, ultimately reinforcing the principles of justice and fairness in the criminal justice system.

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## MULTIPOLAR WORLD

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### Introduction:

- ⇒ The incumbent BJP is running a coalition government after a decade.
- ⇒ On foreign policy fronts, the coalition government has shown continuity by placing S. Jaishankar as the Foreign Minister.
- ⇒ This tenure of Jaishankar will see some continuity and some shifts in foreign policy formulations.

### S. Jaishankar Articulated India's Viewpoint on the Global Front:

- ⇒ At the Bratislava Forum in June 2022, Jaishankar shifted the political narrative on India by reminding the world that "Europe has to grow out of the mindset that Europe's problems are the world's problems but the world's problems are not Europe's problems."
- ⇒ This statement resonated widely, particularly in the Global South, and even in Europe, where German Chancellor Olaf Scholz acknowledged Jaishankar's point at the Munich Security Conference a year later.
- ⇒ India's goodwill, built over decades as a neutral and non-aggressive power, has served the country well despite major geopolitical changes.
- ⇒ However, for the next five years, India will need a differentiated narrative — one based on its 8.2 percent GDP growth, entry into global trade regimes, and the digital model.



### Continuities and Shifts in Foreign Policy:

#### The Continuities in Foreign Policy:

##### 1. Greater Integration and Cohesion in the Subcontinent:

- This was evident at the inauguration of the new government, attended by India's neighbors — Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, Maldives, Sri Lanka, along with Indian Ocean partners Mauritius and Seychelles.
- All of South Asia, except Pakistan, was present, indicating that greater economic integration and geopolitical cohesion in the Subcontinent are on the agenda.



## 2. India Will Remain a Voice for the Global South:

- During India's G20 presidency in 2023, the inclusion of the African Union into the G20 highlighted the focus on the Global South.
- Additionally, PM Modi inaugurated the (Dakshin) Development and Knowledge Sharing Initiative Global South Centre for Excellence, aimed at knowledge-sharing for locally relevant solutions and capacity-building.
- More such initiatives are expected in the future.

## 3. Cordial Relations with Great Powers:

- India has built strong relationships with the great powers, especially the US, maintaining a 2+2 ministerial dialogue (foreign and defense ministries) with both the US and Russia.
- India is part of more multilateral groupings than ever before, such as the G20, Quad, SCO, BRICS, I2U2, and the Indo-Pacific Economic Framework.
- New Delhi has managed its friendship with Moscow well, continuing political engagement and imports of oil and defense equipment.
- Despite tensions with China, India has maintained peace, setting an example for other great powers.
- India is also close to other G7 countries and has been a permanent invitee to G7 summits since 2019.
- While stepping into trade regimes with the great powers is still a work in progress, India has made significant strides with middle powers like Australia, the UAE, and the four non-EU EFTA countries.

## The Shifts in Foreign Policy:

### 1. A Shift from Geo-Politics to Geo-Economics:

- India's global conversation must transition from political to economic discourse.
- Delhi has committed to investors that India can be a trusted +1 alternative to China.
- There will be greater efforts on the Make in India initiative, expansion of supply chains, and infrastructure development.
- Corporate India will be encouraged to increase investments in manufacturing, and India will position itself as a services exporter beyond IT services.
- The Global South, rich in human capital, will follow India's example.
- The Telugu Desam Party, a new coalition partner, is completing the building of Amaravati, aiming for a modern capital competitive on the tech front domestically and internationally.
- India's digital public infrastructure model is already accepted and promoted in both developed and developing countries.

### 2. More Coordination Among Middle Powers:

- The past five years have seen global instability due to COVID-19, the Russia-Ukraine war, the Gaza conflict, and sanctions imposed by great powers.
- Middle powers – countries with significant economic, regional, and military influence – are beginning to assert themselves.
- Countries like Australia, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Singapore, and Germany are emerging as influential players.
- India fits in with this group, along with Brazil, South Africa, Mexico, and Indonesia, and will increase its engagement with these peer nations.

## Conclusion:

- ⇒ India is an important participant in several groupings, both old and new. Its goal is economic and financial progress, and just global governance, reflecting the emerging multipolar world order.
- ⇒ By maintaining its central role, India helps to keep the world steady amid ongoing global shifts, neither succumbing to the "exorbitant privilege" of dollar domination nor the reserve-currency obsession of the Yuan.

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## NHRC NOTICE TO ODISHA GOVERNMENT OVER CUSTODIAL DEATH

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### Introduction

- ⇒ On July 6, 2024, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) issued a notice to the Odisha government, requiring an explanation as to why the Commission should not recommend monetary compensation to the next of kin of a person who allegedly died in police custody.
- ⇒ This incident has raised significant ethical and legal concerns regarding custodial violence and the responsibilities of law enforcement agencies.

### What is Custodial Death?

- ⇒ Custodial death refers to a death that occurs while a person is in the custody of law enforcement officials or a correctional facility.
- ⇒ Causes can include excessive force, neglect, or abuse by the authorities.
- ⇒ The Law Commission of India states that violence committed by a public servant against an arrested or detained person amounts to custodial violence.

### Judicial Pronouncements on Custodial Death

Several landmark Supreme Court cases have addressed custodial violence:

- ⇒ **Kishore Singh vs. State of Rajasthan (1981)**: Held that the use of third-degree methods by the police violates Article 21 of the Constitution of India.
- ⇒ **Nilabati Behera vs. State of Orissa (1993)**: Established that the state is liable to pay compensation for custodial deaths resulting from police negligence or brutality, recognizing the state's responsibility to protect the right to life.
- ⇒ **Joginder Kumar vs. State of Uttar Pradesh (1994)**: Addressed human rights violations due to indiscriminate arrests, emphasizing recommendations from the National Police Commission to avoid unnecessary arrests.
- ⇒ **D.K. Basu vs. State of West Bengal (1997)**: Laid down specific guidelines to prevent custodial torture and deaths, including requirements for arrest memos, the right to medical examination, and access to legal counsel.

### DK Basu Case Guidelines

The Supreme Court provided preventive measures to be followed by police officers during arrests, such as:

- ⇒ Prohibiting third degree methods.
- ⇒ Improving the working environment, training, and orientation of police officials with basic human values.
- ⇒ Following constitutional requirements under Articles 21 and 22 (1).
- ⇒ Creating awareness among arrestees about their basic rights.
- ⇒ Ensuring that an arrest memo is made and a family member is present during the arrest.

### Ethical Concerns Associated with Custodial Deaths

Custodial deaths raise several ethical issues, including:

- ⇒ **Violation of Human Rights and Dignity**: Inflicting physical and psychological harm on individuals in custody violates their inherent dignity and basic human rights.
- ⇒ **Undermining the Rule of Law**: Engaging in violence contradicts the principles of justice, equality, and the safeguarding of human rights.
- ⇒ **Presumption of Guilt**: Torturing individuals before conviction violates their right to a fair trial and due process.
- ⇒ **Professionalism and Integrity**: Custodial violence breaches ethical standards expected of law enforcement officers, damaging the profession's reputation.

### Measures to Prevent Custodial Torture

Several measures can be taken to prevent custodial torture and deaths:

#### Strengthening Legal Systems

- ⇒ Enforcing strict laws against torture.
- ⇒ Ensuring prompt and impartial investigations into allegations of custodial torture.
- ⇒ Holding perpetrators accountable through fair and expeditious trials.

#### Police Reforms and Sensitization

- ⇒ Improving police training programs to uphold human rights and dignity.
- ⇒ Establishing oversight mechanisms to monitor and address cases of custodial torture.
- ⇒ Promoting accountability, professionalism, and empathy within law enforcement agencies.

#### Empowering Civil Society and Human Rights Organizations

- ⇒ Supporting active advocacy by civil society organizations for victims of custodial torture.
- ⇒ Allowing NHRC to inquire into matters even after a year from the alleged human rights violation.
- ⇒ Providing support and legal aid to victims and their families.
- ⇒ Collaborating with international human rights bodies and organizations to seek redress and justice.

## Conclusion

- The NHRC's notice to the Odisha government regarding the alleged custodial death highlights the urgent need for accountability and reform in law enforcement practices.
- Custodial deaths not only violate human rights but also undermine the rule of law and ethical standards expected of police officers.
- Strengthening legal systems, implementing police reforms, and empowering civil society are crucial steps to prevent custodial torture and ensure justice for victims.
- The judiciary's guidelines and ethical considerations must be rigorously followed to protect the dignity and rights of individuals in custody.

## NINE YEARS OF DIGITAL INDIA INITIATIVE

### Introduction

- Launched on 1st July 2015, the Digital India initiative was a transformative endeavor by the Indian Government aimed at revolutionizing the country's digital landscape.
- Over the past nine years, this initiative has sought to integrate technology into various aspects of governance, economy, and daily life, thereby fostering greater transparency, efficiency, and participation.
- The initiative builds on earlier e-governance efforts from the mid-1990s but distinguishes itself with a more cohesive and interactive approach.
- As we reflect on the progress and impact of Digital India, it is crucial to understand its core components, key initiatives, challenges, and the way forward.



### Core Objectives

- **Bridging the Digital Divide:** Digital India aims to reduce the disparity between those with access to digital technology and those without, ensuring inclusive growth.
- **Enhancing Digital Participation:** The initiative strives to provide equitable access to digital benefits in areas like education, healthcare, and government services, making technology accessible to all citizens.
- **Driving Economic Growth:** By leveraging technological advancements, Digital India aims to stimulate economic development across the country.
- **Improving Quality of Life:** Through the strategic application of technology, the initiative seeks to elevate the living standards of citizens.

### Key Components of Digital India

- **Broadband Highways:** Focus on developing extensive high-speed broadband networks to improve connectivity and empower citizens digitally.
- **Universal Access to Mobile Connectivity:** Expanding mobile network coverage to remote areas, ensuring no region is left out of the digital revolution.
- **Public Internet Access Program:** Establishing Common Service Centres (CSCs) to provide affordable internet access in underserved areas, promoting digital literacy.
- **E-Governance:** Enhancing the efficiency, accessibility, and transparency of government services through technological integration.
- **E-Kranti:** Facilitating the electronic delivery of services to citizens, improving accessibility and operational efficiency.
- **Information for All:** Digitizing government records and promoting open data initiatives to fuel innovation and development.
- **Electronics Manufacturing:** Encouraging local electronics manufacturing to reduce imports, create jobs, and boost the economy.
- **IT for Jobs:** Training youth in IT skills to meet industry demands through programs like the Digital Literacy Mission and Skill India.

- ⇒ **Early Harvest Programs:** Implementing quick-win projects such as online access to school certificates, digital attendance, and public Wi-Fi.

### Major Digital India Initiatives

- ⇒ **Aadhaar:** A biometric identification system assigning unique 12-digit identity numbers to residents, enhancing identification and service delivery.
- ⇒ **BharatNet:** Aiming to provide high-speed broadband connectivity to villages, facilitating digital services in rural areas.
- ⇒ **Startup India:** Supporting entrepreneurship and startups through incentives, funding, and mentoring.
- ⇒ **e-NAM:** An online trading platform connecting agricultural markets, improving efficiency in the sale of produce.
- ⇒ **Digital Locker:** A secure cloud-based platform for storing and accessing important documents digitally.
- ⇒ **BHIM UPI:** A digital payment system enabling secure peer-to-peer transactions using smartphones.
- ⇒ **eSign Framework:** Allowing online signing of documents using digital signatures.
- ⇒ **MyGov:** A citizen engagement platform facilitating participation in governance and policy discussions.
- ⇒ **e-Hospital:** Digitized hospital services, including online registration and access to health records.
- ⇒ **SWAYAM:** An online education platform offering courses and resources.
- ⇒ **UMANG App:** A unified mobile application providing access to various government services.
- ⇒ **Smart Cities Mission:** Integrating digital technologies into urban planning and services to enhance urban living.

### Digital India Act (DIA), 2023:

- ⇒ This proposed act aims to replace the outdated IT Act of 2000, adapting to the evolving digital landscape, emerging technologies like AI and blockchain, and new digital challenges.

### Challenges and Solutions

#### Digital Divide:

- ⇒ **Challenge:** As of 2021, only 47% of Indians had internet access, with rural areas particularly underserved.
- ⇒ **Solution:** Initiatives like PM-WANI for public Wi-Fi networks and investment in 5G infrastructure aim to bridge this gap.

#### Digital Literacy:

- ⇒ **Challenge:** Only 34% of the population is digitally literate.
- ⇒ **Solution:** Expanding digital literacy programs like the Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA) and integrating digital literacy into school curricula.

#### Cybersecurity and Data Privacy:

- ⇒ **Challenge:** Over 1.1 million cybersecurity incidents were reported in 2020.
- ⇒ **Solution:** Implementing the National Cyber Security Strategy and robust privacy legislation such as the India Digital Personal Data Protection Act (DPDPA) 2023.

#### E-Governance:

- ⇒ **Challenge:** Issues with digital identity verification and service delivery in remote areas persist.
- ⇒ **Solution:** A unified digital identity system and expanding the number of services available through the UMANG app.

#### Skills Gap:

- ⇒ **Challenge:** 20% of tech professionals lack relevant digital skills.
- ⇒ **Solution:** National digital skills programs to up-skill professionals, aiming to meet the demand for 30 million digitally skilled professionals by 2026.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ Over the past nine years, the Digital India initiative has made significant strides in transforming the digital landscape of India.
- ⇒ By focusing on core objectives such as bridging the digital divide, enhancing digital participation, and driving economic growth, the initiative has brought numerous benefits to citizens across the country.
- ⇒ However, challenges such as the digital divide, cybersecurity concerns, and the skills gap remain.
- ⇒ Addressing these challenges through targeted solutions will be crucial in ensuring the continued success and sustainability of Digital India.

- As the country moves forward, the Digital India initiative will continue to play a vital role in empowering citizens and fostering a digitally inclusive society.

## NOT AN OPEN AND SHUT CASE

### Introduction

- India has witnessed a seismic shift in its criminal law framework.
- The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (BNS) has replaced the Indian Penal Code (IPC), 1860.
- Similarly, the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam, 2023, has succeeded the Indian Evidence Act, 1872, and the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, has supplanted the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973.

### Continuities in the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS)

#### Retention of IPC Provisions:

- Extent of Retention:** Experts suggest that 80 to 90 percent of the IPC is retained in the BNS, 2023. The essence of the provisions has been maintained, even though the provision numbers have been revised.
- Key Offenses Unchanged:** Provisions relating to culpable homicide, murder, assault, forgery, criminal intimidation, defamation, and rape remain largely unchanged. For instance, murder, previously addressed in sections 300 and 302 of the IPC, is now covered under sections 101 and 103 of the BNS.

#### Minimal Revisions from IPC to BNS

#### Sedition and Negligence:

- Sedition:** The offense of sedition (now section 152 BNS) has been retained but with an expanded definition and increased punishment. It now includes acts endangering sovereignty, such as exciting secession or armed rebellion. Punishment has been increased from three years to life imprisonment.
- Negligent Medical Practice:** The BNS specifically punishes death caused by negligence of a "registered medical practitioner" while performing a medical procedure, addressing a gap in the previous legislation (section 304A IPC).

#### Reform in Theft Provisions:

- Community Service for Petty Theft:** Section 303 of the BNS introduces community service for first-time offenders where the value of stolen property is under Rs 5,000. This is a progressive step considering most thefts are petty.

#### Redefinitions in the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita

#### Organized Crime and Terrorism:

- Unified Framework:** Unlike previous legislative practices that maintained separate statutes for organized crime and terrorism (e.g., UAPA and MCOCA), the BNS integrates these under general criminal law.
- Organized Crime Definition:** Section 111 of the BNS includes unlawful activities such as kidnapping, robbery, vehicle theft, land grabbing, and trafficking, committed by two or more persons. Punishments range from five years to life imprisonment.
- Terrorist Acts:** Former UAPA offenses are now under section 113 of the BNS, with similar definitional provisions but differing procedural safeguards. Decisions on whether to register cases under BNS or UAPA are now vested in officers of Superintendent of Police rank or higher.

#### Conclusion

- Law reform is essential in postcolonial nations to align legal frameworks with contemporary values and constitutional principles.
- In the realm of criminal law, this reform must uphold fair trials, the presumption of innocence, and procedural justice.
- The BNS represents a significant step in this direction, integrating old and new legal provisions to create a coherent and updated criminal law system for India.



## OPPOSITION PUSHES FOR DEPUTY SPEAKER POST AMID STRENGTHENED POSITION IN LOK SABHA

### Context

- With the increased strength of the Opposition in Lok Sabha, there is a renewed push for the Deputy Speaker's post.
- Unlike the 16th Lok Sabha (2014-19) where M Thambi Durai of the AIADMK, an ally of the BJP, held the position, the 17th Lok Sabha (2019-24) did not have a Deputy Speaker.
- Congress MP Rahul Gandhi has expressed willingness to support the NDA's candidate for Speaker, provided the government adheres to parliamentary convention and allocates the Deputy Speaker's post to the Opposition.
- Historically, from 1990 to 2014, the Opposition consistently held this position.



### Constitutional Provisions for Deputy Speaker

- Article 95(1) of the Indian Constitution states that the Deputy Speaker performs the Speaker's duties if the position is vacant and holds the same general powers when presiding over the House.
- Both the Speaker and Deputy Speaker must be appointed "as soon as may be" after the House is constituted, as per Article 93.
- The Constitution does not specify a strict timeline for these appointments, allowing for potential delays. However, the mandatory nature of these roles is underscored by the use of "shall" in the articles, implying an urgency in their election.

### Election Rules and Historical Context

- The election of the Speaker typically occurs in the first session of the new Lok Sabha, usually on the third day following the oath-taking sessions.
- The Deputy Speaker's election often takes place in the second session, although there is no restriction against holding it in the first session.
- Rule 8 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha governs this election, which proceeds once a motion proposing a candidate's name is carried.
- The Deputy Speaker remains in office until the House is dissolved, and they can resign or be removed by a resolution passed by a majority of the House members.

### Deputy Speaker's Role in Absence of Speaker

Historically, the Deputy Speaker has filled in for the Speaker during vacancies. For example:

- After the death of Speaker G V Mavalankar in 1956, Deputy Speaker M Ananthasayanam Ayyangar assumed the role until the end of the Lok Sabha's term.
- After Speaker GMC Balayogi's death in 2002, Deputy Speaker P M Sayeed served as acting Speaker until a new Speaker was elected.

### Opposition's Historical Hold on Deputy Speaker Post

The post of Deputy Speaker has frequently been held by members of the Opposition, especially during Congress-led UPA governments. For instance:

- During UPA-I (2004-09) and UPA-II (2009-14), the position was held by Charanjit Singh Atwal of the Shiromani Akali Dal and Kariya Munda of the BJP, respectively.
- During Atal Bihari Vajpayee's tenure as Prime Minister (1999-2004), P M Sayeed of the Congress served as Deputy Speaker.
- This pattern underscores the role of the Deputy Speaker as a critical element of parliamentary democracy, ensuring a balance of power and representation.

### Significance of Deputy Speaker of Lok Sabha

The Deputy Speaker of Lok Sabha holds significant importance in the Indian parliamentary system. The major significance includes:

- **Orderly Functioning of House:** Ensures orderly conduct of proceedings, upholding the rules of the House, and maintaining decorum while presiding over the House.

- ⇒ **Representation and Inclusivity:** Conventionally, the office of the Deputy Speaker goes to the Opposition Party/Alliance, providing representation to the opposition and promoting balance and inclusivity within the parliamentary system.
- ⇒ **Administrative Responsibilities:** Shares administrative responsibilities with the Speaker, contributing to the effective management of parliamentary affairs.
- ⇒ **Contributing to Committees:** Involvement in various parliamentary committees enhances the quality of deliberations and decision-making processes within these committees.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ The election and appointment of the Deputy Speaker in Lok Sabha are vital for the functioning and balance of parliamentary proceedings.
- ⇒ The Opposition's recent push for this post, backed by constitutional provisions and historical precedence, highlights the ongoing dynamics and negotiations within India's legislative framework.
- ⇒ By adhering to these conventions, the government can ensure a balanced and effective parliamentary system.

## SAMPOORNATA ABHIYAN

### Introduction

- ⇒ The Sampoonata Abhiyan, a development initiative by the Indian government's NITI Aayog, was recently launched in Manzgam Block, Kulgam.
- ⇒ This program aims to transform Aspirational Blocks into Inspirational Blocks by achieving saturation in key development indicators, thus improving the socio-economic conditions of these areas.
- ⇒ The launch event saw significant participation from local officials and the community, marking a significant step towards comprehensive development.



### Recent Initiatives

- ⇒ A grand event was held at the Government Higher Secondary School in Manzgam to kick off the program.
- ⇒ Attendees included Mohd Afzal Parrey, Chairperson of the District Development Council (DDC) Kulgam, and Athar Aamir, Deputy Commissioner (DC) Kulgam.
- ⇒ The primary goal of this project is to ensure measurable progress in all indicators within three months, bringing substantial positive changes to Manzgam's social and economic landscape.

### Program Goals and Implementation

- ⇒ Deputy Commissioner Athar Aamir detailed the program's objectives, aiming for full saturation of selected development markers crucial for Manzgam Block's holistic growth.
- ⇒ Coordinated efforts from local line departments are essential for the timely execution of the program.

### Community Participation and Activities

- ⇒ The launch event featured extensive community involvement, including a marathon for students and various registration booths for local beneficiaries, reviewed by prominent officials.
- ⇒ Such activities not only enhance community engagement but also ensure broad-based benefits from the Sampoonata Abhiyan's development initiatives.

### Distinctive Aspects and National Perspective

- ⇒ Mateen Nazir, a Guest Observer from NITI Aayog, elaborated on the national context of the initiative and its alignment with the Indian government's three-month campaign for rapid improvement. The Sampoonata Abhiyan aims to address six crucial indicators in 112 Aspirational Districts and 500 Aspirational Blocks, including Manzgam, positioning it as a model for rural development.

### About NITI Aayog

- ⇒ **Establishment and Purpose:** NITI Aayog, established on January 1, 2015, replaced the Planning Commission. It stands for "National Institution for Transforming India" and serves as the Indian government's primary policy think tank, providing strategic and policy advice.

- ⇒ **Policy and Technical Advisor:** NITI Aayog formulates effective policies and offers technical guidance to the Centre and States, focusing on technological advancements and skill development for effective program implementation and monitoring.
- ⇒ **Cooperative Federalism:** NITI Aayog promotes cooperative federalism through structured assistance programs and systems, led by the Prime Minister of India.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ The Sampoonata Abhiyan's launch in Manzgam Block is a significant stride towards the overall development of the area.
- ⇒ By achieving saturation of key development indicators and fostering community and government collaboration, Manzgam is poised to become a model for rural growth, demonstrating the effectiveness of targeted development initiatives in transforming Aspirational Blocks into Inspirational Blocks.

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## SYNDICATE VS LAW

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### Overview:

- ⇒ The article focuses on a specific incident in North Dinajpur district where a local leader associated with a political party was filmed assaulting a couple accused of engaging in an extramarital affair.
- ⇒ This assault took place during a village court session, commonly known as a "salishi sabha" or kangaroo court, where community disputes are often resolved informally but sometimes result in severe outcomes.



### Implications of Vigilante Justice:

- ⇒ The incidents illustrate a troubling trend where non-state actors, often with political affiliations or community influence, take on roles that are typically reserved for law enforcement and the judiciary.
- ⇒ This includes delivering summary judgments and punishments without adherence to legal due process. Such actions not only undermine the credibility of formal legal institutions but also jeopardize individual rights and community cohesion.

### Systemic Challenges:

- ⇒ The article points out systemic failures in governance and law enforcement that contribute to the normalization of vigilante justice.
- ⇒ Political patronage and inadequate regulatory oversight are cited as factors that perpetuate impunity for perpetrators of such acts.
- ⇒ Despite occasional arrests, there is skepticism about whether these measures are sufficient to deter future occurrences or address the root causes effectively.

### Response and Recommendations:

- ⇒ There is a growing consensus among critics and experts for stronger regulatory frameworks, enhanced community policing, and swift judicial interventions to prevent vigilante justice from becoming ingrained in local governance.
- ⇒ Upholding the rule of law and ensuring political accountability are seen as essential steps towards restoring public trust in legal institutions and safeguarding citizen rights.

### Conclusion:

- ⇒ The article concludes by emphasizing the importance of a comprehensive approach to address vigilante justice, encompassing legal reforms, community engagement, and political will.
- ⇒ It underscores the need for proactive measures to protect vulnerable populations and uphold fundamental principles of justice and human rights in the face of evolving societal challenges.

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## THE TELECOMMUNICATIONS ACT 2023

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### Introduction

- ⇒ The Telecommunications Act 2023, recently enacted by the UK government, introduces significant updates aimed at optimizing and regulating the use of telecommunications space.



- ⇒ Key sections of the Act, including sections 6–8, 48, and 59(b), have come into effect as of July 6, 2024.
- ⇒ These updates are designed to modernize and enhance the efficiency of the telecommunications industry, building upon measures that have been in place since June 26.

## Understanding the Telecommunications Act

### Modernization of Legal Framework

- ⇒ The Telecommunications Act replaces the outdated Indian Telegraph Act of 1885 and the Indian Wireless Telegraph Act of 1933.
- ⇒ This overhaul is in response to significant technological advancements and changes in the telecommunications sector.
- ⇒ The primary objective is to establish a comprehensive legal system for managing and allocating the telecommunications spectrum.



### Spectrum Utilization and Management

- ⇒ The newly implemented sections focus on the optimal use of the telecommunications spectrum.
- ⇒ The Act permits various actions such as relinquishing, sharing, selling, leasing, and assigning the spectrum.
- ⇒ These measures ensure the efficient utilization of this limited resource and accommodate emerging technologies.
- ⇒ The Act also adopts a technology-neutral approach, promoting flexibility and a wider range of options for spectrum use.

### Regulatory Changes and Appointments

- ⇒ Section 59(b) of the Act amends Section 4 of the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) Act 1997.
- ⇒ This amendment introduces new rules for the appointment of the Chairperson and members of TRAI, ensuring that the regulatory body is governed by individuals meeting the current standards and requirements of the telecommunications industry.

### Enforcement and Compliance

- ⇒ The Act empowers the Central Government to implement effective enforcement mechanisms and oversight.
- ⇒ It includes provisions to prohibit the use of any communication equipment that blocks calls unless explicitly authorized by the government.
- ⇒ These measures are crucial for maintaining the security and integrity of telecom services.

### Impact on the Telecommunications Sector

- ⇒ The Telecommunications Act 2023 establishes a robust and up-to-date framework for spectrum management and regulatory appointments.
- ⇒ This ensures that the telecommunications sector remains aligned with technological advancements and operates efficiently and adaptably.

### About Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI)

- ⇒ **Regulatory Oversight:** Established in 1997, TRAI oversees the telecommunications sector in India, promoting compliance, competition, and efficient service delivery.
- ⇒ **Consumer Protection:** TRAI introduced the National Do Not Call Registry in 2007 to combat telemarketing fraud and the "Telecom Commercial Communications Customer Preference Regulations" in 2018 to curb unwanted business calls.
- ⇒ **Service Quality Monitoring:** TRAI regulates cable and television services and launched the "MySpeed" app to allow users to check and report their internet speeds directly to the government, ensuring transparency and service quality.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ The Telecommunications Act 2023 represents a significant step forward in the regulation and optimization of the telecommunications industry.

- By modernizing the legal framework, promoting efficient spectrum utilization, and ensuring robust regulatory oversight, the Act aligns the sector with current technological trends and sets a foundation for continued innovation and efficiency.
- This comprehensive and adaptable system is crucial for maintaining the integrity and security of telecom services while fostering an environment that supports technological advancement and growth.

## UTTAR PRADESH NIRMAN BILL 2024

### Introduction

- In a significant development, the Uttar Pradesh government has passed the draft for the Uttar Pradesh Nodal Investment Region for Manufacturing (Construction) Area Bill (NIRMAN) 2024.
- This initiative, led by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, is part of a broader strategy to elevate the state's economy to the one trillion dollar mark.

### Objective and Framework

- The NIRMAN2024 bill aims to establish Special Investment Regions (SIRs) across Uttar Pradesh, evenly distributed across the state's four geographical zones.
- These SIRs will serve as cluster regions designed to attract substantial investments.
- By delegating authority from the state government to regional officials, the bill intends to streamline business operations and foster a more conducive environment for economic activities.



### Strategic Development and Economic Impact

- Under the NIRMAN2024 plan, Uttar Pradesh plans to utilize approximately 20,000 acres of land from its land bank to develop these SIRs.
- Notably, the Bundelkhand Industrial Development Authority has earmarked a significant 5,000hectare area for large scale business and industrial activities. This strategic move is expected to:
  - ➔ **Accelerate Economic Growth:** By creating legally protected investment zones and simplifying business processes, the bill aims to catalyze rapid economic expansion.
  - ➔ **Facilitate Business Operations:** Streamlined procedures and empowered regional authorities will make it easier for businesses to operate efficiently.
  - ➔ **Generate Employment:** The establishment of SIRs is projected to create numerous job opportunities for local residents.

### Inducement of Investments

- To attract both national and international investments, Uttar Pradesh intends to emulate successful models from states like Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Karnataka.
- The government's plan includes leveraging and enhancing existing frameworks to accommodate and entice significant business investments.

### Additional Developments

Alongside the NIRMAN2024 bill, several complementary initiatives have been undertaken:

- **MoU with ITPO and MSME:** A Memorandum of Understanding was signed between the India Trade Promotion Organization (ITPO) and the Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector to foster a favorable business environment.
- **Convention Centers in Lucknow and Varanasi:** The construction of large convention centers aims to enhance MSME visibility and promote local production.
- **Teacher Reassignments:** Over 2,200 teachers in nonsubsidized secondary schools have been temporarily reassigned to address staffing shortages resulting from a Supreme Court order.

If executed effectively, these initiatives could significantly expedite Uttar Pradesh's journey towards becoming a trillion dollar economy, while also promoting sustainable growth and job creation.

### About Special Investment Regions (SIR)

- **Investment Zones:** SIRs are designated areas designed to attract investments by simplifying business processes and enhancing facilities and infrastructure. They often offer tax incentives and other benefits to stimulate growth.

- **Economic Boost:** By focusing on sectors like technology and industry, SIRs aim to drive local economic growth, create jobs, and foster technological advancement. The Gujarat SIRD Act serves as a notable example of such government initiatives in India.
- **Global Examples:** On the international stage, China's Special Economic Zones (SEZs) and Free Trade Zones (FTZs) offer similar concepts, though SIRs typically have broader economic objectives and encompass larger areas.

### Conclusion

- The Uttar Pradesh NIRMAN Bill 2024 represents a strategic and forward thinking approach to economic development.
- By establishing Special Investment Regions and implementing supportive measures, the state aims to attract significant investments, boost economic growth, and create job opportunities.
- This initiative is poised to play a crucial role in Uttar Pradesh's aspiration to achieve a one trillion dollar economy, fostering longterm prosperity and development.

## WHY THE HURRY?

### Context

- As we approach the implementation of new criminal laws on July 1, there is significant concern about the administration of justice.
- While some changes are beneficial, the expansion of police powers and potential erosion of civil liberties raise alarm.
- Additionally, the readiness of institutions to implement these changes is questionable.

### Overview of New Laws

- The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS), and Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam (BSA) will replace the Indian Penal Code (IPC), Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), and Indian Evidence Act (IEA), respectively.
- Despite being presented as decolonization efforts, 75% of existing provisions remain unchanged, indicating a superficial legislative shift without addressing colonial institutional legacies.



### Crucial Changes Introduced in BSA, 2023

- **Precise Definition of "Document":** Includes electronic and digital records such as emails, server logs, messages, and voicemail messages stored on digital devices.
- **Clarity with Respect to Primary (Electronic) Evidence:** Recognizes each stored recording as primary evidence, aiding in cybercrime investigations.
- **Synchronization with IT Act, 2000:** Incorporates terms like 'semiconductor memory' and 'any communication device' for better visibility.

### Main Features of the Bhartiya Nagrik Suraksha Sanhita Bill, 2023

- **Use of Technology:** Promotes video-conferencing for trials and appeals and mandates video-recording of statements from survivors of sexual violence.
- **Police Accountability:** Requires police to inform the status of a complaint within 90 days and mandates DSP approval for arrests in certain cases.
- **Victim Consultation:** Ensures police consult the victim before withdrawing cases punishable by seven years or more.
- **Trials In-Absentia:** Allows absconding criminals to be tried and sentenced in their absence.
- **Electronic Records:** Empowers magistrates to take cognizance of offenses based on electronic records.

### Concerns with Police Powers

- The new provisions grant excessive powers to the police, such as extending custody durations significantly under Section 187 of the BNSS.
- Unlike the CrPC, which limits police custody to 15 days, the BNSS removes these restrictions, posing threats similar to those of past stringent laws like UAPA and POTA.

### Civil Liberties at Risk

- ⇒ Vague definitions of offenses, such as “false and misleading information” and acts “endangering sovereignty,” pose significant risks to civil liberties.
- ⇒ These provisions open the door to potential abuse, particularly against dissent.

### Trials In-Absentia

- ⇒ The BNSS permits trials in-absentia, undermining the accused’s right to defense.
- ⇒ This shift from the CrPC, which allowed only for evidence recording in the absence of the accused, marks a concerning departure from fair trial standards.

### Questions of Repeal and Implementation

- ⇒ The retention of many existing laws raises questions about the necessity of repealing the old codes.
- ⇒ Ambiguities in transitional provisions could lead to confusion in ongoing cases, particularly regarding the applicability of old versus new laws.

### Institutional Preparedness

- ⇒ The lack of thorough assessment of institutional readiness across police, courts, and prisons is alarming.
- ⇒ Without comprehensive training and evaluation, implementing these laws poses significant risks to liberty and justice.
- ⇒ A delay in enforcement until adequate preparation is essential.

### Key Highlights of the Proposed Changes in BNS

- ⇒ **Adultery and Gender-Neutral Provision:** A gender-neutral provision criminalizing adultery, following the Supreme Court’s 2018 declaration of Section 497 IPC as unconstitutional.
- ⇒ **Non-Consensual Sex and Bestiality:** Criminalizes non-consensual sex between any persons and acts of bestiality.
- ⇒ **Definition of Terms:** Better definitions for terms like “community service” and “life imprisonment.”
- ⇒ **Positive Changes:** Removal of Section 124A (Sedition) and provisions for prosecuting offenses committed in foreign countries.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ While the intent to reform is clear, the execution raises serious concerns about civil liberties, police powers, and institutional capacity.
- ⇒ An independent audit of preparedness is critical before moving forward with these legislative changes.
- ⇒ Ensuring the readiness of institutions and safeguarding civil liberties should be prioritized to achieve meaningful and effective criminal justice reform.

## APPOINTMENT TO CABINET COMMITTEES

### Introduction

- ⇒ The recent reconstitution of eight Cabinet committees by the Union government has brought attention to the role and significance of these committees in the Indian executive framework.
- ⇒ Notably, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) has seen the addition of three new members, while the Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC) and the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) remain unchanged.
- ⇒ Concurrently, the Lok Sabha Speaker has amended the oath-taking rules for Members of Parliament, barring any additional remarks during their oath.



### What are Cabinet Committees?

#### About

- ⇒ Cabinet Committees are subsets of the Union Cabinet, comprising selected Union Ministers.
- ⇒ These committees are designed to streamline decision-making by distributing responsibilities among different groups focusing on areas like economic affairs, security, parliamentary affairs, and political affairs.

- ⇒ They ensure that complex issues receive detailed consideration and are handled efficiently before being presented to the full Cabinet for final approval.
- ⇒ This system is based on the principles of division of labour and effective delegation.

### Types

- ⇒ **Standing Committees:** Permanent in nature.
- ⇒ **Ad hoc Committees:** Temporary, established to address specific problems.

### Features

- ⇒ **Extra-Constitutional Nature:** Cabinet Committees are not mentioned in the Constitution, but their establishment is provided for in the Rules of Business.
- ⇒ **Legal Basis:** The executive in India functions under the Government of India Transaction of Business Rules, 1961, which are derived from Article 77(3) of the Constitution. This article empowers the President to make rules for the smooth functioning of the government and to allocate tasks among Ministers.
- ⇒ **Membership:** These committees are formed by the Prime Minister based on the needs of the time and situation. Their membership typically ranges from three to eight ministers, including both Cabinet and non-Cabinet Ministers. When the Prime Minister is a member, he invariably presides over the committee.

### List of Cabinet Committees

- ⇒ Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA)
- ⇒ Appointments Committee of the Cabinet (ACC)
- ⇒ Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS)
- ⇒ Cabinet Committee on Accommodation
- ⇒ Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs
- ⇒ Cabinet Committee on Political Affairs
- ⇒ Cabinet Committee on Investment and Growth
- ⇒ Cabinet Committee on Skill, Employment, and Livelihood

### Recent Changes

- ⇒ The Home Minister is the only Cabinet member included in all committees.
- ⇒ The Prime Minister heads six of these committees, except for the Committee on Accommodation and the Cabinet Committee on Parliamentary Affairs.
- ⇒ No changes have been made to the Appointments Committee, headed by the Prime Minister with the Home Minister as the sole member.

### Parliamentary Committees

- ⇒ Parliamentary committees are specialized bodies that handle the detailed work of Parliament, which is too complex and extensive to be conducted within full House sittings.
- ⇒ These committees ensure thorough scrutiny, discussion, and investigation into specific matters. Types include Standing Committees and Departmentally Related Standing Committees (DRSCs).

### Groups of Ministers

- ⇒ Groups of Ministers (GoMs) are ad hoc bodies formed to provide recommendations on emergent issues and critical problem areas.
- ⇒ Some GoMs are empowered to make decisions on behalf of the Cabinet, while others make recommendations. Once their advice is crystallized, they are disbanded.

### Lok Sabha Speaker Amends Oath-Taking Rules for MPs

- ⇒ A new clause has been added to 'Direction 1' in the 'Directions by the Speaker' to manage matters not explicitly covered by existing rules.
- ⇒ This amendment mandates that MPs must take and subscribe to the oath or affirmation without using any words or expressions as prefixes or suffixes to the prescribed form.

### Challenges of Cabinet Committees

- ⇒ **Overlapping Mandates:** Leads to delays, inefficiency, and conflicts as committees vie for control, causing proposals to get stuck and decisions to be slow.
- ⇒ **Lack of Expertise:** Committees may lack the necessary expertise, resulting in poorly informed decisions with unintended consequences.
- ⇒ **Information Silos & Poor Communication:** Committees may operate in isolation, leading to duplication of effort, missed opportunities for synergy, and decisions based on limited information.

- **Political Pressure & Short-termism:** Political considerations can push committees to prioritize short-term gains over long-term planning, leading to reactive measures instead of proactive solutions.
- **Lack of Accountability & Transparency:** Secretive decision-making erodes trust, as the legislature cannot hold committees accountable without clear information about their activities.
- **Concentration of Power:** If decision-making authority is concentrated in a few committees or individuals, valuable perspectives might be excluded, leading to unbalanced decisions and potential resentment among excluded parties.

### Way Forward

- **Clear Mandate:** Define committee mandates clearly to avoid ambiguity. Establish a central conflict resolution body for inter-committee disputes.
- **Expert Appointment:** Include subject matter experts as advisors or temporary committee members and partner with external think tanks for specialized knowledge.
- **Better Information Sharing:** Implement a centralized information-sharing platform for all committees and establish regular inter-committee briefings to foster collaboration.
- **Long-Term Goals:** Mandate committees to develop long-term strategic plans alongside short-term action items. Integrate independent economic or social impact assessments into decision-making.
- **Accountability:** Regularly release meeting minutes and summaries to ensure accountability.
- **Broad-Based Consultation:** Ensure broader consultation by inviting other cabinet members as special invitees.

### Conclusion

- Cabinet Committees play a crucial role in the Indian executive framework, ensuring efficient decision-making and handling complex issues.
- However, they face challenges that need to be addressed to improve their effectiveness.
- Clear mandates, expert appointments, better information sharing, long-term planning, accountability, and broad-based consultation are essential steps towards enhancing the functioning of these committees.
- By addressing these challenges, Cabinet Committees can better serve the needs of the government and the public, ensuring transparent, efficient, and informed decision-making.

## DRAFT DIGITAL COMPETITION BILL

### Introduction

- The Draft Digital Competition Bill emerged from the Committee on Digital Competition Law (CDCL), formed by India's Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) to address the unique challenges posed by digital markets.
- Unlike traditional markets, digital markets are characterized by rapid growth facilitated by economies of scale, scope, and network effects.
- These factors allow digital businesses to expand quickly and potentially dominate sectors, raising concerns about fair competition and consumer welfare.



### Understanding the Ex-Ante Framework

- Traditionally, competition laws like the Competition Act, 2002, primarily focus on addressing anti-competitive behavior after it has occurred (ex-post regulation).
- In contrast, the Draft Digital Competition Bill proposes an ex-ante regulatory approach.
- This proactive framework aims to prevent market distortions and abuses of market power before they manifest.
- Inspired by the European Union's Digital Markets Act, which similarly targets large digital platforms, the ex-ante approach in India seeks to ensure that dominant digital firms operate transparently, fairly, and competitively.

### Characteristics and Challenges of Digital Markets

- Digital markets operate differently from traditional markets due to their scalability, network effects, and rapid technological advancements.

- ⇒ These dynamics often lead to winner-takes-all scenarios, where a few firms can achieve significant market power swiftly.
- ⇒ The CDCL expressed concerns that the current regulatory framework's reactive nature may not effectively mitigate these risks, potentially allowing monopolistic practices to harm competition and innovation.

### Key Provisions of the Draft Digital Competition Bill

The Draft Digital Competition Bill introduces several key provisions aimed at regulating large digital platforms, termed as "systemically significant digital enterprises (SSDEs)." These firms, identified based on criteria such as substantial financial strength and user base, would be subject to stringent obligations:

- ⇒ **Fair Operation:** SSDEs must operate fairly and transparently, ensuring that their conduct does not unfairly disadvantage competitors or consumers.
- ⇒ **Non-Discrimination:** They are prohibited from engaging in discriminatory practices that favor their own products or services over those of competitors.
- ⇒ **Transparency:** SSDEs must maintain transparency in their operations, including how they collect, store, and use data.
- ⇒ **Restrictions on Practices:** The bill restricts practices like self-preferencing (prioritizing their own products/services in search results or platforms) and anti-steering (restricting consumers' ability to choose alternative products/services).

### Reception and Critiques

The Draft Digital Competition Bill has garnered mixed reactions from stakeholders:

- ⇒ **Supporters:** Some Indian startups and consumer advocacy groups support the bill as a necessary step to curb the potentially monopolistic practices of large tech companies. They argue that stricter regulations are essential to promote fair competition and protect consumer interests.
- ⇒ **Critics:** However, critics, including some industry experts and stakeholders, raise concerns about the bill's feasibility and potential unintended consequences. They argue that while the ex-ante approach may be effective in the EU context, its application in India's diverse and rapidly evolving market may stifle innovation and entrepreneurial growth. Critics also caution that stringent regulatory measures could disproportionately burden small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs), which rely on innovative business strategies like bundling to compete effectively.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ The Draft Digital Competition Bill represents a significant regulatory initiative aimed at addressing the challenges posed by digital markets in India.
- ⇒ While it reflects global trends towards stricter regulation of large digital platforms, its success will depend on balancing regulatory rigor with fostering a competitive and innovative digital ecosystem.
- ⇒ As the legislative process continues, ongoing dialogue and adjustments will be crucial to ensuring that the bill effectively promotes fair competition, protects consumer interests, and supports sustainable economic growth in India's digital economy.

## INDIA'S DEEP DRILL MISSION

### Overview:

- ⇒ The Ministry of Earth Science has embarked on a pioneering task of deep drilling into the earth's crust to a depth of 6 km, conducted by the Borehole Geophysics Research Laboratory (BGRL) in Karad, Maharashtra.
- ⇒ This mission aims to provide comprehensive insights into geological formations, earthquake mechanisms, and geothermal energy potential.

### Why Koyna?

- ⇒ **Triggered Seismicity:** Unlike typical tectonic earthquakes, Koyna experienced a series of tremors post the Koyna Dam construction in 1962, a phenomenon known as Reservoir-Induced Seismicity (RIS).



- ⇒ **Active Fault Zone:** Koyna-Warna region lies on a geological fault line, which inherently makes it prone to earthquakes.
- ⇒ **Isolated Activity:** The Koyna Dam area is relatively seismically isolated, ideal for focused research.

### Scientific Deep Drilling:

#### Techniques:

- ⇒ **Rotary Drilling:** Uses a rotating drill bit with drilling mud to cool the bit and carry rock cuttings.
- ⇒ **Percussion Drilling:** Uses high-pressure air to power a hammer for breaking rock, effective for hard rock and shallower depths.
- ⇒ **Hydraulic Fracturing:** Sometimes used to create fractures in rock formations.
- ⇒ **Geophysical Surveys:** Employ seismic, magnetic, and gravitational methods for mapping subsurface structures.

#### Other Methods to Study Earth's Interior:

- ⇒ **Seismic Waves:** Analyzing seismic waves from earthquakes to infer the Earth's internal structure.
- ⇒ **Gravitational and Magnetic Field Measurements:** Indicate density and composition variations in the Earth's interior.
- ⇒ **Heat Flow Measurements:** Provide information on the temperature and thermal properties of the Earth's layers.
- ⇒ **Meteorite Composition:** Studying meteorites offers insights into Earth's composition.

#### Global Deep Drilling Projects:

- ⇒ **Project Mohole (US):** Attempted to drill to the Moho Discontinuity in the 1960s.
- ⇒ **Kola Superdeep Borehole (Russia):** Reached 12,262 meters, revealing unexpected findings like liquid water at unexpected depths.
- ⇒ **China's Deep Hole Project:** Aims to drill 10,000 meters in Xinjiang to explore various geological strata.
- ⇒ **Deep Sea Drilling Project (DSDP) and Integrated Ocean Drilling Project (IODP):** Involve ocean drilling to study Earth's history and processes.

#### Key Findings from Koyna Deep Drilling:

- ⇒ **Region's Critical Stress:** The region is highly stressed, leading to frequent small-magnitude earthquakes.
- ⇒ **Water Presence to 3 km:** Indicates deep percolation of meteoric water.
- ⇒ **Insights into Reservoir-triggered Earthquakes:** Identified Deccan trap lava flows overlying ancient granitic rocks.
- ⇒ **Rock Information:** Provided new data on rock properties, fluid composition, temperature, stress regimes, and fracture orientations.
- ⇒ **Data Validation:** High-resolution borehole images enable global data validation.
- ⇒ **Hydraulic Fracturing and Fault Detection:** Measured in-situ stress regimes and detected buried fault zones.

#### Significance:

- ⇒ **Enhanced Earthquake Understanding and Geohazard Management:** Better predictive models and risk mitigation.
- ⇒ **Verification of Geological Models:** Direct observation and sampling for accurate geological models.
- ⇒ **Technological Innovation and Self-Reliance:** Advances in seismology, drilling techniques, sensor development, and data analysis.
- ⇒ **Global Scientific Contribution:** Contributes to global geoscience knowledge, fostering international collaboration.

#### Challenges:

- ⇒ **Rig Capacity:** Greater depths require significantly more powerful rigs.
- ⇒ **Drilling Complexity:** Higher risks and complications at greater depths.
- ⇒ **Core Handling:** Technical challenges in extracting and handling long, heavy rock cores.
- ⇒ **Borehole Stability:** Increased instability risks in deeper boreholes.
- ⇒ **Human Resources:** Extended duration of operations places a burden on skilled personnel.

#### Conclusion:

- ⇒ The pilot data from the 3 km drilling will guide future 6 km plans, enhancing India's scientific drilling capacity and interdisciplinary research.
- ⇒ The Koyna findings have potential industrial applications and international interest, including projects on carbon capture in deep Deccan traps.



## INDIA LAUNCHES MANAS: FIRST TOLL-FREE NATIONAL ANTI-NARCOTICS HELPLINE

### Introduction

- India is set to inaugurate its first toll-free national helpline for narcotics issues, named MANAS (Madak Padarth Nisedh Asuchna Kendra), or the Narcotics Prohibition Intelligence Centre.
- The Union Home Minister, Amit Shah, will launch this initiative on July 18 during the seventh Narco-Coordination Centre (NCORD) meeting.
- The helpline, accessible via the number 1933 and the email info.ncbmanas@gov.in, aims to provide an anonymous and straightforward way for the public to report drug-related activities.



### Goals and Operation of MANAS

- MANAS is designed to be an all-encompassing service to combat drug trafficking and associated crimes.
- It enables citizens to report illegal activities such as drug trafficking, manufacturing, and cultivation through its website (ncbmanas.gov.in) and other means.
- The Narcotics Control Bureau (NCB) will verify the reported information and take necessary action as per the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.

### Integration and Impact

- This initiative is part of the central government's broader strategy, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, to adopt a "zero tolerance" approach towards drug abuse, aiming for a drug-free India by 2047.
- This plan includes strengthening institutional frameworks, improving coordination among drug enforcement agencies, and implementing extensive public awareness campaigns.
- The introduction of the MANAS helpline marks a significant improvement in communication and operational efficiency compared to previous methods.

### Enhancing the Anti-Narcotics Framework

- The launch of the MANAS helpline coincides with the inauguration of the NCB's new zonal office in Srinagar and the release of the NCB's 2023 annual report.
- These developments are part of the ongoing efforts to enhance anti-drug operations nationwide.
- The NCORD system, established in 2016 and upgraded in 2019, is central to this strategy, promoting coordination at the national, state, and district levels.
- This is further supported by the creation of special task forces, drug disposal drives, and other initiatives aimed at addressing the drug problem in India.

### About Narco-Coordination Centre (NCORD)

- The Narco-Coordination Centre (NCORD), established in 2021 in Maharashtra, facilitates cooperation among law enforcement agencies to tackle drug-related crimes.
- Using digital platforms, NCORD coordinates information sharing and actions among various agencies, including the NCB, police, and customs.
- The center aims to prevent the escalation of drug abuse and trafficking through real-time information and coordinated efforts.
- This project reflects the Indian government's commitment to combating the drug issue, guided by its directive to intensify the "war on drugs."

### Conclusion

- The launch of MANAS represents a significant step forward in India's fight against narcotics.
- By providing a toll-free helpline and an easy way to report drug-related activities, the government aims to empower citizens to contribute to a drug-free society.
- Combined with the enhanced coordination efforts of the NCORD and the opening of new NCB facilities, this initiative demonstrates a robust and comprehensive approach to tackling drug abuse and trafficking in India.
- As these efforts continue to evolve, they hold the promise of significantly reducing the narcotics problem and promoting a safer, healthier nation.

## KARNATAKA CABINET CLEARS BILL MANDATING LOCAL JOB RESERVATIONS

### Context

- ⇒ The Karnataka Cabinet has recently approved a Bill mandating significant reservations for local candidates in the private sector, aimed at addressing employment concerns for locals.

### Key Points

#### Bill Overview:

- ⇒ **Name:** Karnataka State Employment of Local Candidates in the Industries, Factories, and Other Establishments Bill, 2024.
- ⇒ **Objective:** To ensure job opportunities for Kannadigas in the private sector by reserving specific percentages of jobs for locals.



#### Reservation Quotas:

- ⇒ **Management Positions:** At least 50% of these roles, which include executive, administrative, and leadership positions, must be filled by local candidates.
- ⇒ **Non-Management Positions:** 75% of roles such as technical, operational, and support positions must be occupied by local candidates.

#### Eligibility Criteria for Local Candidates:

- ⇒ **Birth or Domicile:** Candidates must be born in Karnataka or have been domiciled in the state for at least 15 years.
- ⇒ **Language Proficiency:** Candidates must be able to speak, read, and write Kannada proficiently. There is a required test for this proficiency.
- ⇒ **Educational Requirement:** Candidates should hold a secondary school certificate with Kannada as a language. If not, they must pass a Kannada proficiency test.

#### Minimum Thresholds:

- ⇒ **Management Positions:** The percentage of local candidates should not fall below 25%, even if there are challenges in finding local talent.
- ⇒ **Non-Management Positions:** The percentage should not be below 50%.

#### Fallback Measures:

- ⇒ **Training Programs:** If qualified local candidates are unavailable, industries must collaborate with the government to train local candidates within three years.
- ⇒ **Relaxation Requests:** Establishments can apply for relaxation from the Act's provisions in exceptional cases. The government will review these requests.

#### Penalties for Non-Compliance:

- ⇒ **Fines:** Industries failing to comply with the reservation norms may face penalties ranging from ₹10,000 to ₹25,000.
- ⇒ **Enforcement:** The government aims to rigorously enforce these provisions to ensure effective implementation.

### Background

#### Sarojini Mahishi Report:

- ⇒ The bill is a response to long-standing demands for job reservations for Kannadigas.
- ⇒ Kannada organisations have organised rallies across the state, urging the immediate implementation of the Sarojini Mahishi Report, which was submitted in 1984 and recommended quotas for locals in both government and private sector jobs.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ The Karnataka Cabinet's decision to mandate job reservations for local candidates is seen as a significant move to ensure equitable employment opportunities within the state.
- ⇒ While some industry leaders have criticised the move as discriminatory, proponents argue that it will empower local talent, boost regional employment, and strengthen the state's economy.

- ⇒ The success of the bill will depend on effective implementation and the ability to balance local employment needs with the operational requirements of industries.

## MAINTENANCE RIGHTS OF DIVORCED MUSLIM WOMEN

### Why in News?

- ⇒ The Supreme Court of India, in the case of Mohd Abdul Samad v. the State of Telangana, 2024, dismissed a petition challenging the applicability of Section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) to a divorced Muslim woman.

### What was the Petition About?

- ⇒ A Muslim man filed the petition challenging a direction to pay interim maintenance to his divorced wife under Section 125 CrPC.
- ⇒ The petitioner argued that the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986 should override the secular law of Section 125 CrPC.
- ⇒ He claimed that the 1986 Act, being a special law, provided more comprehensive maintenance provisions and should take precedence over the general provisions of Section 125 CrPC.
- ⇒ The petitioner emphasized that Sections 3 and 4 of the 1986 Act, with a non-obstante clause, empower First Class Magistrates to decide matters of Maher (mandatory gift given by the husband to his wife at the wedding) and subsistence allowances, arguing that family courts lack jurisdiction as the Act mandates Magistrates to handle these issues.
- ⇒ The petitioner also noted the wife's failure to submit an affidavit opting for CrPC provisions over the 1986 Act, as required by Section 5.
- ⇒ He argued that the 1986 Act implicitly repealed Section 125 CrPC for Muslim women due to its specific provisions, thus barring them from seeking relief under Section 125 CrPC.



### What is the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Divorce) Act, 1986?

#### Purpose:

- ⇒ The Act was enacted to protect the rights of Muslim women who have been divorced by, or have obtained divorce from, their husbands.
- ⇒ It provides for matters connected with or incidental to the protection of these rights.

#### Context:

- ⇒ The Act was a response to the Mohd. Ahmad Khan vs. Shah Bano Begum, 1985 case, in which the SC held that Section 125 of the CrPC is a secular provision applicable to all, irrespective of religion.
- ⇒ The right to maintenance under CrPC is not negated by provisions of personal law.

#### Provisions:

- ⇒ A divorced Muslim woman is entitled to a reasonable and fair provision and maintenance from her former husband, to be paid within the iddat period (a period, usually of three months, which a woman must observe after the death of her husband or a divorce before she can remarry).
- ⇒ The Act also covers the payment of mahr (dower) and the return of properties given to the woman at the time of marriage.
- ⇒ It allows a divorced woman and her former husband to choose to be governed by the provisions of sections 125 to 128 of the CrPC, 1973, if they make a joint or separate declaration to this effect at the first hearing of the application.

### Evolution of Legal Provisions

- ⇒ **Danial Latifi & Another vs Union Of India (2001):** The SC upheld the constitutional validity of the 1986 Act, stating that its provisions do not offend Articles 14, 15, and 21 of the Constitution of India. The ruling extended the right of Muslim women to receive maintenance beyond the iddat period until they remarry.
- ⇒ **Shabana Bano v. Imran Khan (2009):** The SC reiterated that divorced Muslim women could claim maintenance under Section 125 of the CrPC, even beyond the iddat period, as long as they do not remarry. This affirmed the principle that the CrPC provision applies irrespective of religion.

### What Does Section 125 of the CrPC Say?

- Section 125 of the CrPC mandates that a Magistrate of the first class may order a person with sufficient means to make a monthly allowance for the maintenance of:
  - ➔ His wife, if she is unable to maintain herself.
  - ➔ His legitimate or illegitimate minor child, whether married or not, unable to maintain itself.
  - ➔ His legitimate or illegitimate adult child with physical or mental abnormalities or injuries that render them unable to maintain themselves.
  - ➔ His father or mother, unable to maintain themselves.

### Supreme Court Observations

- The SC held that Section 125 CrPC applies to all women, not just married women, and emphasized that the provision would apply universally.
- The SC's judgment reaffirms the rights of divorced Muslim women to claim maintenance under Section 125 CrPC, ensuring legal parity and safeguarding constitutional guarantees of equality and non-discrimination.
- The Court dismissed the appeal, reaffirming that Muslim women can seek maintenance under Section 125 CrPC despite the existence of the 1986 Act. The Court noted that Section 3 of the 1986 Act, starting with a non-obstante clause, does not restrict the application of Section 125 CrPC but rather provides an additional remedy.
- The Court affirmed that divorced Muslim women, including those divorced through triple talaq (now deemed illegal), can claim maintenance under Section 125 CrPC irrespective of personal laws.
- Instant triple talaq, or talaq-e-bidat, is a practice within the Muslim community where a man can instantly divorce his wife by pronouncing "talaq" three times in one sitting, through phone, or even via text message. The divorce is immediate and irrevocable, regardless of the husband's later desire to reconcile. Triple talaq has been declared void by the SC and criminalized by the Muslim Women (Protection of Rights on Marriage) Act, 2019.

### Conclusion

- The Supreme Court's dismissal of the petition in Mohd Abdul Samad v. the State of Telangana, 2024 upholds the principle that Section 125 of the CrPC applies universally, irrespective of personal laws.
- This ruling reinforces the rights of divorced Muslim women to seek maintenance under a secular provision, ensuring their financial security and upholding constitutional guarantees of equality and non-discrimination.
- The Court's decision highlights the judiciary's commitment to providing equal protection under the law for all women, regardless of religious background, and affirms the non-obstante nature of the 1986 Act as providing an additional, not exclusive, remedy for divorced Muslim women.
- This landmark judgment is a significant step towards gender justice and the protection of women's rights in India.

## PROJECT PARI (PUBLIC ART OF INDIA)

### Overview:

- **Initiated by:** Ministry of Culture
- **Event:** 46th Session of the World Heritage Committee Meeting, New Delhi
- **Objective:** Project PARI aims to bring public art inspired by India's rich artistic heritage (lok kala/lok sanskriti) into public spaces. The project seeks to integrate traditional art forms with modern themes and techniques to beautify and culturally enrich urban areas.

### Details:

- **Artists Involved:** More than 150 visual artists from different regions of India.
- **Artworks:** The project will include various forms of art such as wall paintings, murals, sculptures, and installations.
- **Locations:** These artworks will be installed in various public spaces across Delhi, transforming the city into a vibrant and culturally immersive environment.



### Themes of Sculptures and Artworks:

- ⇒ **Tribute to Nature:** Sculptures and installations celebrating the beauty and importance of the natural world.
- ⇒ **Ideas from the Natyashastra:** Art inspired by the ancient Indian treatise on the performing arts, encompassing drama, dance, and music.
- ⇒ **Gandhi:** Artworks paying homage to Mahatma Gandhi, reflecting his ideals and legacy.
- ⇒ **Toys of India:** Sculptures and installations inspired by traditional Indian toys, showcasing the country's cultural heritage and craftsmanship.
- ⇒ **Ancient Knowledge:** Art reflecting India's vast repository of ancient knowledge, including science, mathematics, astronomy, and philosophy.
- ⇒ **Naad (Primeval Sound):** Art exploring the concept of sound and its spiritual significance in Indian culture.
- ⇒ **Harmony of Life:** Installations and sculptures symbolizing the balance and interconnectedness of life.
- ⇒ **Kalpataru (Divine Tree):** Art inspired by the mythical wish-fulfilling tree in Indian mythology, symbolizing prosperity and abundance.

### World Heritage Committee (WHC)

- ⇒ **Role:** The WHC is responsible for the inscription of new sites into the UNESCO World Heritage List, which recognizes and protects sites of outstanding cultural or natural importance to humanity.
- ⇒ **2024 Meeting:** For the first time, India will host the World Heritage Committee Meeting in July 2024.
- ⇒ India's UNESCO World Heritage Sites:
  - **Total Sites:** 42
  - **Categories:**
    - **Cultural:** 34 sites (e.g., Taj Mahal, Qutub Minar)
    - **Natural:** 7 sites (e.g., Kaziranga National Park, Sundarbans)
    - **Mixed:** 1 site (Khangchendzonga National Park)
    - **Recent Addition:** Sacred Ensembles of the Hoysala, renowned for their intricate temple architecture and cultural significance.

### Significance of Project PARI and the WHC Meeting

#### Cultural Impact:

- ⇒ **Revitalizing Public Spaces:** Project PARI aims to transform Delhi's public spaces into dynamic cultural hubs, making art accessible to everyone and fostering a deeper connection between people and their cultural heritage.
- ⇒ **Promotion of Indian Art:** By integrating traditional and modern art forms, the project promotes India's diverse artistic traditions and encourages contemporary interpretations.

#### Economic and Tourism Benefits:

- ⇒ **Attracting Tourists:** The beautification of public spaces with culturally rich artworks can attract tourists, boosting local economies.
- ⇒ **Global Recognition:** Hosting the WHC Meeting enhances India's global standing in heritage conservation and cultural promotion, potentially attracting international investment and collaboration.

#### Educational and Social Impact:

- ⇒ **Cultural Education:** The artworks serve as educational tools, raising awareness about India's rich cultural heritage among residents and visitors.
- ⇒ **Community Engagement:** Involving local artists and communities in the creation and installation of art fosters a sense of pride and ownership, encouraging community engagement and participation in cultural activities.

#### Challenges and Future Directions:

- ⇒ **Maintenance and Preservation:** Ensuring the long-term maintenance and preservation of public artworks is crucial for sustaining their impact.
- ⇒ **Expanding Initiatives:** Building on the success of Project PARI, similar initiatives could be launched in other cities across India, promoting cultural integration and urban beautification nationwide.

#### Conclusion:

- ⇒ Project PARI and the hosting of the World Heritage Committee Meeting represent significant steps towards celebrating and preserving India's cultural heritage.
- ⇒ These initiatives highlight the importance of public art in enriching urban spaces, fostering cultural appreciation, and promoting India's artistic legacy on a global stage.

- ⇒ Through such efforts, India can strengthen its cultural identity, attract global attention, and inspire future generations to value and protect their heritage.

## SC SEEKS REPORT ON GRAM NYAYALAYAS FROM STATES

### Context

- ⇒ The Supreme Court has requested comprehensive reports from States and High Courts concerning the establishment and functioning of Gram Nyayalayas.

### About Gram Nyayalayas

#### Mandate:

- ⇒ Gram Nyayalayas are designed to deliver affordable and prompt justice to rural populations directly at their doorsteps.

#### Background:

- ⇒ The Gram Nyayalayas Bill was passed by Parliament in 2008, and the Gram Nyayalayas Act came into force on October 2, 2009.
- ⇒ The Law Commission of India, in its 114th Report, had recommended the establishment of Gram Nyayalayas.
- ⇒ The Act is applicable throughout India, except in Nagaland, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim, and certain tribal areas.

#### Appointment of Nyayadhikari:

- ⇒ The State Government appoints a Nyayadhikari for each Gram Nyayalaya in consultation with the High Court.
- ⇒ Qualifications: The appointed individual must be eligible to serve as a Judicial Magistrate of the first class.

### Salient Features of the Gram Nyayalayas Act

#### Jurisdiction:

- ⇒ Gram Nyayalayas act as Courts of Judicial Magistrate of First Class with both civil and criminal jurisdiction to resolve minor disputes at the village level.

#### Establishment:

- ⇒ State Governments are responsible for establishing Gram Nyayalayas in consultation with their respective High Courts.

#### Procedure:

- ⇒ These courts are not bound by the Indian Evidence Act, 1872, but follow principles of natural justice, subject to High Court rules.

#### Location:

- ⇒ The headquarters of Gram Nyayalayas are generally at the intermediate Panchayat headquarters but can be located elsewhere as notified by the State Government.

### Issues with Gram Nyayalayas

#### Judicial Vacancies:

- ⇒ There is a shortage of judicial officers willing to work in rural areas due to challenging conditions and lack of incentives.

#### Inadequate Facilities:

- ⇒ Many Gram Nyayalayas lack basic amenities like dedicated court buildings, proper seating, and essential office equipment.

#### Pendency of Cases:

- ⇒ Despite their goal of providing speedy justice, many Gram Nyayalayas face significant backlogs, undermining their purpose.

#### Lack of Training:

- ⇒ Judicial officers and staff often lack adequate training in rural jurisprudence and the socio-economic context of rural areas, affecting the quality of justice delivered.



**Delay in Notification:**

- Several states have been slow to notify and establish Gram Nyayalayas, leading to uneven implementation.

**Coordination Issues:**

- There is often a lack of proper coordination between state governments and the judiciary, resulting in administrative and operational challenges.

**Financial Constraints:**

- Insufficient financial allocations for the establishment and maintenance of Gram Nyayalayas hinder their operations and sustainability.

**Note:** Currently, around 16,000 Gram Nyayalayas are needed, but only a little over 450 have been established, with about 300 actually functioning.

**Way Ahead**

To address these issues, comprehensive reforms are needed:

**Filling Judicial Vacancies:**

- Streamlining the appointment process, providing adequate incentives, and offering specialized training to judicial officers.

**Case Management Systems:**

- Implementing effective case management systems to reduce pendency and streamline case handling.

**Public Awareness:**

- Conducting awareness campaigns to inform rural populations about the existence and functioning of Gram Nyayalayas and ensuring they are easily accessible.

**Conclusion**

- The Gram Nyayalayas hold the promise of delivering justice at the grassroots level, but their potential remains underutilized due to various operational challenges.
- Comprehensive reforms, effective coordination, and adequate resource allocation are crucial to making Gram Nyayalayas a cornerstone of rural justice in India.

**THE CASE FOR A CASTE CENSUS****Context:**

- India, with its vast cultural diversity, has a complex social structure deeply influenced by caste.
- Recently, there has been a renewed call to amend the Census Act of 1948 to make caste enumeration mandatory.
- This change aims to address several social, legal, administrative, and moral imperatives.

**About Caste Census:**

- Caste-wise enumeration in India began during British colonial rule (1881-1931) but was discontinued in independent India to avoid perpetuating caste divisions.
- However, as caste remains a significant social construct influencing various aspects of life, there is a growing demand for its reintroduction in the Census.

**Census Authority:**

- **Union Subject:** Census is a Union subject, but the Collection of Statistics Act, 2008 allows states and local bodies to gather necessary statistics.
- **Caste Surveys:** States like Karnataka (2015) and Bihar (2023) have conducted caste surveys, but Census data is more authoritative and less contested.

**Imperatives for a Caste Census****Social Imperative:**

- Caste continues to be a foundational social construct.
- As of 2011-12, only 5% of Indian marriages were inter-caste.
- Caste surnames, marks, and residential segregation by caste persist.
- Electoral and ministerial candidate selection is often influenced by caste.

**Legal Imperative:**

- ⇒ Policies of social justice, including reservations, require detailed caste-wise data.
- ⇒ The Constitution, although using 'class', recognizes caste for defining backward classes and reservations.
- ⇒ The Supreme Court's rulings emphasize the relevance of caste in upholding reservation policies.

**Administrative Imperative:**

- ⇒ Detailed caste-wise data prevents wrongful inclusions/exclusions in reservations.
- ⇒ It helps sub-categorize reserved categories and set criteria for the creamy layer.

**Moral Imperative:**

- ⇒ The absence of detailed data has allowed elites to dominate resources and power.
- ⇒ A caste census is crucial for addressing historical injustices and ensuring equitable distribution.

**Case for OBC Inclusion in Census****Constitutional Provisions:**

- ⇒ **Education and Employment Reservations:** Permits reservation for OBCs (Article 15(4) and Article 16(4)).
- ⇒ **Mandal Commission Recommendations:** OBCs enjoy reservations based on these recommendations.
- ⇒ **Periodic Revision:** The Supreme Court mandates periodic revision of the OBC list.

**Electoral Constituencies:**

- ⇒ OBCs lack reservation in electoral constituencies for MPs and MLAs, unlike SCs and STs.
- ⇒ The 73rd and 74th Amendments provide for reservations in panchayats and municipalities for OBCs (Articles 243D(6) and 243T(6)).
- ⇒ Essential caste-wise data is needed for these provisions.

**EWS Reservation:**

- ⇒ The Supreme Court upheld 10% reservation for economically weaker sections (EWS) without empirical data.
- ⇒ The Census should now include all castes, as done until 1931.

**Arguments Against Caste Census****Social Divisiveness:**

- ⇒ Critics argue that caste enumeration could perpetuate casteism.
- ⇒ However, caste counts of SCs and STs have not led to conflicts.
- ⇒ Religion, language, and region, also enumerated, can be equally divisive.

**Administrative Challenges:**

- ⇒ Caste enumeration is seen as complex, but the government has successfully enumerated SCs and STs.
- ⇒ Enumerating the remaining castes, mostly state-specific, should be manageable.

**Reservation Demands:**

- ⇒ Caste-wise data could address reservation claims objectively.
- ⇒ Fuzzy data allows arbitrary implementation for electoral gains.

**Legal Challenges:**

- ⇒ States' attempts to implement OBC reservations in local elections have been stayed due to lack of caste-wise data.
- ⇒ The judiciary demands caste-wise data, but the executive has avoided it.

**Issues with Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC)-2011**

- ⇒ **Poor Design and Execution:** SECC-2011 was not conducted under the Census Act and was poorly designed.
- ⇒ **Union Ministries Conducted Survey:** Ministries of Rural and Urban Development conducted it without prior experience.
- ⇒ **Questionnaire Issues:** Open-ended questions led to confusion and inaccurate data, resulting in an impractical figure of 46 lakh castes.
- ⇒ **Data Inaccuracy:** The last enumeration in 1931 listed 4,147 castes.

**Way Forward for Caste Enumeration in Census**

- ⇒ **Amend the Census Act (1948):** Make caste enumeration mandatory.
- ⇒ **Census Commissioner's Role:** Include caste in the regular Census.



- ⇒ **Pertinent Questions:** Add specific caste-related questions to the Census questionnaire.
- ⇒ **Expert Involvement:** Enlist sociological/anthropological experts to draft caste lists specific to each state.
- ⇒ **Public Input:** Publish the draft list online for public suggestions before finalizing.
- ⇒ **Streamlined Process:** Provide enumerators with specific caste lists and use handheld devices for accurate data collection.
- ⇒ **Legal Review:** Interested states should move the Supreme Court to review its 2021 judgment.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ A caste census is crucial for informed policy-making and addressing historical injustices. Amending the Census Act to mandate caste enumeration is a significant step towards social justice and equitable development.
- ⇒ As Peter Drucker said, "Only what gets measured gets managed." This adage is particularly relevant in addressing the issues faced by historically discriminated social groups.
- ⇒ Collecting data on caste, like other group identities, is essential for creating an inclusive and just society.

## THE PROBLEM WITH THE KARNATAKA GIG WORKERS BILL

### Context

- ⇒ The Karnataka government recently introduced the draft Karnataka Platform-based Gig Workers (Social Security and Welfare) Bill, 2024, with the aim of providing social security for gig workers.
- ⇒ However, much like Rajasthan's 2023 Act, this Bill follows a welfare board model that does not address employment relations, leaving significant issues such as minimum wages and working conditions unresolved.

### Introduction

- ⇒ In July 2024, Karnataka unveiled the draft Karnataka Platform-based Gig Workers (Social Security and Welfare) Bill, aimed at enhancing social security and welfare for gig workers.
- ⇒ This initiative mirrors Rajasthan's earlier legislation, the Rajasthan Platform-Based Gig Workers (Registration and Welfare) Act, 2023.
- ⇒ Both pieces of legislation utilize a welfare board model suited for self-employed informal workers but fail to address the critical aspect of employment relations.

### Who Are Gig Workers?

- ⇒ Gig workers engage in short-term, flexible jobs often facilitated through digital platforms.
- ⇒ They are typically classified as independent contractors rather than employees, which means they lack formal employment protections like minimum wage, benefits, and job security.
- ⇒ Gig work encompasses roles such as rideshare driving, food delivery, freelance work, and other on-demand services.
- ⇒ While offering flexibility and supplemental income opportunities, gig work often lacks the social security and legal protections provided to regular employees, raising concerns about worker rights and fair treatment.

### The Rise of Gig Work and Associated Issues

- ⇒ The number of gig and platform workers has surged, particularly in the last decade, driven by developments in app-based cab services and retail delivery sectors.
- ⇒ NITI Aayog projects that India's gig workforce will grow to 23.5 million workers by 2030.
- ⇒ Gig work currently provides livelihoods for an increasing number of job-seekers, a trend observed globally.
- ⇒ In India, there have been protests by gig workers over issues such as revenue sharing, working hours, and other employment conditions.
- ⇒ The existing legal framework, based on traditional employer-employee relationships, struggles to address these issues due to the complex nature of employment relations in the gig economy.

### Employment Relations in the Gig Economy

- ⇒ Aggregators, the platforms' operators, consider gig workers as independent contractors and view themselves as technology providers connecting workers with consumers.



- ⇒ Gig workers, however, see aggregators as their employers since the aggregators set the service conditions and employment terms.
- ⇒ For instance, in app-based cab services, the ride prices and working conditions are dictated by the app company.
- ⇒ Gig workers demand fair treatment, better working conditions, and access to social security as legal entitlements.

### Legal Precedents and India's Framework

- ⇒ In the United Kingdom, the Supreme Court ruled that Uber is an employer, meaning existing labor laws apply to Uber drivers.
- ⇒ In India, gig and platform workers are included in the Code on Social Security 2020 as informal self-employed workers but are not mentioned in the other three new labor codes: the Code on Wages, Industrial Relations Code, and Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code.
- ⇒ The recent legislations in Rajasthan and Karnataka add to this legal landscape but do not fully resolve the issues.

### Avoiding Employment Relations

- ⇒ Both the Rajasthan Act and the Karnataka Bill avoid defining employment relations in gig work, referring to app companies as 'aggregators' instead of employers.
- ⇒ This omission makes it challenging to apply labor laws that ensure minimum wage, occupational safety and health, working hours, leave entitlements, and the right to collective bargaining.
- ⇒ Critical issues in gig work, such as minimum earnings, regulation of working hours, and overworked drivers, remain unresolved.

### Issues with the Welfare Board Model

- ⇒ The welfare board model adopted by Rajasthan and Karnataka offers some welfare schemes for gig workers but does not provide institutional social security benefits like provident fund, gratuity, or maternity benefits.
- ⇒ Historically, welfare board models have been poorly implemented, as seen with the Construction Workers Welfare Act of 1996 and the Unorganized Workers Social Security Act, where available funds were inadequately utilized.
- ⇒ The Karnataka Bill does not address key issues like minimum wages or working hours for gig workers.
- ⇒ Section 16 discusses income security regarding payment deductions but does not guarantee a minimum income, wage entitlements, or fair revenue sharing between aggregators and gig workers. Section 16(2) only mandates weekly payments without specifying a minimum amount.

### Conclusion

The Karnataka Bill, like the Code on Social Security 2020 and the Rajasthan Act 2023, fails to address the employment relationship within the gig economy. This oversight leads to confusion regarding employment relations and absolves employers of their legal obligations, making it challenging to fully protect workers' rights. A more comprehensive approach is necessary to ensure fair treatment and social security for gig workers, addressing their fundamental concerns about wages, working conditions, and employment stability.

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## 4TH PERIODIC REVIEW BY THE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITTEE

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### Context

- ⇒ India successfully completed its 4th periodic review by the Human Rights Committee under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) in Geneva.

### About the Review

- ⇒ During the review, a wide range of questions were posed, covering topics such as anti-corruption measures, non-discrimination, the status of women and minorities, counter-terrorism and national security measures, the judicial framework, privacy and data protection laws, and new criminal laws.



- ⇒ The review showcased India's commitment to engaging with the international human rights framework and its readiness to address concerns while continuing its efforts towards the protection and promotion of human rights for its citizens.

### International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)

- ⇒ The ICCPR, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1966 and enforced in 1976, is a multilateral treaty that obligates nations to respect the civil and political rights of individuals.
- ⇒ This Covenant expands on the civil and political rights and freedoms listed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

### Universal Declaration of Human Rights

- ⇒ Proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly in Paris in 1948, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights sets out fundamental human rights to be universally protected. It has been translated into over 500 languages.
- ⇒ The document consists of a preamble and 30 articles outlining fundamental rights and freedoms, enshrining the inalienable rights that everyone is entitled to as a human being, regardless of race, color, religion, sex, language, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth, or other status.
- ⇒ The Covenant is legally binding, and the Human Rights Committee, established under Article 28, monitors its implementation.

### India's Involvement

- ⇒ India became a State Party to the ICCPR in 1979. The rights and freedoms provided in the ICCPR are guaranteed under the Constitution of India and are supported by legislative and judicial frameworks.
- ⇒ India has undergone three ICCPR reviews in the past, with the last review taking place in 1997.

### Human Rights Committee

- ⇒ The Human Rights Committee is composed of 18 independent experts serving in their individual capacity.
- ⇒ It monitors the implementation of the ICCPR, reviews reports from all State Parties, conducts periodic reviews, and provides observations and recommendations.

### What are Human Rights?

- ⇒ Human rights are fundamental rights and freedoms inherent to all human beings, regardless of nationality, ethnicity, gender, religion, or any other status.
- ⇒ These rights are universal, inalienable, and indivisible, forming the foundation for human dignity, equality, and justice.
- ⇒ Human rights differ from civil rights, which are legal rights granted and protected by a government and may change as laws are amended or updated.

### Significance of Human Rights

- ⇒ **Inherent Dignity:** Human rights affirm the inherent dignity of every individual.
- ⇒ **Equality and Non-Discrimination:** They ensure that all individuals have equal opportunities and are treated fairly and without prejudice.
- ⇒ **Protection from Abuse:** Human rights provide a framework for holding governments, institutions, and individuals accountable for actions that violate these rights, promoting justice and accountability.
- ⇒ **Global Standards:** International human rights agreements and treaties establish a global standard for how individuals should be treated, fostering a sense of shared responsibility for upholding these standards.
- ⇒ **Human Dignity in Crisis:** In times of crisis, human rights provide a foundation for responding to emergencies in a way that upholds human dignity and prevents further harm.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ The successful conclusion of India's 4th periodic review by the Human Rights Committee underscores the nation's commitment to the international human rights framework and its ongoing efforts to protect and promote the rights of its citizens.
- ⇒ This review process not only highlights the strides India has made in human rights but also serves as a reminder of the continuous effort needed to address existing and emerging challenges.
- ⇒ The engagement with the ICCPR reflects India's dedication to upholding universal human rights standards and fostering an environment where the dignity and rights of every individual are respected and protected.

## AIZAWL BECOMES THE FOURTH NORTHEASTERN CAPITAL TO GAIN RAILWAY CONNECTIVITY

### Introduction

- Aizawl, the capital of Mizoram, is set to become the fourth capital in Northeast India to have train service by July 2025.
- This development will follow the footsteps of Guwahati, Agartala, and Naharlagun, thereby significantly enhancing regional connectivity and making travel more convenient for the people of Northeast India.



### Project Overview

- The Bairabi-Sairang railway project spans 52 kilometers, connecting Bairabi in Assam to Sairang in Mizoram's Aizawl District.
- Initiated in the fiscal year 2008-2009, the project is estimated to cost approximately Rs 8,213.72 crore.
- Its primary objective is to improve transportation infrastructure in the region, thereby facilitating easier movement of goods and passengers and fostering economic growth.

### Progress and Infrastructure

- As of now, 93% of the project's construction work is complete.
- The railway line will include four stations: Hortoki, Kawnpui, Mualkhang, and Sairang.
- To streamline construction, the project has been divided into segments.
- Significant engineering feats include 12,853 meters of tunneling and the construction of 55 major and 89 smaller bridges, making it a challenging yet vital infrastructure endeavor.
- The meticulous engineering work is aimed at ensuring the durability and efficiency of the railway line.

### Challenges Faced

The construction of the Bairabi-Sairang railway has faced several formidable challenges:

- **Rugged Terrain:** The hilly and uneven terrain of the region poses significant difficulties for construction.
- **Heavy Monsoons:** Frequent and intense monsoons lead to delays and complications in construction work.
- **Accessibility Issues:** The need for a steady supply of construction materials and skilled labor is complicated by the region's remote location.
- Despite these obstacles, the Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) is committed to completing the project on schedule. Advanced engineering techniques and careful project management are employed to navigate these challenges effectively.

### Benefits of Connectivity

The introduction of railway connectivity to Aizawl is expected to bring about several benefits:

- **Reduced Travel Time:** The railway link will significantly cut down travel time between Aizawl and Assam, facilitating quicker and more efficient transportation.
- **Cost Efficiency:** Lower transportation costs for goods and passengers will directly benefit the local population.
- **Economic Boost:** Enhanced connectivity is anticipated to spur local businesses and attract tourists, thereby contributing to the economic development of Mizoram.
- **Improved Accessibility:** The railway will make it easier for people to access essential services and opportunities in other regions, fostering greater integration within the Northeast.

### About Aizawl

- Aizawl, the capital city of Mizoram, is situated 1,132 meters above sea level in the Himalayas.
- Established as a town in 1890, Aizawl was part of the Lushai Hills District during British rule.
- The city is known for its vibrant culture, predominantly influenced by the Mizo people, and serves as an important center for the Indian Presbyterian Church.
- Aizawl hosts the Mizo New Year festival, Chapchar Kut, and is home to several natural attractions, including the Durtlang Hills and picturesque streams, making it a cultural and tourist hub in the region.

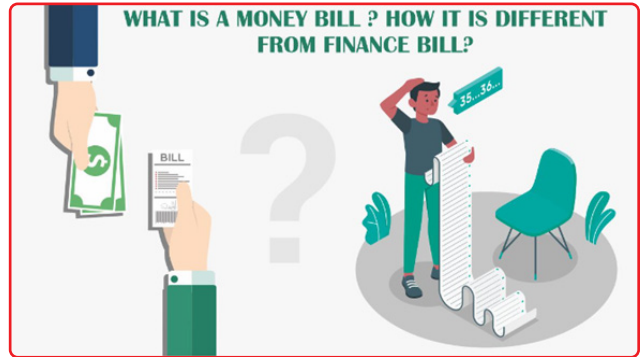
## Conclusion

- ⇒ The railway connectivity to Aizawl marks a significant milestone in the region's infrastructure development.
- ⇒ By enhancing transportation efficiency and fostering economic growth, the Bairabi-Sairang railway project promises to bring substantial benefits to Mizoram and the broader Northeast region.
- ⇒ This development not only facilitates easier movement but also opens up new opportunities for trade and tourism, contributing to the overall progress of the area.
- ⇒ The project underscores the government's commitment to improving infrastructure and connectivity in the Northeast, paving the way for a brighter future for its people.

## DEFINITION AND PROCEDURE FOR MONEY BILLS

### Introduction

- ⇒ In the context of parliamentary procedures in India, the classification of a bill as a "money bill" carries significant implications for its passage and the legislative process.
- ⇒ Recent petitions challenging the use of the money bill route for passing contentious laws have brought this issue into focus.
- ⇒ Understanding the definition, classification, and procedure for money bills is crucial for comprehending the legislative process and the checks and balances within the Indian parliamentary system.



### Definition of a Money Bill

Article 110 of the Indian Constitution defines a money bill with specific criteria:

#### Scope of Provisions:

A money bill must contain only provisions related to one or more of the following six matters:

- ⇒ **Taxation:** Bills concerning the imposition, abolition, remission, alteration, or regulation of taxes.
- ⇒ **Borrowing:** Provisions for the borrowing of money by the government.
- ⇒ **Custody and Payment:** Matters related to the custody of the Consolidated Fund or Contingency Fund of India and the payment or withdrawal of money from such funds.
- ⇒ **Appropriation:** Bills concerning the appropriation of money from the Consolidated Fund.
- ⇒ **Expenditure Charged:** Expenditures that are charged on the Consolidated Fund.
- ⇒ **Receipt and Audit:** Matters concerning the receipt of money into the Consolidated Fund or the Public Account and the audit of accounts of the Union or States.

#### Incidental Matters:

Clause (g) of Article 110 allows for matters incidental to the above six categories to be included in a money bill.

#### Examples:

- ⇒ **Finance Act:** Deals primarily with taxation.
- ⇒ **Appropriation Act:** Deals with expenditure out of the Consolidated Fund.
- ⇒ **Speaker's Certification:** The classification of a bill as a money bill is determined by the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, whose certification is final.

### Procedure for a Money Bill

#### Introduction and Passage:

- ⇒ **Lok Sabha:** A money bill can only be introduced in the Lok Sabha.
- ⇒ **Rajya Sabha:** Once passed by the Lok Sabha, the Rajya Sabha has 14 days to make recommendations. The Lok Sabha may accept or reject these recommendations.

#### Significance:

- ⇒ The special procedure for money bills ensures that financial matters crucial for administration receive prompt approval from the Lok Sabha, where the ruling party typically has a majority.
- ⇒ This procedure reflects a practice derived from the UK parliamentary system, aimed at curtailing the powers of the unelected House of Lords over budgetary matters.

### Procedure Origins:

- The practice of money bills is rooted in the UK, where the powers of the House of Lords over budgetary issues were limited in 1911, allowing the elected House of Commons to have the final say.

### Issues and Controversies

#### Judicial Review:

The certification of bills as money bills has been subject to judicial review. For instance:

- **Aadhaar Act (2016):** This act, which included provisions on enrolment, authentication, and penalties, was passed as a money bill. The Supreme Court, by a majority of 4:1, upheld this classification, despite dissenting views on its primary purpose.
- **Finance Act (2017):** The use of the money bill route to pass amendments concerning tribunal reorganizations was also controversial.

#### Challenges:

- **Speaker's Role:** The Speaker's certification process has been questioned when bills with significant non-financial provisions are classified as money bills.
- **Misuse Concerns:** There are concerns about potential misuse of the money bill designation to bypass normal legislative scrutiny.

#### Conclusion

- The classification and certification of a bill as a money bill play a critical role in the legislative process, impacting how financial matters are handled in Parliament.
- While the procedure facilitates swift legislative action on crucial financial issues, the integrity of this process depends on adhering to the constitutional definitions and the spirit behind the money bill provisions.
- The challenges and controversies surrounding the classification of bills as money bills highlight the need for careful consideration and transparency in maintaining the balance between legislative efficiency and democratic scrutiny.

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## IS IMMUNITY FOR THE PRESIDENT AND GOVERNORS ABSOLUTE?

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### Context

- A three-judge Bench led by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud has involved the Union government and sought assistance from the Attorney General of India to decide if the "blanket" immunity under Article 361 granted to the President and Governors, while in office, from criminal proceedings undermines fairness, constitutional morality, and violates fundamental rights to equal protection of the law and fair trial.



### What is the Case?

- The issue arose from a petition filed by a contractual woman employee with the Raj Bhavan accusing West Bengal Governor C.V. Ananda Bose of sexual harassment and molestation.
- The petitioner argued that the police handled her complaint against the Governor dismissively due to the immunity clause.
- She contended that she had no choice but to wait for the Governor to leave office for the investigation to commence.
- She urged the court to mandate the State of West Bengal to investigate her complaint and to frame guidelines defining the extent of the immunity.

### Do Governors Have Immunity?

#### Article 361 (1):

- Provides that the President and Governors are not answerable to any court for acts done in the exercise and performance of their powers and duties.
- The first proviso allows the conduct of the President to be reviewed by any court, tribunal, or body designated by either House of Parliament for the investigation of a charge under Article 61 (impeachment for violation of the Constitution).

- ⇒ The second proviso states that the immunity does not prevent a person from suing the Centre or State concerned.

### Article 361 (2):

- ⇒ States that "no criminal proceedings whatsoever shall be instituted or continued against the President, or the Governor of a State, in any court during his term of office".

The Supreme Court has decided to interpret clause (2) of Article 361 to determine when criminal proceedings can be instituted against a President or Governor, essentially questioning the extent of the protective cover of immunity.

### Historical Context:

- ⇒ Constituent Assembly debates in September 1949 on Article 361 (Draft Article 302) showed concerns about the language of clause (2), particularly the phrase "during the term of his office".

### Not an Absolute Immunity

- ⇒ The immunity under Article 361 does not impair the police's power to investigate an offence or name the perpetrator in the complaint/FIR.
- ⇒ The powers of the Governor do not include the authority to commit crimes such as sexual abuse.
- ⇒ The Supreme Court, in Rameshwar Prasad vs. Union of India, interpreted that 'civil immunity' under Article 361(4) did not take away the power of citizens to challenge the actions of the President or Governors on grounds of 'malafides'.

### Key Points from Supreme Court Rulings:

#### Rameshwar Prasad vs. Union of India:

- ⇒ The court interpreted that 'civil immunity' under Article 361(4) does not prevent citizens from challenging the actions of the President or Governors on grounds of malafide intentions.
- ⇒ The immunity is intended to protect the functioning of these high offices, not to shield personal misconduct.

#### Madhya Pradesh High Court in Ram Naresh vs. State of Madhya Pradesh:

- ⇒ This ruling held that the immunity under Article 361 does not prevent the police from investigating an offence, including recording the Governor's statement.
- ⇒ The immunity is procedural and does not obstruct justice or the investigation of criminal acts.

### Arguments Against Absolute Immunity:

#### Fairness and Constitutional Morality:

- ⇒ The principle of fairness and constitutional morality demands that no individual, irrespective of their position, should be above the law.
- ⇒ Absolute immunity could lead to misuse of power and injustice, undermining public confidence in the legal system.

#### Fundamental Rights:

- ⇒ The fundamental right to equal protection of the law and a fair trial, guaranteed by Articles 14 and 21 of the Constitution, could be violated by absolute immunity.
- ⇒ Victims of crimes, including gender violence, must have the right to seek redress and justice without undue delay.

#### Precedents and Comparative Law:

- ⇒ In other democratic countries, immunity for heads of state or governors is not absolute and often allows for exceptions, particularly in cases involving serious crimes.
- ⇒ Comparative analysis of international practices can inform a balanced approach to immunity in India.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ This case represents a significant moment in interpreting constitutional provisions concerning the balance between immunity for high constitutional offices and the fundamental rights of individuals to seek justice and protection under the law.
- ⇒ The Supreme Court's decision will have far-reaching implications for the accountability of public officials and the enforcement of the rule of law in India.
- ⇒ The court may establish guidelines to ensure that while the dignity and functionality of high offices are preserved, they do not become a shield for personal misconduct or criminal activities.

## POLITICAL REPRESENTATION OF WOMEN

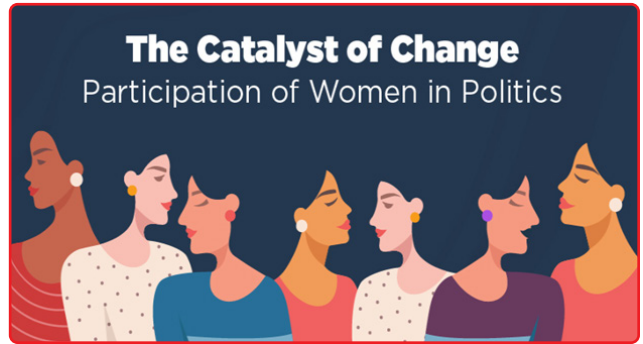
### Context

- Around the world, the representation of women in political spheres has seen significant progress over the years.
- However, this progress has been uneven, and much work remains to be done.

### Historical Context

Universal suffrage – the right to vote for all citizens – was achieved in various countries after prolonged political movements. For instance:

- New Zealand, as a self-governing unit under British rule, granted universal women's suffrage in 1893.
- The United Kingdom provided all its women the right to vote only in 1928.
- The United States granted equal voting rights through the Nineteenth Amendment in 1920.
- In independent India, women have had the right to vote since the first general elections in 1952. However, their representation in legislative bodies has been far from satisfactory.



### Current Data

- Universal suffrage was achieved in various parts of the world after prolonged political movements.
- In the recently concluded general elections in the United Kingdom, a record 263 women MPs (40%) were elected to the House of Commons.
- The South African National Assembly has around 45% women representation, while the US House of Representatives has 29%.

### Women and Political Representation

- Women's equal participation and leadership in political and public life are essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.
- However, data show that women are underrepresented at all levels of decision-making worldwide and that achieving gender parity in political life is far off.

### Women in National Parliaments

- Only 26.9% of Parliamentarians in single or lower houses are women, up from 11% in 1995.
- Only six countries have 50% or more women in Parliament in single or lower houses: Rwanda (61%), Cuba (56%), Nicaragua (54%), Andorra (50%), Mexico (50%), New Zealand (50%), and the United Arab Emirates (50%).
- A further 22 countries have reached or surpassed 40%, including 13 countries in Europe, five in Africa, four in Latin America and the Caribbean, and one in Asia-Pacific.
- Globally, there are 21 States in which women account for less than 10% of parliamentarians in single or lower houses, including two lower chambers with no women at all.
- At the current rate of progress, gender parity in national legislative bodies will not be achieved before 2063 (another 40 years).

### How Do Women MPs Fare Worldwide?

- Voluntary or legislated compulsory quotas within political parties.
- Quotas in parliament through the reservation of seats.
- Quotas within political parties allow more democratic choice for voters and flexibility for parties in selecting women candidates.

### Women in Local Government

- Data from 141 countries show that women constitute more than 3 million (35.5%) of elected members in local deliberative bodies.
- Only three countries have reached 50%, and an additional 22 countries have more than 40% women in local government.

### Women in Indian Politics

- The percentage of women Members of Parliament (MPs) in the Lok Sabha (the lower house of India's Parliament) remained very low – between 5% and 10% – until 2004. It marginally increased to 12% in 2014 and currently stands at 14% in the 18th Lok Sabha.



- ⇒ State Legislative Assemblies fare even worse, with a national average of around 9% women representatives.
- ⇒ The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments of 1992-93 provided for one-third reservation for women in Panchayats and Municipalities. However, attempts between 1996 and 2008 to provide similar reservation in the Lok Sabha and assemblies were unsuccessful.

### Expanding Participation in India

- ⇒ **106th Constitutional Amendment:** It reserves one-third of all seats for women in Lok Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies, and the Legislative Assembly of the National Capital Territory of Delhi, including those reserved for SCs and STs. It shall come into effect based on the Delimitation Exercise after the relevant figures of the first Census conducted after the commencement of this act is published.
- ⇒ The census is overdue since 2021 and should be conducted without any further delay to ensure that this reservation is implemented starting with the general elections in 2029.
- ⇒ India ranks 143 in the list of countries in the 'Monthly ranking of women in national parliaments' recently published by the Inter-Parliamentary Union, a global organisation for national parliaments.
- ⇒ Naam Tamilar Katchi, a state party in Tamil Nadu, has been following a voluntary quota of 50% for women candidates in the last three general elections.
- ⇒ **Intersectionality Matters:** It's essential to recognize that women are not a homogenous group. Their identities intersect with other factors (such as caste, class, religion, and ethnicity), influencing their political representation. Ensuring that women from diverse backgrounds have a voice in politics is crucial for genuine representation.

### Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action

- ⇒ Balanced political participation and power-sharing between women and men in decision-making is the internationally agreed target set in the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

### Conclusion and Way Forward

- ⇒ Women demonstrate political leadership by working across party lines through parliamentary women's caucuses – even in the most politically combative environments – and by championing issues of gender equality, such as the elimination of gender-based violence, parental leave and childcare, pensions, gender-equality laws, and electoral reform.
- ⇒ While progress has been made, the road to equitable political representation for women remains challenging.
- ⇒ Advocacy, policy changes, and societal shifts are necessary to create a more inclusive and representative political landscape.

## PROJECT ASMITA

### Introduction

- ⇒ Project ASMITA (Augmenting Study Materials in Indian languages through Translation and Academic Writing) is a groundbreaking initiative aimed at enriching the educational landscape in India by producing a vast array of academic books in Indian languages.
- ⇒ This initiative is closely aligned with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which emphasizes the promotion and integration of Indian languages into the education system.

### Detailed Features of Project ASMITA

#### Overview and Objectives:

- ⇒ **Launch and Collaboration:** The project was launched by the Union Ministry of Education in partnership with the University Grants Commission (UGC) and the Bharatiya Bhasha Samiti.
- ⇒ **Aim:** To produce 22,000 books in 22 Indian languages over five years.
- ⇒ **Scope:** The project will cover a wide range of subjects across Arts, Science, and Commerce streams.

#### Implementation Strategy:

- ⇒ **Nodal Universities:** Thirteen nodal universities have been designated to lead the project, with additional member universities from various regions supporting the initiative.



- ⇒ **Standard Operating Procedure (SOP):** The UGC has developed an SOP to streamline the book-writing process, ensuring quality and consistency across languages.
- ⇒ **Timeline:** The target is to produce 1,800 textbooks by June 2025.

### Key Components and Initiatives:

#### Bahubhasha Shabdkosh:

- ⇒ **Purpose:** A comprehensive multilingual dictionary repository developed by the Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL) in collaboration with the Bharatiya Bhasha Samiti.
- ⇒ **Function:** Supports the use of Indian words, phrases, and sentences in new age domains like IT, Industry, Research, and Education.

#### Real-time Translation Architecture:

- ⇒ **Development:** Created by the National Educational Technology Forum (NETF) and Bharatiya Bhasha Samiti.
- ⇒ **Objective:** To establish a framework for real-time translation in Indian languages, enhancing accessibility and understanding.
- ⇒ **Role of NETF:** An autonomous body facilitating technology integration in education, aligning with NEP 2020 goals.

### Legal and Institutional Background

#### University Grants Commission (UGC):

- ⇒ **Establishment:** Founded in 1953, became a statutory body in 1956.
- ⇒ **Role:** Coordinates, determines, and maintains standards of teaching, examination, and research in university education.

#### Bharatiya Bhasha Samiti:

- ⇒ **Constitution:** A high-powered committee formed in 2021 by the Ministry of Education.
- ⇒ **Objective:** To promote the use of Indian languages in education.

### Objectives and Benefits

#### Academic Resource Creation:

- ⇒ **Comprehensive Pool:** Developing a wide range of academic resources in 22 scheduled languages to support diverse linguistic backgrounds.
- ⇒ **Subject Coverage:** Ensures extensive coverage of essential subjects across various academic streams.

#### Bridging the Linguistic Divide:

- ⇒ **Inclusivity:** Facilitates access to educational materials in native languages, promoting inclusivity.
- ⇒ **Cohesion:** Fosters social cohesion and unity by bridging linguistic gaps.

#### Educational Transformation:

- ⇒ **Skill Development:** Enhances learning by providing study materials in students' mother tongues, improving comprehension and retention.
- ⇒ **Global Citizenship:** Aims to transform youth into socially responsible global citizens through accessible and culturally relevant education.

#### Support for National Integration:

- ⇒ **Linguistic Diversity:** Celebrates and promotes India's rich linguistic heritage.
- ⇒ **Cultural Preservation:** Encourages the preservation and promotion of regional languages and cultures.

### Scheduled Languages in the Indian Constitution

The Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution lists 22 languages recognized for special support and promotion:

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

### Conclusion

- ⇒ Project ASMITA represents a significant move towards linguistic inclusivity and educational equity in India.

- ⇒ By producing academic materials in Indian languages, it aims to empower students, enhance learning outcomes, and foster a sense of national unity.
- ⇒ This initiative not only aligns with the NEP 2020 but also underscores the importance of preserving and promoting India's diverse linguistic and cultural heritage.
- ⇒ Through systematic implementation and strategic collaboration, Project ASMITA has the potential to transform the educational landscape in India, making it more inclusive and accessible for all.

## RESERVATION FOR LOCALS IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR

### Context

- ⇒ Recently, the Karnataka government suspended the implementation of the "Karnataka State Employment of Local Candidates in the Industries, Factories, and Other Establishments Bill, 2024."
- ⇒ This decision followed significant opposition from the business sector, prompting a comprehensive review of the bill before its reintroduction in the state assembly.

### Reservation Policies in Other States

In a related development, the Haryana government announced employment opportunities for Agniveers, recruits under the Agnipath scheme, including:

- ⇒ 10% reservation in various public sector roles such as constable and mining guard.
- ⇒ Age relaxations for Group-B and Group-C posts.
- ⇒ Subsidies and loan benefits for private firms hiring Agniveers and for their business startups.
- ⇒ Priority in arms licenses and government jobs.

### Key Provisions of Karnataka's Reservation Bill

- ⇒ **Reservation Mandate:** The bill proposes 75% reservation for local candidates in non-management positions and 50% in management positions within private enterprises in Karnataka.
- ⇒ **Definition of Local Candidate:** A local candidate is defined as someone born in Karnataka or residing there for at least 15 years, with proficiency in Kannada.
- ⇒ **Job Categorisation:** It differentiates between management (supervisory, managerial, technical) and non-management (clerical, unskilled, semi-skilled) roles.
- ⇒ **Skill Development:** Industries must offer training to local candidates to bridge skill gaps, with a three-year implementation window if qualified local candidates are unavailable.
- ⇒ **Flexibility Clause:** Under specific conditions, the reservation quota can be reduced to 50% for non-management and 25% for management positions.

### Legal and Constitutional Challenges

- ⇒ **Equality and Affirmative Action:** Domicile-based reservations face scrutiny under India's Constitution. Article 14 ensures equality before the law, while Articles 15 and 16 allow special provisions for backward classes without prejudice to non-domicile candidates.
- ⇒ **Judicial Precedents:**
  - **Dr. Pradeep Jain v. Union of India (1984):** The Supreme Court allowed some preference for domicile candidates but cautioned against absolute exclusion of non-domicile candidates.
  - **Indra Sawhney Case (1992):** The Supreme Court capped total reservations at 50%, including domicile reservations.
  - In recent rulings, the Punjab & Haryana High Court declared Haryana's 75% reservation for locals in the private sector unconstitutional, citing artificial divisions and disruption of free-market principles. This decision is currently under appeal in the Supreme Court.

### Arguments in Favor of the Bill

- ⇒ **Local Employment:** Aims to boost job opportunities for local residents, reducing unemployment and retaining economic benefits within the state.
- ⇒ **Economic Equity:** Seeks to address regional disparities and promote balanced economic development across various areas.



- ⇒ **Skill Development:** Training programs are expected to enhance local workforce skills, making them more competitive.
- ⇒ **Social Stability:** Increasing job opportunities for locals could reduce social tensions and foster community harmony.
- ⇒ **Talent Retention:** Helps retain skilled individuals within the state, preventing brain drain.
- ⇒ **Cultural Preservation:** The language proficiency requirement supports local culture and language, enhancing cultural identity.

**Arguments Against the Bill**

- ⇒ **Business Competitiveness:** May hinder companies from hiring the best talent, affecting efficiency and competitiveness.
- ⇒ **Skill Shortages:** Local candidates may lack the necessary skills for specialized roles, increasing training costs and operational inefficiencies.
- ⇒ **Investment Deterrence:** Restrictive hiring policies could deter both domestic and international investors, negatively impacting economic growth.
- ⇒ **Legal and Administrative Burden:** Ensuring compliance with the policy could impose significant costs on businesses.
- ⇒ **Discrimination Concerns:** The policy might discriminate against non-local candidates, violating equal opportunity principles.
- ⇒ **Economic Impact:** Domicile-based reservations could hinder economic growth by limiting job opportunities and deterring businesses.
- ⇒ **Social Tensions:** The policy might exacerbate divisions between local and non-local residents, undermining social cohesion.

**Way Forward**

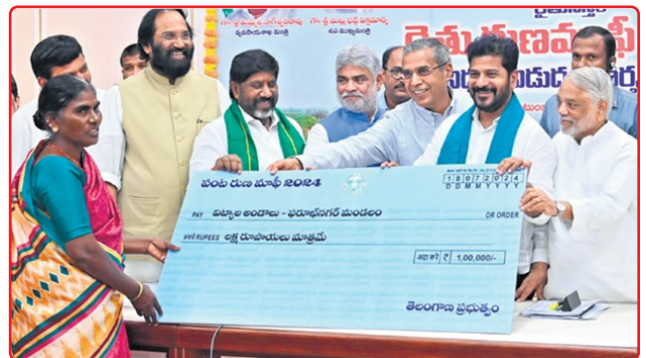
To balance local interests with broader economic goals, the reservation policy should:

- ⇒ **Periodic Review:** Regularly assess its economic and industrial impact.
- ⇒ **Constitutional Compliance:** Ensure that policy decisions align with the Indian Constitution and respect citizens' fundamental rights.
- ⇒ **Free Movement:** Implement the policy without restricting manpower mobility across the country.

**TELANGANA GOVERNMENT RELEASES FUNDS TOWARDS CROP LOAN WAIVER**

**Context**

- ⇒ The Telangana government has initiated the first phase of its farm loan waiver scheme, crediting Rs 6,098 crore into the accounts of over 11 lakh farmers.
- ⇒ This move aims to alleviate the financial burden on farmers, ensuring economic stability and social welfare in rural areas.



**Understanding Loan Waivers**

**Farm Loan Waivers:**

- ⇒ **Definition:** Financial relief measures where the government forgives certain agricultural loans, freeing farmers from the obligation to repay.
- ⇒ **Mechanism:** The government allocates funds to banks and financial institutions to cover the farmers' outstanding debt.
- ⇒ **Challenges Addressed:** Farmers often struggle with issues like disputed land ownership, diminishing groundwater reserves, poor soil quality, rising input costs, and low crop productivity.

**Arguments in Favor of Loan Waivers**

**1. Debt Relief:**

- Provides immediate financial relief to farmers facing severe hardships due to crop failure, natural disasters, or low market prices.
- Prevents farmers from falling into a deeper debt spiral.

**2. Improved Investment Capacity:**

- Alleviates the debt burden, allowing farmers to invest in better inputs (seeds, fertilizers), irrigation, and technology.
- Potentially leads to increased productivity in the long run.

**3. Social and Political Stability:**

- Addresses widespread farmer distress, preventing social unrest in rural areas.
- Helps maintain social stability by mitigating economic pressures on farming communities.

**4. Stimulating Rural Economy:**

- Increased disposable income for farmers can boost demand for essential goods and services in rural areas.
- Enhances overall economic activity and prosperity in the countryside.

**Arguments Against Loan Waivers****1. Moral Hazard:**

- Creates a moral hazard problem, where farmers might become less cautious about taking loans, expecting future government bailouts.
- Can lead to a cycle of debt and reliance on government interventions.

**2. Fiscal Burden:**

- Puts significant financial strain on the government, diverting funds from potential long-term solutions for the agricultural sector.
- **Example:** Maharashtra's decision to waive off crop loans cost about Rs 45,000 crore in 2020.

**3. Limited Long-Term Impact:**

- Provides only temporary relief without addressing the root causes of farm distress, such as low crop prices, volatile markets, and high input costs.
- Persistent issues like lack of irrigation or proper storage facilities remain unaddressed.

**4. Distortion of Credit Market:**

- Discourages banks and financial institutions from lending to farmers, fearing potential future bailouts.
- Makes it harder for farmers to access credit, hindering long-term investments in their farms.

**5. Inefficiency and Corruption:**

- Implementation can be inefficient and prone to corruption.
- Risk of intended beneficiaries not receiving full benefits due to bureaucratic hurdles or mismanagement.

**Way Ahead****1. Investment in Infrastructure:**

- Develop better storage facilities, improved transportation networks, and efficient marketing channels.
- Ensure farmers get fair prices for their produce.

**2. Crop Diversification:**

- Encourage farmers to diversify their crops to reduce dependence on a few vulnerable crops.
- Mitigate risks associated with price fluctuations and crop failures.

**3. Sustainable Agricultural Practices:**

- Promote sustainable farming methods to improve soil health and water management.
- Invest in research and development for improved crop varieties and resilient farming techniques.

**4. Financial Literacy and Risk Management:**

- Educate farmers on financial literacy and risk management practices.
- Provide access to crop insurance and other financial tools to manage uncertainties.

**5. Long-term Policy Reforms:**

- Implement long-term policy reforms focusing on the overall improvement of the agricultural sector.
- Address systemic issues such as market access, input costs, and farmer incomes to create a sustainable agricultural economy.

**Conclusion**

- ⇒ While farm loan waivers can provide immediate relief to distressed farmers, they are not a sustainable solution to the deep-rooted challenges in the agricultural sector.
- ⇒ A balanced approach, combining immediate relief measures with long-term structural reforms, is essential to ensure the economic well-being and sustainability of the farming community in India.
- ⇒ By investing in infrastructure, promoting crop diversification, and implementing sustainable agricultural practices, the government can create a more resilient and prosperous agricultural sector.

## INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

## A STRATEGIC WINDOW FOR INDIA IN EVOLVING EURASIAN GEOPOLITICS

**Introduction**

- Recent geopolitical developments, such as Russian President Vladimir Putin's visits to North Korea and Taiwan, coupled with the US presidential debate between Joe Biden and Donald Trump, highlight the increasingly complex security dynamics between Europe and Asia.
- These changes present new strategic opportunities for middle powers like India as they navigate the emerging "Eurasian" geopolitics.

**Asia's Enhanced Role in Global Affairs**

- Historically, Asian resources and contributions significantly shaped the economic and geopolitical landscapes of European imperial powers, particularly during the colonial era.
- Indian military contributions were crucial for Britain's dominance in the Indian Ocean and supported Western allies during both World Wars.
- Today, Asian nations are no longer passive players but active agents in global power dynamics:
  - ➔ Both Russia and Western Europe are seeking alliances with Asian countries to influence the conflict in Ukraine.
  - ➔ Asian states are exercising greater agency in shaping global power structures and geopolitical outcomes.

**Strategic Realignments and Alliances**

The current conflict has led to notable realignments and the formation of new alliances:

- North Korea has become a key supplier of ammunition to Russia, while South Korea is providing arms to Ukraine.
- China, while indirectly supporting Russia, and Washington pressuring Japan to liberalize arms exports, highlight the intricate web of alliances.
- Putin's visits to Pyongyang and Hanoi demonstrate Russia's efforts to rebuild ties with North Korea and strengthen its position in Asia.
- Vietnam's strategic balancing act between the US, China, and Russia exemplifies the growing agency of Asian nations in global affairs.

**Western Dilemmas and Strategic Shifts**

The increasing maneuverability of Asian states has intensified strategic dilemmas for the West:

- The US, historically dominant in both European and Asian theatres, now faces the challenge of addressing simultaneous threats from Russia and China.
- A significant faction within the US political establishment advocates for focusing military power in Asia, viewing China as the primary challenge. This debate is expected to be prominent in the upcoming presidential elections.
- Both Biden and Trump agree on the need for Europe to assume greater responsibility for its defense, which would alleviate some of America's burdens and enable a more balanced approach to the dual challenges posed by Russia and China.

**Opportunities for Middle Powers**

The evolving geopolitical landscape offers unprecedented opportunities for middle powers like India:

- The US is eager to build strong security partnerships with middle powers to counterbalance China and Russia.
- The concept of "integrated deterrence" emphasizes enhancing the comprehensive national power of middle powers, including military capabilities.
- For India, this presents a strategic window to modernize its defense industrial base and expand arms production, aligning with its goal of achieving self-sufficiency and "strategic autonomy."

## Conclusion

- The deepening interconnections between European and Asian security present both challenges and opportunities.
- Middle powers like India have a crucial role to play in this evolving geopolitical scenario, with significant potential to influence global power dynamics through strategic partnerships and defense modernization.
- By capitalizing on these opportunities, India can enhance its strategic autonomy and contribute to global stability.

## BOOSTING A SPECIAL BOND: INDIA-NEPAL RELATIONS

### Introduction

- Nepal and India share a unique relationship characterized by an open border, shared culture, economic interdependence, and deep-rooted people-to-people connections.
- The leadership of both countries has been actively working to enhance this special bond, fostering closer ties and cooperation.

### India's Significance for Nepal

- India plays a crucial role in Nepal's economy and development.
- As Nepal's largest trading partner, India is the top source of tourists, the sole supplier of petroleum products, and the largest source of foreign investment.
- India also provides vital transit for almost all of Nepal's third-country trade and accounts for a significant share of inward remittances from pensioners, professionals, and laborers working in India.
- In times of disaster and emergencies, India has always been the first responder, providing immediate rescue and relief, as well as financial aid, such as the \$75 million package for earthquake-hit areas in Nepal.



### New Initiatives in India-Nepal Relations

- Nepal's trade deficit with India, close to 18% of GDP, highlights the need for improved infrastructure and reduced transaction costs.
- To address this, Nepal and India are now focusing on reducing the trade deficit, initiating and strengthening cross-border digital financial connectivity to facilitate trade, tourism, and remittance flows.
- These efforts are in addition to enhancing physical connectivity to lower the cost of doing business and strengthen people-to-people ties.

### Cooperation in the Power Sector: The Backbone of Economic Cooperation

- The power sector stands as a cornerstone of India-Nepal economic cooperation. Following the 2022 Joint Vision Statement on Power Sector Cooperation, covering bilateral cooperation in the production, transmission, and cross-border trading of hydropower, significant progress has been made.
- In 2023, Nepal exported approximately 650 MW of electricity to India, earning over Rs 10 billion, thus helping to reduce the trade deficit and augment foreign exchange earnings.
- A long-term power trade agreement signed in 2023 aims to export 10,000 MW of electricity from Nepal to India over ten years, boosting investor confidence in Nepal's hydro sector.
- This has led to new projects by Indian and Nepali investors and significant partnerships in building cross-border transmission lines.
- Additionally, a tripartite agreement between Nepal, India, and Bangladesh has initiated hydroelectricity export from Nepal to Bangladesh, starting with 40 MW in 2025, with plans for substantial increases.

### India-Nepal Cooperation in the Digital Space

- In 2023, Nepal and India decided to enhance digital financial connectivity.
- This allows Indian travelers in Nepal to make payments via mobile phones, with Nepali citizens expected to gain similar capabilities soon.
- This facility will enable hassle-free payments for traders, tourists, pilgrims, students, and medical travelers.

- ⇒ The mobile transfer mechanism, set to operationalize soon, will help workers transfer earnings through formal channels.
- ⇒ Furthermore, the process for Nepalis to open bank accounts in India is being simplified, alongside straightforward procedures for obtaining Aadhaar cards.

### Measures to Reduce the Cost of Cross-Border Trade

- ⇒ Several measures have been taken in partnership with India to reduce the cost of doing business in Nepal.
- ⇒ This includes constructing two new petroleum pipelines, one between Siliguri, India, and Jhapa, Nepal, and another between Amlekhgunj and Chitwan.
- ⇒ Following the success of the Motihari-Amlekhgunj petroleum pipeline, which saved Nepal Rs 1 billion annually in transportation costs, these new projects aim to further reduce costs and prevent losses from pilferage, leakage, and delays.
- ⇒ Additionally, two new integrated check posts (ICPs) in Bhairahawa and Dodhara-Chandani, funded by India, will facilitate smoother movement of cargo and passenger vehicles.
- ⇒ Upgraded border roads, operational cross-border freight rail, and several ongoing cross-border road and bridge constructions further enhance connectivity.
- ⇒ The feasibility study of the Raxaul-Kathmandu railway is complete, and a direct rail service from Ayodhya to Janakpur is under consideration.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ The relationship between Nepal and India is deep, broad, and multifaceted. While there are concerns that need addressing, the recent momentum in partnership and progress should continue.
- ⇒ Bilateral mechanisms to address areas of cooperation and concerns, including boundary issues, should be activated to keep the relationship robust.
- ⇒ By maintaining this momentum, both nations can ensure a prosperous and cooperative future.

## CHURN IN FRANCE

### Introduction

- ⇒ French President Emmanuel Macron is known for taking risks.
- ⇒ He first came to power in 2017 by creating a new political party that aimed to transcend the traditional left-right divide, thereby marginalizing established parties on both sides.

### Unpopularity of Macron's Reforms

- ⇒ The current political climate in France is polarized, leaving little room for moderation.
- ⇒ Macron's key reforms, particularly the changes to the pension system, have been deeply unpopular.
- ⇒ The yellow vest protests of 2018, sparked by Macron's green tax on fuel, are a testament to this discontent.
- ⇒ Losing his legislative majority in June 2022 has further hampered his ability to enact his agenda, resulting in a stalemate in the French parliament.



### The Challenge from Far-Right Candidate

- ⇒ Marine Le Pen has been rebranding her National Rally party to make it more palatable to mainstream voters, a process she refers to as "de-demonisation."
- ⇒ She no longer advocates for France's exit from the EU but seeks to collaborate with other right-wing leaders like Italy's Giorgia Meloni.
- ⇒ Le Pen's platform remains tough on immigration and favors economic nationalism, opposing globalization and multiculturalism.

### The New Left in France and Its Agenda

- ⇒ On the other side of the spectrum, left-wing parties have formed a "new popular front" with promises that include lowering the retirement age to 60, increasing minimum wages, boosting public sector pay, reducing income tax, and introducing a wealth tax.



- ⇒ While these proposals appeal to many voters, they could exacerbate France's already high public debt, which stands at 110% of GDP.

### The Probable Scenario After the Snap Election

- ⇒ The upcoming legislative elections on June 30 and July 7 are unpredictable, but it seems unlikely that Macron's party will secure an outright majority.
- ⇒ This would force Macron to "co-habit" with a prime minister from a different party, likely Marine Le Pen's young protégé, Jordan Bardella.
- ⇒ A hung parliament is also a possibility, which would lead to greater political instability in France.

### The Significance of France in Europe and the World

- ⇒ France is the EU's second-largest economy and the only European country with nuclear weapons.
- ⇒ It is also a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, making its political stability crucial for both Europe and the global community.

### Ramifications of the Results of the Snap Election for Europe and Beyond

The results of France's snap election could have far-reaching implications:

- ⇒ A government with a far-right or far-left prime minister and Macron as president could weaken France's influence in shaping EU foreign and security policy.
- ⇒ Such a government could clash with the EU over membership obligations, disrupting the Franco-German partnership that drives the EU.
- ⇒ France's support for Ukraine might diminish, as Marine Le Pen has opposed sending French troops and would prioritize domestic spending.
- ⇒ The left's pro-Palestinian stance could strain relations with French Jews and Israel.
- ⇒ An inward-looking, protectionist France could weaken the EU's global influence.
- ⇒ A possible return of Trump to the White House, coupled with a weakened EU, could benefit countries like China and Russia.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ President Macron hopes that voters will reject the extremes of both the left and the right.
- ⇒ However, if either side gains power, France's policies will likely shift dramatically, impacting not only the country but also Europe and the world at large.

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## DELHI AND A NEW LONDON

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### Introduction

- ⇒ As the Tories in Britain face a historic defeat in tomorrow's elections, India is well-positioned to advance bilateral relations under a potential new Labour government led by Keir Starmer.
- ⇒ It is also an opportune time for New Delhi to reassess its perspective on London's Labour government.

### India-UK Relations Under the Conservative Party's 15-Year Rule

- ⇒ Under the Conservative Party, there has been a positive reorientation of ties between London and Delhi.
- ⇒ Shedding some of Britain's colonial baggage, the Tories have reframed engagement with India within a broader Indo-Pacific framework, rather than being solely influenced by the Pakistan and Kashmir factors.
- ⇒ They have also negotiated a roadmap for transforming bilateral relations across various domains, including green transition, defence, new technologies, and maritime security.
- ⇒ Additionally, the Migration and Mobility Agreement has helped address challenges related to illegal immigration and facilitated the flow of Indian talent into the UK.



### Persistent Irritants in the Relationship

- ⇒ Despite progress, some issues remain unresolved.
- ⇒ Delhi is still concerned about the impunity enjoyed by anti-India activities in Britain.

- ⇒ There is enduring resistance within Britain's permanent establishment to a fresh relationship with India.
- ⇒ Additionally, "anti-colonial" posturing in India, both on the left and right, prevents the establishment from fully seizing the possibilities with Britain.

### Sour Memories from Labour Party's Rule for India

- ⇒ Labour's return to power might rekindle some of India's anxieties about bilateral ties.
- ⇒ The late 1990s, during Labour's tenure, saw a significant downturn in India-UK relations.
- ⇒ Queen Elizabeth II's visit to India in 1997, intended to signal post-colonial reconciliation, became a lesson in how not to organize major diplomatic events.
- ⇒ During the mission's stopover in Pakistan, British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook suggested mediating on the Kashmir issue, prompting Indian Prime Minister Inder Kumar Gujral to dismiss the offer and criticize Britain's perceived post-imperial delusions.
- ⇒ Prince Philip's remark about the Jallianwala Bagh massacre death count further soured the visit, leading to a massive uproar in India.
- ⇒ Despite British PM Tony Blair's efforts to limit the damage, the squabbling over Pakistan and Kashmir continued to cast a shadow over bilateral relations under Labour's tenure.

### Potential for Labour's Return to Open Old Wounds

- ⇒ This scenario seems unlikely under Starmer's leadership. Starmer has quelled the anti-India sentiment within the Labour Party ignited by Jeremy Corbyn.
- ⇒ The Labour Manifesto's references to Kashmir in the 2019 elections triggered a storm in Delhi and mobilized the Hindu community to support the Tories.
- ⇒ However, Starmer has sought to crush radical ideologies, curbing the free run of anti-India groups.
- ⇒ He has signaled an intent to build on the foundations laid by the Tories. Labour is reaching out to the Hindu vote, as are the Tories.
- ⇒ Starmer's presence at the Swaminarayan Temple in Kingsbury, promising to protect British Hindus' interests, is a testament to this.
- ⇒ However, Labour cannot ignore other minorities, including the Pakistani diaspora, which stands at 1.2 million (compared to the Indian diaspora at 1.5 million).
- ⇒ UK-based Khalistani groups will continue to lobby the new government to push an anti-India agenda.

### Diplomatic Tasks for Delhi

For Delhi, navigating India's domestic politics and the fractures of the Subcontinent resonating within the large South Asian diaspora in the UK is crucial. Like in most democracies, UK retail politics involves cultivating vote banks. Delhi, then, has a two-fold task.

#### 1. Engage with All Stakeholders in the UK to Curb Anti-India Activities

- Delhi must maintain pressure to curb anti-India activities in the UK.
- It must also intensify engagement with the "deep state" in Britain to establish sensible protocols for managing issues arising from the UK's large and growing South Asian diaspora.

#### 2. Positively Engage with the UK

- Building on the positive potential is essential to limit the salience of negative factors. Shedding misperceptions about Britain is equally important.
- Contrary to Gujral's "third-rate power" comment, Britain's GDP in the mid-1990s was higher than China and India combined.
- Today, while India's economy is slightly larger than Britain's (nearly \$4 trillion compared to \$3.5 trillion), India, with a per capita income of less than \$3,000 (compared to Britain's \$50,000), has much to gain from a deeper partnership with London.

### UK's Significance for India

- ⇒ Delhi should stop underestimating Britain's relative importance.
- ⇒ India's exports to Britain, at nearly \$30 billion, are nearly six times its exports to Russia.
- ⇒ Although far behind the US and China, Britain remains among the front-ranking middle powers.
- ⇒ Its financial clout, technological depth, and global reach make Britain a force multiplier for a rising India.
- ⇒ As Starmer nudges Labour towards political moderation, he offers India an opportunity to strengthen ties with Britain.
- ⇒ David Lammy, expected to be the next foreign secretary, recently laid out an ambitious vision for India-UK relations, criticizing the Tories for over-promising and under-delivering.
- ⇒ Labour is ready to push forward on the free trade deal and advance technological and defence cooperation.

## Conclusion

- New Delhi must not view the potential new Labour government with preconceived notions.
- The new Labour party has signaled a moderate stance on India's immediate concerns.
- It is time for India to stop underestimating the UK's importance and embark on energized economic and political engagement with Britain.

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## DOON SCHOOL WINS AWARD AT INDO-NORWAY EDUCATION SUMMIT 2024

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### Introduction

- Doon School Srinagar has been honored with the "Award for Transformative Education Excellence" at the Indo-Norway International Education Summit, held at Stortinget, Norway on June 5, 2024.
- Organized by Mind Mingle since 2014, this summit celebrates global educational innovation and features notable speakers including Himanshu Gulati (MP, Norway), Ole Jacob Johansen (Minister of State for Akershus), and Dr. Acquino Vimal (Indian Ambassador to Norway).



### The Leadership of Showkat Hussain Khan

- Under the visionary guidance of its Chairman, Showkat Hussain Khan, Doon School has implemented significant educational advancements.
- Khan, who holds an MSc in Physics, has received global acclaim for his contributions to education.
- In 2022, the Government of Mauritius awarded him the Award for Excellence.
- His efforts to encourage girls' education and promote peace through sports in Kashmir have been particularly transformative.

### Contributions to Education

- Showkat Hussain Khan's leadership has revolutionized the teaching approach at Doon School.
- His commitment to quality and inclusivity is evident in his dedication to not only educating but also discovering and nurturing the unique potential of each student.
- His approach has positioned Doon School as a leader in the region, significantly influencing educational practices and student learning outcomes.

### Global Collaboration and Innovation

- The Indo-Norway International Education Summit highlighted the importance of cross-border collaboration in education, emphasizing the need for innovative approaches to address contemporary educational challenges and shape the future of global education.
- The recognition of 25 schools, including Doon School, for their transformative teaching practices underscores this theme.
- In his acceptance speech, Showkat Hussain Khan expressed his gratitude and reaffirmed Doon School's commitment to a legacy of transformative education.
- The school continues to strive to be a beacon of global learning, emphasizing that innovation and excellence in education can profoundly impact students' learning and development worldwide, regardless of their location or cultural background.

### Conclusion

- The award at the Indo-Norway Education Summit 2024 marks a significant achievement for Doon School Srinagar and its Chairman, Showkat Hussain Khan.
- Their dedication to transformative education practices not only enhances the learning experience of their students but also sets a high standard for educational excellence globally.
- This recognition serves as an inspiration for other institutions to pursue innovative and inclusive educational strategies, fostering a brighter future for students everywhere.

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**FIRST INTERNATIONAL DAIRY FEDERATION ASIA-PACIFIC SUMMIT HELD IN KOCHI**


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**Introduction**

- The first International Dairy Federation (IDF) Regional Dairy Conference Asia Pacific-2024 is taking place in Kochi, Kerala, from June 26th to June 28th, 2024.
- This significant event brings together experts and leaders from around the globe to discuss innovative ideas and address challenges facing the dairy industry.
- Organized by the Union Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairy, the National Dairy Development Board (NDDB), and the International Dairy Federation (IDF), the conference is hosted at the Grand Hyatt, Bolgatty.
- It is expected to attract over 1,000 delegates from more than 20 countries.

**Key Figures**

Prominent attendees include Rajiv Ranjan Singh, Union Minister, who will address the event virtually. Other notable participants are:

- J. Chinchurani, Kerala's Minister for Animal Husbandry and Dairy Development
- Ashish Kumar Bhutani, Secretary, Ministry of Cooperation
- Alka Upadhyaya, Secretary, Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairying
- Meenesh Shah, Chairman, NDDB

**Conference Theme and Objectives**

The theme of the event is "Farmer-centric Innovations in Dairying." The conference aims to tackle key issues in the dairy industry, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region, while also addressing global challenges. The main objectives include:

- Enhancing dairy production
- Ensuring transparency in milk collection
- Promoting environmentally sustainable practices in response to climate change

**Discussions and Expectations**

- The conference features sessions that offer insights into dairy farming and innovative methods from both global and regional perspectives.
- These discussions aim to foster in-depth conversations and provide valuable knowledge by focusing on the one health concept and farmer-centric innovations.
- This summit is crucial for advancing understanding in the global dairy industry and addressing unique challenges faced by the Asia-Pacific region.

**Conclusion**

- The first IDF Regional Dairy Conference Asia Pacific-2024 in Kochi is a landmark event for the dairy industry, bringing together a diverse group of experts and leaders to discuss and share innovations.
- The focus on farmer-centric innovations and sustainable practices highlights the commitment to improving dairy production and addressing climate change challenges.
- This conference sets the stage for significant advancements in the dairy sector, both regionally and globally.

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**GLOBAL INDIA AI SUMMIT 2024**


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**Introduction**

- On July 3, 2024, New Delhi hosted the Global India AI Summit 2024, where Ashwini Vaishnaw, the Minister of Electronics and Information Technology, delivered the opening address.
- Vaishnaw underscored the critical role of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in addressing global challenges, emphasizing that a unified global approach is essential for effective AI regulation and utilization.
- He highlighted that isolated efforts by individual countries would be insufficient to harness AI's full potential.

### Emphasis on Global Collaboration

- ⇒ The summit provided a platform for reflecting on AI advancements over the past year and initiating discussions on creating a cohesive strategy for AI regulation and application.
- ⇒ Vaishnaw articulated the Indian government's vision of democratizing technology, ensuring that AI is accessible to all, rather than being dominated by a select few, such as large tech companies or governmental bodies.



### India's Model for AI Utilisation

#### Public AI Platform

- ⇒ Vaishnaw illustrated India's digital public infrastructure as a blueprint for making AI widely accessible.
- ⇒ The Indian model prevents monopolistic control by any single service provider and ensures the benefits are distributed across a broad spectrum of society.
- ⇒ The government plans to replicate this model in the AI domain by investing in a public platform equipped with essential tools, including:
  - **Computing Power:** High-performance computing resources to support AI development and deployment.
  - **High-Quality Datasets:** Access to diverse and rich datasets crucial for training robust AI models.
  - **Technical and Legal Frameworks:** Comprehensive guidelines and regulations to ensure ethical and legal compliance in AI practices.
- ⇒ This platform aims to empower startups, entrepreneurs, and researchers, fostering innovation and the widespread adoption of AI solutions.

### AI's Impact on Key Sectors

#### Healthcare

AI is being leveraged in healthcare for various applications such as:

- ⇒ **Disease Diagnosis:** AI algorithms that can diagnose diseases with high accuracy, enhancing early detection and treatment.
- ⇒ **Personalized Medicine:** Tailoring treatments based on individual patient data, improving outcomes and reducing side effects.

#### Agriculture

AI applications in agriculture include:

- ⇒ **Precision Farming:** Using AI to analyze soil health, predict weather patterns, and optimize planting schedules.
- ⇒ **Crop Monitoring:** AI systems that monitor crop health and provide real-time advice to farmers, boosting yield and efficiency.

#### Education

In the education sector, AI contributes to:

- ⇒ **Customized Learning Plans:** Developing individualized learning plans based on students' strengths and weaknesses.
- ⇒ **Interactive Learning Tools:** AI-powered educational tools that enhance student engagement and learning outcomes.

### Addressing AI-Related Risks and Challenges

#### Threats to Democracy and Misinformation

Despite its benefits, AI poses significant risks, such as:

- ⇒ **Threats to Democracy:** AI technologies, like deep fakes, can undermine democratic processes by spreading disinformation.
- ⇒ **Misinformation:** The rapid dissemination of false information through AI-driven platforms.

## Cyber Security Measures

- The summit stressed the importance of collective efforts to manage and counter AI-related security threats.
- Ensuring a safe and secure AI environment requires global cooperation and proactive measures.

## Conclusion: Vision for the Future

- The Global IndiaAI Summit 2024 concluded with a reaffirmation of India's commitment to fostering a collaborative, equitable, and secure future for AI technologies.
- The government's approach aims to balance innovation with widespread accessibility and stringent safety measures, ensuring that AI benefits all sections of society while mitigating its risks.
- The summit set the stage for India's next steps in AI, highlighting the importance of global partnerships and a unified strategy in navigating the AI landscape.

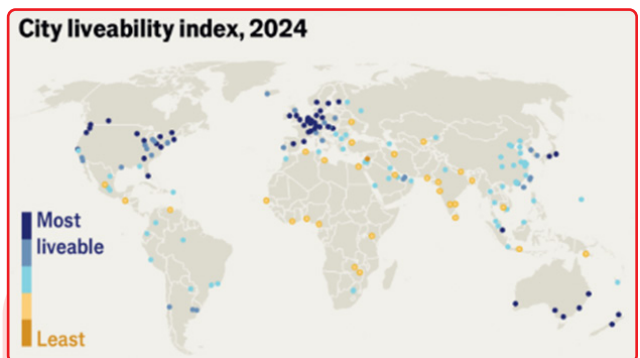
## GLOBAL LIVEABILITY INDEX 2024

### Introduction

- The Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU) has unveiled its latest Global Liveability Index, once again naming Vienna, Austria, as the world's most liveable city.
- The 2024 index evaluates cities globally based on several critical factors, including education, healthcare, culture, environment, stability, and infrastructure, providing a comprehensive overview of urban liveability.

### 2024 Top Rankings Overview

- Vienna, Austria, continues to hold the top spot as the most liveable city in the world, a position it has maintained consistently due to its excellent public services, infrastructure, and overall quality of life.
- Following Vienna, Copenhagen, Denmark, remains in second place, showcasing its strong healthcare, education, and cultural offerings.
- Zurich, Switzerland, has ascended to third place, reflecting improvements in its public services and overall stability.
- Melbourne, Australia, previously third, has slipped to fourth place, yet it remains a highly liveable city with robust healthcare and educational systems.
- Calgary, Canada, and Geneva, Switzerland, share the fifth spot, highlighting their high standards in healthcare, infrastructure, and stability.
- Other cities that made it to the top ten include Sydney, Australia, and Vancouver, Canada, both tied at seventh place, and Osaka, Japan, and Auckland, New Zealand, both tied at ninth place.



### Methodology Behind the Rankings

The EIU's Global Liveability Index evaluates cities based on five key areas:

- **Education:** Availability and quality of education, including the presence of international schools.
- **Healthcare:** Quality and availability of private and public healthcare services.
- **Culture and Environment:** Availability of cultural activities, climate, and green space.
- **Stability:** Prevalence of crime, threat of conflict, and level of civil unrest.
- **Infrastructure:** Quality of roads, public transport, housing, energy provision, and telecommunications.
  - ➔ Vienna scored exceptionally well, achieving perfect scores in education, healthcare, stability, and infrastructure.
  - ➔ However, it fell slightly in culture and environment due to a lower number of major sporting events compared to other global cities.

### Regional Differences and Trends

- **North America:** North American cities generally scored well in education, with top-tier institutions and widespread availability of high-quality educational services. However, infrastructure issues, particularly related to housing crises in Canadian cities like Vancouver and Calgary, impacted their overall scores.

- **Middle East:** Cities in the UAE and Saudi Arabia experienced notable improvements in their rankings, driven by enhanced safety measures and significant investments in healthcare infrastructure. These advancements reflect ongoing efforts to improve living standards and attract international talent and businesses.
- **Western Europe:** Despite high rankings, Western European cities faced a decline in stability scores due to increased protests and crime rates. These socio-political issues have slightly impacted the overall liveability scores in this region.
- **Israel:** Tel Aviv saw a substantial drop in its ranking, primarily due to the ongoing regional conflict, which has affected the city's stability and overall safety.

### Insights into Least Liveable Cities

- At the other end of the spectrum, Damascus, Syria, continues to rank as the least liveable city in the world, plagued by ongoing conflict and instability.
- Other cities at the bottom include Tripoli, Libya; Algiers, Algeria; and Lagos, Nigeria, where persistent socio-economic challenges and political instability contribute to low liveability scores.

### The 10 Best Cities to Live in the World

- Vienna, Austria
- Copenhagen, Denmark
- Zurich, Switzerland
- Melbourne, Australia
- Calgary, Canada (tied with Geneva)
- Geneva, Switzerland (tie)
- Sydney, Australia (tied with Vancouver)
- Vancouver, Canada (tie)
- Osaka, Japan (tied with Auckland)
- Auckland, New Zealand (tie)

### The 10 Worst Cities to Live in the World

- Caracas, Venezuela
- Kyiv, Ukraine
- Port Moresby, PNG
- Harare, Zimbabwe
- Dhaka, Bangladesh
- Karachi, Pakistan
- Lagos, Nigeria
- Algiers, Algeria
- Tripoli, Libya
- Damascus, Syria

### Way Forward

- The Global Liveability Index 2024 provides valuable insights into the factors influencing urban liveability worldwide.
- Vienna's consistent top ranking underscores its high standards in public services and overall quality of life.
- The index also highlights regional disparities, with cities in the Middle East showing significant improvements, while socio-political issues have affected cities in Western Europe and Israel.

### Conclusion

- As urban environments continue to evolve, the Global Liveability Index serves as a crucial tool for city planners, policymakers, and residents to understand and address the factors that contribute to making cities more liveable.
- Continuous monitoring and evaluation are essential for enhancing global liveability and ensuring that cities can provide their inhabitants with the best possible quality of life.

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## INDUS WATER TREATY

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### Introduction

- The Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) is a critical agreement between India and Pakistan, signed on September 19, 1960, and brokered by the World Bank.

- This treaty has governed the water-sharing of the Indus River and its tributaries for over six decades, standing as a significant example of cooperation between the two neighboring countries.
- Recently, the treaty was back in the spotlight as a five-member Pakistani delegation visited Jammu's Kishtwar to inspect power projects set up on the rivers covered under the IWT.

### What is the Indus Water Treaty (IWT)?

#### About

- The Indus Waters Treaty was established to manage the use and distribution of the waters of the Indus River and its five tributaries—Sutlej, Beas, Ravi, Jhelum, and Chenab—between India and Pakistan.
- The treaty outlines mechanisms for cooperation and information exchange and sets a framework for resolving disputes related to water-sharing.

#### Key Provisions

##### Water Sharing

- The treaty specifies how the water from the six rivers of the Indus River System is shared:
- The three western rivers—Indus, Chenab, and Jhelum—are allocated to Pakistan for unrestricted use. India can use these waters for certain non-consumptive purposes, including agriculture and domestic needs.
- The three eastern rivers—Ravi, Beas, and Sutlej—are allocated to India for unrestricted use.
- This allocation means that Pakistan receives about 80% of the water, while India uses the remaining 20%.

##### Permanent Indus Commission

- The treaty mandates the establishment of a Permanent Indus Commission, which is required to meet annually to facilitate cooperation and resolve issues.

##### Dispute Resolution Mechanism

The IWT includes a three-step dispute resolution mechanism:

- Questions on both sides can be resolved at the Permanent Commission level.
- Unresolved issues can be escalated to the inter-government level.
- Further disputes can be addressed by a Neutral Expert appointed by the World Bank, and appeals can be referred to a Court of Arbitration set up by the World Bank.

#### Recent Inspections Under IWT

The Pakistani delegation inspected several hydroelectric projects in Jammu and Kashmir:

- **Pakal Dul Hydro Electric Project:** Built on the Marusudar River, a tributary of the Chenab.
- **Lower Kalnai Hydro Electric Project:** Developed on the Chenab River.
- **Kishanganga Hydroelectric Project:** A run-of-the-river project on the Kishanganga River (Neelum River in Pakistan). Pakistan objected to this project, but in 2013, The Hague's Permanent Court of Arbitration allowed India to divert water under specific conditions.
- **Ratle Hydroelectric Project:** Another run-of-the-river project on the Chenab River.

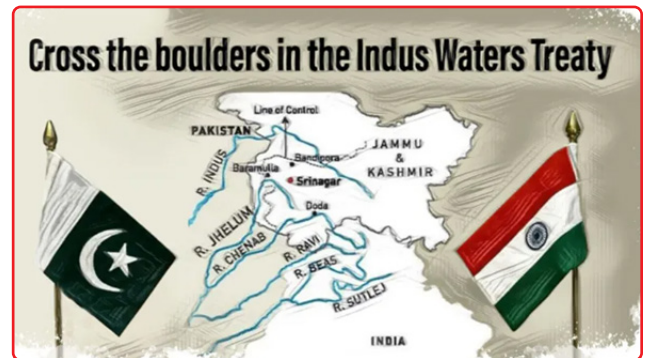
#### Indus River and Its Tributaries

##### Source

- The Indus River, known as Sengge Chu or 'Lion River' in Tibetan, originates near Mansarovar Lake in the Trans-Himalaya in Tibet.
- It flows through Tibet, India, and Pakistan, providing water to about 200 million people living in its drainage basin.

##### Course and Major Tributaries

- The Indus River enters India through Ladakh, flows through Jammu and Kashmir, and then reaches Pakistan's Gilgit-Baltistan region. It eventually empties into the Arabian Sea near Karachi.
- **Left-bank tributaries:** Zaskar, Suru, Soan, Jhelum, Chenab, Ravi, Beas, Satluj, and Panjnad rivers.
- **Right-bank tributaries:** Shyok, Gilgit, Hunza, Swat, Kunnar, Kurram, Gomol, and Kabul rivers.





## Way Forward

To ensure the continued success and effectiveness of the Indus Waters Treaty, both India and Pakistan need to focus on the following areas:

- **Technical Dispute Resolution:** Utilize the existing framework of the treaty to resolve technical disputes efficiently.
- **Transparency and Data Sharing:** Enhance mutual trust by sharing hydrological data and addressing shared concerns.
- **Joint Basin Management:** Collaborate on managing the Indus basin to tackle challenges posed by climate change and population growth, focusing on water conservation, flood control, and sustainable usage.
- **Political Commitment and Dialogue:** Prioritize dialogue and cooperation over confrontation to find sustainable solutions for both countries.

## Conclusion

- The Indus Waters Treaty remains a cornerstone of India-Pakistan relations, symbolizing the potential for cooperation amidst political differences.
- By strengthening the treaty's implementation and addressing emerging challenges, both nations can continue to benefit from this vital agreement.

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## PANCHSHEEL: 'FIVE PRINCIPLES' OF PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

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### Introduction

- The Panchsheel principles, or the 'Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence,' hold a significant place in the history of international relations, particularly between India and China.
- As China commemorates the 70th anniversary of these principles, it is an opportune moment to reflect on their origin, key features, and enduring relevance.
- These principles have not only shaped the bilateral relations between India and China but have also influenced global diplomatic norms.

### India-China Relations

- India and China share a complex history of diplomatic relations, marked by territorial disputes, border tensions, and occasional military clashes.
- Both countries established diplomatic relations in 1950, making India the first non-socialist bloc country to do so with the People's Republic of China.

### Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence (Panchsheel)

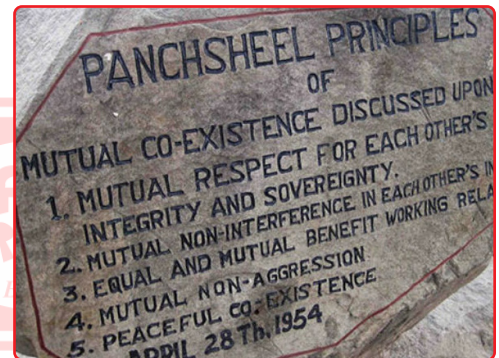
- These principles were first formally enunciated in the Agreement on Trade and Intercourse between the Tibet region of China and India signed in 1954.
- India welcomed Panchsheel, recognizing its alignment with its foreign policy since independence.

### Ancient Roots

- Panchsheel traces its origin to the Buddhist concept of Pañcaśīla, which describes the five moral vows of Buddhism: abstinence from murder, theft, sexual misconduct, lying, and intoxicants.
- Confucius, the Chinese philosopher, spoke of harmony amid differences, laying the groundwork for these principles.
- Panchsheel's modern form emerged in China, bridging ancient wisdom with contemporary international relations.

### Key Features

- **Mutual Respect for Territorial Integrity and Sovereignty:** Both nations committed to respecting each other's territorial boundaries and sovereignty, emphasizing the importance of recognizing each other's rights and boundaries.
- **Mutual Non-Aggression:** India and China pledged not to engage in aggressive actions against each other, aiming to prevent armed conflicts and maintain peace.



- ⇒ **Mutual Non-Interference:** The two countries agreed not to interfere in each other's internal affairs, emphasizing respect for national autonomy and sovereignty.
- ⇒ **Equality and Mutual Benefit:** India and China sought equal treatment and mutual benefits in their interactions, emphasizing fairness and cooperation.
- ⇒ **Peaceful Co-existence:** The ultimate goal was peaceful coexistence, fostering an environment where both nations could thrive without conflict.

### Relevance

- ⇒ Post-Chinese Revolution, the Common Programme adopted most core Panchsheel principles.
- ⇒ Panchsheel guided India-China relations and resonated in the North-South dialogue and other global groupings. Its relevance persists in our ever-changing world.

### Collective Security in Asia

- ⇒ India and China concluded that a system of collective security or collective peace could be established in Asia through the Five Principles (Panchsheel), rather than military pacts and alliances.
- ⇒ They visualized Panchsheel agreements of this type between China and Burma, Burma and India, China and Indonesia, then Indonesia and India, etc.

### Global Acceptance

- ⇒ The Five Principles came to be accepted almost universally by countries and finally by the United Nations Organisation.
- ⇒ The UN accepted the Five Principles as a code of conduct in international relations. Later, Yugoslavia, Sweden, and India moved a resolution in the UN containing the Five Principles; it was adopted unanimously.
- ⇒ In a series of active and independent international moves, heads of both countries visited countries in Asia, Africa, and Europe and signed agreements embodying the Five Principles.
- ⇒ The Asian-African conference held in Bandung accepted the Five Principles, expanding them into the Ten Principles of Bandung.
- ⇒ Panchsheel became the presiding principle of the Asian-African movement for equality and freedom against the prevailing colonial and imperialist domination of the world.
- ⇒ The Conference of Non-Aligned Nations in Belgrade accepted them as the core principles behind the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

### Concerns Related to India and China Relations

#### Boundary Questions

- ⇒ Since the 1980s, India and China have sought peaceful resolution of their boundary dispute. Informal summits between leaders, like those in Wuhan (2018) and Chennai (2019), emphasized strategic communication and cooperation.
- ⇒ However, the unresolved boundary issue remains a point of contention, leading to occasional tensions.

#### Economic Ties

- ⇒ Bilateral trade has grown significantly, with China becoming India's largest trading partner in goods.
- ⇒ However, economic competition and geopolitical tensions persist. Both countries vie for influence in South Asia, often competing for regional projects and markets.

#### Strategic Geopolitics

- ⇒ South Asia lies at the crossroads of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The region's proximity to the Indian Ocean and shipping routes is critical for China's oil imports and trade.
- ⇒ South Asia, where land and maritime Silk Roads intersect, plays a crucial role in this initiative.

#### Infrastructure Investment

- ⇒ China invests heavily in port development, enhancing connectivity and securing its maritime trade routes.

#### Military Dimension

- ⇒ China's military ties with South Asian nations have grown, impacting regional dynamics.
- ⇒ Its influence extends through diplomacy, culture, and economic initiatives.

### Way Forward

- ⇒ Today, the Panchsheel Principles continue to resonate globally.
- ⇒ They guide interstate relations, remain relevant in addressing contemporary challenges, and foster peace, sovereignty, and mutual growth.

- ⇒ By adhering to these principles, India and China can work towards a more harmonious and cooperative future, setting an example for the rest of the world.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ India-China relations stand at a critical juncture. Both countries need to focus on dialogue and diplomacy, and conflict avoidance.
- ⇒ Balancing competition and cooperation is essential for regional stability and prosperity, as highlighted at the Wuhan summit.
- ⇒ As both nations celebrate 70 years of diplomatic ties, revisiting the spirit of good neighbourliness and friendship remains crucial.

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## RETURN OF REFORMISTS: MASOUD PEZESHKIAN'S HISTORIC WIN IN IRAN

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### Introduction

- ⇒ In a major surprise, reformist candidate Masoud Pezeshkian won the second round of voting last Friday, becoming the ninth president of the Islamic Republic of Iran.
- ⇒ The elections were held after the previous president, Ibrahim Raisi, died in a helicopter crash in May.

### The Electoral Pitch of President-Elect Pezeshkian

- ⇒ Unlike his predecessor Raisi and his electoral rival Saeed Jalili, both of whom pursued hardline policies at home and abroad, Pezeshkian offers a different path.
- ⇒ He has promised to make peace with the world, free the internet, and lift social restrictions, especially on women.
- ⇒ For the people of a country that has been locked in prolonged conflict with many of its Arab neighbors and the West, and endured endless censorship and repression at home, Pezeshkian could bring a breath of fresh air.



### How Pezeshkian Ensured His Victory

- ⇒ The first round of elections was marked by a small turnout of less than 40 percent, reflecting growing apathy towards the political process and mounting pessimism about the possibility of positive change.
- ⇒ Pezeshkian appears to have enthused urban voters to return to the polling booths in the second round.
- ⇒ His rival, Jalili, in contrast, threatened to double down on social control at home and intensify the confrontation with the world.
- ⇒ Besides the higher turnout, squabbles within the conservative camp may have facilitated Pezeshkian's victory.

### The Challenges Ahead for Pezeshkian

- ⇒ Although Pezeshkian has rekindled hope for much-desired change, he knows that the elected president is not the master of the Iranian polity.
- ⇒ That privilege belongs to the "Supreme Leader," Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who heads Iran's "rule by clerics." Pezeshkian served under two liberal presidents — Ayatollah Khatami and Hassan Rouhani — both of whom promised reform at home and reengagement with the world but could not deliver.
- ⇒ However, politics is the art of the possible, and if he is lucky, opportunities could open up for Pezeshkian in the days ahead as the aging Khamenei struggles to manage the multiple crises enveloping Iran.
- ⇒ Cynics might even argue that Khamenei could give Pezeshkian a longer rope to govern as part of an effort to restore the fading legitimacy of the 1979 Islamic revolution.

### Iran in Geopolitics: A Regional Power

- ⇒ Iran's geopolitical orientation has a powerful impact on the prospects for peace and stability in the world.
- ⇒ Iran has the potential to become a swing state in the deepening great power conflict between the US and Europe on the one hand and the Sino-Russian alliance on the other.
- ⇒ To its west, Tehran is at the heart of multiple conflicts, including the war in Gaza, Lebanon, and Yemen.
- ⇒ To the north, Iran is a critical factor in the Caucasus, Caspian, and Central Asia.

- ⇒ Tehran is also a critical player shaping the turbulent frontiers of Afghanistan and Pakistan and the balance between Kabul and Rawalpindi.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ The election of Masoud Pezeshkian has opened a new opportunity for the world.
- ⇒ Delhi, which has cultivated a productive relationship with Iran's deep state in recent years, must be prepared to seize new possibilities for advancing bilateral ties with Pezeshkian.
- ⇒ His presidency could signal a significant shift in Iran's domestic and foreign policies, offering a chance for renewed engagement and cooperation on various fronts.

## SCO SUMMIT 2024

### Context

- ⇒ Astana, Kazakhstan, is poised to host the 24th summit of the Council of Heads of State of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) on July 3-4, 2024.
- ⇒ This pivotal event will address key regional issues and showcase Astana's commitment to dialogue and diplomacy.

### The SCO: An Overview

- ⇒ The Shanghai Cooperation Organization, established on June 15, 2001, by Kazakhstan, China, the Kyrgyz Republic, Russia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan, emerged from the earlier Shanghai Five mechanism.
- ⇒ The SCO has grown to include nine members, with India, Iran, and Pakistan joining the original six.
- ⇒ The organization also includes three observer states—Afghanistan, Belarus, and Mongolia—and 14 dialogue partners, such as Azerbaijan, Armenia, Qatar, the United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, and Türkiye.
- ⇒ Reflecting its significance, the SCO represents 40% of the world's population and contributes over \$23 trillion to global GDP.
- ⇒ The 2022 Samarkand SCO summit initiated the process of elevating Belarus's status to a member state, further expanding the organization's influence.



### Summit Attendees

Sixteen world leaders are expected to participate in the Astana summit. Notable attendees include:

- ⇒ Chinese President Xi Jinping: Arrived on July 2 for a state visit and the summit.
- ⇒ Russian President Vladimir Putin
- ⇒ Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif
- ⇒ Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev
- ⇒ Tajik President Emomali Rahmon
- ⇒ Kyrgyz President Sadyr Zhaparov
- ⇒ Indian External Affairs Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar
- ⇒ Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko
- ⇒ Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan
- ⇒ Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev
- ⇒ United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres: Arriving in Almaty on July 3.

Alisher Tastenov, chief expert at the Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies (KazISS), highlighted the high number of participants as indicative of the summit's importance as a platform for constructive dialogue.

### Summit Agenda

The theme for the summit, "Strengthening Multilateral Dialogue—Striving Towards a Sustainable Peace and Prosperity," will guide discussions on key areas of cooperation and development. The agenda will primarily focus on:

### Security and Stability

At least 20 major documents will be considered, including:

- ⇒ Astana SCO Declaration
- ⇒ SCO Development Strategy until 2035
- ⇒ Energy Cooperation Development Strategy until 2030
- ⇒ Program of Cooperation in Countering Terrorism, Separatism, and Extremism for 2025–2027
- ⇒ SCO Anti-Drug Strategy for 2024–2029

One key document under discussion is Kazakhstan's initiative, "On World Unity for Just Peace and Harmony," aimed at enhancing confidence-building measures and promoting stable development globally.

### Kazakhstan's Chairmanship

Kazakhstan assumed the rotating chairmanship of the SCO from India in July 2023. President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev described this role as both important and responsible, emphasizing Kazakhstan's dedication to multilateral dialogue and balanced foreign policy. The chairmanship agenda has focused on:

- ⇒ **Resolving Security Issues:** Developing common approaches to security.
- ⇒ **Strengthening Economic Cooperation:** Enhancing trade, investment, and connectivity.
- ⇒ **Environmental Protection:** Advancing sustainable development initiatives.
- ⇒ **Promoting Friendship:** Strengthening cultural and people-to-people bonds.

Kazakhstan has hosted over 150 events under its chairmanship, expanding SCO partnerships and enriching the organization's legal and contractual base.

### Economic and Strategic Benefits

Participation in the SCO offers Kazakhstan numerous benefits:

- ⇒ **Economic Growth:** Enhancing trade and investment, particularly with China and Russia, and developing infrastructure and energy projects.
- ⇒ **Political and Security Cooperation:** Addressing shared challenges like terrorism, extremism, and transnational crime through improved intelligence sharing and operational coordination.

Kazakhstan's trade turnover with SCO countries increased by 56.5% over the past five years, reaching \$66 billion, with a trade volume of \$19.1 billion in January–April 2024 alone.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ The SCO Summit 2024 in Astana represents a critical opportunity for member states to reinforce their commitment to regional security, economic cooperation, and sustainable development.
- ⇒ As Kazakhstan concludes its chairmanship, the summit aims to strengthen the SCO's international influence and foster a collaborative environment for addressing global challenges.

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## SIMLA AGREEMENT 1972

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### Introduction

- ⇒ On July 2, 1972, India and Pakistan signed the Simla Agreement, marking a significant milestone in their bilateral relations.
- ⇒ This agreement, signed by Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Pakistan's President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, aimed to establish peace and normalize relations between the two nations following the 1971 Indo-Pakistani War.
- ⇒ The 52nd anniversary of the Simla Agreement was recently observed, highlighting its enduring impact on South Asian geopolitics.



### Origins and Context

#### Post 1971 War Dynamics:

- ⇒ The Simla Agreement was a direct consequence of the 1971 Indo-Pakistani War, which resulted in the independence of Bangladesh (formerly East Pakistan).
- ⇒ India's military intervention played a crucial role in this conflict, significantly altering the geopolitical landscape of South Asia.

**Key Negotiators:**

- ⇒ The agreement was negotiated by Indian Prime Minister Indira Gandhi and Pakistan's President Zulfikar Ali Bhutto.
- ⇒ The primary aim was to establish lasting peace and normalize relations between the two countries after the intense hostilities.

**Objectives of the Simla Agreement:**

- ⇒ **Resolution of Kashmir Issue:** India sought a bilateral resolution to the Kashmir dispute, aiming to restrain Pakistan from internationalizing the issue.
- ⇒ **Normalisation of Relations:** India hoped to improve relations with Pakistan based on the new regional power balance.
- ⇒ **Avoiding Humiliation of Pakistan:** India chose not to press for turning the ceasefire line into a permanent boundary to prevent further resentment and potential revanchism in Pakistan.

**Key Provisions****Conflict Resolution and Bilateralism:**

- ⇒ The agreement emphasized resolving all issues between India and Pakistan through peaceful means, primarily through bilateral negotiations.
- ⇒ It aimed to end the conflict and confrontation that had marred their relations.

**Status of Kashmir:**

- ⇒ One of the most contentious issues addressed was the Line of Control (LoC) in Kashmir, established after the 1971 war.
- ⇒ Both sides agreed to respect this line without prejudice to their respective claims and to refrain from altering its status unilaterally.

**Withdrawal of Forces:**

- ⇒ The agreement stipulated the withdrawal of forces to their respective sides of the international border, marking a significant step towards de-escalation.

**Future Diplomacy:**

- ⇒ The agreement laid down provisions for future meetings between the heads of both governments and ongoing discussions to establish durable peace, normalize relations, and address humanitarian issues like the repatriation of prisoners of war.

**Significance****Geopolitical Tensions:**

- ⇒ The Simla Agreement remains relevant today as the Kashmir issue and broader IndoPak relations continue to be flashpoints in South Asian geopolitics.

**Legal and Diplomatic Framework:**

- ⇒ It provides a legal framework for future discussions and negotiations between the two countries, despite its limitations and differing interpretations.

**Criticism****Unfulfilled Potential:**

- ⇒ The Simla Agreement fell short of its intended goals of fostering lasting peace and cooperation between India and Pakistan.
- ⇒ Deep-seated mistrust and historical grievances continue to hinder progress.

**Nuclearisation and Strategic Shifts:**

- ⇒ Both countries conducted nuclear tests post-1998, significantly altering the strategic calculus.
- ⇒ This nuclear capability has led to a deterrence-based stability rendering the Simla agreement less relevant.

**Long term Impact:**

- ⇒ Despite its intentions, the Simla Agreement did not lead to a sustained peace process or normalization of relations between India and Pakistan.

**International Perspective:**

- ⇒ The international community generally respects the Simla Agreement's bilateral approach to resolving issues between India and Pakistan.
- ⇒ It has often been cited to discourage international intervention in Kashmir.

## How India-Pakistan Relations Have Been Over the Years

### Partition and Independence (1947):

- ⇒ The partition of British India into India and Pakistan in 1947 resulted in the creation of two separate nations.
- ⇒ The Maharaja of Kashmir initially sought independence but eventually acceded to India due to Pakistan's attack on Kashmir, which resulted in the first Indo-Pak War in 1947-48.

### Wars, Agreements and Terror:

- ⇒ **1965 and 1971 Wars:** The 1965 war began with border skirmishes and escalated into a full-scale conflict, ending with a UN-mediated ceasefire and no major territorial changes. In 1971, India intervened in East Pakistan's struggle for independence, leading to the creation of Bangladesh.
- ⇒ **Simla Agreement (1972):** Established the Line of Control (LOC) in Kashmir between India and Pakistan.
- ⇒ **Insurgency in Kashmir (1989):** Pakistan supported a militant insurgency in Kashmir, leading to widespread violence and human rights abuses.
- ⇒ **Kargil War (1999):** Pakistan-backed forces infiltrated Indian-controlled territory in Kargil, sparking a war that ended with an Indian military victory but strained relations further.
- ⇒ **Mumbai Attacks (2008):** Pakistan-based Lashkar-e-Taiba militants launched coordinated attacks in Mumbai, killing 166 people. This event severely strained relations and led to international pressure on Pakistan to act against terrorism.

### Current Situation (2023-2024):

- ⇒ Continued political instability in Pakistan, coupled with ongoing militant activities and cross-border tensions, perpetuate the cycle of violence and distrust between the two nations.
- ⇒ **Geopolitical Dimensions:** China's growing influence in the region, including its strategic partnership with Pakistan and territorial disputes with India, adds another layer of complexity to the Indo-Pakistani dynamic.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ The India-Pakistan conflict remains a complex and volatile issue with deep historical roots, intertwined with geopolitical rivalries, domestic politics, and aspirations for regional dominance.
- ⇒ Efforts towards lasting peace face significant challenges amid recurring episodes of violence, militant activities, and mutual distrust.
- ⇒ While the Simla Agreement of 1972 represented a significant effort towards peace between India and Pakistan after the 1971 war, its limitations and controversies underscore the complex and enduring nature of Indo-Pakistani relations.
- ⇒ Its legacy remains pivotal in understanding the dynamics and challenges of South Asian diplomacy and security.

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## US PASSED RESOLVE TIBET ACT

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### Introduction

- ⇒ On 30 June 2024, the United States Congress passed the Promoting a Resolution to Tibet-China Dispute Act, commonly known as the Resolve Tibet Act.
- ⇒ This legislation aims to facilitate a peaceful resolution to the Tibet-China dispute in accordance with international law and the United Nations (UN) Charter.
- ⇒ The Act calls for dialogue between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama or his representatives without preconditions.

### Key Provisions of the Resolve Tibet Act 2024

#### Strengthening the US Position

- ⇒ The Resolve Tibet Act is designed to bolster the US's stance on the Tibet issue, applying pressure on China to resume negotiations with the Dalai Lama.
- ⇒ It seeks to enhance US support for Tibet and empower US State Department officials to actively counter disinformation propagated by the Chinese government.



## Advocacy for Human Rights

- ⇒ The Act underscores the Tibetan people's right to self-determination and human rights, highlighting China's obligations as a signatory of international human rights covenants.
- ⇒ It also recognizes the distinct historical, cultural, religious, and linguistic identity of the Tibetan people.

## International Community Involvement

- ⇒ The Act aims to mobilize the international community to support justice and peace in Tibet, calling for negotiations "without preconditions" between the Chinese government and the Dalai Lama or the democratically elected leaders of the Tibetan community.

## Differences with Earlier Acts

- ⇒ Unlike the Tibetan Policy Act (2002), which acknowledged China's claim over Tibet and encouraged dialogue with the Dalai Lama only in his spiritual capacity, the Resolve Tibet Act directly challenges China's territorial claim.
- ⇒ It also goes further than the Tibetan Policy & Support Act (2020) by stipulating that negotiations should aim to resolve the differences between the parties.

## India's Relation with Tibet

### Historical Context

- ⇒ **Younghusband Mission (1903-1904):** A British military expedition to Tibet aimed at establishing a British presence and countering Russian influence, leading to the signing of the Lhasa Convention.
- ⇒ **Anglo-Russian Convention (1907):** Settled colonial disputes and stipulated that Britain and Russia would only negotiate with Tibet through Chinese mediation.

### Cultural and Religious Ties

- ⇒ Despite the Sino-Russian treaty, India maintained close cultural and religious ties with Tibet, primarily through the spread of Buddhism and the presence of influential Buddhist monasteries.

### Border Disputes

- ⇒ The Indo-Tibetan border, especially in Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh, remains a significant point of contention between India and China.
- ⇒ India's recognition of the Tibet Autonomous Region as part of China since 2003, and its asylum to the Dalai Lama in 1959, further complicate the issue.

## Background of the China-Tibet Dispute

### Tibet's Independence Claims

- ⇒ Tibet, an autonomous region with a distinct culture and religion centered around Tibetan Buddhism, declared de facto independence in 1913.
- ⇒ However, successive Chinese governments have claimed sovereignty over Tibet, with the People's Republic of China (PRC) establishing control in 1949.

### Chinese Invasion and the Seventeen Point Agreement

- ⇒ In 1951, the PLA invaded Tibet, leading to the signing of the Seventeen Point Agreement, which nominally guaranteed Tibetan autonomy while allowing Chinese military presence.
- ⇒ The agreement is widely rejected by Tibetans as a forced occupation.

### 1959 Uprising and Aftermath

- ⇒ The 1959 Tibetan uprising resulted in the Dalai Lama fleeing to India and the establishment of a government-in-exile in Dharamshala.
- ⇒ Since then, China has tightened its control over Tibet, restricting freedoms and committing human rights abuses.

## The Dalai Lama

### Role and Significance

- ⇒ The Dalai Lama, a spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism, is believed to be a manifestation of Avalokiteshvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion.
- ⇒ The current Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso, is the 14th in the line.

### Selection Process

- ⇒ The selection of a Dalai Lama involves identifying the reincarnation of the previous Dalai Lama, a process that includes rigorous spiritual and educational training for the chosen child.
- ⇒ This search can take several years and is generally limited to Tibet.



## Global Stand on China-Tibet Issue

### China's Stance

- ⇒ China claims Tibet as part of its territory since the 13th century and aims to develop the region, arguing that Tibet is an autonomous region with significant rights.

### International Support

- ⇒ While some Western countries support Tibetan autonomy and human rights, many countries, including India, do not recognize the Tibetan government-in-exile.
- ⇒ International organizations, including the UN, have raised concerns about human rights abuses in Tibet.

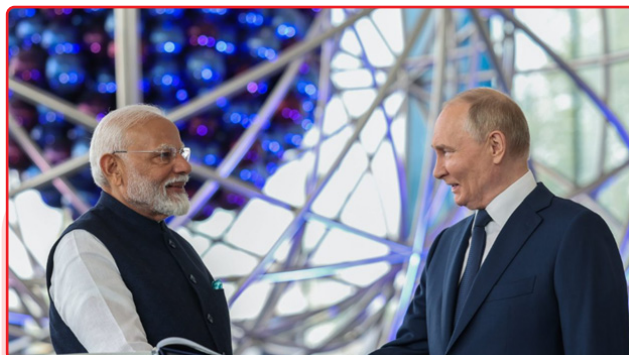
### Conclusion

- ⇒ The Resolve Tibet Act represents a significant shift in US policy towards the Tibet-China dispute, emphasizing the need for genuine dialogue and the protection of Tibetan rights.
- ⇒ This Act not only strengthens the US position but also seeks to mobilize the international community to support a peaceful resolution, highlighting the broader implications for regional stability and human rights.

## 22ND INDIA-RUSSIA ANNUAL SUMMIT

### Why in News?

- ⇒ The 22nd India-Russia Annual Summit in Moscow brought together Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Vladimir Putin to discuss a wide range of issues.
- ⇒ The summit aimed to solidify the strategic partnership between the two nations, particularly in light of ongoing geopolitical tensions.
- ⇒ In another development, Russia has been upgraded from an upper-middle-income to a high-income country by the World Bank, despite ongoing Western sanctions.



### Key Highlights of the 22nd India-Russia Annual Summit

#### Diplomatic Achievements:

- ⇒ President Vladimir Putin conferred Russia's highest civilian honour, the "Order of Saint Andrew the Apostle," on Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- ⇒ This honour is awarded for promoting the strategic partnership and friendly relations between Russia and India.
- ⇒ Notable past recipients of the award include Chinese President Xi Jinping and former Kazakh President Nursultan Nazarbayev.

#### Economic Cooperation:

- ⇒ A new bilateral trade target of USD 100 billion by 2030 was set, significantly higher than the previous target of USD 30 billion by 2025.
- ⇒ Agreement to prepare a comprehensive "Programme-2030" for developing promising areas of economic cooperation, coordinated by the India-Russia Intergovernmental Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technical and Cultural Cooperation (IRIGC-TEC).
- ⇒ Initiation of negotiations for a Free Trade Agreement between India and the Eurasian Economic Union on goods, services, and investments.
- ⇒ Facilitation of participation of Russian businesses in "Make in India" and "Atmanirbhar Bharat" programs, and Indian companies in investment projects in Russia.

#### Defence and Technology:

- ⇒ Transition from a buyer-seller relationship to joint research, development, co-development, and joint production of advanced defence technology and systems.
- ⇒ Establishment of joint ventures for manufacturing spare parts and components for Russian-origin arms and defence equipment in India.

- ⇒ Formation of a new Working Group on Technological Cooperation within the Intergovernmental Commission on Military and Military Technical Cooperation (IRIGC-M&MTC).
- ⇒ President Putin accepted Prime Minister Modi's request to discharge Indian military recruits serving in the Russian military on the Ukrainian war front who wish to return to India.

### Transport and Connectivity:

- ⇒ Development of stable and efficient transport corridors in Eurasia, including the Chennai-Vladivostok Eastern Maritime Corridor and the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC).
- ⇒ Enhancement of the infrastructure capacity of the Northern Sea Route to reduce transportation time and costs.

### International Cooperation:

- ⇒ Russia appreciated India's non-permanent membership in the UN Security Council (2021-22) and supported India's efforts in peacekeeping and counter-terrorism.
- ⇒ Russia reiterated its support for India's permanent membership in a reformed and expanded UN Security Council.
- ⇒ Close cooperation in international forums such as the UN, G20, BRICS, and Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) to reinvigorate multilateralism.
- ⇒ India expressed full support for Russia's BRICS Chairship in 2024 under the theme "Strengthening Multilateralism for Just Global Development and Security."
- ⇒ India looked forward to Russia's joining of the International Solar Alliance (ISA), the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), and the International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA).

### Global Issues:

- ⇒ **Climate Change:** Commitment to combating climate change and achieving the goals of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Paris Agreement.
- ⇒ **Multipolar World Order:** Emphasis on the need for a multipolar world order and the development of an architecture of equal and indivisible regional security in Eurasia and the Indian and Pacific Ocean regions.
- ⇒ **Counter Terrorism:** Condemnation of terrorism and violent extremism in all forms, including cross-border terrorism and terrorism financing networks.

### Factors Contributing to Russia's Status as a High-Income Country

#### Economic Growth Across Sectors:

- ⇒ The World Bank classifies countries based on their Gross National Income (GNI) per capita. As of July 2024, the threshold for "high-income" is USD 14,005. Russia crossed this threshold in 2023 with a GNI per capita of USD 14,250.
- ⇒ Russia saw notable growth in trade (+6.8%), the financial sector (+8.7%), and construction (+6.6%) in recent years, boosting both real (3.6%) and nominal (10.9%) GDP.

#### Impact of Military Spending:

- ⇒ A substantial increase in military-related activities in 2023 bolstered economic activity, though experts suggest this growth may not be sustainable.

#### Trade Diversification:

- ⇒ Western sanctions led to a shift in trade patterns, reducing dependence on G7 and EU countries and increasing transactions with China, India, Türkiye, Central Asia, and the South Caucasus.

#### Resilient Energy Sector:

- ⇒ Despite sanctions on its energy sector, Russia maintained steady overall export volumes, leveraging global oil prices and strategic trade diversification.

#### Fiscal Stimulus and Investment:

- ⇒ Government initiatives, including fiscal stimulus and increased defence spending (estimated at 7% of GDP), supported economic recovery and growth.

#### Job Market and Consumer Spending:

- ⇒ Low unemployment, rising wages, and strong private consumption contributed positively to economic stability and growth.

#### Overcoming Earlier Sanctions:

- ⇒ Russia adapted its economic policies and infrastructure investments to mitigate ongoing challenges since the sanctions of 2014.

## World Bank's Country Income Classification

### About:

- ⇒ The World Bank Group assigns the world's economies to four income groups: low, lower-middle, upper-middle, and high.
- ⇒ The classifications are updated annually on 1st July based on the GNI per capita of the previous calendar year.
- ⇒ The World Bank's income classification aims to reflect a country's level of development, using Atlas GNI per capita as an indicator of economic capacity.

### Classification Thresholds:

- ⇒ Low-income: USD 1,145 or less;
- ⇒ Lower-middle-income: USD 1,146 to USD 4,515;
- ⇒ Upper-middle-income: USD 4,516 to USD 14,005;
- ⇒ High-income: More than USD 14,005.

### Regional Highlights:

- ⇒ In South Asia, the share of low-income countries has fallen from 100% in 1987 to just 13% in 2023. India is a lower-middle-income country with a GNI per capita in terms of PPP of approximately USD 10,030 as of 2023.
- ⇒ In the Middle East and North Africa, the share of low-income countries has increased from 0% in 1987 to 10% in 2023.
- ⇒ In Latin America and the Caribbean, the share of high-income countries has climbed from 9% in 1987 to 44% in 2023.
- ⇒ Europe and Central Asia have a slightly lower share of high-income countries in 2023 (69%) than in 1987 (71%).

**Note:** GNI measures the total domestic and foreign value added claimed by residents over a given period, usually a year, expressed in international dollars using purchasing power parity rates. It includes GDP plus net receipts of primary income from nonresident sources and provides an aggregate measure of income.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ The 22nd India-Russia Annual Summit highlights the depth and breadth of the bilateral relationship, covering areas such as diplomatic achievements, economic cooperation, defence and technology, transport and connectivity, and international cooperation.
- ⇒ The summit reinforces the commitment of both nations to strategic partnership, addressing global challenges, and fostering economic and technological collaboration.
- ⇒ Russia's elevation to a high-income country by the World Bank, despite ongoing sanctions, underscores the resilience and adaptability of its economy.
- ⇒ The summit serves as a testament to the enduring ties and shared vision for a multipolar world order, sustainable development, and regional security between India and Russia.

## CHINA PLUS ONE STRATEGY

### Context:

- ⇒ India has a significant opportunity to capitalize on the China Plus One (C+1) strategy to attract global manufacturing investments.
- ⇒ While China's export capacity remains strong, India's large domestic market, low-cost talent, and growth potential position it as a viable alternative.

### What is the China Plus One Strategy?

- ⇒ **Concept:** This strategy involves companies diversifying their manufacturing and supply chains by establishing operations in countries other than China to mitigate risks associated with over-reliance on a single country.
- ⇒ **China's Dominance:** China has been the "World's Factory" for decades due to favorable factors of production and a robust business ecosystem.



- ⇒ **Shift in the 1990s:** Large manufacturing entities from the US and Europe moved their production to China to benefit from low costs and a vast domestic market.
- ⇒ **Pandemic Disruptions:** The Covid-19 pandemic caused significant disruptions. China's zero-Covid policy led to industrial lockdowns, causing inconsistent supply chains and container shortages.

### Evolution of the China Plus One Strategy:

- ⇒ The combined impact of China's zero-Covid policy, supply chain disruptions, high freight rates, and longer lead times prompted many global companies to adopt the C+1 strategy.
- ⇒ This strategy explores alternative manufacturing locations in other developing Asian countries such as India, Vietnam, Thailand, Bangladesh, and Malaysia.

### Opportunities for India:

#### 1. Demographic Dividend and Consumption Power:

- India's youthful demographic boosts consumption, savings, and investments. As of 2023, 28.4% of the population is under 30, compared to China's 20.4%.

#### 2. Cost Competitiveness and Infrastructure Advantage:

- India's lower labor and capital costs make its production sector highly competitive.
- A 2023 Deloitte study revealed that India's average manufacturing wage is 47% lower than China's.
- The National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP) aims to reduce manufacturing costs and improve logistics.

#### 3. Business Environment and Policy Initiatives:

- Policies such as the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme, tax reforms, and relaxed FDI norms have created a conducive business environment.
- The Make in India initiative promotes ease of doing business and attracts foreign investments.

#### 4. Digital Skilling and Technological Edge:

- With 870 million internet users as of January 2024 and access to global tech giants like Google and Facebook, Indian youth have a digital advantage.

#### 5. Strategic Economic Partnerships:

- India's strategic approach includes sub-regional partnerships and the CEPA trade agreement with the UAE, expected to increase bilateral trade by 200% within five years.

#### 6. Dynamic Diplomacy and Global Influence:

- India's active participation in groupings like QUAD and I2U2, along with leadership roles in G20 and SCO, strengthens its economic ties and opens doors for technology transfer and market access.

#### 7. Large Domestic Market:

- India's GDP per capita growth of 6.9% between 2018 and 2023 provides a vast consumer base and strong foundation for sustained economic growth and increased global trade.

### Sectors Benefiting from the China Plus One Strategy in India:

- ⇒ **IT/ITeS:** Recognized as a key player in IT services exports, with initiatives like "Make in India" attracting global technology firms.
- ⇒ **Pharmaceuticals:** India's pharmaceutical industry is the world's third-largest by volume, with significant cost advantages and a strong export position.
- ⇒ **Metals and Steel:** India's natural resources and the PLI scheme for specialty steel position it as a major steel exporter.

### India's Performance in the C+1 Landscape:

- ⇒ **Import Growth:** India's imports from Western countries have shown significant growth, with a CAGR of 6.3% from 2014 to 2023.
- ⇒ **Business Perception:** Despite resources and strategic planning, India struggles with a positive business perception compared to Vietnam and Thailand.
- ⇒ **Tariff Rates:** Higher tariff rates and an inverted duty structure reduce competitiveness.

### Factors Hindering India's Competitiveness:

- ⇒ **Ease of Doing Business:** Complex regulatory environment and bureaucratic hurdles.
- ⇒ **Manufacturing Competitiveness:** High input costs, inadequate infrastructure, and skill shortages.
- ⇒ **Infrastructure Deficiencies:** Poor transportation, logistics, and energy infrastructure.
- ⇒ **Labour Market Rigidities:** Restrictive labor laws hinder flexibility.
- ⇒ **Tax Structure:** Complex tax regime increases business costs.
- ⇒ **Land Acquisition Challenges:** Delays and high costs in land acquisition.

- ⇒ **Skill Mismatch:** Education system not aligned with industry needs.
- ⇒ **Corruption:** Erodes investor confidence.

### Way Forward:

- ⇒ **Targeted Incentives and Subsidies:** Offer attractive incentives, particularly in electronics, automotive, and pharmaceuticals.
- ⇒ **Improve Ease of Doing Business:** Streamline regulatory processes and simplify labor laws and land acquisition procedures.
- ⇒ **Develop Specialized Industrial Clusters:** Create dedicated industrial clusters with world-class infrastructure.
- ⇒ **Invest in Skill Development:** Strengthen vocational training and promote STEM education.
- ⇒ **Enhance Infrastructure and Logistics:** Invest in modern transportation networks and reliable utilities.
- ⇒ **Streamline Trade Policies and Agreements:** Negotiate FTAs and simplify import-export procedures.
- ⇒ **Promote Research and Innovation:** Encourage public-private partnerships in R&D.

### Conclusion:

- ⇒ The China Plus One strategy presents a crucial opportunity for India to address its longstanding manufacturing sector challenges and emerge as a global manufacturing powerhouse.
- ⇒ By addressing key bottlenecks and implementing a comprehensive strategy, India can leverage this trend to drive sustainable economic growth and job creation.
- ⇒ The time is ripe for India to seize the C+1 opportunity and cement its position as a preferred manufacturing destination.

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## INDIA'S MOSCOW CONNECTION

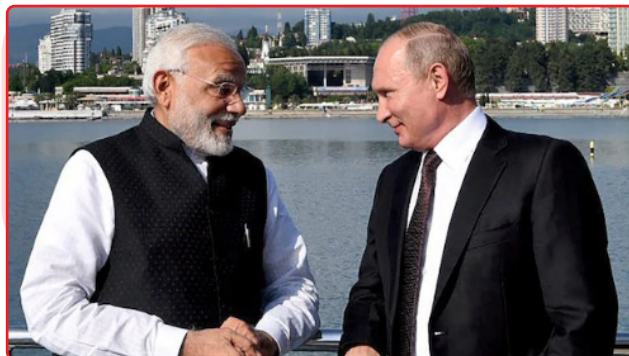
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### Context

- ⇒ Despite maintaining strong economic ties, the highest level of interaction between India and Russia, the annual bilateral summit, ceased after 2021.
- ⇒ Russia suspects this is due to diplomatic pressure from the United States.

### Diplomatic and Symbolic Importance

- ⇒ Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Moscow is particularly significant as few global leaders, except Chinese President Xi Jinping, have visited Moscow in the last two years.
- ⇒ By choosing Russia as his first foreign destination for a bilateral meeting in his third term, PM Modi sends a powerful message.
- ⇒ In a time when Russia faces Western isolation, such visits help the Kremlin counter the narrative of its global isolation.
- ⇒ India's continued sympathy towards Russia, seen in its refusal to condemn Russia, refrain from adverse UN votes, and ignore Western threats of sanctions, further solidifies this relationship.



### Economic and Trade Relations

- ⇒ India's trade with Russia reached a historic high of \$65 billion in the last financial year, driven by India's import of cheap oil from Russia.
- ⇒ Despite severe criticism, India justified these imports by emphasizing their role in keeping energy prices and inflation under control.
- ⇒ However, the prolonged conflict poses challenges for Indian policymakers, as India's diplomacy is strained between Western criticism, inflationary pressures, and Russia's growing closeness to China.

### Concerns Over Russia-China Relations

- ⇒ Russia's growing dependence on China is a serious concern for India.
- ⇒ The close ties between Moscow and Beijing generate fears that Russia might become a subordinate partner due to the economic, demographic, and technological asymmetry between them.
- ⇒ India's strong ties with Russia aim to counterbalance China's advantage in Eurasia.
- ⇒ With the US and Japan on its side and Russia as a neutral player, India is better positioned than China in the Asian security architecture.

- ⇒ Moscow acknowledges New Delhi's concerns and accepts India's ties with the West, similar to how India accepts the Moscow-Beijing alignment.

### Substantive Agreements and Existing Ties

- ⇒ While the visit may not result in spectacular substantive agreements, it adds momentum to the already comprehensive India-Russia relationship.
- ⇒ The two countries cooperate across various sectors, including defense, trade, space, nuclear, and cultural cooperation, and collaborate actively in multilateral forums like BRICS, SCO, and G20.
- ⇒ The focus should be on revamping existing ties rather than adding new items to the catalogue.

### Addressing Trade Imbalance and Defense Commitments

- ⇒ A significant issue for New Delhi is the trade imbalance, with India's exports constituting less than \$5 billion of the total \$65 billion trade.
- ⇒ This imbalance is unsustainable in the long run, and Russia needs to scale up its purchases from and investment in India.
- ⇒ Exploring new areas of joint production can help ease the burden on India.
- ⇒ Additionally, India is concerned about whether Russia can fulfill its defense commitments, given Western sanctions on the supply of semiconductor chips.
- ⇒ Timely delivery of defense spare parts and S-400 systems would alleviate India's concerns.

### International North-South Transport Corridor and Economic Cooperation

- ⇒ Russia must invest more diplomatic and financial resources to complete the pending works for the International North-South Transport Corridor.
- ⇒ Recently, Russia supplied coking coal to India through this route, indicating progress.
- ⇒ Both sides should expedite discussions on the Free Trade Agreement with the Eurasian Union to enhance economic cooperation.

### What is the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC)?

- ⇒ INSTC is a 7,200-kilometer multimode transit route linking the Indian Ocean and the Persian Gulf to the Caspian Sea via Iran and onward to northern Europe via St. Petersburg in Russia. It connects ship, rail, and road routes for moving cargo between India, Iran, Azerbaijan, Russia, Central Asia, and Europe.
- ⇒ **Origin:** Launched on 12th September 2000 in St. Petersburg by a trilateral agreement signed by Iran, Russia, and India at the Euro-Asian Conference on Transport in 2000 to promote transportation cooperation among the Member States.
- ⇒ **Ratification:** Membership has expanded to include 10 more countries (total 13) - Azerbaijan, Armenia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Ukraine, Syria, Belarus, and Oman.
- ⇒ **Routes and Modes:**
  - **Central Corridor:** Starts from the Jawaharlal Nehru Port in Mumbai, connects to Bandar Abbas port (Iran) on the Strait of Hormuz, passes through Iranian territory, and reaches Olya and Astrakhan Ports in Russia via the Caspian Sea.
  - **Western Corridor:** Connects the railway network of Azerbaijan to Iran and further to Jawaharlal Nehru port in India via the sea route.
  - **Eastern Corridor:** Connects Russia to India through Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan.

### Strategic Implications and Global Message

- ⇒ The visuals of Modi-Putin's embrace send a clear message to the international community that Russia holds a pivotal place in India's strategic calculations and that India will not yield to external pressures.
- ⇒ New Delhi is willing to withstand Western criticism, but any escalation to sanctions and strategic alienation could change its priorities.
- ⇒ It appears assured that the West needs India as much as India needs the West.
- ⇒ Notably, PM Modi's meeting with Putin coincides with NATO's 75th anniversary celebrations in Washington, DC, highlighting the intricate geopolitical dynamics at play.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ India's strategic engagement with Russia remains robust despite global pressures and criticism.
- ⇒ The bilateral relationship, deeply rooted in economic ties, strategic cooperation, and shared geopolitical interests, continues to evolve.
- ⇒ Prime Minister Modi's visit underscores India's commitment to maintaining strong ties with Russia, balancing regional dynamics, and safeguarding its national interests amidst shifting global alliances and geopolitical challenges.

- ⇒ As both nations navigate complexities in trade, defense commitments, and international relations, sustained dialogue and pragmatic cooperation will be crucial in strengthening and expanding this critical partnership.

## TRANSITIONING FROM 'BIG BROTHER' TO 'BROTHER'

### Introduction

- ⇒ Since 2015, Nepal-India relations have faced significant hurdles due to disagreements over Nepal's constitution and a blockade by India.
- ⇒ However, with new leadership in both nations, there is a chance to mend and stabilize relations by focusing on mutual respect, non-interference, and regional cooperation for enhanced stability and prosperity.



### Background of Nepal-India Relations

- ⇒ The relationship between Nepal and India soured in 2015, primarily due to differing prime ministers in both countries.
- ⇒ The discord began when Nepal adopted a new Constitution in 2015, despite India's request for amendments, leading to bilateral tensions.
- ⇒ Nepal's decision to promulgate the Constitution without amendments further strained relations.

### The Blockade and Its Consequences

- ⇒ India's six-month blockade, attributed to Madhesi activists, caused significant hardship in Nepal, fostering lasting resentment.
- ⇒ In retaliation, Nepal signed ten agreements with China covering trade, transit, power, and transport.
- ⇒ This period also saw Nepal's leadership making provocative statements about historical and national identity, worsening the relationship further.

### Political and Diplomatic Tensions

- ⇒ Even though prime ministerial meetings occurred post-blockade, tensions remained high, with Nepal making provocative suggestions regarding India's national symbols.
- ⇒ In 2019, India's updated political map, including disputed territories, led Nepal to amend its Constitution to assert its territorial claims.
- ⇒ India's increasing involvement in Nepal's governance and politics, including advocating for its ideological positions, further complicated the relationship.

### Challenges and Opportunities

- ⇒ With the start of a new term for India's prime minister and new leadership in Nepal, there is an opportunity to reset and stabilize relations.
- ⇒ India's government might need to reassess its approach, emphasizing policy changes and mutual respect.
- ⇒ The principle of non-interference, as outlined in the Panchsheel doctrine, should guide India's engagement with Nepal.

### Importance of Non-Interference

- ⇒ India's continual involvement in Nepal's politics contradicts the Panchsheel doctrine's principle of non-interference.
- ⇒ A non-intrusive approach could lead to a politically stable and economically vibrant Nepal, benefiting both nations.
- ⇒ Nepal significantly contributes to remittances in India, supporting livelihoods in some of India's poorest regions, underscoring the mutual benefits of a stable relationship.

### Internal Dynamics in Nepal

- ⇒ Political instability in Nepal has weakened its ability to engage with India on equal terms.
- ⇒ Previous Nepali leaders have had varied success in balancing relations with India.
- ⇒ The recent prime ministerial term saw substantial concessions to India, including agreements that potentially compromised Nepal's sovereignty.

### Hydropower and Economic Issues

- Recent hydropower agreements between Nepal and India have sparked controversy due to terms favoring India.
- The Indian Embassy in Kathmandu has been granted unique privileges not extended to other embassies, raising concerns about unequal treatment.
- Bypassing parliamentary ratification by delinking Nepal's hydropower from its water resources highlights the complexities of bilateral agreements.

### Regional Cooperation

- Nepal's new leadership has the opportunity to advocate for the revival of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC), benefiting the entire region.
- Indian policymakers need to acknowledge Nepal's inevitable friendship with China, which does not exclude strong ties with India.
- Balancing these relationships is crucial for regional stability and cooperation.

### Historical and Cultural Context

- The historical and cultural ties between India and Nepal should be leveraged to enhance relations.
- Misunderstandings about Nepal in Indian academia and public opinion need to be addressed through better communication and outreach.
- Nepal's open border with India, often seen as a security concern, can serve as a model for peaceful South Asian integration.

### Future Prospects

- Both nations need to move beyond historical grievances and power dynamics to build a mutually beneficial relationship.
- Nepal's new leadership must assert its sovereignty and engage with India on equal terms.
- Indian policymakers should adopt a more respectful and cooperative approach, recognizing Nepal as a distinct and important neighbor.

### Conclusion

- The potential for a positive and stable relationship between India and Nepal exists, based on mutual respect and non-interference.
- By addressing unresolved bilateral issues and fostering regional cooperation, both countries can achieve greater stability and prosperity.
- Embracing a more balanced and respectful relationship will benefit not only India and Nepal but also the broader South Asian region.

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## ANTI-RESERVATION PROTESTS IN BANGLADESH

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### Introduction

- In Bangladesh, recent anti-reservation protests have ignited significant unrest, with over 100 casualties reported.
- The protests center around the country's job quota system, which allocates a substantial portion of government jobs to specific groups, including the families of those who fought in the Bangladesh Liberation War.
- This system has been criticized for its perceived inequities and for benefiting the ruling party disproportionately.
- The unrest has not only led to severe disruptions in Dhaka but also drew international attention due to its implications for both domestic politics and regional relations.



### Main Cause of Protests

The primary driver of the protests is dissatisfaction with Bangladesh's government job quota system. This system reserves 56% of government jobs for various groups:



- ⇒ **Freedom Fighters' Families:** 30% of positions are reserved for the descendants of those who participated in the 1971 Liberation War.
- ⇒ **Other Reservations:** The remaining 26% includes 10% for women, 10% for individuals from underdeveloped districts, 5% for indigenous communities, and 1% for persons with disabilities.

### Protesters' Grievances:

- ⇒ **Perceived Discrimination:** Many protesters believe that the quota system unfairly benefits families connected to the ruling Awami League, a party with deep historical ties to the Liberation War. They argue that this system perpetuates a cycle of favoritism and hinders fair access to government jobs.
- ⇒ **Demand for Abolition:** The demonstrators are calling for the complete abolition of the quota system, claiming that it exacerbates unemployment and limits opportunities for merit-based candidates.

### Underlying Issues

#### Unemployment Crisis

- ⇒ The job market in Bangladesh is characterized by a significant imbalance between job seekers and available positions.
- ⇒ Each year, around 4 lakh candidates vie for 2,000–3,000 government jobs, highlighting a severe supply-demand mismatch.
- ⇒ This imbalance fuels frustration and desperation among job seekers, contributing to the intensity of the protests.

#### Government's Position

- ⇒ **Quota Utilization:** The Bangladeshi government contends that the quota for freedom fighters' families is underutilized, with only 10% of these positions being filled. The government has taken steps to address concerns by eliminating quota facilities for first-class and second-class government jobs, aiming to balance fairness and merit.
- ⇒ **Recent Reforms:** In response to criticism, the government has introduced reforms to reduce the impact of the quota system. However, these measures have not fully quelled dissent or resolved the underlying issues driving the protests.

#### Awami League and Historical Context

- ⇒ **Role in Liberation War:** The Awami League, under the leadership of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, played a pivotal role in Bangladesh's struggle for independence from Pakistan in 1971. This historical significance contributes to the complexity of the current protests, as Rahman's legacy and the party's continued dominance influence public perceptions of the quota system.
- ⇒ **Current Leadership:** Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, the daughter of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, leads the Awami League. Her familial connection to the nation's founding adds another layer of contention, with critics arguing that the ruling party disproportionately benefits from the quota system.

#### India's Stand

- ⇒ **Neutral Stance:** India has adopted a neutral position, referring to the protests as an internal matter for Bangladesh. This approach reflects the strategic importance of maintaining positive relations with Bangladesh, where Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina is viewed as a key ally in regional politics.
- ⇒ **Advisory to Nationals:** In light of the unrest, the Indian mission in Dhaka has advised Indian nationals to limit travel and remain cautious. This advisory underscores the potential impact of the protests on broader regional dynamics and international relations.

#### Conclusion

- ⇒ The anti-reservation protests in Bangladesh represent a critical juncture in the country's socio-political landscape.
- ⇒ The dissatisfaction with the job quota system, combined with historical and political complexities, has led to significant unrest and casualties.
- ⇒ Addressing the root causes of these protests requires a multifaceted approach, including reforms to the quota system, improved job market strategies, and enhanced communication between the government and the public.
- ⇒ The situation highlights broader issues of equity and opportunity, which are central to Bangladesh's ongoing development and stability.

## CONCERNS REGARDING OPIUM STOCKPILES IN AFGHANISTAN

### Why in News?

- The latest report by the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has highlighted significant concerns regarding Afghanistan's extensive opium stockpiles.
- This comes despite the Taliban's ban on poppy cultivation, emphasizing the persistent challenges in curbing narcotics production and trafficking in the region.



### Key Findings of the Report

- **Substantial Opium Stockpiles:** Despite the Taliban's ban in April 2022, Afghanistan continues to have large stockpiles of opium. These stockpiles suggest that the full impact of the ban will not be immediately visible and could take several years to assess.
- **Continued Narcotics Trade:** The trade in narcotics remains robust, with seizure data indicating no significant reduction in drug exports. This points to the ongoing prevalence of drug trafficking networks.
- **Taliban Involvement:** Senior Taliban figures and well-connected traders, including the Haqqani Network, are still profiting from drug trafficking. Key Taliban members control various narcotics trafficking routes.
- **Increase in Methamphetamine Production:** There has been a surge in methamphetamine production, with significant quantities of fentanyl also being recorded. Major hubs for methamphetamine production include Farah, Herat, and Nimroz provinces, with active labs in Bahramcha, Dishu district, and Helmand province.

### Implications of Opium Stockpiles and Drug Trafficking

- **Trafficking Networks:** A significant portion of drugs trafficked to India originates from Afghanistan, with Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency playing a key role in controlling these networks. This has serious implications for regional security and drug control efforts.
- **Terrorism Funding:** Drug money is increasingly being used to fund anti-India terror groups such as Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT). Narcotics procured from Afghanistan are labeled in clandestine laboratories in Balochistan and then smuggled into India.
- **Significant Seizures:** Indian security agencies have uncovered direct links between Kandahar-based cartels and drug smuggling networks. Notable seizures include the National Investigation Agency (NIA) intercepting 3,000 kg of heroin at Mundra port in September 2021.
- **Government Response:** The Union Home Minister has urged security agencies to adopt a ruthless approach towards smuggling networks. The central government is working on installing container scanners at all ports and land border crossings to curb drug trafficking.

### Initiatives to Tackle Drug Abuse

#### Global Initiatives:

- **Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1954:** This treaty aims to limit the possession, use, trade, distribution, import, export, manufacture, and production of drugs exclusively to medical and scientific purposes.
- **Convention on Psychotropic Substances, 1971:** It establishes an international control system for psychotropic substances.
- **UN Convention against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, 1988:** It addresses the global issue of drug trafficking.
- **United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC):** Established in 1997, UNODC combines the United Nations International Drug Control Program (UNDCP) and the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division of the United Nations Office in Vienna. It focuses on drug control and crime prevention.

#### Indian Initiatives:

- **Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyaan/Drugs-Free India Campaign:** Aimed at creating awareness and promoting a drug-free society.
- **National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction:** Focuses on preventive education, awareness generation, and capacity building.

- ⇒ **Narco-Coordination Centre:** Ensures effective coordination among various agencies dealing with drug-related issues.
- ⇒ **National Fund to Control Drug Abuse:** Provides financial support for activities related to drug abuse control.

### Famous Hotspots of Illicit Drugs

- ⇒ **Golden Triangle:** A region in Southeast Asia known for the production of illicit drugs, particularly Opium, where the borders of Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand meet.
- ⇒ **Golden Crescent or "Death Crescent":** Includes Afghanistan and Iran, making it a natural transit point for drugs being smuggled out of Pakistan.

### Opium Regulation and Uses

#### Regulation:

- ⇒ The Narcotics Commissioner under the Narcotic Drugs & Psychotropic Substances Act 1985 oversees the cultivation of the opium poppy and production of opium.
- ⇒ Currently, opium poppy cultivation is confined to notified tracts in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh. Mandasaur district of Madhya Pradesh and Chittorgarh and Jhalawar Districts of Rajasthan constitute about 80% of the total area cultivated.

#### Uses of Opium:

- ⇒ Opium has unique therapeutic value and is indispensable in the medical world.
- ⇒ It is used in Homeopathy, Ayurveda, and Unani systems of indigenous medicines.
- ⇒ Opium is used as an analgesic, antitussive, antispasmodic, and as a source of edible seed oil.

#### Conclusion

- ⇒ The UNSC report underscores the persistent challenges posed by Afghanistan's opium stockpiles and the extensive narcotics trade.
- ⇒ Despite the Taliban's ban, significant stockpiles and ongoing drug trafficking highlight the complex nature of the issue.
- ⇒ This has serious implications for regional security, particularly for India, where drug trafficking networks linked to Afghanistan continue to thrive.
- ⇒ India's efforts to combat these issues involve both international collaboration and stringent domestic measures to curb the illegal drug trade and reduce drug abuse.
- ⇒ The development and implementation of global and national initiatives are crucial in addressing the multifaceted challenges of narcotics production and trafficking.

## WORLD'S MOST POWERFUL PASSPORTS 2024: INDIA RANKS AT 82ND

### Introduction

- ⇒ According to the latest Henley Passport Index, Singapore's passport has been ranked as the most powerful in the world, allowing visa-free entry to an impressive 195 destinations.
- ⇒ This ranking highlights Singapore's extensive diplomatic efforts and the significant travel freedom enjoyed by its citizens.
- ⇒ On the other hand, India's passport is positioned at 82nd, permitting visa-free access to 58 countries, which reflects a moderate level of international mobility.



### Global Passport Rankings

- ⇒ **1st Place:** Singapore – 195 destinations
- ⇒ **Joint 2nd Place:** France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Spain – 192 destinations
- ⇒ **Joint 3rd Place:** Austria, Finland, Ireland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, South Korea, Sweden – 191 destinations
- ⇒ **4th Place:** UK, Belgium, Denmark, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland – 190 destinations
- ⇒ **8th Place:** USA – 186 destinations
- ⇒ **82nd Place:** India – 58 destinations (tied with Senegal and Tajikistan)

- ⇒ The rankings reflect significant geopolitical shifts. In 2014, both the UK and USA jointly held the top spot, but have since dropped, with the UK now sharing 4th place and the USA ranking 8th.
- ⇒ Meanwhile, Afghanistan remains at the bottom, with its passport providing access to only 26 countries, underscoring the severe limitations faced by its citizens.

### Noteworthy Climbs and Drops

Several countries have experienced remarkable changes in their passport rankings:

- ⇒ **UAE:** The United Arab Emirates has made a significant leap, rising from 62nd to 9th place, with its passport now offering access to 185 destinations. This rapid improvement reflects the UAE's strategic diplomatic initiatives and international agreements.
- ⇒ **China:** China has climbed from 83rd to 59th, now providing access to 85 destinations, a notable improvement highlighting its growing international influence.
- ⇒ **Ukraine:** Ukraine has jumped from 53rd to 30th, offering access to 148 destinations, likely influenced by recent geopolitical developments and enhanced international relations.
- ⇒ **Venezuela:** In contrast, Venezuela has dropped from 25th to 42nd, reflecting the country's ongoing political and economic challenges.
- ⇒ **Bangladesh:** Bangladesh has seen a decline from 86th to 97th, indicating a reduction in travel freedom for its citizens.
- ⇒ Other countries such as Yemen, Nigeria, and Syria also experienced declines, highlighting the complex interplay between domestic issues and international mobility.

### Access Discrepancies

- ⇒ The disparities in passport strength reveal significant global inequalities.
- ⇒ Countries like Nepal, Djibouti, Burundi, Sri Lanka, and Somalia have weak passports with limited travel freedom, reflecting broader socio-economic and political challenges.
- ⇒ Conversely, nations like Barbados, Singapore, Malaysia, and the Bahamas have strong passports with minimal disparities in access, indicating stable governance and robust diplomatic relations.

### About Henley Passport Index

- ⇒ The Henley Passport Index has been a key measure of global mobility since its inception in 2006.
- ⇒ It ranks passports based on the number of countries that offer visa-free or visa-on-arrival access.
- ⇒ The index, updated quarterly, sources its data from the International Air Transport Association (IATA) and plays a crucial role in discussions on global mobility and travel freedom.
- ⇒ It not only reflects the current state of international travel but also symbolizes international agreements and diplomatic ties.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ The 2024 Henley Passport Index underscores the significant variations in global mobility and travel freedom.
- ⇒ Singapore's position at the top highlights its successful diplomatic efforts, while India's ranking at 82nd shows a moderate level of international mobility for its citizens.
- ⇒ The shifting ranks of countries like the UAE, China, and Ukraine illustrate the dynamic nature of global politics and diplomacy.
- ⇒ Meanwhile, the persistent challenges faced by countries with weaker passports emphasize the ongoing inequalities in global mobility.
- ⇒ These rankings are more than just numbers; they influence international relations and highlight the broader geopolitical landscape.

## ECONOMY

### A FRESH START: THE GST COUNCIL'S BROADER REFORM AGENDA

#### Context

- ⇒ The GST Council must not lose sight of broader reforms.

#### The Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council

- ⇒ The Goods and Services Tax regime was introduced following the passage of the Constitutional (122nd Amendment) Bill by both Houses of Parliament in 2016.
- ⇒ The GST Council, a collaborative forum of the Centre and the states, was established by the President under Article 279A (1) of the amended Constitution.

- This Council comprises the Union Finance Minister as the chairperson, the Union Minister of State for Finance, and ministers in charge of finance or taxation from each state.
- The Council's mandate, as per Article 279, is to make recommendations to the Union and the states on critical GST-related issues, including the goods and services subject to GST, those exempted from it, model GST Laws, and the various rate slabs under the GST regime.



### The Recent Meeting

- Last week, after a hiatus of nearly nine months, the GST Council convened with 11 new State Ministers and a recalibrated NDA government at the Centre.
- The agenda was packed with clarifications, adjustments, forbearances, and procedural changes, all based on industry feedback and vetted by officials.
- Despite the heavy agenda, the Council achieved a consensus on several issues aimed at alleviating taxpayer burdens, reducing litigation, and providing tax relief on some items.

### Significant decisions included:

- Exemption of GST on hostel accommodation costing up to ₹20,000 a month and on railway services for passengers.
- Approval of a uniform 12% GST rate for packing cartons, milk cans, and solar cookers, eliminating classification differences based on material or technology.
- Waiver of interest and penalty on tax dues for the first three years of GST, provided they are paid by March 2025.
- Reduction in the predeposit requirement for filing appeals, including those to be filed with the upcoming GST Appellate Tribunals.
- Introduction of a new form for taxpayers to correct errors or oversights in previous returns.
- Termination of the anti-profiteering clause requiring firms to pass on tax cut gains to customers.
- Implementation of biometric-based Aadhaar authentication for all GST registrations in a phased manner across India.

### Way Forward

- The detailed implementation of these decisions will determine their groundlevel impact, but the Council's intent to simplify and streamline the seven-year-old GST regime is clear.
- It is encouraging that the Council plans to revisit the 2021 proposal to rationalize the multi-rate GST structure, which has been in abeyance.
- The apex GST body must not only revive and expedite GST rate reforms but also incorporate a roadmap to include currently excluded items, such as petroleum and electricity, into the GST net while adjusting tax rates.

### Conclusion

- The GST Council's recent meeting represents a significant step towards simplifying the GST regime and addressing taxpayers' concerns.
- The focus on broader reforms, such as rationalizing the GST structure and expanding the tax net to include items like petroleum and electricity, is crucial for enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of the GST system.
- Moving forward, the Council must balance simplifying procedures and ensuring compliance to achieve a more streamlined and robust GST framework.
- This approach will be vital for fostering a more transparent and taxpayer-friendly environment, ultimately contributing to the stability and growth of the Indian economy.

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## E-RUPEE: INDIA'S DIGITAL CURRENCY

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### Introduction

- The advent of digital currencies marks a transformative phase in the financial ecosystem. India, with its progressive stance on financial technology, launched its own Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC), known as the e-Rupee, on December 1, 2022.

- This initiative by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) aims to integrate digital currency into the mainstream financial system, enhancing the efficiency, security, and inclusivity of transactions.
- However, the journey of the e-Rupee has seen fluctuating trends in adoption and usage.

### Understanding e-Rupee

- The e-Rupee is designed as a digital equivalent of the traditional Indian rupee, intended to function as legal tender for various financial transactions.
- Unlike cryptocurrencies, which are decentralized and often unregulated, the e-Rupee is a centralized digital currency issued and regulated by the RBI, ensuring stability and security.



### Types of CBDCs

CBDCs, including the e-Rupee, are broadly categorized into two main types:

- **Retail CBDCs:** These are designed for everyday use by the general public, functioning similarly to physical cash. The e-Rupee, in this context, allows individuals to conduct daily transactions with ease and efficiency.
- **Wholesale CBDCs:** These are used primarily by financial institutions for large-scale transactions and interbank settlements. Wholesale CBDCs aim to enhance the efficiency and security of high-value transfers between banks.

### Issuance & Acquisition of e-Rupee

- The e-Rupee is issued by the RBI in the form of electronic tokens, which hold value equivalent to physical money.
- These tokens are distributed by commercial banks and can be acquired through digital wallets offered by licensed financial institutions.
- The process of using e-Rupee involves straightforward mechanisms such as scanning QR codes and mobile number transactions, ensuring seamless transfers through the Unified Payments Interface (UPI).

### Advantages of Using e-Rupee

The e-Rupee offers several advantages that align with the goals of modernizing the financial system:

- **Financial Inclusion:** One of the primary objectives of the e-Rupee is to bring digital financial services to the unbanked population. By simplifying access to digital transactions, it helps bridge the gap between the banked and unbanked segments of the population.
- **Efficiency:** The digital nature of the e-Rupee speeds up transaction processes and reduces the costs associated with traditional banking methods. Instantaneous transfers and reduced dependency on physical cash handling are significant benefits.
- **Security and Transparency:** Utilizing blockchain technology, the e-Rupee ensures secure and transparent transactions. This reduces the risk of fraud and enhances the trustworthiness of the financial system. Each transaction is recorded on a tamper-proof ledger, providing a clear and traceable history of exchanges.

### Current Usage Trends

- Despite the promising features and potential benefits, the usage of the e-Rupee has witnessed a significant decline.
- At the end of December 2023, the daily retail transactions involving the e-Rupee stood at 1 million.
- However, by June 2024, this number had plummeted to 100,000 transactions per day, indicating a tenfold decrease in adoption.

### Challenges and Future Prospects

- The sharp decline in the usage of e-Rupee can be attributed to several factors.
- User adaptability remains a critical challenge, as many individuals may still prefer traditional cash or other digital payment methods.
- Technological hurdles, such as internet connectivity issues in rural areas, also pose significant barriers to widespread adoption.
- Additionally, competition from established digital payment platforms like UPI and mobile wallets can affect the uptake of the e-Rupee.

- To address these challenges, the RBI and other stakeholders need to focus on increasing awareness and educating the public about the benefits of the e-Rupee.
- Enhancing the infrastructure to support digital transactions, especially in rural and semi-urban areas, is crucial.
- Collaborations with fintech companies and continuous technological advancements can further bolster the adoption and usage of the e-Rupee.

### Conclusion

- The e-Rupee represents a significant step forward in India's journey towards a more inclusive and efficient digital economy.
- While the initial decline in usage highlights the challenges ahead, the potential benefits of the e-Rupee in terms of financial inclusion, efficiency, and security cannot be overlooked.
- With targeted efforts to overcome the current barriers, the e-Rupee can play a pivotal role in shaping the future of digital transactions in India.

## ISSUE OF URBAN FINANCE AND THE 16TH FINANCE COMMISSION

### Introduction

- Urban finance is a critical issue facing India's urban local bodies (ULBs), affecting their ability to provide essential services and maintain infrastructure.
- The recent discussions around the 16th Finance Commission (FC) underscore the need for fiscal decentralisation to ensure financial sustainability in urban areas.

### Financial Sustainability Issues in Urban Areas

#### Urbanisation Challenges:

- India's urban areas, which contribute 66% of the nation's GDP and about 90% of total government revenues, face significant infrastructure and financial challenges.
- Despite their economic importance, cities receive inadequate fiscal support, with intergovernmental transfers (IGTs) constituting only 0.5% of GDP, limiting their capacity to deliver essential services.

#### Financial Devolution Issues:

- The devolution of funds to ULBs is significantly lower than in other developing nations.
- For instance, South Africa allocates 2.6% of GDP to cities, Mexico 1.6%, the Philippines 2.5%, and Brazil 5.1%.
- This shortfall affects urban productivity and quality of life, exacerbated by the Goods and Services Tax (GST) reducing ULBs' own tax revenues.

#### Draining Resources:

- An RBI survey (2020-21) of 221 municipal corporations revealed that over 70% saw a decline in revenues, while their expenditure rose by 71.2%.
- The limited coverage of property tax contributes to low municipal revenues, with India having the world's lowest property tax to GDP ratio according to the OECD.

#### Decline in Grants:

- The introduction of GST eliminated octroi, significantly reducing revenue for ULBs, which previously covered about 55% of urban centres' total revenue expenditure.

#### Other Issues:

- **Census Data Concerns:** The absence of updated census data since 2011 hampers accurate assessment of urban populations and their needs, affecting fiscal planning.
- **Policy Distortions:** Parallel agencies and schemes, such as MP/MLA Local Area Development Funds, undermine the financial autonomy of local governments.
- **Lesser Functional Autonomy:** During the pandemic, municipal leaders were often excluded from disaster mitigation strategies, reflecting an outdated approach that treats local governments as adjuncts of state governments.



- ⇒ **Structural Issues:** Many urban local governments lack basic infrastructure and human resources, and some states do not conduct regular elections for local bodies, affecting their functioning and service delivery.

### Major Terms of Reference for the 16th Finance Commission

#### About:

- ⇒ Established under Article 280 of the Indian Constitution, the Finance Commission recommends the distribution of financial resources between the central and state governments.
- ⇒ The 15th Finance Commission's recommendations are valid up to the financial year 2025–26.

#### Terms of Reference:

- ⇒ **Division of Tax Proceeds:** Recommending the distribution of taxes between the Union Government and the States.
- ⇒ **Principles for Grants-in-Aid:** Establishing principles for grants-in-aid to the States from the Consolidated Fund of India.
- ⇒ **Enhancing State Funds for Local Bodies:** Identifying measures to enhance state resources for Panchayats and Municipalities.
- ⇒ **Evaluation of Disaster Management Financing:** Reviewing current financing structures related to Disaster Management and making recommendations.

### Steps Needed for Better Urban Finance

#### Strengthening Municipal Revenue:

- ⇒ The Finance Commissions have highlighted the need to augment property tax revenue.
- ⇒ For example, the 12th Finance Commission encouraged the use of GIS and digitisation, and the 14th Finance Commission recommended enabling municipalities to levy vacant land tax.

#### Modernise Tax Administration:

- ⇒ Implementing digital platforms for property tax assessment, e-filing, and online payments can improve transparency and collection rates.

#### Explore User Charges for Specific Services:

- ⇒ Implementing fair user charges for services such as parking, waste collection, or recreation facilities can generate revenue.
- ⇒ Bengaluru has successfully implemented user charges for solid waste management.

#### Strategic Property Management:

- ⇒ Monetising underutilised properties through public-private partnerships (PPP) can generate rental income and stimulate local economic activity.

#### Promote Local Businesses and Economic Development:

- ⇒ Supporting local businesses through streamlined licensing, tax breaks for startups, or creating innovation hubs can boost local economies and tax revenues.

#### Explore Social Stock Exchange (SSE):

- ⇒ Partnering with or creating an SSE can attract investment for social initiatives, addressing local needs while generating revenue.

#### Implement Value Capture Mechanisms:

- ⇒ Capturing a portion of increased property values resulting from public infrastructure projects can fund further development.
- ⇒ Hong Kong effectively uses land value capture for such projects.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ The ongoing work of the 16th Finance Commission is pivotal in addressing urban finance challenges by revisiting fiscal devolution principles, updating methodologies based on current urbanisation dynamics, and recommending substantial increases in IGTs to urban areas.
- ⇒ Effective implementation will require coordinated efforts from Union and State governments to align policies and ensure sustainable urban development, impacting India's economic growth, social equity, and environmental sustainability.



## PROJECT NEXUS OF BIS

### Introduction

- On July 2, 2024, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced its participation in Project Nexus, a significant multilateral initiative aimed at enabling instant crossborder retail payments by interlinking domestic Fast Payments Systems (FPSs).

### What is Project Nexus?

#### About:

- Project Nexus is an initiative conceptualized by the Innovation Hub of the Bank for International Settlements (BIS).
- Its objective is to enhance crossborder payments by connecting multiple global domestic instant payment systems (IPS).
- This project is the first BIS Innovation Hub initiative in the payments area to move towards live implementation.



#### Members:

- Project Nexus aims to connect the FPSs of four Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) members: Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. India will be among the founding members and first movers of this platform.
- Indonesia is expected to join the platform in the future.
- The agreement was signed by the BIS and the central banks of the founding countries in Basel, Switzerland.

### Benefits of Project Nexus

- Streamlined Connections:** Project Nexus aims to centralize how IPS connect globally, eliminating the need for custom connections with each new country. This is achieved by centralizing connections through a single platform.
- Efficient Payments:** A single connection to the platform allows a fast payment system to reach all other countries on the network. According to BIS, connecting IPS can enable crossborder payments from sender to recipient within 60 seconds in most cases.
- Enhanced Bilateral Connectivity:** While India and its partner countries benefit from bilateral connectivity of FPS, a multilateral approach through Project Nexus will further enhance the international reach of Indian payment systems.

### India's Involvement

- The RBI has been actively collaborating bilaterally with various countries to link India's Fast Payments System (FPS) UPI with their respective FPSs for crossborder Person to Person (P2P) and Person to Merchant (P2M) payments.
- Notable collaborations include Bhutan, UAE, France, Sri Lanka, and Mauritius.

### About the Bank for International Settlements (BIS)

- Establishment and Ownership:** Established in 1930, the BIS is owned by 63 central banks, representing countries that account for about 95% of world GDP.
- Head Office:** The BIS's head office is located in Basel, Switzerland, with representative offices in Hong Kong SAR and Mexico City, and Innovation Hub Centres around the world.
- Innovation BIS 2025:** This is BIS's medium term strategy that leverages technology and new collaboration channels to serve the central banking community in a fast changing world.
- Basel Banking Accords:** These are global rules set by the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision (BCBS), operating under the BIS, providing guidelines for best practices in banking.

### Services Provided by BIS:

- A forum for dialogue and broad international cooperation.
- A platform for responsible innovation and knowledgesharing.
- Indepth analysis and insights on core policy issues.
- Sound and competitive financial services.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ Project Nexus represents a significant step towards enhancing the efficiency and reach of crossborder payments.
- ⇒ By joining this initiative, the RBI is poised to further expand the international connectivity of India's payment systems, fostering greater financial inclusion and economic integration on a global scale.

## STATE OF WORLD FISHERIES AND AQUACULTURE (SOFIA) 2024

### Context

- ⇒ According to the "State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture" (SOFIA) 2024 report by the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), aquaculture has surpassed capture fisheries in aquatic animal production for the first time.
- ⇒ This milestone highlights significant shifts in global fisheries and aquaculture dynamics.

### Overview

- ⇒ The SOFIA 2024 report reveals that global fisheries and aquaculture production in 2022 surged to 223.2 million tonnes, a 4.4 percent increase from 2020.
- ⇒ This production included 185.4 million tonnes of aquatic animals and 37.8 million tonnes of algae.



### Aquaculture Production

- ⇒ Aquaculture involves the breeding, rearing, and harvesting of fish, shellfish, algae, and other organisms in various water environments.
- ⇒ Global aquaculture production reached an unprecedented 130.9 million tonnes, with 94.4 million tonnes being aquatic animals, accounting for 51 percent of total aquatic animal production.
- ⇒ Currently, a few countries dominate global aquaculture production:
  - China
  - Indonesia
  - India
  - Vietnam
  - Bangladesh
  - The Philippines
  - Republic of Korea
  - Norway
  - Egypt
  - Chile
- ⇒ These nations produce over 89.8 percent of the total aquaculture output.

### Global Consumption of Aquatic Foods

- ⇒ In 2021, global consumption of aquatic animal foods reached 162.5 million tonnes.
- ⇒ Of the total aquatic animal production, 89 percent was used for direct human consumption, while the remainder was used for indirect or non-food purposes, such as fishmeal and fish oil production.

### Fisheries and Aquaculture Sector in India

- ⇒ India stands as the third-largest fish-producing country globally, accounting for 8 percent of global production and contributing about 1.09 percent to the country's Gross Value Added (GVA) and over 6.72 percent to agricultural GVA.
- ⇒ India is also the fourth-largest exporter of fish and fisheries products, with a growth in exports of 26.73 percent in terms of quantity between FY 2021-22 and FY 2022-23.

### In FY 2022-2023:

- ⇒ Inland fisheries contributed 74.7 percent of fish production.
- ⇒ Marine fisheries contributed the remaining 24.3 percent.

### Challenges Faced by the Sector

- ⇒ **Technology Adoption:** Limited access to modern technology and practices for sustainable aquaculture.
- ⇒ **Climate Change:** Rising sea temperatures, ocean acidification, and changing weather patterns affecting fish habitats and breeding.
- ⇒ **Pollution:** Water pollution from industrial, agricultural, and plastic waste harms aquatic life and ecosystems.
- ⇒ **Market Access:** Limited access to international markets due to trade barriers and quality standards.
- ⇒ **Infrastructure:** Inadequate cold storage, processing facilities, and transportation affecting fish quality and market access.

### Government Initiatives

- ⇒ **National Marine Fisheries Action Plan (NMFAP):** Measures to improve fishery resources assessment, enhance infrastructure and technology in the fisheries sector, and promote aquaculture development.
- ⇒ **Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY):** Aimed at bringing the Blue Revolution through sustainable and responsible development of the fisheries sector from FY 2020–21 to FY 2024–25.
- ⇒ **Fisheries and Aquaculture Infrastructure Development Fund (FIDF):** Addressing infrastructure requirements for the fisheries sector.
- ⇒ **100% FDI:** Allowed under the automatic route in the pisciculture and aquaculture sector in India.
- ⇒ **Kisan Credit Card (KCC) Scheme:** Extended to fisheries and animal husbandry farmers to meet their working capital requirements.

### Way Forward

- ⇒ The growth of aquaculture underscores its potential to meet the rising global demand for aquatic foods.
- ⇒ However, future expansion and intensification must prioritize sustainability and benefit regions and communities most in need.
- ⇒ Many low-income countries in Africa and Asia are not using their full potential.
- ⇒ Targeted policies, technology transfer, capacity building, and responsible investment are crucial to boost sustainable aquaculture where it is most needed, especially in Africa.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ The SOFIA 2024 report highlights the dynamic shifts in global fisheries and aquaculture, with aquaculture now surpassing capture fisheries in production.
- ⇒ This growth presents opportunities and challenges that require coordinated efforts to ensure sustainable and equitable development in the sector.
- ⇒ By addressing technological, environmental, and infrastructural challenges, countries can harness the full potential of aquaculture to support global food security and economic development.

## UNEMPLOYMENT AND INEQUALITY: INDIA'S ECONOMIC IMPERATIVES

### Introduction

- ⇒ India's economic trajectory in recent years has been characterized by impressive GDP growth rates alongside persistent challenges in job creation and wealth distribution.
- ⇒ This juxtaposition raises critical questions about the quality and inclusivity of economic growth and the broader impact on societal welfare.

### Unemployment Trends Amidst GDP Growth

- ⇒ Despite India's GDP growing at a reported rate of 8% in recent years, the corresponding reduction in the official unemployment rate from 4.2% in 2021 to 3.1% in 2023 appears inadequate.
- ⇒ This discrepancy suggests that economic expansion, while robust on paper, has not translated sufficiently into meaningful job opportunities for the growing workforce.
- ⇒ Key sectors such as manufacturing and services, which are expected to be major contributors to employment, have struggled to absorb the influx of job seekers due to factors like automation, skill mismatches, and structural barriers.



### Rising Wealth Inequality: The "K-shaped" Dilemma

- Over the past decade, wealth inequality in India has exacerbated significantly.
- The concentration of wealth among a small fraction of the population, where 1% owns 40% of the nation's wealth, mirrors a "K-shaped" pattern of economic growth.
- This phenomenon denotes that while affluent segments experience escalating incomes and consumption levels, a large proportion of the population faces stagnating or declining economic prospects.
- Such disparities not only undermine social cohesion but also inhibit sustainable economic development by limiting aggregate demand and perpetuating cycles of poverty.

### Scrutiny of Economic Claims and Electoral Realities

- Political assertions of lifting millions out of poverty through capital investments have faced scrutiny amidst electoral outcomes that reflect public skepticism.
- Despite claims of India's rapid economic ascent and poverty alleviation efforts, electoral mandates often reflect voter concerns about the equitable distribution of economic gains and the effectiveness of government policies in addressing socio-economic disparities.
- The disconnect between economic rhetoric and public sentiment underscores the imperative for transparent and inclusive growth strategies that resonate with diverse societal needs.

### Volatility in Economic Growth and Structural Deficits

- India's economic growth trajectory has been marked by volatility, evident from significant fluctuations in GDP growth rates over recent years.
- For instance, the sharp decline in GDP growth from 8% to 3.8% in the fourth quarter of 2019-20 highlights vulnerabilities inherent in an economy reliant on cyclical capital expenditure rather than sustainable structural reforms.
- Addressing structural deficits through investments in infrastructure, technology, and human capital development is crucial for fostering long-term economic resilience and mitigating the adverse effects of global economic fluctuations.

### Informal Sector Dominance and the Need for Formalization

- A substantial majority of India's workforce remains employed in the informal sector, particularly in agriculture, where 92% of jobs lack formal organizational structures.
- Similarly, within industry and services, 73% of employment is concentrated in small- and medium-sized enterprises operating informally.
- Informal employment perpetuates vulnerabilities such as low wages, inadequate social security, and limited access to financial services, hindering socio-economic mobility and overall productivity.
- Promoting formalization through policy measures that incentivize compliance, enhance skill development, and integrate informal sectors into mainstream economic activities is essential for unlocking the sector's full potential and fostering inclusive growth.

### Conclusion

- India's pursuit of economic development must be anchored in strategies that prioritize inclusive growth, equitable wealth distribution, and resilience against economic volatility.
- A comprehensive economic agenda should encompass reforms aimed at expanding employment opportunities, narrowing wealth disparities, and fostering sustainable development across all sectors.
- By addressing structural deficits, promoting formalization, and enhancing social safety nets, India can build a robust economic foundation that not only accelerates growth but also ensures that the benefits are shared equitably among all segments of society.
- Such endeavors are pivotal in advancing India's aspirations of becoming a global economic powerhouse while upholding its democratic ethos of social justice and opportunity for all.

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## UTTAR PRADESH LEADS INDIA IN COMPRESSED BIOGAS PRODUCTION

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### Introduction

- Uttar Pradesh is emerging as a significant player in India's renewable energy market, particularly in the production of compressed biogas (CBG).
- A recent report by the Center for Science and Environment (CSE) highlighted that Uttar Pradesh has the potential to produce 24% of India's CBG.

- ⇒ This revelation was made at a symposium in Muzaffarnagar, organized by CSE and the Uttar Pradesh New and Renewable Energy Development Agency (UPNEDA).
- ⇒ The event focused on enhancing waste management, developing local clean energy solutions, and reducing dependence on imported compressed natural gas (CNG).



### Strategic Importance of Western Uttar Pradesh

- ⇒ Western Uttar Pradesh, encompassing towns such as Muzaffarnagar, Meerut, and Saharanpur, is strategically important for CBG production due to its abundant feedstock availability.
- ⇒ The majority of the state's existing and planned CBG plants are situated in this region.
- ⇒ Uttar Pradesh has the capacity to complete 1,000 of the 5,000 CBG projects planned nationwide under the Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation (SATAT) scheme, leveraging just a fifth of its additional fuel resources.

### State's Bioenergy Policy and Support

- ⇒ Uttar Pradesh has established itself as a leader with its ambitious bioenergy policy, which allocates Rs. 750 crore for CBG projects from 2022 to 2027.
- ⇒ This policy includes subsidies and leasing options to support CBG producers.
- ⇒ It aims to address common challenges, promote best practices, create new business opportunities, and educate local communities about the benefits of bioenergy.

### Challenges Hindering CBG Adoption

Despite the optimistic outlook, the CBG sector in Uttar Pradesh faces several challenges:

- ⇒ **Bioslurry Management:** Disposal of bioslurry, often viewed as waste, poses a significant challenge. There is a need for increased awareness of its value as an organic fertilizer.
- ⇒ **Inconsistent Gas Offtake:** CBG plants often underutilize their gas production capacity due to inconsistent purchasing by oil and gas companies and the lack of nearby CNG pipelines.
- ⇒ **Skilled Personnel Shortage:** The sector requires highly trained personnel to operate biogas systems, highlighting the need for specialized training centers.
- ⇒ **Financial Barriers:** Banks are hesitant to lend to CBG projects due to perceived risks. Government-backed guarantees may be necessary to secure financing.

### Solutions and Strategic Measures

To mitigate these challenges, several policy changes and strategic measures are being considered:

- ⇒ **Diverse Feedstock Use:** Encouraging the use of various feedstocks to enhance sustainability.
- ⇒ **Farmer Partnerships:** Involving farmers as partners in local bioenergy projects to ensure they benefit directly.
- ⇒ **Government Support:** Increasing government assistance and ensuring transparent payment systems.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ By addressing these challenges and implementing strategic measures, Uttar Pradesh can strengthen its position as a leader in CBG production and contribute significantly to India's renewable energy goals.

## ANGEL TAX

### Introduction:

- ⇒ Angel tax has been a contentious issue in the startup ecosystem in India.
- ⇒ The recent recommendation by the Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT) to abolish this tax has sparked discussions on its potential impact on startup funding and investor sentiment.
- ⇒ This proposal is anticipated to be announced in the upcoming Union Budget, aiming to simplify funding processes and enhance the attractiveness of Indian startups to investors.

### Understanding Angel Tax:

- ⇒ Angel tax refers to the tax levied on private companies when they receive funding that exceeds their fair market value, primarily affecting investments from angel investors.

- ⇒ The tax was introduced under Section 56(2) VII B of the Income Tax Act, categorizing any premium on the sale of shares to foreign buyers as "income from other sources," thus making it taxable.

### Origins of Angel Tax:

- ⇒ Introduced in the 2012 Union Budget by then-Finance Minister Pranab Mukherjee, the angel tax aimed to curb money laundering activities.
- ⇒ Significant relief came in April 2018 when startups were exempted from this tax if their total investment, including funds from angel investors, did not exceed ₹10 crore.
- ⇒ However, startups were still required to obtain multiple licenses and valuation certificates, complicating the process.



### Rationale Behind DPIIT's Recommendation for Repeal:

- ⇒ The recommendation to abolish the angel tax emerged from extensive consultations with stakeholders in the startup ecosystem and industry groups.
- ⇒ Concerns were consistently raised about the adverse effects of the angel tax on startup funding and growth.
- ⇒ The DPIIT has communicated these concerns to the finance ministry, suggesting that eliminating the tax could significantly boost capital formation in the country.

### Impact on Startups:

- ⇒ Abolishing the angel tax could greatly benefit India's more than 141,000 DPIIT-registered startups.
- ⇒ It would make angel investments more attractive and financially viable.
- ⇒ Currently, the angel tax is seen as a deterrent by potential investors as it reduces the funds available for growth and reinvestment in startups.
- ⇒ The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) and other business groups have been vocal advocates for reducing this tax to support the startup ecosystem.

### Current Investment Trends and Challenges:

- ⇒ The first half of 2024 witnessed a slight decline in startup fundraising efforts, reflecting the challenging economic environment for new tech startups.
- ⇒ Additionally, significant drops in the valuations of prominent startups indicate a broader slowdown in funding, exacerbated by cautious global market sentiments.
- ⇒ Eliminating the angel tax could help mitigate some of these challenges by fostering more vigorous business activities.

### Conclusion:

- ⇒ The proposed abolition of the angel tax by the DPIIT is a welcome move for the Indian startup ecosystem.
- ⇒ By making funding processes more straightforward and attractive for investors, this step could lead to a more vibrant and dynamic entrepreneurial landscape in India.
- ⇒ As the Union Budget approaches, the startup community eagerly anticipates this potential policy change, hoping it will pave the way for enhanced growth and innovation.

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## BOOSTING LIGHTHOUSE TOURISM IN INDIA

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### Why in News?

- ⇒ The Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways has announced plans to enhance lighthouse tourism under Maritime India Vision (MIV) 2030 and Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047 during a stakeholders meeting organized by the Directorate General of Lighthouses and Lightships in Vizhinjam, Kerala.

### What is a Lighthouse?

#### About:

- ⇒ A lighthouse is a structure designed to emit light from a system of lamps and lenses, aiding mariners and local fishermen in navigation.
- ⇒ Lighthouses mark dangerous coastlines, hazardous shoals, reefs, and safe entries to harbors.
- ⇒ Currently, India has established and maintains 194 lighthouses along its coastline and islands.

**Historical Role:**

- ⇒ **Ancient India:** The Rigveda and Satapatha Brahmana mention navigation in the East and West Seas. The Rigveda also describes sea voyages by Varuna and Vashistha.
- ⇒ **Mythological Connections:** The story of 'Manu' being rescued from a flood highlights early Indian knowledge of sea and navigation.
- ⇒ **7th Century A.D.:** Pallava king Narasimhavarman-I established a lighthouse at Mamallapuram (Mahabalipuram) using log fires to guide ships. This lighthouse offers stunning views of the Shore Temple complex, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

**Significant Modern Marvels:**

- ⇒ **Tangasseri Lighthouse, Kollam, Kerala:** The tallest lighthouse in Kerala, constructed by the British. It is painted in white and red bands, making it a fascinating sight.
- ⇒ **Mahabalipuram Lighthouse, Tamil Nadu:** An old lighthouse from the colonial period, built next to an ancient lighthouse commissioned by Mahendra Pallava of the Pallava dynasty. Though non-functional, it is open for visitors to explore.
- ⇒ **Kaup Beach Lighthouse, Udupi, Karnataka:** Constructed by the British in 1901, it has undergone various improvements, including the installation of different lighting equipment.
- ⇒ **Vizhinjam Lighthouse, Kovalam, Kerala:** Established in 1972, it is one of the oldest and most picturesque lighthouses in India.
- ⇒ **Fort Aguada Lighthouse, Goa:** A well-preserved Portuguese structure and one of Goa's prime attractions, offering dreamy sea views.
- ⇒ **Chandrabhaga Lighthouse, Odisha:** Located near the Konark Temple, it has endured severe cyclones like the Super Cyclone (1999), Phailin (2013), and Fani (2019).

**Note:**

- ⇒ In the 3rd century B.C., Ptolemy II built the famous Pharos of Alexandria (Lighthouse of Alexandria), one of the seven wonders of the ancient world.
- ⇒ The tower, made of high-quality kedan stone bricks embedded in molten lead, operated for 1600 years but collapsed in the 13th century due to a severe earthquake.

**What is the Role of Modern Lighthouses in India?**

- ⇒ Modern lighthouses guide ships, mark ports, and send signals, serving as valuable backups to GPS technology.
- ⇒ After the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks, lighthouses were equipped with state-of-the-art radars for coastal surveillance.
- ⇒ The Indian government established the Automatic Identification System (AIS) to facilitate communication between fishermen and lighthouses.
- ⇒ The Marine Aids to Navigation Act of 2021 aimed to promote the historical and cultural value of lighthouses.
- ⇒ Events like the Indian Lighthouse Festival in Goa showcase the heritage and tourism potential of these structures.

**Modern Navigational Aids:**

- ⇒ **Light Vessels:** Floating aids mark isolated shoals or submerged dangers, used where lighthouse construction is impractical.
- ⇒ **Buoys:** Provide navigational directions to mariners, initially using acetylene gas and now operating on electric lights powered by solar photovoltaic modules.
- ⇒ **M.F Radio Beacons:** Installed between 1955-60, these were replaced by the Differential Global Positioning System (DGPS) for improved maritime positioning accuracy.
- ⇒ **Racons:** Radar transponder beacons return a distinctive code signal to ship radar, providing range, bearing, and identification data.

## What are the Benefits of Boosting Lighthouse Tourism in India?

### Cultural Heritage:

- ⇒ **Educational Hubs:** Lighthouses offer historical and cultural value, making them educational hubs.
- ⇒ **Festivals:** Events like India's First Lighthouse Festival, "the Bharatiya Prakash Sthamb Utsav", held at Fort Aguada in Goa, celebrate India's rich maritime heritage.
- ⇒ **Heritage Sites:** Under the Marine Aids to Navigation Act, 2021, certain lighthouses may be designated as heritage sites, expanding their roles beyond navigation aids to cultural and educational purposes.

### Economic Development:

- ⇒ **Investment Potential:** The Directorate General of Lighthouses and Lightships has identified 75 lighthouses for potential investment in tourism development, promising economic benefits to surrounding areas.
- ⇒ **Public-Private Partnerships (PPP):** Encouraging private entities to invest in developing these sites as tourist destinations can increase tourism, benefiting local vendors, restaurants, and service providers.

### Environmental Awareness:

- ⇒ **Eco-friendly Tourism:** Promoting heritage lighthouses encourages eco-friendly tourism practices, protecting coastal environments while drawing visitors.
- ⇒ **Diverse Experiences:** Transforming lighthouses into multifaceted tourist destinations offers diverse experiences beyond traditional beach tourism.

### Directorate General of Lighthouses and Lightships

- ⇒ The Directorate General of Lighthouses and Lightships, under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, provides aids to marine navigation along the Indian coast.
- ⇒ Headquartered in Noida, it has regional headquarters in nine districts (Gandhidham, Jamnagar, Mumbai, Goa, Cochin, Chennai, Visakhapatnam, Kolkata, and Port Blair).
- ⇒ The Directorate aims to ensure safe and secure navigation in Indian waters through visual aids such as lighthouses, light vessels, buoys, and beacons, as well as radio aids like DGPS and RACONS.
- ⇒ It also provides Vessel Traffic Service for interactive navigation control.

### What is the Maritime India Vision (MIV) 2030?

Maritime India Vision 2030 is a ten-year blueprint for the maritime sector in India, released by the Prime Minister at the Maritime India Summit in November 2020. It aims to boost waterways, the shipbuilding industry, and cruise tourism. MIV 2030 highlights essential themes for India to secure its position in the global maritime sector, superseding the Sagarmala initiative. Key interventions include:

- ⇒ **Brownfield Capacity Augmentation:** Developing world-class Mega Ports and a transshipment hub in Southern India.
- ⇒ **Infrastructure Modernisation:** Improving maritime capabilities and Ease of Doing Business (EoDB) through digitization, smart ports, and system-driven performance monitoring.
- ⇒ **Logistics Efficiency:** Enhancing logistics efficiency and cost competitiveness through 200+ port connectivity projects, mechanisation, technology adoption, and coastal shipping promotion.
- ⇒ **Governance Mechanisms:** Improving governance, amending existing laws, strengthening the Maritime and Coastguard Agency (MCA), and promoting PPP, fiscal support, and financial resilience.
- ⇒ **Education and Training:** Promoting research and innovation, improving education and training, and creating a favourable environment for seafarers and port capability development.
- ⇒ **Renewable Energy:** Increasing renewable energy usage, reducing air emissions, optimizing water usage, improving waste management, and establishing a Zero accident safety program.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ Enhancing lighthouse tourism in India under the Maritime India Vision 2030 and Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047 is a promising step towards leveraging the country's rich maritime heritage.
- ⇒ This initiative will not only boost tourism and local economies but also promote cultural and environmental awareness, positioning India as a leader in sustainable and heritage tourism.

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## BUDGETING FOR SCIENCE: A PATH TO PROGRESS

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### Introduction

- ⇒ India has long recognized the importance of investing in science and technology, with every prime minister from Jawaharlal Nehru to Narendra Modi highlighting its critical role.



- ⇒ Nehru, in particular, laid the groundwork for the nation's space research and atomic energy programs.
- ⇒ Despite this legacy, India's overall R&D spending remains low, between 0.6% and 0.7% of GDP, far short of the 2% target often discussed.



### Global Comparison and India's Position

#### Disparity in R&D Expenditure

- ⇒ A comparison with other nations underscores India's significant gap in R&D spending. Countries like the US (2.8% of GDP), China (2.1%), Israel (4.3%), and South Korea (4.2%) invest substantially more.
- ⇒ China, for example, increased its R&D spending from 0.7% of GDP in the 1990s to 2.1% currently, becoming the second-largest spender globally in purchasing power parity terms.
- ⇒ In contrast, India's R&D expenditure was \$58.7 billion in 2018, a small fraction compared to China's \$525.7 billion in 2019.

### Lessons from Space and Atomic Energy Successes

#### Autonomy and Investment

India's notable achievements in space and atomic energy provide valuable insights. These sectors benefited from liberal investment and significant autonomy. The Space Commission and Atomic Energy Commission, led by senior scientists with decision-making power free from bureaucratic constraints, exemplify successful models. This autonomy has been instrumental in driving progress and achieving remarkable successes.

### Challenges in R&D Structure and Private Sector Involvement

#### Government vs. Private Sector Contribution

- ⇒ In India, the government accounts for 56% of R&D expenditure, unlike other countries where government spending is much lower.
- ⇒ Attempts to incentivize private sector R&D through tax concessions largely failed due to misuse of benefits by companies.
- ⇒ Additionally, 44% of India's R&D expenses go towards capital development, unlike countries like China and the UK, which spend almost nothing in this area.
- ⇒ This misallocation suggests that much government R&D funding is directed towards construction and real estate rather than genuine research.

### Future Directions and Budget Considerations

#### Role of the Upcoming Union Budget

- ⇒ The upcoming Union Budget presents an opportunity for significant advancement in science and technology.
- ⇒ Prime Minister Modi has emphasized the importance of science, technology, research, and development in building a robust economy.
- ⇒ The Finance Minister, in collaboration with top scientists, can introduce transformative measures.
- ⇒ One suggestion is to merge all scientific institutions into a few overarching bodies, similar to the Space and Atomic Energy Commissions, granting them substantial autonomy.

#### Encouraging Private Sector Involvement

- ⇒ To promote genuine private sector research, a mandate requiring companies to allocate 2% of their profits to R&D, similar to corporate social responsibility, could be introduced.
- ⇒ Unspent funds could be directed to the National Research Foundation (NRF), which would support state governments, educational institutions, and corporations in R&D initiatives.
- ⇒ Additionally, excluding construction costs from R&D expenditure figures and fostering a research mentality in higher education institutions are crucial steps.

#### Supporting State-Level Initiatives

- ⇒ State governments could be allowed to raise additional funds for R&D by increasing their gross state domestic product (GSDP) allocation through loans, exclusively for research projects approved by the NRF.

- ⇒ This would enable state-level councils to undertake significant R&D initiatives, contributing to national development goals.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ Investing in science and technology is vital for India's growth and development.
- ⇒ The upcoming Union Budget could mark a turning point by implementing bold measures to enhance R&D expenditure, foster private sector involvement, and streamline scientific institutions.
- ⇒ By learning from past successes and addressing current challenges, India can achieve significant advancements in science and technology, driving economic and social progress.

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

### Introduction

- ⇒ The Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act, enacted in 2003, aims to ensure fiscal discipline, reduce India's fiscal deficit, and improve overall macroeconomic management.
- ⇒ Its significance has been particularly highlighted during economic crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, when the usual fiscal targets under the FRBM Act were relaxed to allow for increased government spending.



### Origin and Implementation

- ⇒ **Proposed By:** Yashwant Sinha, Finance Minister at the time, in 2000.
- ⇒ **Enacted:** 2003.
- ⇒ **Implemented:** July 5, 2004.
- ⇒ **Purpose:** Establish a framework for fiscal responsibility to ensure macroeconomic stability and promote long-term economic growth.

### Goals and Objectives

The FRBM Act aims to:

- ⇒ **Maintain Budget Stability:** Ensure a balanced budget over the medium term.
- ⇒ **Promote Transparency:** Increase openness in government financial operations.
- ⇒ **Enhance RBI's Independence:** Allow the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) greater autonomy to manage inflation.
- ⇒ **Equitable Financial Load:** Ensure the financial burden is distributed fairly across generations.

### Key Features

The FRBM Act requires the presentation of specific documents alongside the Union Budget:

- Medium-term Fiscal Policy Statement:** Outlines the government's fiscal objectives and policies for the coming years.
  - Macroeconomic Framework Statement:** Provides an overview of the economic conditions influencing the budget.
  - Fiscal Policy Strategy Statement:** Details the government's fiscal strategy for achieving the targets.
- ⇒ These documents provide a transparent view of the government's financial plans and projections for key fiscal indicators, such as revenue and fiscal deficits.
  - ⇒ The Act allows deviations from fiscal targets under certain circumstances, such as natural disasters or significant national security threats, providing flexibility in fiscal policy.

### Challenges and Reforms

- ⇒ Despite its detailed framework, the FRBM Act has faced implementation challenges, leading to several amendments. In 2016, the NK Singh Committee reviewed the Act and proposed significant reforms:
  - Focus on Debt Reduction:** Prioritize reducing the overall debt burden.
  - Independent Fiscal Council:** Establish an independent body to monitor fiscal performance.
  - Clear Deviation Guidelines:** Define acceptable circumstances for deviations from fiscal targets.
  - Stringent Borrowing Rules:** Implement strict rules for government borrowing.
- ⇒ These recommendations aim to enhance the effectiveness of the FRBM Act in promoting sustainable economic growth and fiscal stability.

### Importance in Current Context

- ⇒ The FRBM Act remains crucial for India's economic management, especially amid global economic instability.
- ⇒ It enforces structured fiscal control and transparency, ensuring that the government's financial operations remain sustainable and accountable.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ The FRBM Act is a cornerstone of India's fiscal policy framework.
- ⇒ It underscores the importance of fiscal discipline, transparency, and long-term economic stability.
- ⇒ Despite facing challenges in implementation, the Act's continued relevance is evident in its adaptability to economic exigencies, such as those experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- ⇒ The reforms proposed by the NK Singh Committee, if implemented effectively, can further strengthen the Act's impact, ensuring that India maintains a robust and sustainable fiscal policy framework.
- ⇒ As India navigates through evolving economic landscapes, the principles enshrined in the FRBM Act will remain vital for maintaining fiscal prudence and promoting economic resilience.

## HOLDING STEADY: GLOBAL AND INDIAN ECONOMIC OUTLOOK

### Introduction

- ⇒ The global economy is projected to grow at a stable pace in the near term.
- ⇒ According to the July update of the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) World Economic Outlook, global growth is estimated at 3.2% in 2024 and 3.3% in 2025.
- ⇒ This stability is in line with the IMF's April assessment and indicates a balanced global economic environment amid various challenges.



### IMF Adjustments to Growth Perspectives

#### Developed Economies:

- ⇒ **Spain and France:** The IMF has upgraded its growth forecasts for these countries. This suggests positive economic developments and resilience in these economies, possibly due to robust domestic demand and effective fiscal policies.
- ⇒ **Japan:** Conversely, the growth outlook for Japan has been revised downward. This may reflect challenges such as demographic issues, low inflation, and the need for structural reforms.

#### Emerging Markets and Developing Economies:

- ⇒ **Middle East and Central Asia:** The growth prospects have been lowered, which could be due to geopolitical tensions, fluctuating oil prices, and economic uncertainties.
- ⇒ **Parts of Latin America:** Similar downward revisions indicate economic struggles, possibly due to political instability and structural inefficiencies.
- ⇒ **China and India:** The IMF has significantly raised its expectations for these economies. For China, this may be due to policy support and recovery from pandemic-induced slowdowns. For India, it reflects strong private consumption and favorable rural economic conditions.

### IMF's Prediction for the Indian Economy

The IMF now forecasts the Indian economy to grow at 7% in 2024, an upward revision by 0.2 percentage points from its earlier projection. This optimistic outlook is driven by:

- ⇒ **Private Consumption:** Enhanced prospects for private consumption, especially in rural areas, indicate increased household spending and economic activity.
- ⇒ **Policy Measures:** Government initiatives aimed at boosting economic growth and infrastructure development.

### Alignment with Other Agencies' Assessments

#### Asian Development Bank (ADB):

- ⇒ **Growth Forecast:** Maintains India's growth projection at 7%.

- ⇒ **Agriculture Sector:** Expects a rebound, supported by predictions of an above-normal monsoon. A good monsoon is crucial for agricultural output, which in turn supports rural income and consumption.

### Reserve Bank of India (RBI):

- ⇒ **Growth Projection:** Slightly higher at 7.2%. This reflects the central bank's confidence in the domestic economy's resilience and ongoing recovery.

### Crisil and ICRA:

- ⇒ **Growth Estimates:** Slightly lower at 6.8%, suggesting a cautious yet positive outlook based on various economic indicators.

### Outlook for Next Year:

- ⇒ **IMF Projection:** 6.5% growth, indicating continued robust economic performance.
- ⇒ **ADB Projection:** 7.2% growth, underscoring a favorable economic trajectory.
- ⇒ These projections indicate that India's underlying economic momentum remains strong, driven by domestic consumption, policy support, and favorable demographic factors.

### IMF's Global Economic Outlook

#### Inflation and Interest Rates:

- ⇒ **Disinflation Progress:** Slowing across the globe, indicating that while inflation is moderating, it remains above target levels for many economies.
- ⇒ **Inflation Risks:** Rising, suggesting persistent pressures that may necessitate prolonged high interest rates to curb inflation.

#### US Federal Reserve:

- ⇒ **June Decision:** Chose to maintain the status quo on interest rates, reflecting a wait-and-see approach to assess inflation trends.
- ⇒ **Rate Cut Projections:** Now expects only one rate cut this year, down from earlier expectations of three. This indicates a cautious stance given the uncertainties around inflation.

#### European Central Bank (ECB):

- ⇒ **June Action:** Cut rates, signaling efforts to stimulate the economy.
- ⇒ **July Meeting Expectations:** Likely to maintain status quo, waiting for more macroeconomic data before making further moves.

#### Emerging Economies:

- ⇒ **Central Banks' Approach:** Cautious on lowering rates due to potential currency depreciation and capital outflows.
- ⇒ **India:** Despite some calls for rate cuts within the monetary policy committee, a change in policy appears unlikely in the near term due to ongoing uncertainties regarding inflation, particularly food prices.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ The IMF's outlook on India presents an optimistic scenario, highlighting the country's robust economic fundamentals amidst global uncertainties.
- ⇒ Despite high interest rates posing a concern, India's macroeconomic environment appears stable and resilient.
- ⇒ This positive outlook is supported by strong domestic consumption, favorable policy measures, and a promising agricultural sector.
- ⇒ As India navigates through global economic challenges, its solid growth prospects underscore the country's potential to maintain a healthy economic trajectory in the coming years.

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

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### Introduction

- ⇒ India experienced a significant boost in employment in the fiscal year 2023-24, creating 46.7 million new jobs and bringing the total number of jobs across the country to 643.3 million.
- ⇒ This remarkable growth rate of 6% is detailed in the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) newly released provisional output report, highlighting a substantial improvement from the 3.2% growth rate in the previous fiscal year.

### RBI's Provisional Productivity Report: A New Approach

- The RBI's provisional productivity report for FY24 marks a significant shift from its traditional reporting methods.
- For the first time, the RBI has utilized current data to measure economic output, offering a real-time perspective on India's economic and job market changes.
- This innovative approach provides a more accurate reflection of the country's economic health and employment trends.



### Employment Growth Amidst Rising Unemployment

- Despite the impressive job creation figures, rising unemployment remains a critical issue.
- The Center for Monitoring the Indian Economy (CMIE) reported an increase in the jobless rate from 7% to 9.2% in June 2024, the highest in eight months.
- This paradox between job creation and rising unemployment has fueled debates about "jobless growth," a prominent topic during the recent parliamentary elections.

### GDP Growth and Employment Projections

- India's GDP grew by an exceptional 8.2% in FY24, surpassing expectations.
- The RBI forecasts a GDP growth rate of 7.2% for FY25, aligning with the current strong growth trajectory.
- However, Citibank research indicates that even a 7% GDP growth might generate only 8 to 9 million jobs, potentially falling short of the workforce's needs over the next decade.
- This underscores the complex relationship between GDP growth and job creation, suggesting that economic growth alone may not suffice to meet employment demands.

### Methodological Insights: Data Behind the Estimates

- The RBI's employment estimates are derived from data provided by the Ministry of Labour and the government's National Accounts.
- These estimates extrapolate output and employment levels across 27 industries, encompassing agriculture, manufacturing, and services.
- This comprehensive methodology ensures a detailed and extensive view of job conditions across various economic sectors.

### Conclusion

- The creation of 46.7 million new jobs in fiscal 2023-24 is a significant milestone for India, reflecting robust economic growth.
- However, the concurrent rise in unemployment highlights the need for a nuanced approach to employment policies and economic planning.
- As India continues to grow, understanding the intricate dynamics between GDP growth and job creation will be essential to ensure sustainable and inclusive economic development.

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## INDIA TO HOST SECOND ASIA-PACIFIC AVIATION CONFERENCE

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### Introduction

- India is set to host the second Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Civil Aviation from September 11th to 12th.
- This significant event follows the inaugural conference held in Beijing in February 2018.
- Given the rapid growth of aviation in the region, the upcoming conference marks a crucial step in shaping the future of aviation for 39 member states in the Asia-Pacific.

### Significance of the Asia-Pacific Region in Global Aviation

- The Asia-Pacific region accounts for 33.41% of all global departures, underscoring its critical role in global aviation.
- This statistic highlights the region's central position in international aviation, emphasizing the need for continued advancements in technology and safety regulations.

### Goals of the Upcoming Conference

- The primary objective of the second Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference is to enhance cooperation and coordination within the region.
- The conference aims to provide a future vision that fosters a culture of innovation while emphasizing the importance of maintaining aviation safety.
- This strategic plan is designed to help the region meet the future demands of air travel.

### Projected Growth and Opportunities

- According to Salvatore Sciacchitano, President of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Council, the Asia-Pacific region is poised for significant growth.
- Passenger numbers are projected to increase from 4.5 billion in 2023 to 11.5 billion by 2050.
- India, as one of the fastest-growing aviation markets globally, is at the forefront of this expansion.
- The conference will address these projections, aiming to make aviation more sustainable and resilient.

### Foundation and Future Directions

- The upcoming conference is expected to build on the achievements of the 2018 Beijing Declaration, which facilitated closer cooperation among Asia-Pacific airlines.
- As the aviation sector evolves rapidly, the focus will remain on creating a sustainable and responsive aviation environment.
- This approach will ensure the long-term viability and adaptability of the aviation industry.

### Conclusion

- The second Asia-Pacific Ministerial Conference on Civil Aviation represents a pivotal moment for the region's aviation industry.
- By fostering enhanced cooperation, innovation, and safety, the conference aims to address the challenges and opportunities presented by rapid growth.
- The event underscores India's role in shaping the future of global aviation, promoting a sustainable and resilient aviation sector for the decades to come.



## INDIA'S DEMOGRAPHIC JOURNEY

### Introduction

- On July 11, as the world observes World Population Day, it provides a poignant moment to delve into India's profound demographic transformation over the decades.
- Established in 1989 by the United Nations, this day serves as a reminder of the global challenges such as poverty, health disparities, and gender inequality, especially in developing countries.

### Historical Context and Progress

- In the 1960s and 1970s, the global population was escalating at an alarming annual rate of 2%, sparking concerns of widespread poverty and humanitarian crises in India.
- Contrary to these dire predictions, subsequent decades witnessed a remarkable shift.
- Globally, fertility rates plummeted due to advancements in healthcare and living standards, leading to increased life expectancies.
- India mirrored this trend with a significant decline in fertility rates since the 1970s, now resting below replacement levels.
- This demographic transition has been complemented by substantial improvements in health metrics, including noteworthy reductions in maternal and child mortality rates.



- ⇒ The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in 2015 further galvanized India's efforts to integrate population dynamics into its developmental framework.

### Current Population Dynamics

- ⇒ India's demographic landscape hinges on three pivotal components: fertility, mortality, and migration.
- ⇒ Notably, India's Total Fertility Rate (TFR) has dropped from 3.4 to 2 between 1992 and 2021, underscoring a shift towards smaller family norms.
- ⇒ Coupled with declining mortality rates and rising life expectancies, India faces the dual challenge of an aging population, projected to encompass 19.5% of the populace by 2050.

### Challenges and Emerging Trends

- ⇒ India's demographic dynamics intersect profoundly with its development trajectory.
- ⇒ While declining fertility offers prospects of a demographic dividend, urbanization and internal migration pose formidable challenges, straining urban infrastructure and exacerbating socioeconomic disparities.
- ⇒ Moreover, gender inequities persist in labor force participation and political representation, impeding India's path to inclusive growth.

### Progress Towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

- ⇒ The core of India's development agenda revolves around ensuring food security, adequate shelter, and robust health systems for all.
- ⇒ Significant strides have been made, evidenced by the drastic reduction in poverty rates and advancements in healthcare accessibility.
- ⇒ Initiatives like the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) and the Janani Suraksha Yojana have been pivotal in poverty alleviation and maternal health enhancement.
- ⇒ However, challenges remain in achieving SDGs related to hunger and nutrition.
- ⇒ Despite initiatives like the POSHAN Abhiyaan, malnutrition continues to afflict a substantial segment of the population, necessitating sustained efforts to realize the goal of 'Zero Hunger' by 2030.
- ⇒ Health outcomes, while improving, require continued investment in healthcare infrastructure to bridge existing gaps.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ India stands at a critical juncture in its demographic journey, navigating complexities of population aging, urbanization, and gender disparities amidst ambitious development goals.
- ⇒ As the nation progresses towards 2030, equitable distribution of resources and inclusive growth strategies are imperative to ensure sustainable development in its truest sense.
- ⇒ By addressing these challenges with steadfast determination and holistic policies, India can forge a future where prosperity and well-being are shared by all its citizens.

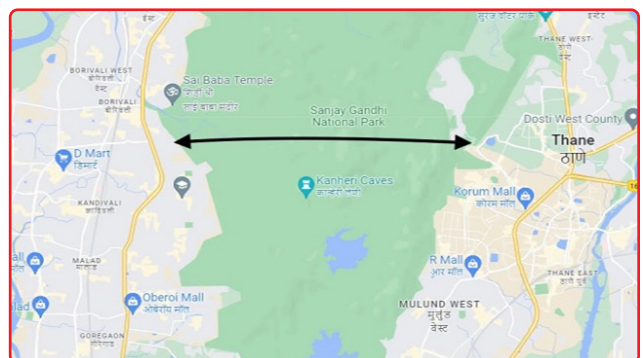
## INDIA'S LONGEST URBAN TUNNEL BETWEEN BORIVALI AND THANE

### Introduction

- ⇒ On July 13, 2024, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the groundbreaking ceremony for the Thane-Borivali Twin Tunnel project in Mumbai.
- ⇒ This ambitious Rs. 16,600 crore project is part of a larger Rs. 29,000 crore infrastructure development initiative aimed at significantly improving Mumbai's transportation network and connectivity.

### Overview of the Thane-Borivali Twin Tunnel Project

- ⇒ **Project Cost:** Rs. 16,600 crore.
- ⇒ **Length:** 11.8 km.
- ⇒ **Connectivity:** Direct subway line between Thane and Borivali, ending at Borivali on National Highway 8.
- ⇒ **Travel Time Reduction:** From over an hour to just 12 minutes.
- ⇒ **Distance Reduction:** 12 km.
- ⇒ **Lanes:** Two regular lanes and one emergency lane.



- ⇒ The Thane-Borivali Twin Tunnel project is designed to provide a seamless and rapid transit option between Thane and Borivali.
- ⇒ By reducing the travel time from over an hour to just 12 minutes, the tunnel will greatly enhance the efficiency of commuting, offering a significant improvement in connectivity within Mumbai.
- ⇒ The inclusion of two regular lanes and one emergency lane ensures that the tunnel can handle a substantial amount of traffic while providing a safe and reliable route for emergency situations.

### Strategic Implications and Benefits

- ⇒ The Thane-Borivali Twin Tunnel is not only a transportation link but also a strategic solution to alleviate traffic congestion on key routes such as Ghodbundar Road and the Western Express Highway.
- ⇒ By offering a direct and rapid route, the tunnel aims to improve east-west suburban connectivity, streamline travel, and prevent road overcrowding.

### Key Benefits:

- ⇒ **Traffic Decongestion:** The tunnel will help reduce traffic on major roads, leading to smoother and faster travel.
- ⇒ **Economic Growth:** Improved connectivity can boost economic activities by facilitating easier movement of goods and people.
- ⇒ **Enhanced Quality of Life:** Reduced travel time and congestion will improve the daily commute for residents, enhancing their overall quality of life.
- ⇒ **Sustainability:** By cutting down on travel time and distance, the tunnel will also contribute to reducing vehicle emissions, promoting environmental sustainability.

### Environmental and Technical Details

- ⇒ **Environmental Impact:** The project is designed to be environmentally friendly, with no impact on the adjacent Sanjay Gandhi National Park.
- ⇒ **Tunnel-Boring Machine:** India's longest tunnel-boring machine will be used, capable of boring a tunnel 10.25 km long with cross passages every 300 meters for safety and maintenance.
- ⇒ **Carbon Emission Reduction:** The project is expected to reduce carbon emissions by 150,000 metric tons per year.

### Environmental Considerations:

- ⇒ The project emphasizes minimal environmental impact, particularly with regard to the Sanjay Gandhi National Park, a crucial green space in Mumbai.
- ⇒ By using advanced technology and environmentally sustainable practices, the project aims to achieve its infrastructural goals without compromising the ecological balance.

### Technical Advancements:

- ⇒ The use of India's longest tunnel-boring machine, capable of boring a tunnel 10.25 km long, demonstrates the project's commitment to leveraging cutting-edge technology.
- ⇒ Cross passages every 300 meters will ensure safety and ease of maintenance, making the tunnel a robust and reliable infrastructure asset.

### About Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA)

- ⇒ Established in 1975, the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) is responsible for planning and overseeing development in the Mumbai Metropolitan Region. Key projects and achievements include:
  1. **Bandra-Kurla Complex:** A major business hub initiated by MMRDA.
  2. **Mumbai's First Train (2014):** MMRDA's milestone in urban transportation.
  3. **Mumbai Metro:** Overseen by MMRDA, with several lines under construction to ease traffic.
  4. **Mumbai Urban Infrastructure Project:** Managed by MMRDA to improve urban infrastructure.
  5. **Mumbai Trans-Harbour Link:** A project to facilitate travel between Mumbai and Navi Mumbai.

### MMRDA's Role:

- ⇒ The MMRDA has been instrumental in transforming Mumbai's urban landscape.
- ⇒ From developing the Bandra-Kurla Complex, a prominent business district, to implementing the Mumbai Metro and the Mumbai Trans-Harbour Link, the MMRDA has consistently worked towards enhancing the city's infrastructure.
- ⇒ The Thane-Borivali Twin Tunnel project is the latest in a series of initiatives aimed at making Mumbai a more accessible and livable city.



### Future Prospects:

- As the Thane-Borivali Twin Tunnel project progresses, it is expected to serve as a model for similar infrastructure projects across India.
- The project's success will likely inspire further investments in urban infrastructure, driving economic growth and improving the quality of life for millions of residents.
- By prioritizing sustainability and leveraging advanced technology, India can continue to build resilient and efficient urban environments that meet the needs of its growing population.

### Conclusion

- The Thane-Borivali Twin Tunnel project represents a significant leap forward in Mumbai's infrastructure development.
- By drastically reducing travel time and distance, and mitigating traffic congestion, the project is set to enhance urban mobility and contribute to environmental sustainability.
- The involvement of the Mumbai Metropolitan Region Development Authority (MMRDA) ensures that the project will be executed with a focus on efficiency, environmental care, and long-term urban planning.
- This project is a testament to India's commitment to modernizing its urban infrastructure and addressing the growing demands of its metropolitan regions.

## NITI AAYOG SDG INDIA INDEX 2023-24

### Overview

- The latest Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) India Index for 2023-24 has been released by NITI Aayog, showcasing substantial advancements in sustainable development across Indian states and union territories.

### SDG India Index Explained

- **Purpose:** The SDG India Index is a tool developed by NITI Aayog to measure and track India's progress towards the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It encourages states to incorporate these goals into their development agendas and helps identify gaps and prioritize actions to achieve sustainable development by 2030.
- **Methodology:** The Index evaluates states and union territories on 16 out of 17 SDGs, excluding Goal 14 (Life Below Water), which pertains only to coastal states. It uses 113 indicators aligned with the National Indicator Framework. Scores range from 0-100, with higher scores indicating better progress towards SDG targets. States/UTs are categorized into Aspirant (0-49), Performer (50-64), Front-Runner (65-99), and Achiever (100).
- **Impact:** The Index fosters competitive and cooperative federalism, encouraging states and UTs to learn from each other. It highlights achievements and areas needing improvement, integrating SDGs into national development strategies and supporting the vision of Viksit Bharat @ 2047.



### Key Highlights of SDG India Index 2023-24

- **Overall Progress:** India's overall SDG score improved to 71 in 2023-24, up from 66 in 2020-21 and 57 in 2018. This progress is attributed to targeted government interventions in areas like poverty reduction, economic growth, and climate action.
- **Top Performers:** Kerala and Uttarakhand emerged as the top-performing states with scores of 79 each.
- **Lowest Performer:** Bihar scored the lowest with 57 points, followed by Jharkhand at 62 points.
- **Front-Runner States:** 32 states and UTs fall under the front-runner category, with 10 new entrants including Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Chhattisgarh, and Uttar Pradesh.

### Government Interventions and Their Impact

- **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana:** Over 4 crore houses built.
- **Swachh Bharat Mission:** 11 crore toilets and 2.23 lakh community sanitary complexes constructed.
- **Ujjwala Yojana:** 10 crore LPG connections provided.
- **Jal Jeevan Mission:** Tap water connections in over 14.9 crore households.
- **Ayushman Bharat-PMJAY:** Over 30 crore beneficiaries.

- ⇒ **PM Mudra Yojana:** 43 crore loans sanctioned.
- ⇒ **Saubhagya Scheme:** 100% household electrification.
- ⇒ **Renewable Energy:** Solar power capacity increased from 2.82 GW to 73.32 GW in a decade.
- ⇒ **National Food Security Act (NFSA):** Coverage of over 80 crore people.
- ⇒ **Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT):** Rs. 34 lakh crore transferred via PM-Jan Dhan accounts.
- ⇒ **Skill India Mission:** Over 1.4 crore youth trained and upskilled, 54 lakh reskilled.

### Specific SDG Highlights

- ⇒ **Goal 1: No Poverty:** Improved score from 60 (2020-21) to 72 (2023-24). Employment under MGNREGA offered to 99.7% of those demanding it.
- ⇒ **Goal 2: Zero Hunger:** Score improvement from Aspirant to Performer category. 99.01% beneficiaries covered under NFSA, 2013.
- ⇒ **Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being:** Score improved from 52 (2018) to 77 (2023-24). 93.23% children fully immunized, Maternal Mortality Rate at 97 per 100,000 live births.
- ⇒ **Goal 4: Quality Education:** Adjusted Net Enrolment Rate (ANER) for elementary education at 96.5% (2021-22). 88.65% of schools have access to both electricity and drinking water.
- ⇒ **Goal 5: Gender Equality:** Score improved from 36 (2018) to 49 (2023-24). Sex ratio at birth stands at 929 females per 1,000 males.
- ⇒ **Goal 6: Clean Water and Sanitation:** Significant score improvement from 63 (2018) to 89 (2023-24). 99.29% of rural households have improved drinking water sources.
- ⇒ **Goal 7: Affordable and Clean Energy:** Highest score among all SDGs, from 51 (2018) to 96 (2023-24). 100% household electrification under Saubhagya Scheme.
- ⇒ **Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth:** 5.88% annual growth rate of GDP per capita (2022-23). Unemployment rate reduced from 6.2% (2018-19) to 3.40% (2022-23).
- ⇒ **Goal 9: Industry, Innovation, and Infrastructure:** Score improved from 41 (2018) to 61 (2023-24). 99.70% of targeted habitations connected with all-weather roads under PM Gram Sadak Yojana.
- ⇒ **Goal 10: Reduced Inequalities:** Score decreased from 67 (2020-21) to 65 (2023-24). 45.61% of Panchayati Raj Institution seats held by women.
- ⇒ **Goal 11: Sustainable Cities and Communities:** Score improved from 39 (2018) to 83 (2023-24). Municipal solid waste processing increased from 68% (2020) to 78.46% (2024).
- ⇒ **Goal 12: Responsible Consumption and Production:** 91.5% of biomedical waste treated in 2022. 54.99% hazardous waste recycled/utilized (2022-23).
- ⇒ **Goal 13: Climate Action:** Score improved from 54 (2020-21) to 67 (2023-24). 43.28% of electricity generated from renewable energy (2024).
- ⇒ **Goal 14: Life on Land:** Score improved from 66 (2020-21) to 75 (2023-24). 25% of geographical area under forests and tree cover.
- ⇒ **Goal 15: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions:** 95.5% of population under Aadhaar coverage (March 2024). 71.3% charge sheeting rate of IPC crimes (NCRB 2022).

### Conclusion

- ⇒ The SDG India Index 2023-24 reflects India's ongoing commitment to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.
- ⇒ Through targeted interventions and collaborative efforts, significant progress has been made across various sectors.
- ⇒ However, challenges remain, especially in areas like gender equality and reducing inequalities.
- ⇒ The Index serves as a valuable tool for policymakers to strategize and prioritize actions, ensuring inclusive and sustainable development for all by 2030.

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## TRADE POLICY NEEDS A RESET: SHAPING INDIA'S GLOBAL ECONOMIC FOOTPRINT

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### Introduction

- ⇒ India stands at a critical juncture in its trade policy, necessitating a strategic reassessment to align with evolving global dynamics and domestic economic aspirations.
- ⇒ India's participation in WTO discussions holds pivotal significance, influencing subsequent bilateral engagements with major global markets.

- Recent WTO events have highlighted India's need for a more nuanced and adaptive trade policy to effectively safeguard its interests amidst evolving global economic priorities.
- This article examines India's current stance on trade, its challenges, and the imperative for proactive engagement in global economic governance.

### India's Stance on "WTO Expansion"

- India adopts a cautious stance on expanding the WTO's negotiation agenda, particularly in areas like e-commerce, trade, climate change, and investment facilitation.
- This approach aims to preserve policy flexibility crucial for sustaining economic development initiatives.
- However, it risks hindering opportunities in the digital economy and high-tech manufacturing sectors.



### Vision 2047 and Global Economic Governance

- India envisions becoming a technology-driven developed economy by 2047.
- As global economic governance rules evolve under the influence of geoeconomics, emerging technologies, and sustainability imperatives, India's rising stature demands proactive leadership to manage global economic differences constructively.

### India's Economic Integration and Opportunities

- Domestic policy reforms are pivotal in promoting global integration and sustainable economic growth.
- India ranks among the top destinations for FDI globally and aims to escalate goods exports to \$1 trillion by 2030.
- The burgeoning e-commerce market, projected to reach \$350 billion by 2030, underscores significant export potential.

### Regulatory Reforms and Commitments

- India's regulatory landscape is evolving, driven by reforms in data protection, consumer rights, competition, and taxation, especially in response to the burgeoning e-commerce sector.
- Commitments toward achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2070 reflect India's proactive stance on sustainability.

### Evolving Export Strategy

- There is a pressing need for India to transition from defensive to proactive strategies in key global markets.
- Active participation in WTO negotiations on crucial fronts such as e-commerce, trade, climate change, and investment facilitation is essential to capitalize on emerging export opportunities.

### Historical Context and Current Landscape

- The transformative policy reforms initiated post the 1991 economic crisis have dismantled trade barriers, fostering economic liberalization.
- Today, India's focus is on digital transformation, sustainable development, and resilient value chains to navigate the contemporary global economic landscape.

### Importance of WTO Engagement

- Engaging constructively with the WTO not only facilitates bilateral engagements with major global markets but also positions India as a leader among Global South nations.
- Non-engagement risks marginalization as other nations forge consensus on new global trade regulations.

### Future Approach

- India must break away from its historically defensive trade positions to achieve its ambitious economic targets.
- A proactive engagement strategy, akin to its approach in G20 and bilateral negotiations, should be extended to WTO deliberations.
- This includes advocating for policies that enhance trade-to-GDP ratios and accelerate overall economic growth.

### Conclusion

- India's proactive stance in shaping multilateral trade and investment disciplines through active participation in G20 forums and bilateral negotiations with advanced economies underscores its commitment to global economic leadership.

- ⇒ Extending this approach to WTO negotiations is imperative for ensuring India's integration into the evolving global economic order and achieving sustainable economic growth objectives.

## A CANDID ASSESSMENT: ECONOMIC SURVEY 2023-24

### Introduction

- ⇒ The Economic Survey 2023-24, released by the finance ministry, provides a thorough and realistic evaluation of India's economic status and future prospects.
- ⇒ This flagship document not only highlights the recovery from the pandemic but also delves into the various challenges facing the economy.

### Private Sector Performance and Investment Trends

#### Economic Progress and Paradoxes

- ⇒ The Survey documents the economic rebound from the pandemic while presenting a paradoxical situation.
- ⇒ On one hand, the corporate sector is enjoying "excess profits" and banks are experiencing record-high interest margins.
- ⇒ On the other hand, the economy is grappling with subdued private sector investments, sluggish growth in productive employment opportunities, and private consumption growing at a modest 4 percent.

#### Need for Private Sector Leadership

- ⇒ The Survey emphasizes the need for the private sector to take the lead in investment.
- ⇒ While public sector investments have sustained capital formation, the private sector has predominantly invested in "dwellings, other buildings, and structures" rather than in "machinery, equipment, and intellectual property."
- ⇒ This shift in focus is crucial for continued economic growth.
- ⇒ The data indicates some positive trends, with capital formation expanding, albeit at a slower rate.

#### The Job Crisis: A Growing Concern

#### Job Creation Challenges

- ⇒ The Survey highlights the severe job crisis that influenced recent national elections.
- ⇒ To effectively address this issue, India needs to create 78.5 lakh jobs annually in the non-farm sector to accommodate new entrants into the labor market and those transitioning from agriculture.
- ⇒ Current schemes such as the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) and Mudra loans are considered insufficient to meet this scale of employment generation.
- ⇒ Additional measures are required to tackle this crisis.

#### Skill Gap Issues

- ⇒ Another significant concern is the skill gap, with approximately half of college graduates being "deemed employable."
- ⇒ This disparity between education and job market requirements needs to be addressed to enhance employability and support job creation.

#### Pessimistic Outlook on External Stimuli

#### Challenges from the Global Landscape

- ⇒ The Survey expresses caution about external factors that could hinder India's economic progress.
- ⇒ It points out that India's goal of becoming Viksit Bharat (Developed India) by 2047 will be more challenging compared to China's economic rise, due to the end of a favorable geopolitical environment and peak globalization.

#### Additional Threats

- ⇒ The Survey also identifies threats such as climate change, global warming, and the rise of Artificial Intelligence, which are expected to create significant barriers to sustaining high growth rates.



- Overcoming these challenges will require a coordinated effort between Union and state governments and the private sector.

### Conclusion

- The Economic Survey 2023-24 presents a comprehensive analysis of India's current economic situation and future challenges.
- It outlines several policy measures and strategies to address these issues, emphasizing the need for increased private sector investment, effective job creation strategies, and adaptation to external threats.
- The critical question remains whether these insights and recommendations will translate into actionable policies in the upcoming Union Budget.
- The effectiveness of these measures will be essential in shaping India's economic trajectory.

## A SETBACK FOR THE FARM

### Introduction

- In the fiscal year 2023-24, India's economy showcased robust growth with a GDP increase of 8.2%.
- Projections suggest this growth will continue above 7% into FY25. However, the agriculture sector faced a significant downturn, with growth plummeting from 4.7% in FY23 to just 1.4% in FY24.
- Given this scenario, one would have anticipated substantial measures in the budget to invigorate the agricultural sector.



### R&D in Agriculture Remains Underfunded

- **Return on Investment (RoI) in Agri-R&D:** Investment in agricultural research and development (R&D) has demonstrated a high return, with every additional ₹1,000 crore investment yielding ₹10,000 crore in agri-GDP. Such investments could substantially enhance agricultural growth.
- **Current Budget Allocation:** Despite the evident benefits of R&D, the budget allocated to the Department of Agricultural Research and Education (DARE) stands at ₹99.4 billion. This reflects a mere 0.7% increase from the previous year's allocation of ₹98.8 billion. This increase is insufficient given the rising needs of the sector.
- **Historical Context:** In 2020-21, agriculture R&D expenditure was ₹160 billion, with the public sector contributing 89% and the private sector 11%. However, the Agriculture Research Intensity (ARI), which measures R&D investment as a percentage of agri-GDP, has declined from a peak of 0.75% in 2008-09 to 0.43% in 2022-23. With reduced allocations, this ratio is expected to fall further, impacting food security and inflation control.

### Budget Allocations and Inflation

- **Overall Allocation:** The budget has earmarked ₹1.52 trillion for the agriculture and allied sectors. The Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare received ₹1.22 trillion, marking a 5% increase from the previous year's revised estimate of ₹1.16 trillion. This increase is marginal and insufficient to counter inflationary pressures.
- **Sector-Specific Increases:** The Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, and Dairying saw a substantial 27% increase in allocation, rising from ₹56 billion in FY24 to ₹71 billion in FY25. This rise indicates positive development in this sector but does not extend to the broader agricultural sector.

### Focus on Welfare Schemes and Subsidies

- **Welfare Measures:** A significant portion of support to the agricultural and rural sectors is channeled through welfare measures and subsidies rather than direct agricultural investments. Key components include:
  - ➔ **Food and Fertiliser Subsidies:** These are critical for stabilizing costs but do not directly address the underlying issues in agriculture.
  - ➔ **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA):** Provides income support to rural labor, indirectly benefiting the agricultural sector.

- **Direct Income Support:** Programs like PM-KISAN, credit subsidies, and PM-Fasal Bima Yojana offer direct income support to farmers. However, these measures amount to ₹5.52 trillion for FY25, slightly down from the revised estimate of ₹5.8 trillion for FY24. This represents 11.5% of the overall budget and 21.4% of the central government's net tax revenue.
- **Food Subsidy Trends:** The food subsidy has been reduced to ₹2.05 trillion from ₹2.12 trillion in FY24. Although this decrease may reflect economic constraints, the primary beneficiaries are consumers, not farmers.

### Economic Survey 2023–24 Insights

- **Policy Concerns:** The Economic Survey for 2023–24 highlighted the need for reformed agricultural policies. Current practices have led to increased productivity but have also caused soil degradation, groundwater depletion, and negative environmental impacts, including increased greenhouse gas emissions. Furthermore, these practices have adversely affected public health by promoting diets high in sugar and carbohydrates rather than balanced nutrition.

### Conclusion

- There is an urgent need to transform the agriculture sector into a growth engine that supports both farmers and the environment.
- Effective policy reforms should focus on reorienting subsidies and investments to enhance agricultural productivity, boost farmers' incomes, and create opportunities in food processing and exports.
- This pivotal shift may be deferred to future budgets, but it is essential for sustainable agricultural development and economic resilience.

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## DISABLING THE DISABLED

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### Context

- The Indian Goods and Services Tax (GST) regime imposes a five percent tax on essential mobility aids such as prosthetic limbs, Braille, and wheelchairs.
- Enacted in 2017, this tax unfairly penalizes disabled individuals, contradicting constitutional principles and established judicial precedents against discriminatory taxation.
- This article argues for the repeal of this tax to ensure dignity and equality for disabled citizens.



### Discriminatory Tax Regime

- Revenue policymakers in India have created a tax regime that not only discriminates against disabled individuals but also effectively penalizes them for their disabilities.
- This is particularly surprising given Prime Minister Narendra Modi's expressed concern for the disabled, whom he refers to as "divyang," meaning divine in Hindi.
- A tax regime that penalizes movement and learning—activities for which able-bodied individuals do not pay any tax—fails the test of reasonableness under Article 14 of the Constitution.
- The unfairness of this taxation is evident, even without complex legal principles.

### The Burden on Wheelchair Users

- Consider the case of a wheelchair user who pays five percent GST on a motorized wheelchair costing Rs 1 lakh.
- If the wheelchair's lifespan is 500 kilometers, the tax burden can be calculated as Rs 10 per kilometer.
- An able-bodied person would scoff at the notion of paying the government a tax for every kilometer they walk.
- Similarly, a blind person bears the tax burden of a Braille publisher solely due to their blindness.
- Such a tax on goods used by people with disabilities for movement and learning amounts to explicit and severe discrimination.

### Constitutional Challenges and Judicial Precedents

- The Supreme Court of India has tested the constitutionality of various taxes in landmark cases such as Sakal Papers (1961), Indian Express (1984), and Aashirwad Films (2007).

- ⇒ The judiciary has consistently struck down any tax, cess, or duty that indirectly curtailed a fundamental right. For instance:
  - In Sakal Papers, the Supreme Court struck down government-imposed restrictions on advertising in newspapers, as reduced advertising would lower circulation, impacting the citizen's fundamental right to free speech and expression under Article 19(1)(a).
  - In Indian Express, the Supreme Court struck down the customs duty on newsprint, terming it a burden on the common man for being literate and informed.
  - In Aashirwad Films, the Court struck down a discriminatory tax on non-Telugu movies in Andhra Pradesh, terming it "socially divisive."

### The Way Forward

- ⇒ The tax imposed on disability aids perpetuates negative stereotypes against those who are disabled by penalizing their disability, unlike their able-bodied counterparts.
- ⇒ Such a tax regime should not remain in effect in 2024.
- ⇒ Even under Article 15, which prohibits discrimination on grounds of "place of birth," this tax fails.
- ⇒ The phrase "place of birth" must be interpreted to include individuals with disabilities, thus warranting the tax's repeal.
- ⇒ The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, specifically prohibits discrimination against persons with disabilities under Section 3.
- ⇒ Chief Justice DY Chandrachud, in a landmark 2021 judgment on Article 15 (Lt. Col. Nitisha), emphasized the need to recognize indirect discrimination.

### Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016

- ⇒ The Act was passed to give effect to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), which India ratified in 2007.
- ⇒ It replaces the earlier Persons with Disabilities (Equal Opportunities, Protection of Rights and Full Participation) Act, 1995, which was inadequate in addressing the needs and challenges of persons with disabilities in India.
- ⇒ The Act expands the definition and classification of disabilities, recognizing 21 types of disabilities compared to 7 under the previous law.
- ⇒ It empowers the central government to notify any other category of specified disability and defines persons with disabilities as those with long-term impairments that hinder their full participation in society equally with others.
- ⇒ Repealing discriminatory taxes and implementing supportive measures for the disabled will contribute to a more inclusive and equitable society.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ Although the GST revenue collected from disability aids is minuscule compared to the total, the issue is one of dignity for the disabled.
- ⇒ By taxing them for basic activities such as movement and reading, society sends a message not of empowerment but of inferiority.
- ⇒ Repealing this discriminatory tax would be a significant step toward ensuring equality and dignity for all citizens, regardless of their physical abilities.

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## ECONOMIC SURVEY 2024

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### Introduction

- ⇒ The Economic Survey 2024, released on July 22, 2024, is an essential document for understanding India's economic performance over the past year and the projections for the coming year.
- ⇒ It was presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman and prepared by the Department of Economic Affairs under the guidance of Chief Economic Advisor V. Anantha Nageswaran.
- ⇒ The survey projects a GDP growth rate of 6.5–7% for FY25 and covers key sectors such as agriculture, industry, and services.

### What is the Economic Survey?

- ⇒ The Economic Survey is an annual report prepared and presented by the Government of India before the Union Budget.

- ⇒ It reviews the economic developments over the past fiscal year, evaluates the performance of various sectors, and highlights key policy initiatives and their impacts.
- ⇒ It serves as a critical tool for policymakers, economists, and scholars to understand the economic landscape and make informed decisions.

### Highlights of the Economic Survey 2024

- ⇒ **Release Date:** The Economic Survey 2024 was released on July 22, 2024, a day before the Union Budget 2024-25.
- ⇒ **Presented By:** Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.
- ⇒ **Prepared By:** The Department of Economic Affairs, under the guidance of Chief Economic Advisor V. Anantha Nageswaran.
- ⇒ **GDP Growth:** The survey projects India's GDP growth to be between 6.5-7% for FY25, following an 8.2% growth in FY24.
- ⇒ **Inflation:** The inflation rate has been reduced from 6.7% in FY23 to 5.4% in FY24.
- ⇒ **Current Account Deficit:** The current account deficit improved to 0.7% of GDP in FY24 from 2.0% in FY23.
- ⇒ **Government Spending:** Ensured free food grains to 81.4 crore people and progressively enhanced capital spending.
- ⇒ **Banking Sector:** The RBI maintained a steady policy rate of 6.5%, and credit disbursement by Scheduled Commercial Banks grew by 20.2%.
- ⇒ **Agricultural Credit:** Witnessed double-digit growth.
- ⇒ **External Sector:** Improved logistics performance and growth in service exports.



### Key Chapters and Insights

#### State of the Economy

- ⇒ **Real GDP Growth:** The economy experienced an 8.2% growth in FY24, with real GDP 20% higher than in FY20. Tax collection saw 55% from direct taxes and 45% from indirect taxes.
- ⇒ **Inflation:** Retail inflation fell to 5.4% from 6.7% in FY23, aided by effective administrative and monetary policies.
- ⇒ **Current Account Deficit:** Improved to 0.7% of GDP in FY24 from 2.0% in FY23.

#### Monetary Management and Financial Intermediation

- ⇒ **Banking Sector:** Displayed strong performance with the RBI maintaining a policy rate of 6.5%.
- ⇒ **Credit Growth:** Credit disbursement by Scheduled Commercial Banks grew by 20.2% to ₹164.3 lakh crore.
- ⇒ **Agricultural Credit:** Witnessed significant growth, and industrial credit grew by 8.5%.

#### Prices and Inflation

- ⇒ **Inflation Management:** Retail inflation stayed at 5.4%, aided by price cuts on LPG, petrol, and diesel.
- ⇒ **Food Inflation:** Increased to 7.5% in FY24 due to weather and crop issues.
- ⇒ **Future Projections:** The RBI projects inflation to fall to 4.5% in FY25, and the IMF forecasts 4.6% in 2024 and 4.2% in 2025.

#### External Sector

- ⇒ **Performance:** India's rank in the World Bank's Logistics Performance Index improved to 38th.
- ⇒ **Exports:** Services exports grew by 4.9% to USD 341.1 billion. India remains the top remittance recipient with USD 120 billion in 2023.

#### Medium-Term Outlook

- ⇒ **Policy Focus:** Emphasis on boosting private investment, expanding MSMEs, agriculture, financing green transitions, bridging education-employment gaps, and capacity building of states.
- ⇒ **Growth Strategy:** Requires collaboration between the Union Government, State Governments, and the private sector to achieve 7% plus growth.

#### Climate Change and Energy Transition

- ⇒ **Renewable Energy:** 45.4% of installed electricity generation capacity comes from non-fossil sources.



- ⇒ **Emission Reduction:** Emission intensity of GDP reduced by 33% from 2005 levels.
- ⇒ **Energy Savings:** Annual energy savings of 51 million tonnes of oil equivalent, translating to cost savings of ₹1,94,320 crore and emissions reduction of 306 million tonnes.
- ⇒ **Green Bonds:** Issued ₹16,000 crore in early 2023 and ₹20,000 crore in late 2023.

### Social Sector

- ⇒ **Welfare Expenditure:** Increased at a CAGR of 12.8% from FY18 to FY24.
- ⇒ **Ayushman Bharat:** More than 34.7 crore cards generated, covering 7.37 crore hospital admissions and 22 mental disorders.
- ⇒ **Education:** Initiatives like "Poshan Bhi Padhai Bhi" for preschool education and Vidyanjali benefiting 1.44 crore students.
- ⇒ **Patents:** Nearly one lakh patents granted in FY24, indicating rapid progress in R&D.

### Employment and Skill Development

- ⇒ **Unemployment:** Rate declined to 3.2% overall and 6.7% in urban areas.
- ⇒ **Labour Market:** Growth in EPFO memberships with net payroll additions doubling from 61.1 lakh in FY19 to 131.5 lakh in FY24.
- ⇒ **Gig Workforce:** Expected to expand to 2.35 crore by 2029–30.

### Agriculture and Food Management

- ⇒ **Sector Growth:** Average annual growth rate of 4.18% over the last five years.
- ⇒ **Credit Disbursal:** Total credit to agriculture amounted to ₹22.84 lakh crore.
- ⇒ **Research Investment:** For every rupee invested in agricultural research, the payoff is ₹13.85.

### Industry

- ⇒ **Industrial Growth:** Supported overall economic growth with 9.5% in FY24.
- ⇒ **Pharma Market:** India's pharmaceutical market is the world's third largest at USD 50 billion.
- ⇒ **PLI Schemes:** Attracted over ₹1.28 lakh crore in investment, leading to production/sales of ₹10.8 lakh crore.

### Services

- ⇒ **Sector Contribution:** Services sector contributes 55% to Gross Value Added (GVA).
- ⇒ **Export Growth:** India's share in global digitally delivered services exports increased to 6% in 2023.
- ⇒ **Tourism:** Witnessed 92 lakh foreign tourist arrivals in 2023, a 43.5% YoY increase.

### Infrastructure

- ⇒ **National Highways:** Pace of construction increased from 11.7 km/day in FY14 to 34 km/day by FY24.
- ⇒ **Railways Capex:** Increased by 77% in the past five years. New terminal buildings operationalised at 21 airports.
- ⇒ **Logistics Performance:** India's rank in the World Bank's Logistics Performance Index improved to 22nd.

### Climate Change and India

- ⇒ **Climate Strategy:** Emphasizes a harmonious relationship with nature and mindful consumption through "Mission LIFE."
- ⇒ **Western Approaches:** Criticised for not addressing overconsumption, advocating for a more tailored approach for developing countries.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ The Economic Survey 2024 underscores India's robust economic performance and strategic focus on growth, stability, and sustainability.
- ⇒ The government's policies aim to maintain this positive trajectory while addressing challenges and leveraging opportunities for continued development.
- ⇒ Thoroughly analyzing the Economic Survey is crucial for gaining a deep understanding of India's economic outlook and preparing for the UPSC exams.

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## INDIA'S TEXTILE SECTOR

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### Context

- ⇒ The Global Trade Research Initiative has reported that India's garment exports in 2023–24 stood at \$14.5 billion, a slight decline from \$15 billion in 2013–14.

- ⇒ At the same time, India's garments and textiles imports have risen significantly, reaching almost \$9.2 billion in 2023.
- ⇒ This trend highlights the pressing challenges and opportunities within India's textile sector.



## Overview of the Textile and Apparel Industry in India

### Share in Domestic Trade:

- ⇒ **GDP Contribution:** The textile and apparel industry contributes approximately 2.3% to India's GDP.
- ⇒ **Industrial Production:** It accounts for 13% of the country's industrial production.
- ⇒ **Exports:** The sector makes up 12% of India's total exports.

### Share in Global Trade:

- ⇒ **Market Share:** India holds a 4% share of the global textile and apparel market.
- ⇒ **Export Rankings:** India is the world's third-largest exporter of textiles and apparel, trailing behind China and the European Union.

### Production of Raw Material:

- ⇒ **Cotton and Jute:** India is one of the largest producers of cotton and jute globally.
- ⇒ **Silk Production:** India is the second-largest producer of silk.
- ⇒ **Hand-Woven Fabric:** India produces 95% of the world's hand-woven fabric, showcasing its rich tradition in textiles.

### Employment Generation:

- ⇒ **Direct Employment:** The industry provides direct employment to 45 million people.
- ⇒ **Allied Sectors:** An additional 100 million people are employed in allied sectors, including farming, manufacturing, and retail.

### Major Regions:

- ⇒ **Top Manufacturing States:** Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Haryana, Jharkhand, and Gujarat are the leading states in textile and clothing manufacturing.

## Challenges Faced by the Textile Industry

### Expensive Raw Material:

- ⇒ **Quality Control Orders:** Recent Quality Control Orders for fabric imports have complicated the process, necessitating reliance on more expensive domestic supplies. This makes Indian garments less competitive in global markets.

### Cotton Price Fluctuations:

- ⇒ **Impact on Production Costs:** As a major producer and consumer of cotton, India faces significant production cost impacts due to fluctuating cotton prices.

### Imports from Bangladesh:

- ⇒ **Duty-Free Access:** Bangladesh's duty-free access to the Indian market makes its garments 15-20% cheaper in India.
- ⇒ **Job Losses:** Importing fabric affects domestic jobs in cotton, spinning, knitting, compacting, and processing segments.

### International Competition:

- ⇒ **Labour Costs:** Labour costs in Bangladesh are nearly 30% lower than in India, providing a competitive edge.
- ⇒ **Growth of Competitors:** Between 2013 and 2023, garment exports from Vietnam grew nearly 82% to \$33.4 billion, while Bangladesh's grew nearly 70% to \$43.8 billion.

### Infrastructure Constraints:

- ⇒ **Transportation and Power:** Inadequate transportation systems and power shortages hinder manufacturing efficiency.

⇒ **Outdated Technology:** Many textile units still operate with outdated machinery and technology, reducing productivity and quality.

### Technology Upgradation:

⇒ **Modernization Needs:** There is a pressing need for technological upgrades to enhance productivity and competitiveness.

### Government Initiatives for Growth

#### Amended Technology Upgradation Fund Scheme (ATUFS):

⇒ **Objective:** Launched in 2016, ATUFS aims to generate employment and promote exports through capital investment subsidies for technology upgrades.

#### Scheme for Capacity Building in Textile Sector (SAMARTH):

⇒ **Skill Development:** This scheme addresses the skilled manpower requirement in the textile sector, aligning with the "Skill India" initiative.

#### National Technical Textile Mission:

⇒ **Technical Textiles:** Approved for four years (2020-21 to 2023-24), this mission focuses on developing technical textiles in various sectors, including strategic applications.

#### Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme:

⇒ **MMF and Technical Textiles:** The PLI scheme promotes the production of man-made fibre (MMF) apparel, MMF fabrics, and technical textile products.

#### PM-MITRA:

⇒ **Mega Parks:** This initiative aims to set up seven PM Mega Integrated Textile Region and Apparel (PM MITRA) Parks, fostering employment and modern infrastructure.

#### Scheme for Integrated Textile Parks (SITP):

⇒ **Cluster Development:** SITP promotes the development of textile industry clusters by providing infrastructure support, utilities, and common facilities.

#### Integrated Skill Development Scheme (ISDS):

⇒ **Labor Training:** ISDS focuses on skill development to address labor challenges, enhancing employability and productivity in the textile sector.

### Way Ahead

The textile industry urgently needs comprehensive policy interventions at both the Centre and State levels to revitalize demand and competitiveness. Key strategies include:

#### Policy Intervention:

⇒ **Encouraging Local Purchases:** Promoting the purchase of Indian garments through campaigns similar to 'Make in India' can boost local manufacturing.

⇒ **Streamlining Import Regulations:** Simplifying import procedures for essential raw materials can reduce production costs.

#### Technological Upgradation:

⇒ **Modern Machinery:** Investing in modern machinery and technology is crucial to enhance productivity and quality.

#### Infrastructure Development:

⇒ **Improving Logistics:** Enhancing transportation and power infrastructure can improve efficiency and reduce production delays.

⇒ **Setting Up Textile Parks:** Establishing more integrated textile parks with modern facilities can foster industry growth.

#### Skill Development:

⇒ **Training Programs:** Expanding skill development programs can enhance labor productivity and meet the industry's evolving needs.

#### International Market Strategy:

⇒ **Competitive Pricing:** Reducing the cost difference with competitors like Bangladesh through subsidies and incentives.

⇒ **Exploring New Markets:** Diversifying export markets to reduce dependency on traditional markets.

## Conclusion

- By addressing these challenges and leveraging government initiatives, India's textile sector can enhance its global competitiveness and contribute significantly to the economy.
- This holistic approach will ensure sustainable growth, employment generation, and increased exports, positioning India as a global leader in the textile industry.

## INSOLVENCY & BANKRUPTCY CODE (IBC) IN INDIA

### Context

- The Finance Minister has proposed to set up an integrated technology platform to improve the outcomes under the Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code (IBC).
- This initiative aims to streamline and enhance the efficiency of the insolvency resolution process in India.

### About

- **Additional Tribunals:** The Union Minister proposed the establishment of additional tribunals, some of which will decide cases exclusively under the Companies Act.
- **Debt Recovery Reforms:** Steps to reform and strengthen debt recovery tribunals are also proposed to speed up the recovery process.



### Insolvency

- **Economic Significance:** In a growing economy like India, maintaining a healthy credit flow and generating new capital is essential. Insolvent companies or businesses begin to default on their loans, making it crucial for banks or creditors to recover as much as possible quickly.
- **Recovery Mechanisms:** The business can either restart with new owners if viable or have its assets liquidated in a timely manner to minimize value degeneration and inject fresh credit into the system.

### Need for the IBC

- **Historical Context:** Before the IBC, India faced mounting Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) and debt defaults. Older loan recovery mechanisms, such as the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act (SARFAESI), Lok Adalats, and Debt Recovery Tribunals, were underperforming.
- **Introduction of IBC:** The IBC was introduced in 2016 to overhaul the corporate distress resolution regime and consolidate previously available laws into a time-bound mechanism. Under the IBC, insolvency can result in either resolution or liquidation, with efforts made to resolve the insolvency through restructuring or new ownership plans.

### Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC)

- **Objective:** The primary objective is to promote entrepreneurship, ensure the availability of credit, and balance the interests of all stakeholders by providing a time-bound insolvency resolution process.
- **Applicability:** The IBC applies to companies, limited liability partnerships (LLPs), partnership firms, and individuals, providing a framework for both corporate and personal insolvency.

### Modus Operandi

- **Initiation of CIRP:** When a corporate debtor (CD) defaults on loan repayment, either the creditor or the debtor can apply for the initiation of a Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP) under Section 6 of the IBC, with a minimum default amount of ₹1 crore.
- **Adjudicating Authority:** Applications are made to the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), the designated adjudicating authority for corporate insolvency resolution processes.

### Insolvency Resolution Process (IRP)

- **Licensed Professionals:** The IBC mandates a structured insolvency resolution process overseen by licensed insolvency professionals (IPs) who manage the affairs of the debtor during the process.
- **Time-bound Process:** Strict timelines are mandated to ensure timely resolution and prevent undue delays.

### Liquidation

- ⇒ If a resolution plan is not approved or implemented within the specified time frame, the corporate debtor may be liquidated to distribute the proceeds to creditors.

### Cross-border Insolvency

- ⇒ The IBC includes provisions for dealing with cross-border insolvency through cooperation and reciprocal arrangements with other countries.

### Challenges

- ⇒ **Operational Delays:** Strict timelines are often difficult to adhere to due to legal complexities, coordination issues among stakeholders, and judicial backlog.
- ⇒ **Lack of Infrastructure:** Inadequate infrastructure, including a shortage of insolvency professionals (IPs) and trained personnel, hampers effective handling of cases.
- ⇒ **Creditor Recovery:** Creditors often face significant losses (haircuts) during the resolution process, contrary to the IBC's aim of maximizing asset value.

### Way Ahead

- ⇒ **Parliamentary Recommendations:** The Parliamentary Standing Committee suggested that the NCLT should not take more than 30 days after filing to admit insolvency applications and transfer control to a resolution process. It also recommended recruiting in advance based on the projected number of cases due to more than 50% vacancy in the Tribunal compared to the sanctioned strength.
- ⇒ **Continuous Reforms:** Since its enactment, the IBC has undergone amendments to address practical challenges. Continuous policy reforms and amendments are essential to adapt to evolving economic and legal landscapes.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ The Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) has significantly reformed India's approach to resolving corporate distress.
- ⇒ While it has made substantial progress in improving the efficiency of insolvency resolution, continuous efforts to address challenges and enhance the system's robustness are crucial for maintaining a healthy economic environment.

## THE BUDGET'S DILEMMA

### Introduction

- ⇒ The political context of the upcoming Union budget is markedly different from the previous decade.
- ⇒ The ruling party's interpretation of the fractured election verdict and its perceived chances in upcoming state elections will likely influence the budget's focus.

### Doubling Down on Welfarist Measures

- ⇒ **State Approaches:** States like Maharashtra and Haryana are implementing measures such as monthly cash transfers to women, free bus rides, and filling government vacancies.
- ⇒ **Revenue Relief:** The government's revenue constraints have eased with the RBI transferring a larger-than-expected surplus.
- ⇒ **Utilization of Surplus:** How the surplus is utilized—whether for welfare, capital spending, or reducing the fiscal deficit—will reveal the government's stance on the political landscape and economic condition.



### The Growth Numbers Hide Big Questions

- ⇒ **Growth Concerns:** The 8% growth rate raises questions about robustness and distribution.
- ⇒ **Government Spending:** The Centre's fiscal deficit at 5.6% of GDP highlights that government spending is a key economic driver.
- ⇒ **Employment Issues:** An increase in self-employment, often involving one-man shops or unpaid household work, signals a weak labor market.
- ⇒ **Youth Challenges:** Stories of youth engaging in day trading and night gaming reflect underemployment and the impact of high food inflation.

### Limits of Welfarism in Attracting Votes

- ⇒ **Election Results:** The recent election results question the effectiveness of welfarism in swaying voters.
- ⇒ **Structural Issues:** Governments face the challenge of structural transformation, inadequate job creation, and deepening labor market duality.

### Stagnant Manufacturing Sector Despite PLI Scheme

- ⇒ **Approach:** The government's strategy to boost manufacturing through tariffs and the PLI scheme has had limited success beyond the mobile phone sector.
- ⇒ **Manufacturing Share:** The sector's share of GDP has stagnated at around 17% for two decades.
- ⇒ **Trade Policy:** A contradictory approach of raising tariffs while seeking to join global supply chains and trade deals requires reevaluation.

### Subdued Private Investment

- ⇒ **Corporate Investment:** Despite fiscal incentives, corporate investments remain subdued.
- ⇒ **National Champions:** Emphasis on national champions may not significantly impact investments or job creation.
- ⇒ **Broader Investment Base:** A broader base of companies is needed to drive the capital expenditure cycle.
- ⇒ **Current Sentiment:** Despite healthy bank and corporate balance sheets, caution prevails over optimism in the private sector.

### Current Account Surplus and Investment Implications

- ⇒ **Surplus Misinterpretation:** The current account surplus in the last financial quarter is not ideal for a capital-deficit country like India, indicating that domestic savings exceeded investment.

### Diverse Growth Stories in the Economy

- ⇒ **Consumption Demand:** Weak labor markets and subdued investments imply overall consumption demand remains weak.
- ⇒ **Affluent Spending:** Higher spending by affluent segments contrasts with muted FMCG growth, low two-wheeler sales, and a collapse in entry-level car markets.
- ⇒ **Market Segmentation:** High-end car sales and premium real estate are thriving, reflecting a splintered domestic market.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ The upcoming Union budget presents a challenge for the Modi government.
- ⇒ Coalition partners will demand their share, and the coalition government may avoid radical reforms.
- ⇒ Election results will drive introspection on economic policies—whether to focus on more welfarism to attract votes or to prioritize job creation.
- ⇒ Only time will reveal the government's lessons from the election outcomes.

## WHAT IS A CLIMATE FINANCE TAXONOMY?

### Introduction

- ⇒ On July 23, 2024, Nirmala Sitharaman, India's Finance Minister, introduced the Union Budget, emphasizing the government's initiative to develop a "climate finance taxonomy."
- ⇒ This strategic move aims to boost funding for climate adaptation and mitigation, aiding India in meeting its climate commitments and transitioning to a greener economy.
- ⇒ A climate finance taxonomy is a systematic framework that categorizes economic sectors considered environmentally sustainable investments.
- ⇒ It provides crucial guidance for investors and banks, directing substantial funds toward solutions that address climate change challenges.



### Significance of Taxonomy

- ⇒ As climate change effects intensify and global temperatures rise, transitioning to a net-zero economy becomes critical.

- ⇒ Taxonomies serve as essential tools for assessing whether economic activities align with credible, scientifically-based transition paths.
- ⇒ They foster the deployment of climate capital and mitigate greenwashing risks, ensuring genuine environmental benefits.

### Potential for Green Investments in India

Between 2018 and 2030, India is projected to have a climate-smart investment opportunity worth approximately \$3.1 trillion. Key areas of investment include:

- ⇒ **Electric Vehicles (EVs):** Estimated at \$667 billion, with the aim of making all new vehicles electric by 2030.
- ⇒ **Renewable Energy:** Valued at \$403.7 billion, indicating significant growth in sustainable energy sources.

### Global Context – Existing Taxonomies

- ⇒ Several countries have developed or are developing their climate finance taxonomies.
- ⇒ Nations like South Africa, South Korea, Thailand, and European Union members have established frameworks to encourage environmentally responsible investments.
- ⇒ These taxonomies play a pivotal role in directing financial flows towards sustainable economic activities.

### India's Climate Commitments

India has set ambitious climate targets, including:

- ⇒ Achieving a net-zero economy by 2070.
- ⇒ Reducing the emissions intensity of GDP by 45% by 2030 compared to 2005 levels.
- ⇒ Ensuring that 50% of India's electric power capacity comes from non-fossil sources by 2030.
- ⇒ These commitments underscore the urgency and importance of the proposed climate finance taxonomy, which aims to facilitate funding and investments as part of India's transition to a greener economy.

### About Green Investments

- ⇒ Green investments, also known as environmentally sustainable investments, focus on projects promoting eco-friendly practices.
- ⇒ Green bonds, first introduced in 2007, fund conservation and renewable energy projects.
- ⇒ The global market for green investments is projected to exceed \$50 trillion by 2025.
- ⇒ Green investments can reduce carbon footprints and offer potential long-term profitability.
- ⇒ However, the term "greenwashing" refers to false sustainability claims, a practice countered by initiatives like the European Union's Green Deal, which aims for carbon neutrality by 2050.
- ⇒ Many institutions are also diversifying away from fossil fuels to support sustainable growth.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ The introduction of a climate finance taxonomy in India marks a significant step towards enhancing climate adaptation and mitigation funding.
- ⇒ This framework will guide investors and financial institutions in channeling investments into sustainable projects, aiding India in its quest to meet ambitious climate goals.
- ⇒ As global climate change challenges persist, such taxonomies are essential for ensuring genuine environmental benefits and promoting responsible investments.

## SOCIETY & SOCIAL ISSUES

### FACTORY ACCIDENTS: A POINTER TO RUSTY INSPECTION REFORM

#### Context

- ⇒ India has witnessed recurring industrial accidents due to inadequate safety measures, poor inspection rates, and regulatory failures.
- ⇒ This article discusses the urgent need for reforms to strengthen industrial safety governance and ensure accountability.

#### Background of Industrial Accidents

- ⇒ A recent explosion in a chemical factory in Dombivli MIDC resulted in fatalities and injuries, highlighting persistent safety lapses.
- ⇒ Similar incidents in 2016, 2018, 2020, and 2023 indicate enduring risks within the industrial sector.

### Inadequate Relocation Efforts

- In 2022, a decision was made to relocate 156 chemical factories from Dombivli MIDC to Patalganga, but no action has been taken, exacerbating safety risks.
- The unregistered status of the factory's boiler underscores significant regulatory failures and non-compliance with safety standards.

### Poor Inspection Rates and Shortages

Maharashtra's 2021 inspection rates revealed critical deficiencies:

- Only 23.89% of hazardous factories and 8.04% of registered factories were inspected.
- A shortage of personnel was evident, with only 39.34% of sanctioned officers appointed, leading to workload issues and reduced oversight.

### Prosecution and Deterrence Failures

- Low prosecution rates in Maharashtra (13.84%), Gujarat (6.95%), and Tamil Nadu (14.45%) indicate ineffective enforcement and diminished deterrent effects.
- Critics, including industry representatives, denounce the inspection system as "inspector-raj," alleging harassment and corruption, impacting its credibility.

### Reforms and Challenges in the Inspection System

- Reforms like self-certification and third-party inspections have been criticized for violating International Labour Organization (ILO) standards.
- The ILO Labour Inspection Convention (081) stresses the need for qualified, independent inspectors with unrestricted access to ensure compliance with labour laws.

### Need for Strengthened Governance and Accountability

- Robust reforms are needed to enhance the inspection system's efficiency and ethical standards.
- Governments must prioritize safety over deregulation and ensure comprehensive oversight to prevent industrial disasters.

### Enforcement and Accountability

#### Proposals include:

- Penalties for state failures in industrial governance, emphasizing accountability beyond compensatory measures.
- Addressing the recurring nature of industrial disasters highlights systemic shortcomings and the urgency for meaningful regulatory reforms.

### Key Recommendations

- **Immediate Action on Relocation:** Expedite the relocation of hazardous factories to safer zones and ensure compliance with safety standards.
- **Increase Inspection Frequency and Coverage:** Enhance the number and frequency of inspections, particularly for hazardous industries.
- **Address Personnel Shortages:** Fill sanctioned officer positions to ensure adequate oversight and reduce inspector workloads.
- **Strengthen Enforcement Mechanisms:** Increase prosecution rates and enforce stricter penalties for safety violations.
- **Adopt International Standards:** Align inspection practices with ILO standards to ensure comprehensive and independent oversight.
- **Enhance Transparency and Accountability:** Implement measures to reduce corruption and harassment within the inspection system, ensuring credible and transparent governance.

### Conclusion

- Ensuring a safe working environment requires proactive governance and adherence to international standards rather than lenient regulatory practices.
- Sustainable reforms must prioritize safety, strengthen enforcement mechanisms, and empower qualified inspectors to uphold labour laws effectively.





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## MICROSCHOOLS: A PERSONALIZED APPROACH TO EDUCATION

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### Introduction

- Microschools have become increasingly popular in the United States and the United Kingdom, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- These small private schools offer a more personalized educational experience by maintaining smaller class sizes compared to traditional schools.
- This educational model allows for individualized attention and a tailored approach to student learning.



### Educational Structure and Curriculum

- Typically, students in microschools are registered as homeschoolers within their states. Microschools operate most days of the week, with full-time teachers delivering structured lessons.
- They sometimes use assessments to monitor student progress.
- The educational approach is often flexible, focusing on individual student needs and incorporating various educational philosophies.

### Funding Sources

- According to the National Microschooling Center, the majority of microschool funding (63%) comes from tuition fees paid by parents.
- Additionally, 32% of funding is sourced from state-funded school choice programs, which support diverse educational initiatives.

### Start-Up and Operation

- Microschools are often initiated by educators seeking to provide an alternative to traditional schooling.
- These schools enjoy significant autonomy in designing their curricula, which may include unique perspectives on subjects such as the intersection of religion with science and history.
- It's important to note that microschools are not typically required to conduct safety or background checks on their staff.
- This flexibility allows microschools to blend elements of traditional schooling and homeschooling to meet individual student needs, though it raises concerns about oversight and accountability.

### Characteristics

- Microschools usually enroll between 100 and 150 students, with class sizes ranging from 10 to 15 students.
- They employ multi-age groupings and focus on an emergent curriculum, allowing students to learn at their own pace rather than following a rigid grade-level progression.
- Instead of standard textbooks, microschools often use projects, discussions, and engaging activities.
- Many have maker spaces to foster creativity and demonstrate practical applications of theoretical concepts.

### Learning Environment

- Microschools utilize shared classrooms where students typically meet twice a week for collaborative learning.
- They often implement a flipped classroom model, where students watch instructional videos at home and engage in hands-on group work in class.
- Digital tools are integral to the learning process, facilitating instruction, assessment, and creative activities.
- By combining elements of homeschooling and traditional schooling, microschools offer flexible, personalized learning environments tailored to the needs of families seeking individualized educational outcomes for their children.

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## THE HATHRAS QUESTIONS: A PREVENTABLE TRAGEDY

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### Introduction

- The tragic stampede in Hathras on July 2, which resulted in the loss of 121 lives, predominantly women and children, was an avoidable disaster.

- ⇒ The incident exposes significant failures that warrant thorough examination.
- ⇒ Preliminary reports suggest that the district administration bears considerable responsibility for the catastrophe.

### How the Event Transpired

- ⇒ The chain of events leading to the tragedy began with a seemingly harmless request for permission from the district authorities.
- ⇒ The organizers anticipated around 80,000 devotees for a samagam (congregation of devotees).
- ⇒ The officials approved this request as a routine procedure, seemingly unaware or dismissive of the likelihood that the crowd could swell far beyond the sanctioned number.
- ⇒ Consequently, over three times the expected number of devotees of Bhole Baba gathered at the event site, setting the stage for disaster.



### Who is the Infamous Baba?

- ⇒ The central figure in this event, Bhole Baba, is a former UP police constable, Suraj Pal Singh.
- ⇒ With a history of misdemeanors in his official capacity, Singh was suspended and later opted for voluntary retirement while out on bail.
- ⇒ He then reinvented himself as a godman, leveraging a business model that allegedly exploited people vulnerable to misinformation.
- ⇒ His followers were led to believe in the curative powers of his photographs, which significantly contributed to his large following.

### The Crowd Management at the Event

- ⇒ The management of such a large crowd required meticulous planning and execution, which was glaringly absent.
- ⇒ The massive influx of 2,50,000 people would have taken about seven to eight hours, especially given the venue's proximity to a national highway.
- ⇒ It is plausible that traffic jams caused by the devotees' arrival would have been reported to the city and district control rooms.
- ⇒ However, there was no evident contingency plan.
- ⇒ Proper crowd management measures, including CCTVs, well-defined exit and entry points, duty assignments, and medical aid preparedness, were conspicuously missing.

### The Aftermath of the Incident

- ⇒ Post-mortem reports revealed that the majority of deaths were due to broken rib cages, crushing, asphyxia, and/or hemorrhage.
- ⇒ Following the tragedy, a First Information Report (FIR) was lodged against the sevadar volunteers, but Bhole Baba himself has not been named in the FIR.
- ⇒ A Special Investigation Team (SIT) has been formed to investigate the case.
- ⇒ It is crucial that this SIT operates transparently and expedites its report submission.

### Way Forward

- ⇒ Bhole Baba and similar figures can be prosecuted under the Drugs and Magic Remedies (Objectionable Advertisements) Act, 1954.
- ⇒ The ill-gotten wealth amassed by such individuals should be reclaimed by the state.
- ⇒ Section 14(1) of The Uttar Pradesh Gangsters and Anti-Social Activities (Prevention) Act, 1986, provides the legal framework to attach such properties after due scrutiny.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ The Hathras stampede highlights the dire consequences of neglecting established protocols for crowd management.
- ⇒ There are comprehensive guidelines and scholarly studies on handling large gatherings effectively.
- ⇒ The Hathras incident exemplifies the disastrous outcomes of failing to implement these best practices.
- ⇒ It is imperative that the lessons from this tragedy lead to stricter adherence to crowd management protocols and accountability for those responsible.

## THE ROT IN INDIA'S HIGHER EDUCATION SYSTEM

### Context

- The introduction of the National Testing Agency (NTA)-run Common University Entrance Test (CUET) in 2022-23 led to significant delays in university admissions across India, including at institutions like Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), which historically conducted its own entrance exams.
- This shift highlighted tensions between standardized testing mandates and university governance autonomy.



### Introduction

- The 2022-23 academic year marked a significant shift in India's higher education admission processes with the introduction of the CUET by the NTA.
- This new standardized testing regime caused widespread delays and administrative challenges, particularly impacting the traditionally autonomous Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU).
- The shift from conventional methods to CUET has sparked controversies and raised concerns about the balance between standardization and university autonomy.

### Delays and Administrative Challenges

- The implementation of the CUET led to significant delays in PhD admissions, pushing the academic calendar by eight months.
- JNU, known for its rigorous entrance exams, was particularly affected.
- The abrupt cancellation of the CUET for PhD admissions in 2022-23 left universities uncertain and unprepared, exacerbating the delays and creating administrative chaos.

### Regulatory Changes and University Autonomy

- The University Grants Commission (UGC) Regulations, 2022, reinstated the rights of universities to conduct their own PhD entrance exams.
- However, several central universities, including JNU, continued to use the NTA for PhD admissions.
- This decision, driven by executive mandates, compromised the academic autonomy of these institutions, despite opposition from faculty and students.

### Role of NTA and Executive Decisions

- The NTA's influence over university admissions extended through executive directives, overriding traditional university practices.
- JNU, renowned for its fair and rigorous entrance exams, faced pressure to adopt the standardized CUET format.
- This shift raised questions about the impact of executive decisions on academic integrity and university governance.

### Controversies and Lack of Transparency

- The Ministry of Education and UGC presented contradictory stances on NTA's involvement in university admissions, creating confusion.
- The lack of documented contracts or agreements between JNU and the NTA further fueled controversy, raising concerns about the transparency and accountability of the decision-making processes.

### Impact on Academic Calendar and Governance

- The control exerted by the NTA over university academic calendars disrupted traditional admission timelines, affecting the overall governance of higher education institutions.
- The compliance of vice-chancellors with NTA directives sparked concerns about preserving the autonomy and academic standards of universities.

### Call for Reform and Restoration of Autonomy

- Academic bodies and stakeholders are calling for universities to reclaim their autonomy in admissions, particularly for PhD programs.

- ⇒ There is a pressing need for transparency in decision-making processes to restore confidence among students and faculty in the governance of higher education institutions.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ The challenges posed by the introduction of the NTA-run CUET highlight the need for reforms in India's higher education system.
- ⇒ It is crucial to clarify regulatory frameworks and ensure adherence to statutory university processes.
- ⇒ Restoring autonomy in admissions processes, especially for PhD programs, is essential for maintaining the academic standards and integrity of Indian higher education institutions.
- ⇒ Reforms should focus on balancing standardized testing with the preservation of university governance autonomy to promote a more effective and equitable education system.

## WALK THE TALK

### Introduction

- ⇒ Manipur, a state in Northeast India, has recently been plagued by unrest and violent protests, marking the first significant direct clashes between the Kuki-Zomi tribals and the Meiteis in three decades.
- ⇒ The ongoing turmoil poses severe challenges to regional security, with potential repercussions that could destabilize the fragile peace and influence the broader geopolitical landscape of the region.

### Underlying Causes of Unrest in Manipur

#### External Factors:

- ⇒ **Myanmar Crisis:** The military coup in Myanmar in 2021 triggered unrest that led to a steady influx of Burmese refugees into Manipur, many of whom share ethnic ties with the Kuki tribe. This has complicated the ethnic balance in the state.
- ⇒ **Cross-Border Crime and Drug Trafficking:** Manipur's proximity to the Golden Triangle and its porous borders make it susceptible to drug trafficking and other cross-border criminal activities, exacerbating the region's instability.

#### Internal Factors:

- ⇒ **Demand for Scheduled Tribe Status:** A recent directive by the Manipur High Court to recommend the Meiteis for Scheduled Tribe status has sparked protests from tribal groups, who fear losing their reservation benefits.
- ⇒ **Land Disputes:** The Meitei community, which primarily resides in the densely populated Imphal Valley, occupies only about a tenth of the state's land. This uneven distribution has intensified competition for land and resources between the Meiteis and hill tribes.
- ⇒ **Historical Tensions:** Long-standing conflicts between hill tribes and the Meiteis over political representation, resources, and cultural recognition have fueled the current unrest.
- ⇒ **Economic Disparity:** The region's economic underdevelopment has heightened inter-ethnic tensions as communities vie for limited resources and opportunities.
- ⇒ **Governance Issues:** The government's response, including the suspension of mobile internet and the application of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA), has not effectively addressed the root causes of the unrest and has sometimes aggravated the situation.

### Consequences of the Unrest

- ⇒ **Rise in Cross-Border Criminal Activities:** The ongoing unrest could lead to increased smuggling, drug trafficking, and illegal arms trading.
- ⇒ **Expansion of Militant Influence:** Prolonged instability might provide an opportunity for militant groups to gain influence and recruit more members, exacerbating extremist activities.
- ⇒ **Strained International Relations:** The unrest could impact India's relations with neighboring countries like Myanmar, Bangladesh, and China, complicating diplomatic efforts in the region.
- ⇒ **Economic Setbacks:** Continuous unrest could deter investment and impede economic development, leading to higher unemployment and poverty, which could further fuel instability.



- ⇒ **Impact on India's Act East Policy:** The instability could hamper India's efforts to strengthen economic and strategic ties with Southeast Asia through its Act East Policy.
- ⇒ **Human Rights Concerns:** Prolonged unrest could lead to human rights violations, drawing international criticism and potentially damaging India's reputation as an advocate for human rights and democracy.

### Government Initiatives

- ⇒ **Engaging in Political Dialogue:** The government has initiated discussions with various ethnic groups to address grievances and build trust for lasting peace.
- ⇒ **Withdrawal from Suspension of Operations (SoO):** The Manipur government has withdrawn from the SoO arrangement with certain militant groups amid allegations of instigating unrest among forest encroachers.
- ⇒ **Development Programs:** Efforts to improve infrastructure, education, and healthcare in Manipur include:
  - The Northeast Special Infrastructure Development Scheme (NESIDS)
  - The India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral Highway project
  - Collaborations with the National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) for youth training and employment
- ⇒ **Anti-Drug Trafficking Efforts:** The government has intensified efforts to combat drug trafficking, including destroying illegal poppy plantations to reduce criminal influence and enhance security.

### Proposed Measures for Improvement

- ⇒ **Inclusive Dialogue:** Engage all ethnic groups and stakeholders in meaningful dialogue to address their concerns and foster mutual understanding.
- ⇒ **Strengthening Governance:** Address corruption and inefficiency, and bolster local administration to improve governance.
- ⇒ **Economic Investment:** Focus on developing infrastructure, education, and job creation to reduce poverty and economic disparities.
- ⇒ **Reviewing AFSPA:** Consider alternative security measures that protect human rights while maintaining law and order.
- ⇒ **International Cooperation:** Work closely with neighboring countries, especially Myanmar, to manage cross-border issues such as smuggling, infiltration, and the refugee crisis.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ To achieve lasting peace and progress in Manipur, it is essential to prioritize dialogue, economic empowerment, good governance, security, cultural harmony, and international cooperation.
- ⇒ Addressing the multifaceted challenges of the region requires a concerted effort from both the government and local communities, paving the way for a stable and prosperous future.

## DEBATE ON MENSTRUAL LEAVE IN INDIAN WORKPLACES

### Context

- ⇒ The proposal to mandate menstrual leave in workplaces, currently under consideration by the Supreme Court, raises significant debates regarding its potential impact on women's participation in the workforce.
- ⇒ While advocating for women's health, the policy also invites concerns about reinforcing stereotypes and operational challenges for businesses.

### Understanding Menstrual Leave

- ⇒ Menstrual leave allows female employees to take time off during their menstrual cycle to manage discomfort or health issues associated with menstruation.
- ⇒ Proponents argue it's essential for workplace inclusivity and addressing gender-specific health needs.

### Gender Gap Considerations

- ⇒ **Global Gender Gap:** The widening global gender gap, as highlighted by the World Economic Forum, underscores ongoing challenges in achieving gender parity.



- ⇒ **Labour Force Dynamics:** Women's lower participation in the workforce and leadership roles persist, influencing economic disparities.
- ⇒ **Impact on Discrimination:** Concerns arise that mandating menstrual leave could inadvertently reinforce stereotypes about women's productivity and commitment to work.

### Sociocultural Context in India

- ⇒ **Social Stigma:** Recognizing menstrual leave formally may perpetuate existing social taboos and reinforce notions of impurity associated with menstruation.
- ⇒ **Access to Hygiene Products:** A significant portion of Indian women, particularly from low-income backgrounds, face challenges in accessing affordable and hygienic menstrual products.

### Comparative Analysis with Japan

- ⇒ **Japanese Experience:** Japan offers unpaid menstrual leave but faces low uptake due to stigma and privacy concerns, revealing cultural barriers despite policy provision.
- ⇒ **Gender Equality Challenges:** Japan's ranking in gender equality indices highlights broader societal challenges in workplace equity.

### International Precedents

- ⇒ **Historical Practices:** Soviet Russia's paid menstrual leave and sporadic provisions in China and Indonesia demonstrate varied approaches globally.
- ⇒ **Implementation Challenges:** Concerns about practicality and potential discrimination in implementing such policies are significant, particularly in diverse economic contexts.

### Implementation Challenges and Criticisms

- ⇒ **Equality Concerns:** Critics argue that formalizing menstrual leave may inadvertently reinforce gender stereotypes and complicate efforts towards workplace equality.
- ⇒ **Operational Feasibility:** Small and medium-sized enterprises may face challenges in accommodating additional leave policies, impacting business operations.
- ⇒ **Privacy and Discrimination:** Issues of privacy and potential discrimination based on menstrual status remain contentious in workplace policy discussions.

### Moving Forward

- ⇒ **Balancing Health and Equality:** Emphasizing individual health needs while navigating workplace dynamics is crucial for fostering inclusive work environments.
- ⇒ **Policy Recommendations:** Instead of mandatory menstrual leave, advocating for flexible workplace policies that accommodate diverse health needs on an individual basis could promote inclusivity without formalizing potentially stigmatizing practices.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ In conclusion, while menstrual leave policies aim to address important health concerns, their implementation requires careful consideration of cultural, social, and economic contexts to avoid unintended consequences on gender equality and workplace dynamics.
- ⇒ Flexibility and inclusivity remain paramount in crafting effective workplace policies that support all employees' well-being.

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## 'SAHKAR SE SAMRIDDHI' PROGRAM AND THE EVOLUTION OF COOPERATIVES IN INDIA

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### Introduction:

- ⇒ On the occasion of the 102nd International Day of Cooperatives, the Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation addressed the 'Sahkar se Samriddhi' (Prosperity through Cooperation) program in Gujarat.
- ⇒ Celebrated annually on July 6th, this day highlights the importance of cooperatives in promoting economic and social development.
- ⇒ The 2024 theme, "Cooperatives Building a Better Future for All," aligns with the UN Summit of the Future's theme, "Multilateral solutions for a better tomorrow."



- ⇒ This alignment underscores the global recognition of cooperatives as vital instruments for sustainable development and inclusive growth.

### Evolution of Cooperatives in India:

#### About Cooperatives:

- ⇒ Cooperatives are enterprises owned, controlled, and run by their members to meet their common economic, social, and cultural needs.
- ⇒ They operate on principles of mutual assistance, democratic governance, and equitable distribution of benefits.
- ⇒ In India, cooperatives have played a crucial role in various sectors, including agriculture, credit, dairy, housing, and fisheries.
- ⇒ With over 800,000 cooperatives, India has one of the largest cooperative networks in the world, significantly contributing to the nation's economic and social fabric.

#### Pre-Independence Era:

##### First Cooperative Act:

- ⇒ The Indian Famine Commission of 1901 led to the enactment of the Cooperative Credit Societies Act in 1904, marking the beginning of the cooperative movement in India.
- ⇒ This was followed by the Cooperative Societies Act, 1912, which provided a legal framework for the registration and operation of cooperatives.

##### Maclagan Committee:

- ⇒ In 1915, the Maclagan Committee, headed by Sir Edward Maclagan, was established to assess the cooperative movement's economic and financial viability.
- ⇒ The committee's recommendations helped shape the future trajectory of cooperatives in India.

##### Montague-Chelmsford Reforms (1919):

- ⇒ The Montague-Chelmsford Reforms made cooperation a provincial subject, giving state governments the authority to promote and regulate cooperatives.
- ⇒ This decentralization provided a significant boost to the cooperative movement.

##### Post-Economic Depression (1929):

- ⇒ The economic depression led to the formation of various committees in regions such as Madras, Bombay, Travancore, Mysore, Gwalior, and Punjab.
- ⇒ These committees examined ways to restructure cooperative societies to better serve their members.

##### Gandhian Influence:

- ⇒ Mahatma Gandhi's socialist philosophy emphasized the importance of cooperation for creating a decentralized, self-reliant society.
- ⇒ Gandhi established the 'Phoenix Settlement' and Tolstoy Farm in South Africa as cooperative communities, advocating for cooperation as a means of empowering individuals and promoting social justice.

#### Post-Independence Era:

##### First Five-Year Plan (1951-56):

- ⇒ The plan highlighted the promotion of cooperatives as integral to comprehensive community development, emphasizing their role in rural development and poverty alleviation.

##### Multi-State Co-operative Societies Act, 2002:

- ⇒ This Act provided a legal framework for the formation and functioning of multi-state cooperatives, allowing them to operate across state boundaries and serve a larger membership base.

##### 97th Constitutional Amendment (2011):

- ⇒ The amendment recognized the right to form cooperatives as a fundamental right under Article 19, introduced a Directive Principle of State Policy on Cooperative Societies (Article 43-B), and added Part IX-B to the Constitution.
- ⇒ It empowered Parliament and state legislatures to enact laws governing cooperative societies, enhancing their autonomy and democratic functioning.

##### Union Ministry of Cooperation (2021):

- ⇒ The establishment of this ministry underscored the government's commitment to strengthening the cooperative sector.

- ⇒ The ministry assumed responsibility for cooperative affairs, previously managed by the Ministry of Agriculture, and aimed to provide focused support and policy direction.

### Impact of Cooperatives:

#### Empowering Marginalised Communities:

- ⇒ Cooperatives like the Amul Dairy Cooperative in Gujarat empower rural communities by providing fair prices for milk and fostering economic independence.
- ⇒ With over 3.6 million milk producers, many from small and marginal farms, Amul exemplifies the transformative impact of cooperatives on rural livelihoods.

#### Boosting Agricultural Productivity:

- ⇒ The Indian Farmers Fertiliser Cooperative Limited (IFFCO) is the world's largest fertilizer producer, providing essential agricultural inputs like fertilizers, seeds, and credit at competitive prices.
- ⇒ This support enhances farm productivity and incomes.

#### Facilitating Access to Essential Services:

- ⇒ The Kerala State Milk Marketing Federation (Milma) ensures market access for milk producers and supplies affordable dairy products to consumers.
- ⇒ This dual benefit enhances the livelihoods of producers and meets consumer needs.

#### Promoting Inclusive Growth and Job Creation:

- ⇒ Sugar cooperatives in Maharashtra create significant employment opportunities, with a NITI Aayog report highlighting their contribution to over 5 lakh jobs.
- ⇒ This employment generation fosters rural development and economic growth.

### Government Initiatives:

#### Umbrella Organization for UCBS:

- ⇒ The RBI's approval of the National Federation of Urban Co-operative Banks and Credit Societies Ltd. (NAFCUB) for forming an Umbrella Organization (UO) aims to provide IT infrastructure and operational support to around 1,500 urban cooperative banks, enhancing their efficiency and sustainability.

#### Ensuring Transparency and Sustainability:

- ⇒ Model Bye-Laws for Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS) aim to make them multipurpose, multidimensional, and transparent entities.
- ⇒ The government also plans the world's largest decentralized grain storage system in the cooperative sector to improve food security.

#### Other Initiatives:

- ⇒ The government has established a National Cooperative Database for authentic and updated data.
- ⇒ The National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) has issued ₹2000 crore bonds for cooperative welfare, and cooperatives are now included as 'buyers' on the Government e-Marketplace (GeM) portal.
- ⇒ The establishment of the National Cooperative Organic Limited (NCOL) promotes organic farming and ensures fair pricing, with initiatives like Bharat Organic Atta further supporting this cause.

### Challenges Faced by Cooperatives:

#### Governance Issues:

- ⇒ Cooperatives often struggle with a lack of transparency, accountability, and democratic decision-making processes.
- ⇒ Limited member participation, inadequate representation of marginalized communities, and concentration of power within a few individuals undermine their inclusive nature.

#### Financial Resource Access:

- ⇒ Many cooperatives, particularly those serving marginalized communities, face challenges in accessing financial resources due to lack of collateral or formal documentation, making it difficult to obtain loans from traditional financial institutions.

#### Socio-economic Disparities:

- ⇒ Cooperatives face issues related to inclusivity, structural inequalities, and social hierarchies, which create barriers for equitable participation and representation.



**Infrastructural Constraints:**

- Poor infrastructure and connectivity affect the efficiency and effectiveness of cooperatives, limiting their outreach and impact.

**Technical and Managerial Capacities:**

- Lack of training and skill development initiatives result in outdated human resources, hindering the growth and innovation potential of cooperatives.

**Social and Cultural Factors:**

- Lack of awareness about the cooperative model and its benefits limits member participation.
- Social hierarchies and caste-based divisions also create barriers to equitable participation within cooperatives.

**Way Forward:****Digital Platforms:**

- Implement digital platforms for financial reporting, conduct regular audits, and encourage member participation in decision-making processes to enhance transparency and accountability.

**Financial Resources:**

- Establish cooperative development funds with flexible collateral requirements to cater to the needs of marginalized communities. Encourage cooperatives to explore crowdfunding, social impact bonds, and other innovative financing solutions.

**Inclusivity:**

- Design outreach programs to educate and attract members from marginalized communities, addressing their specific needs and challenges.

**Infrastructure:**

- Advocate for government investment in rural infrastructure development, improving connectivity and access to markets for cooperatives.

**Training and Skills:**

- Partner with government agencies and training institutions to offer skill-building workshops for cooperative members and managers, ensuring they have the necessary technical and managerial capacities.

**Awareness Campaigns:**

- Launch targeted awareness campaigns in local languages to educate potential members about the benefits and principles of cooperatives, encouraging broader participation.

**Conclusion:**

- The 'Sahkar se Samridhhi' program highlights the significant role of cooperatives in fostering economic and social development.
- By addressing the challenges and leveraging government initiatives, cooperatives can continue to empower communities, enhance agricultural productivity, and promote inclusive growth.
- As India moves towards the 2025 International Year of Cooperatives, the focus on strengthening the cooperative sector is crucial for building a sustainable and equitable future.
- The proactive steps taken today will pave the way for a more vibrant and resilient cooperative movement in India.

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## THE PROBLEM WITH BILLIONAIRE CONSUMPTION

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**Context**

- The recent extravagant wedding celebrations of Mukesh Ambani's youngest son have sparked discussions about the ethics of excessive wealth and conspicuous consumption among billionaires.

**Perspectives from Different Ideologies****Defence of Billionaires' Consumption:****➤ Liberal Capitalist View:**

- ➔ In liberal capitalist democracies, individuals have the right to use their private property as they see fit.
- ➔ Assuming fair market processes, billionaire consumption, no matter how lavish, is defended as an exercise of personal freedom and cannot be criticized.

### ⇒ Market Perspective:

- Critics argue that inequality is a result of flawed policies restricting market freedom rather than billionaire consumption itself.
- Increasing market access is proposed as a solution to ensure broader wealth distribution.

### ⇒ Marxist Critique:

- According to Marxist theory, wealth is solely created through labor, making profits inherently exploitative.
- Billionaire consumption is condemned as illegitimate, representing the unjust extraction of value from workers, perpetuating systemic inequalities inherent in capitalism.



## Economic Impact

### Defence of Domestic Consumption:

#### ⇒ Boost to Aggregate Demand:

- Advocates argue that billionaire consumption, when done domestically, stimulates demand for locally-produced goods, thereby boosting employment and incomes within the country.

#### ⇒ Investment vs. Consumption:

- While consumption addresses immediate demand concerns, sustained economic growth and improved living standards depend more critically on investment.
- Investment enhances productivity, upgrades capital stock, and supports long-term economic growth.

## Keynesian Social Contract

### Keynesian Perspective on Capitalist Societies:

- ⇒ According to John Maynard Keynes, capitalist societies operate under a social contract where capitalists enjoy wealth and control over production in exchange for high levels of investment that ensure employment and productivity growth.
- ⇒ Keynesian growth theory emphasizes that maximum welfare occurs when profits are entirely reinvested, known as the "Golden Rule."
- ⇒ Conspicuous consumption from profits reduces resources available for investment, potentially hindering economic welfare and growth.

## Conclusion

- ⇒ In light of high youth unemployment, stagnant wages, and economic challenges in the informal sector, the stark inequalities highlighted by lavish billionaire consumption underscore significant public policy concerns.
- ⇒ Addressing these issues requires confronting systemic economic imbalances and ensuring that both consumption and investment contribute effectively to sustainable economic development and social equity.

## THE STRUGGLE FOR EDUCATION FUNDS: CENTRE-STATE TUSSE

### Introduction

- ⇒ In India, the principle of decentralization in education has been a cornerstone of efforts to achieve universal education over the past two decades.
- ⇒ The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA), initiated in 2001 and continued across different political regimes, aimed to provide context-specific solutions tailored to the needs of local communities.
- ⇒ However, recent developments where the Centre has withheld funds under SSA from certain states have brought to light significant concerns regarding the autonomy of states in managing their educational priorities.



## The Flexibility Gap

- Despite assertions supporting federalism, practical autonomy for states in education has often been constrained.
- Previously, states like Gujarat and Madhya Pradesh, under BJP rule, frequently voiced discontent over central control of education funds during non-BJP governments.
- In more recent times, the Union education ministry's decision to withhold SSA funds from states such as Delhi, Punjab, and West Bengal due to their reluctance to adopt the Pradhan Mantri Schools for Rising India (PM-SHRI) scheme illustrates ongoing discord between the Centre and non-NDA states.

## Pradhan Mantri Schools for Rising India (PM-SHRI) Scheme

### Overview:

- Introduced in 2022 as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme, PM-SHRI aims to transform selected schools into exemplars of the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP).
- Key components include initiatives for environmental sustainability (green schools), experiential and learner-centric pedagogies, competency-based assessments, and collaboration with local industries to enhance employability.

### State Concerns:

- Delhi and Punjab argue that they already have initiatives similar to PM-SHRI but object to prefixing their schools with "PM-SHRI," contending that it diminishes the credit due to the states for their own educational reforms.
- West Bengal raises similar objections, emphasizing issues related to cost-sharing and financial strain on state-funded educational institutions.

### Impact on Students

- The standoff over SSA funds and the PM-SHRI scheme has immediate and long-term implications for educational outcomes:
- Financial constraints in government schools, exacerbated by withheld funds, have led to delays in salary payments for over 2,000 teachers and support staff in Delhi alone.
- Initiatives aimed at improving learning outcomes and infrastructure development in Delhi and Punjab, under AAP governance, face setbacks.
- While states like Kerala and Tamil Nadu, initially hesitant, have signed MoUs with the Centre, Delhi, Punjab, and West Bengal's stance highlights the divisive nature of education funding policies and their impact on educational reforms.

### Conclusion

- Achieving equitable and effective educational outcomes in states like Delhi, Punjab, and West Bengal requires collaborative efforts between the Centre and states.
- The politicization of SSA funds and the implementation of the PM-SHRI scheme underscores challenges in prioritizing educational welfare over political considerations.
- It is crucial for both levels of government to transcend partisan interests and prioritize the future of the young by ensuring robust educational policies and sustainable funding mechanisms are in place.
- Only through genuine collaboration can India achieve its goals of universal education and inclusive growth.

## THE TOLL THAT EXTREME HEAT TAKES ON WOMEN

### Introduction

- Extreme heat has become increasingly prevalent, with 2023 recorded as the hottest year on record and temperatures in India reaching unprecedented highs during May-June 2024.
- This phenomenon disproportionately affects women due to existing power dynamics, gender norms, and unequal access to resources.
- India's rank near the bottom of the Global Gender Gap Index underscores these disparities.



- ⇒ Given that India is home to over one-sixth of the world's women, the impact of extreme heat on this demographic is profound and multi-faceted.

### Hidden Toll on Women

#### Housing and Domestic Challenges

- ⇒ Women in informal settlements face multiple challenges due to rising temperatures.
- ⇒ Their homes, constructed with heat-trapping materials like tin, asbestos, and plastic, become unbearably hot.
- ⇒ Poorly ventilated kitchens exacerbate the situation, subjecting women to extreme temperatures while cooking.
- ⇒ This not only impacts their health but also increases their time poverty and care burdens.
- ⇒ According to the Asian Development Bank's report "Rising Above the Heat," these conditions lead to significant productivity loss for women, who then work longer hours to manage their unpaid domestic responsibilities.

#### Economic and Opportunity Costs

- ⇒ The productivity loss due to heat stress translates into 90 more minutes of care work per day for women in India.
- ⇒ This adds to the already significant gender disparity in time spent on unpaid work, with women dedicating two and a half times more minutes per day than men on tasks like cooking, cleaning, and fetching water and fuel.
- ⇒ This unpaid labor represents a substantial opportunity cost, as women miss out on potential income, skill development, and adequate rest.

### Worryingly Pervasive Conditions

#### Urban Informal Laborers

- ⇒ Urban female informal laborers face extreme weather conditions while working in marketplaces, streets, construction sites, landfills, or employers' homes.
- ⇒ These workers—street vendors, domestic helpers, construction workers, and sanitation workers—are particularly vulnerable to climate extremes.
- ⇒ Energy poverty exacerbates their situation, as they often lack access to cooling facilities like fans or air conditioners.
- ⇒ The scarcity of greenery and natural cooling methods in dense urban areas, coupled with water scarcity and power fluctuations, makes staying hydrated and comfortable challenging.

#### Rural Women

- ⇒ In rural India, women endure severe conditions exacerbated by heatwaves. Cooking with biomass, which poses significant health risks, remains prevalent among 56.8% of rural families.
- ⇒ Women face long working hours under heat stress, whether performing home-based work in poorly ventilated living spaces or working outdoors on projects like MGNREGA.
- ⇒ Prolonged heat exposure also negatively impacts crop yields, leading to hunger and poverty among rural women.

### Unequal Health Strain

#### Physiological Vulnerabilities

- ⇒ The incidence of heat-related diseases is rising with increasing temperatures.
- ⇒ Heat stress strains the body, making temperature regulation difficult and leading to illnesses such as heat cramps, severe heat stroke, and hyperthermia.
- ⇒ Women are at greater risk due to their physiological makeup, including body fat percentage, water content levels, and hormonal changes associated with menstrual cycles and pregnancy.
- ⇒ These factors affect heat tolerance and hydration, making women more susceptible to heat-related health issues.

#### Maternal and Child Health

- ⇒ Heat stress significantly impacts maternal and child health, increasing the risk of preterm delivery, miscarriage, and stillbirths.
- ⇒ Given India's higher maternal mortality rates, these risks are particularly concerning.

- ⇒ Women bear a dual burden from heat-related health issues, as they are more susceptible to its effects and shoulder the majority of caregiving responsibilities that follow.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ Strengthening women's resilience to heat strain is crucial.
- ⇒ Immediate priorities should include climate-friendly urban planning, development and access to sustainable cooling technologies, a fair division of care work, and the public provisioning of essential services.
- ⇒ Addressing the social power gradient that determines women's capacity to face this crisis is also essential for any discussion on adaptation and resilience.
- ⇒ By focusing on these areas, we can mitigate the toll extreme heat takes on women and build a more equitable and sustainable future.

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## RSS: A NON-POLITICAL ORGANIZATION

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### Introduction

- ⇒ The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), a prominent Hindu nationalist organization in India, has recently come into the spotlight following the Indian government's decision to lift a longstanding ban on public servants participating in its activities.
- ⇒ This move, facilitated by the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT), removes the RSS from the list of organizations deemed "political," thus allowing central government employees to engage with it without fear of penalty.



### Why in News?

- ⇒ The recent directive by the DoPT, issued on July 9, 2024, rescinds references to the RSS in official memorandums from 1966, 1970, and 1980.
- ⇒ This decision is specific to central government employees, while state governments retain their own Conduct Rules and can issue relevant instructions as they deem fit.
- ⇒ Notably, the Jamaat-e-Islami remains classified as a political organization, prohibiting government officials from participating in its activities.

### Historical Context and Official Memorandums

#### Official Memorandums of 1966, 1970, and 1980:

- ⇒ **1966:** The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) issued a circular on November 30, 1966, clarifying that participation in RSS and Jamaat-e-Islami was against government policy. This was linked to Rule 5 of the Central Civil Services (Conduct) Rules, 1964, which prohibits government servants from political involvement. Disciplinary action was recommended for violators.
- ⇒ **1970:** A reiteration of the 1966 instructions was issued on July 25, 1970, stressing disciplinary measures for government employees associating with the RSS or Jamaat-e-Islami.
- ⇒ **1980:** A directive from October 28, 1980, emphasized the importance of maintaining a secular outlook among government employees and warned against communal biases.

#### Conduct Rules Pre-1966:

- ⇒ Before 1966, the Government Servants' Conduct Rules of 1949, particularly Rule 23, already prohibited participation in political activities.
- ⇒ This was echoed in Rule 5 of the Central Civil Services (Conduct) Rules, 1964, and the All India Services (Conduct) Rules, 1968.

#### Penalties for Violations:

- ⇒ Violating these rules can lead to severe consequences, including dismissal from service.
- ⇒ The government's decision is final in determining whether an organization is political or an activity violates the rules.

## About Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS)

### Foundation and Ideology:

- ⇒ The RSS was founded in 1925 in Nagpur by Dr. K. B. Hedgewar.
- ⇒ It aims to promote Hindutva, emphasizing Hindu cultural and national identity.
- ⇒ The central ideology, articulated by Vinayak Damodar Savarkar, posits India as fundamentally a Hindu nation, focusing on uniting people under a common national identity.

### Pre-Independence and Post-Independence Activities:

- ⇒ **Pre-Independence:** The RSS played a significant role in mobilizing Hindu society, focusing on community service, education, and promoting Hindu values.
- ⇒ **Post-Independence:** After 1947, the RSS faced scrutiny, especially after Mahatma Gandhi's assassination in 1948. It was briefly banned but reinstated after pledging loyalty to the Constitution.

### Structure and Influence:

- ⇒ The RSS operates through a network of shakhas (branches) across India and abroad, focusing on physical, intellectual, and cultural training.
- ⇒ It has inspired organizations like the Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP), Bajrang Dal, and Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP).
- ⇒ The RSS is also considered the ideological parent of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP).

### History of Bans on RSS

- ⇒ **1948:** Banned after Gandhi's assassination; lifted in 1949 after pledging loyalty to the Constitution.
- ⇒ **1966:** Government employees banned from joining RSS, reiterated in 1970 and 1980.
- ⇒ **1975-1977:** Banned during Indira Gandhi's Emergency; lifted in 1977.
- ⇒ **1992:** Banned post-Babri Masjid demolition; lifted in 1993 after a commission deemed the ban unjustified.

### Jamaat-e-Islami and Ananda Marg

#### Jamaat-e-Islami:

- ⇒ Founded in 1941 by Abul A'la Maududi, it aims to promote Islamic values and implement Sharia law in governance.
- ⇒ The organization was banned in Jammu and Kashmir in March 2019 under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA).

#### Ananda Marg:

- ⇒ Founded by Prabhat Ranjan Sarkar in 1955, it is known for the Progressive Utilisation Theory (Prout), promoting welfare and development in all aspects of life.
- ⇒ It gained notoriety in the 1960s, leading to conflicts with the West Bengal government and was banned during the Emergency (1975-1977).

### Conclusion

- ⇒ The decision to lift the ban on RSS activities for central government employees marks a significant shift in the Indian government's stance towards the organization.
- ⇒ By redefining the RSS as a non-political entity, the government has opened the door for public servants to participate in its activities without fear of retribution.
- ⇒ This move reflects broader socio-political dynamics in India and underscores the evolving nature of governance and civil service regulations in the country.

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## THE PROMISE OF PARAMETRIC INSURANCE

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### Context

- ⇒ The year 2023 has been the warmest on record, causing \$280 billion in losses from natural disasters, of which only \$100 billion was insured.
- ⇒ This insurance gap is more pronounced in developing countries, necessitating innovative insurance solutions like parametric insurance to enhance disaster resilience and financial protection.

### Record-Breaking Year 2023

- ⇒ **Warmest Year:** 2023 was the warmest year on record.
- ⇒ **Disaster Losses:** Natural disasters caused \$280 billion in losses, with only \$100 billion insured.

- ⇒ **Insurance Gap:** There is a significant gap in insurance coverage, especially between developed and developing economies.
- ⇒ **Increasing Extreme Events:** With the rise in extreme weather events, the insurance industry must adopt new methods to enhance disaster resilience and coverage.



### Current Methods of Disaster Risk Reduction

#### Indemnity-Based Insurance Products:

- ⇒ **Traditional Method:** The globally accepted method for disaster risk reduction involves indemnity-based insurance products.
- ⇒ **Physical Assessment:** These products require a physical assessment of damage to process payouts.
- ⇒ **Challenges:** Given the unpredictability of future calamities, past precedents are no longer reliable. Verification of losses is particularly challenging for economically disadvantaged communities with little record of their assets.

#### Characteristics of Parametric Insurance

- ⇒ **Parameter-Based:** Parametric insurance is based on specific parameters of a weather event, such as a certain amount of rainfall or specific flood levels.
- ⇒ **Real-Time Measurements:** Payments are triggered by real-time measurements rather than actual loss verification.
- ⇒ **No Physical Assessment:** Payments are made without the need for a physical damage assessment.
- ⇒ **Climate Adaptation:** Disaster-prone island countries have adopted parametric insurance for climate adaptation, moving away from traditional risk retention models.

#### Benefits and Implementation

- ⇒ **Trust Building:** Parametric insurance builds trust between states and insurers, leading to reasonable pricing and effective trigger-payout combinations.
- ⇒ **Historical Use:** Historically, these products have been used for low-frequency, high-impact disasters like earthquakes and cyclones.
- ⇒ **Example:** In 2023, Morocco received \$275 million in parametric insurance after a 6.8 magnitude earthquake, facilitated by the World Bank.
- ⇒ **Adaptation for High-Frequency Events:** Increasingly considered for high-frequency, low-impact disasters like landslides and heavy rainfall due to climate change.

### Parametric Insurance in India

#### Early Adoption and Government Initiatives:

- ⇒ **Crop Insurance:** One of the earliest uses in India was for crop insurance.
- ⇒ **Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana:** Based on verification of loss.
- ⇒ **Restructured Weather Based Crop Insurance Scheme:** Uses threshold limits, eliminating the need for field verification.
- ⇒ **Private Insurance:** Private insurance in India is increasingly offering parametric products customized for states, corporations, self-help groups, and micro-finance institutions.

#### State and Corporate Adoption:

- ⇒ **Nagaland:** The first Indian state to purchase parametric insurance for extreme precipitation in 2021. The state has since tendered for an improved version with specific annual premiums, duration, and competitive bidding for lower threshold limits and maximized payouts.
- ⇒ **Data Utilization:** Uses credible data from the India Meteorological Department for precise precipitation measurements.

#### Sector-Specific Implementations:

- ⇒ **Dairy Farmers:** The Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation in Kerala has implemented parametric insurance for dairy farmers to cover lower milk yields due to heat stress in cattle.

- ⇒ **Daily Payouts:** Non-profits and micro-finance institutions collaborate with private insurers to provide daily payouts to workers losing jobs due to excessive heat, based on pre-defined temperature and moisture triggers.
- ⇒ **Large Corporations:** Initiate parametric products for cyclonic winds and high waves using data on wind speed, cyclone tracks, and storm surges.

### Ensuring Effective Use of Parametric Products

#### Key Factors for Government Implementation:

- ⇒ **Precise Thresholds:** Essential for effective parametric insurance.
- ⇒ **Monitoring Mechanisms:** Proper monitoring is crucial.
- ⇒ **Experience Sharing:** Governments should share experiences to incorporate lessons learned.
- ⇒ **Bidding Process:** A mandatory bidding process is necessary for transparent price discovery.
- ⇒ **Payout Dissemination:** There must be a widespread retail payout dissemination system.
- ⇒ **Premium Payment:** Encouraging premium payment by households is crucial, though challenging for poorer populations.

#### Examples from Other Countries:

- ⇒ **Earthquake Insurance:** Successful implementation of parametric insurance for earthquakes in New Zealand and Turkey, even among poorer populations.

#### Potential for India and South Asia:

- ⇒ **India's Unique Position:** Well-placed for the use of parametric products due to its Aadhaar-based payment dissemination system.
- ⇒ **Regional Pooling:** Regional pooling of risk has been successfully implemented by the Pacific and Caribbean Catastrophe Risk Insurance Companies.
- ⇒ **South Asia Collaboration:** Given the region's vulnerability to climate change, India and its neighbors could consider collaborative risk pooling and parametric products.

#### Conclusion

- ⇒ The increasing frequency of natural disasters and the existing gap in insurance coverage necessitate innovative approaches.
- ⇒ Parametric insurance offers a viable solution for enhancing disaster resilience and financial protection.
- ⇒ By leveraging credible data and adopting collaborative risk management strategies, India and other climate-vulnerable regions can mitigate the financial burden of natural disasters.

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## THE THINNING OF KANNADA: A LINGUISTIC AND SOCIETAL CHALLENGE

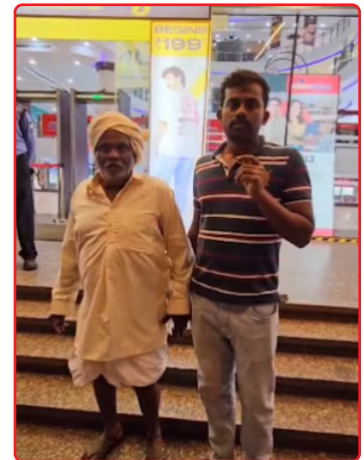
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### Introduction

- ⇒ A recent controversy in Karnataka unfolded when a farmer dressed in traditional attire was barred from entering a mall, which led to discussions about discrimination and unpaid taxes.
- ⇒ This incident highlights broader issues related to the integration of local languages and cultural identities into modern socio-economic frameworks.

### Karnataka's Reservation in the Private Sector

- ⇒ Amid these tensions, the Karnataka government's move to reserve jobs in the private sector for locals has stirred significant debate.
- ⇒ The Karnataka State Employment of Local Candidates in the Industries, Factories, and Other Establishments Bill, 2024, proposes reserving 70% of non-management and 50% of management jobs for individuals identified as "locals."
- ⇒ This bill is intended to address economic disparities and fulfill an election promise but has raised concerns among industry leaders, educators, and real estate developers about potential negative impacts on economic growth.



### Who Qualifies as a Local?

- ⇒ According to the bill, a "local candidate" must have been a resident of Karnataka for at least 15 years.
- ⇒ The bill also stipulates that migrants must learn Kannada, which has sparked controversy.



- ⇒ Many people who have lived in Karnataka for generations face uncertainty regarding their status under this definition.

### Bengaluru's Indifference to Local Language

- ⇒ Historically, Bengaluru, often termed the "Dubai of India," has been viewed as a cosmopolitan hub where knowledge of the local language, Kannada, is not a prerequisite for professional or social integration.
- ⇒ This cosmopolitanism often translates into a widespread disregard for learning Kannada, with many residents and workers preferring to communicate in English or Hindi.

### Widespread Ignorance of Kannada

#### Perceived Unimportance of Kannada Skills:

- ⇒ In various sectors, Kannada is seen as an unnecessary skill.
- ⇒ Newcomers to Karnataka often argue against the necessity of learning Kannada, preferring instead to use English or other languages.
- ⇒ This attitude undermines the importance of Kannada in local cultural and professional contexts.

#### Assumptions About Local Skills:

- ⇒ There is a prevailing assumption that local Kannadigas are less skilled, particularly if they lack proficiency in English.
- ⇒ This view perpetuates the notion that language skills are directly tied to professional competence, marginalizing those who are proficient only in Kannada.

#### Neglect of Kannada in Education:

- ⇒ Kannada faces diminishing relevance in educational institutions.
- ⇒ Many students are shifting away from Kannada-medium schools in favor of English-medium institutions, which are often perceived as providing better opportunities.
- ⇒ Despite efforts by the government to promote Kannada, including establishing the Kannada Development Authority and supporting Kannada in signage and education, the language continues to struggle against the dominance of English and Hindi.

#### The Plight of Kannada

The decline of Kannada is a concern for various stakeholders:

- ⇒ **Economic Stakeholders:** Investors and real estate developers should be concerned about the long-term cultural and economic implications of language decline. The neglect of Kannada could impact community cohesion and economic stability.
- ⇒ **Government and Policy Makers:** Despite various initiatives to promote Kannada, the language's survival remains tenuous. The challenge is not just in policy but also in fostering a genuine cultural shift that values and promotes the local language.
- ⇒ **Cultural Preservationists:** The erosion of Kannada threatens the preservation of Karnataka's rich linguistic and cultural heritage. The language's decline could lead to a loss of unique cultural identity and historical continuity.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ Karnataka has the opportunity to foster a cosmopolitan society while emphasizing the importance of local languages.
- ⇒ By developing a robust bilingual policy, Karnataka can ensure that Kannada remains a vibrant part of its cultural and economic landscape.
- ⇒ This approach would not only support local language integration but also foster a sense of self-respect and cultural pride among its residents.
- ⇒ Embracing both local and global perspectives can help Karnataka build a society that values its heritage while participating actively in the broader economic and cultural arenas.

## DEFENCE & SECURITY

### EXERCISE MAITREE 2024

#### Introduction

- ⇒ The 13th edition of Exercise Maitree is taking place from July 1 to 15, 2024, in Tak Province, Thailand.
- ⇒ This military exercise marks a significant resumption of joint training between India and Thailand after the disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

- The importance of military collaboration and the need for continuous training are underscored by the revival of this exercise.

### Historical Background

- Exercise Maitree originated in 2006 as the Thai-Indian Cooperation Field Exercise (TICAFE). In 2013, it was renamed Maitree, meaning "friendship" in Hindi.
- The exercise is held alternately in India and Thailand, with the primary objective of strengthening military ties through shared training operations and enhanced cooperation.



### Composition and Goals of the Contingents

- For the 2024 edition, India's Ladakh Scouts and Thailand's 1st Battalion, 14 Infantry Regiment each contribute 76 personnel.
- The exercise focuses on enhancing joint skills for operations against insurgency and terrorism, especially in jungle and urban environments.
- This is aligned with the mandates of Chapter VII of the UN Charter, which emphasizes collective security measures.

### Key Tactical Drills and Activities

Exercise Maitree 2024 includes a variety of tactical drills and activities designed to improve coordination and operational readiness. Key activities include:

- **Joint Operation and Intelligence and Surveillance Centers:** Establishing centers to enhance joint operational capabilities and information sharing.
- **Advanced Technology Utilization:** Incorporating cutting-edge technologies such as drones and anti-drone systems.
- **Special Operations Training:** Conducting operations involving helicopters, room entry techniques, and demolition of illegal structures.

These activities aim to enhance interoperability and share best practices, ensuring both forces are well-prepared for real-world scenarios.

### Cultural and Strategic Significance

- Beyond military drills, Exercise Maitree provides a platform for cultural exchange, fostering mutual understanding and cooperation between the soldiers of both nations.
- This cultural interaction is crucial for building a sense of camaraderie, which is essential for effective collaboration during joint operations.

### Broadening Scope of Cooperation

- Exercise Maitree's scope extends beyond conventional military training to include disaster relief, humanitarian aid, and peacekeeping operations.
- This comprehensive approach ensures readiness for a wide range of scenarios, highlighting the armed forces' role as a vital societal force.
- The exercise also sets the stage for future collaborations in emerging areas such as cyber defense and space security, addressing evolving security challenges and contributing to regional stability.

### Conclusion

- Exercise Maitree 2024 is a testament to the enduring military cooperation between India and Thailand.
- By resuming this important joint exercise, both nations reaffirm their commitment to strengthening military ties, enhancing operational readiness, and fostering mutual understanding.
- As the geopolitical landscape continues to evolve, such collaborative efforts are crucial for maintaining regional security and stability.
- The lessons learned and relationships built during Exercise Maitree will undoubtedly contribute to more integrated and effective future training sessions and operations.

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## ISRO AND NASA COLLABORATE FOR AXIOM-4 MISSION

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### Introduction

- The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is set to make a significant leap in its space exploration efforts by partnering with NASA for the Axiom-4 mission.
- Two of ISRO's trained Gaganyaan astronauts have been shortlisted for this mission to the International Space Station (ISS), marking a milestone in India's human spaceflight capabilities.



### About the Axiom-4 Mission

- The Axiom-4 mission is the fourth private astronaut mission conducted by NASA in collaboration with Axiom Space, a private US company.
- Scheduled for no earlier than October 2024, this mission will see the selected astronauts spend up to 14 days docked at the ISS.
- This mission underscores the growing cooperation between ISRO and NASA, aiming to enhance scientific research and international space collaboration.

### Historical Significance

- This collaboration signifies a historic moment in India's space exploration journey.
- It not only highlights the strengthening ties between ISRO and NASA but also underscores India's commitment to advancing its human spaceflight capabilities.
- The selected astronauts will follow in the pioneering footsteps of Rakesh Sharma, who became the first Indian to travel to space in 1984 aboard a Russian spacecraft.

### Training and Preparation

- The shortlisted Gaganyaan astronauts have undergone extensive general space training in India, focusing primarily on Gaganyaan-specific modules.
- To prepare for the ISS mission, they will receive specialized training in the United States, where they will familiarize themselves with ISS modules, protocols, and operational procedures.
- This training will be conducted in collaboration with NASA and other international partners, ensuring that the astronauts are well-prepared for their mission.

### Gaganyaan Mission

- The Gaganyaan project aims to demonstrate ISRO's human spaceflight capability by launching a crew of three members to an orbit of 400 km for a three-day mission and safely returning them to Earth, landing in Indian sea waters.
- The Gaganyaan astronauts are poised to contribute significantly to scientific research, international collaboration, and the overall advancement of space exploration.

### ISRO's First Human Spaceflight Mission

- The upcoming manned mission will be ISRO's first human spaceflight endeavor, positioning India among the select group of nations capable of human spaceflight.
- Currently, only the US, Russia, and China have achieved this feat.
- The mission will be launched using ISRO's Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV) Mk III, a three-stage heavy-lift vehicle designed to carry humans to space.

### Conclusion

- The Axiom-4 mission represents a significant step forward for ISRO and India's space ambitions.
- Through collaboration with NASA, India is set to enhance its human spaceflight capabilities and contribute to international space exploration efforts.
- This mission not only commemorates a historic partnership but also sets the stage for future advancements in space technology and exploration.

## NOMADIC ELEPHANT-2024

### Introduction

- The 16th “Nomadic Elephant” Joint Military Exercise is set to be conducted between the Indian Army and the Mongolian Army from July 3, 2024, to July 16, 2024.
- This year’s military drill will take place in Umroi, Meghalaya.
- The primary aim of this exercise is to enhance the operational synergy and communication between the two forces during semi-conventional operations in semi-urban and mountainous terrains, in accordance with UN directives.



### Objective and Significance of the Exercise

- The main objective of “Nomadic Elephant” is to refine the tactical and operational skills of both armies in joint action scenarios.
- The exercise aims to prepare both forces for UN peacekeeping missions by focusing on semi-conventional warfare, facilitating their cooperation in diverse environments.
- This collaboration is expected to improve military relations and foster a shared understanding between the two nations.

### The exercise also serves several strategic purposes:

- **Enhancing Interoperability:** By training together, the Indian and Mongolian forces can develop a deeper understanding of each other’s tactics, techniques, and procedures. This interoperability is crucial for joint operations, particularly in complex environments.
- **Building Trust and Confidence:** Regular joint exercises help build mutual trust and confidence between the two armies, fostering a spirit of camaraderie and collaboration.
- **Readiness for UN Missions:** The focus on semi-conventional warfare and semi-urban and mountainous terrains aligns with the typical scenarios encountered during UN peacekeeping missions. This training ensures that both armies are well-prepared to participate in international peacekeeping efforts.

### Historical Context and Recent Developments

- “Nomadic Elephant” is an annual exercise held alternately in India and Mongolia.
- The 15th edition of the exercise was hosted by Mongolia in Ulaanbaatar, with Indian troops from the Jammu and Kashmir Light Infantry Regiment participating, alongside Mongolia’s Armed Forces Unit 084.
- These ongoing drills underscore the strong military collaboration between the two countries, aligned with their deepening strategic ties.

### Recent developments include:

- **Strategic Meetings:** The 12th Joint Working Group meeting in May 2023 reviewed and advanced defense cooperation projects, reinforcing the commitment to strengthening military ties. This meeting highlighted the ongoing resolve of both nations to enhance their defense partnership.
- **Military Exchanges:** Regular military exchanges and visits have been a cornerstone of Indo-Mongolian defense relations. These exchanges not only provide opportunities for knowledge sharing but also help in understanding the strategic priorities of each nation.
- **Defense Agreements:** Both countries have signed several agreements to promote defense cooperation, including technology transfer, joint training, and counter-terrorism efforts. These agreements form the backbone of their military partnership.

### Future Impact

- The continuation of the “Nomadic Elephant” series highlights the growing strategic partnership between India and Mongolia, particularly in defense.
- By conducting regular high-level military drills, both countries aim to enhance their cooperation and readiness to manage complex military operations.
- This ongoing collaboration contributes to maintaining peace and stability in their respective regions and beyond.

- ⇒ **Enhanced Operational Readiness:** The regular joint exercises ensure that both armies remain operationally ready to handle diverse military challenges. This readiness is crucial for responding to regional security threats.
- ⇒ **Regional Stability:** The strengthened military ties contribute to regional stability by promoting a collective security approach. This partnership can act as a deterrent against potential threats and foster a stable security environment.
- ⇒ **Global Peacekeeping:** With a focus on preparing for UN peacekeeping missions, the exercise ensures that both India and Mongolia can contribute effectively to global peacekeeping efforts. Their readiness and interoperability make them valuable contributors to international peace and security.
- ⇒ **Strategic Alliances:** The ongoing military collaboration is part of a broader strategy to build strategic alliances. Both nations are looking to strengthen their geopolitical influence through these partnerships, contributing to a more balanced power dynamic in the region.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ The “Nomadic Elephant-2024” exercise is a testament to the robust defense partnership between India and Mongolia.
- ⇒ As the two nations continue to engage in joint military exercises, they not only bolster their operational capabilities but also solidify their strategic alliance, promoting regional and global peace and stability.
- ⇒ The exercise’s emphasis on interoperability, readiness for UN missions, and enhanced operational readiness underlines the significance of this collaboration.
- ⇒ As India and Mongolia look towards the future, their continued military cooperation will play a pivotal role in shaping the security landscape of the region and beyond.

## PUSHPAK – ISRO’S REUSABLE LAUNCH VEHICLE, CLEARS LANDING TEST

### Introduction:

- ⇒ On June 23, 2024, the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) marked a significant milestone in space technology with the successful completion of the third Reusable Launch Vehicle (RLV) Landing Experiment (LEX) at the Aeronautical Test Range (ATR) in Chitradurga, Karnataka.
- ⇒ This test is part of ISRO’s broader initiative to develop a fully reusable space vehicle, which promises to revolutionize space travel and satellite deployment.

### Context and Objective:

- ⇒ The LEX-03 experiment featured a winged vehicle named “Pushpak,” which was released from a height of 4.5 km by an Indian Air Force Chinook helicopter.
- ⇒ Despite challenging conditions, Pushpak successfully navigated and executed a precise landing on the runway’s centerline.
- ⇒ The primary objective of LEX-03 was to demonstrate ISRO’s capability for autonomous landings under difficult conditions, including significant cross-range and strong winds.

### Technical Highlights and Achievements:

During the test, several key advancements in aerospace technology were demonstrated:

- ⇒ **Self-Navigation and Landing:** Pushpak performed cross-range correction maneuvers from 4.5 km away, showcasing advanced guidance, navigation, and control systems.
- ⇒ **High-Speed Landing:** The vehicle achieved a landing speed of over 320 km/h, significantly higher than that of conventional airplanes, highlighting the aerodynamic and structural challenges of space-entry vehicles.
- ⇒ **Advanced Sensor Integration:** The integration of inertial sensors, radar altimeters, and the NavIC navigation system facilitated precise navigation and landing, underscoring ISRO’s advancements in aerospace technology.
- ⇒ **Vehicle Recovery and Reusability:** After landing, Pushpak successfully employed brake parachutes and landing gear brakes, crucial for reusability. The reuse of the winged body and flying systems from the



previous LEX-02 mission without modifications demonstrated the durability and reusability of the launch vehicle components.

### Implications for Future Space Missions:

- The success of RLV-LEX-03 is a significant step towards developing Reusable Launch Vehicle (RLV) technology, which aims to make space missions more frequent and cost-effective.
- The mission's advancements in autonomous guidance algorithms and sensor fusion technology are critical for future Orbital Re-entry Missions, ensuring safe and accurate return paths.

### Conclusion:

- ISRO's progress with the Pushpak RLV project heralds a new era in space exploration, bringing us closer to routine, reusable space travel and more efficient satellite deployment.

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## REASI AND THE PERSISTENT ISSUE OF CROSS-BORDER TERRORISM

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### Introduction

- The recent attack in Reasi highlights the ongoing challenge of cross-border terrorism from Pakistan.
- For nearly 35 years, India has faced persistent terrorist threats, particularly in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K).
- New Delhi must sharpen its definition of what constitutes an "unacceptable" terror attack to effectively respond to Pakistan-backed terrorism.



### Context

#### Continuing Challenge

- The possibility of the Reasi attack's links to terrorist groups in Pakistan is high, reflecting the ongoing terrorist incidents in the Jammu division.
- These incidents underscore the long-standing threat India has faced, particularly in J&K.
- Pakistan and separatists in J&K, inspired by the success of the Afghan Jihad, believed that Islamist groups could pressure India in Kashmir through uprisings, violence against minorities, and attacks on prominent personalities and security forces.

#### Historical Background

- In the late 1980s and early 1990s, both Nawaz Sharif and Benazir Bhutto, as Pakistan's Prime Ministers, supported separatism in J&K, promoting terrorism through the army and intelligence agencies.
- The Indian state and its security forces took time to develop counter-insurgency and counter-terrorism approaches in response.
- Pakistan's political class and army remain committed to the "Kashmir cause," using terror to achieve their objectives.

#### India's Diplomatic Approach

##### Simla Agreement

- Under the 1972 Simla Agreement, India committed to resolving the Kashmir issue peacefully. However, the agreement's constraints became void once Pakistan resorted to terrorism.
- Despite this, India chose diplomacy and dialogue, agreeing on a bilateral composite dialogue in September 1998.
- However, Pakistan's unwillingness to address India's concerns regarding terrorism became evident.

##### Public Opinion and Military Considerations

- Indian public opinion has often favored military action after significant terrorist attacks.
- For instance, the Indian government considered military action after the 2001 Parliament attack but refrained after assurances from Pakistan.
- However, Pakistan did not honor its commitments.

#### The Use of Pre-emption

##### Pulwama Attack and Balakot Strike

- India's departure from diplomacy occurred after the Pulwama attack in 2019, leading to the Balakot aerial strike and the announcement of a pre-emption doctrine.

- ⇒ This doctrine allows India to target terrorist preparations in Pakistan before an attack. However, ambiguity remains on what constitutes an "unacceptable" terrorist attack.

### Kargil Conflict

- ⇒ India used its full military strength to defeat Pakistan's regular military intrusion in Kargil in 1999.
- ⇒ This situation, while not fitting the terrorism rubric, demonstrated India's capability for sustained kinetic action.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ Following the Reasi attack, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar emphasized the need to address cross-border terrorism.
- ⇒ He could start by highlighting to the international community that the first step on an escalatory ladder between nuclear countries is the use of terror.
- ⇒ This approach could help curb Pakistani terrorism and promote a more definitive and proactive Indian response to future threats.

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## BILL OF WRONGS

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### Introduction

- ⇒ Recently, the Maharashtra government introduced the Special Public Security Bill, 2024, citing inadequacies in existing anti-terror laws to combat what it terms as "urban Naxalism."

### Provisions of the Controversial Bill

- ⇒ The Bill grants the state authority to criminalize "unlawful activity" by individuals and imposes severe penalties on organizations deemed unlawful.
- ⇒ While reminiscent of the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), 1976, the cornerstone anti-terror legislation, the Maharashtra Bill expands the scope of unlawful activity to include vague terms such as posing a threat to public order, obstructing law administration, instilling fear in the public, and advocating disobedience to the law.
- ⇒ These broad definitions raise concerns that legitimate dissent, protests, or criticisms of government policies could fall under the purview of criminality.



### The Political Connotation of "Urban Naxals"

- ⇒ Introducing the term "urban Naxals" into legal discourse, the Bill alleges an increase of Naxalite influence in urban areas beyond traditionally affected regions.
- ⇒ This term, often politically charged, has been controversially used to target intellectuals, activists, and dissenters.
- ⇒ The Bill's rationale suggests that any form of questioning or opposition to government actions could be equated with supporting Naxalite activities.
- ⇒ Moreover, the Bill empowers authorities to evict accused individuals from their residences and seize their bank accounts even before a trial, without distinguishing between active participants in alleged unlawful activities and those merely associated with them.

### Judicial Stance Against Draconian Laws

- ⇒ Judicial bodies have consistently cautioned against the overreach of stringent laws.
- ⇒ The Delhi High Court, in the aftermath of the 2019 Delhi riots, emphasized that severe penal provisions must be narrowly construed.
- ⇒ It stressed that terrorist activities should transcend ordinary crimes and be beyond the capacity of regular law enforcement agencies to handle effectively.
- ⇒ Similarly, in cases related to the Bhima Koregaon violence, the Supreme Court granted bail to several accused individuals, asserting that mere possession of literature advocating violence does not automatically constitute criminal offenses under the UAPA.

### Upholding Democratic Values

- The Maharashtra Bill threatens the foundational pact between the state and its citizens, which guarantees the right to dissent and engage in debate.
- Its introduction just before the prorogation of the assembly session, ahead of state elections, suggests a tactical move.
- While the Bill may not be enacted in the current political climate, vigilance is necessary to prevent its revival or similar initiatives in the future.

### Conclusion

- Maharashtra's proposed security legislation, with its ambiguous definitions and potential to criminalize lawful activities, poses a significant threat to democratic freedoms.
- While its immediate enactment seems unlikely, civil society must remain vigilant to ensure that legislative efforts do not undermine fundamental rights in the guise of maintaining public security.
- Balancing security concerns with civil liberties is crucial for upholding India's democratic principles and ensuring a just legal framework for all citizens.

## FOR J&K, BETTER DAYS LIE AHEAD

### Introduction:

- As we approach the fifth anniversary of the abrogation of Article 370, it's crucial to reflect on the significant changes that have taken place in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K).
- Since 1989, thousands of bravehearts, including 1,608 J&K Police officers and 511 CRPF officers, have laid down their lives fighting terrorism.
- The notable decline in terrorism in the Valley since 2019 serves as a fitting tribute to these martyrs and underscores the potential for lasting peace in the region.

### Abrogation of Article 370: A Step Towards Unified Governance

- The abrogation of Article 370 marks a significant shift in the governance of J&K.
- The special constitutional status previously allowed a divergence between the actions and words of J&K politicians, perpetuating oligopolistic, dynastic, and stale politics.
- The removal of this article addresses Syama Prasad Mookerjee's 1950s call for "**Ek desh me do vidhan, do pradhan, do nishan nahin challenge**" (One nation cannot accept two constitutions, two heads of state, and two flags).
  - ➔ **Unified Elections:** Future elections in J&K will now be conducted under the Indian Constitution, introducing new electoral thresholds, ballot structures, and contexts.
  - ➔ **New Opportunities:** This change creates opportunities for new politicians and parties to participate in democracy, converting conflicts into trade-offs through a fresh slate of ideas that blunt passions, create interests, and forge compromises.

### Military Strategy and Cross-Border Terrorism

- The belief that cross-border military strikes by India were impossible after Pakistan's nuclear tests was shattered by the Uri and Pulwama responses.
- These strikes were not acts of war-mongering but a recognition that Pakistan's terror factory required new calculations.
- The lack of consequences for previous attacks led to more significant ones like those on the Indian Parliament in 2001 and Mumbai in 2008.
- These actions established new rules and consequences for internal security strategy.

### The Global Impact of Radical Islam and Counterterrorism Efforts

- The narrative of "jihad" was initially useful for the United States in drafting Mujahideen to fight the USSR in Afghanistan.





- ⇒ However, the CIA's ignorance of the myth of Bhasmasur (the demon who turns on its creator) meant that radical Islamists would eventually turn their attention to the West.
- ⇒ Early signs of this were evident in the 1990s, but it took the 9/11 attacks for the US to recognize the dangers of radical Islam and galvanize global action against terrorism.
- ⇒ India's position on cross-border terrorism is no longer isolated, making Pakistan's strategy and actions untenable.

### Pakistan's Diminishing Geopolitical Importance

- ⇒ Pakistan's geopolitical significance, rooted in Cold War defense treaties, US-China reconciliation, and Afghan Mujahideen support, has greatly diminished since the 9/11 attacks and the evolving US-China rivalry.
- ⇒ Internal anger is rising against Pakistan's economically incompetent garrison state, which weaponizes Islam and sabotages mass prosperity.
- ⇒ With its per capita GDP lower than Bangladesh's and total GDP lower than Maharashtra's, Pakistan faces significant internal and external weaknesses.
  - **Call for Change:** The abrogation of Article 370 strengthens the case for Pakistan's public to choose ittihad (friendship) over military-sponsored jihad.
  - **Declining Terror Capacity:** Although the path to a more normal democracy in Pakistan is unclear, its declining ability to perpetrate acts of terror is evident.

### India's Path to Prosperity and Peace

- ⇒ Since 1947, India has created the world's largest democracy but struggled to deliver mass prosperity.
- ⇒ This is now changing with a massive renovation of India's intellectual, security, financial, diplomatic, investment, welfare, and economic infrastructure.
- ⇒ India is now the fifth-largest economy and will soon be third after China and the US.
- ⇒ The significant export of software compared to Saudi Arabia's oil exports gives India's military a massive edge in a digital world where the distinction between military and civilian technology is eroding.
- ⇒ The most significant change is a new political tone from the top: zero tolerance for terrorism and a vision for India to become a developed country by its 100th anniversary of independence.

### Conclusion:

- ⇒ The decline in terrorism in J&K since the abrogation of Article 370 signifies a positive shift towards peace and development in the region.
- ⇒ The unified governance structure, robust military strategies, and global counterterrorism efforts have played a crucial role in this transformation.
- ⇒ As India continues its journey towards prosperity and peace, it is essential to build on these achievements, fostering a stable and secure environment for the people of J&K.
- ⇒ The ultimate tribute to the martyrs who fought against terrorism is a future where their sacrifices lead to lasting peace and prosperity in the region.

## GALLANTRY AWARDS 2024: HONORING BRAVERY AND SACRIFICE

### Introduction

- ⇒ The President of India recently presented the Gallantry Awards at the Defence Investiture Ceremony-2024 held at Rashtrapati Bhavan, recognizing the acts of bravery and sacrifice of military personnel and civilians.

### About Gallantry Awards

- ⇒ Gallantry Awards are conferred to honor acts of bravery and sacrifice by officers and personnel of the Armed Forces, other lawfully constituted forces, and civilians.
- ⇒ These awards are announced twice a year: on Republic Day and Independence Day.



### Gallantry Awards in the Face of Enemy

- ⇒ **Param Vir Chakra (PVC):** Features four replicas of "Indra's Vajra" with the State Emblem at the center.

- ⇒ **Mahavir Chakra (MVC):** Embossed with a five-pointed heraldic star and a domed gilded State Emblem at the center.
- ⇒ **Vir Chakra:** Features a Chakra at its center with a gilded State Emblem.

### Gallantry Awards Other than in the Face of Enemy

- ⇒ **Ashok Chakra:** Embossed with a replica of the Ashok Chakra in the center, surrounded by a lotus wreath.
- ⇒ **Kirti Chakra:** Features a replica of the Kirti Chakra, surrounded by a lotus wreath.
- ⇒ **Shaurya Chakra:** Embossed with a replica of the Shaurya Chakra, surrounded by a lotus wreath.

### Order of Precedence

- ⇒ Param Vir Chakra
- ⇒ Ashoka Chakra
- ⇒ Mahavir Chakra
- ⇒ Kirti Chakra
- ⇒ Vir Chakra
- ⇒ Shaurya Chakra

### Eligibility and Selection Criteria

#### Param Vir Chakra, Maha Vir Chakra, and Vir Chakra

- ⇒ **Eligible Personnel:** All ranks of the Naval, Military, and Air Forces, Reserve Forces, Territorial Army, Militia, and other lawfully constituted Armed Forces.
- ⇒ **Eligibility:** Awarded for actions against the enemy on land, at sea, or in the air.
- ⇒ **Param Vir Chakra:** For most conspicuous bravery or some daring or pre-eminent act of valor or self-sacrifice.
- ⇒ **Maha Vir Chakra:** For acts of conspicuous gallantry.
- ⇒ **Vir Chakra:** For acts of gallantry.

#### Ashoka Chakra, Kirti Chakra, and Shaurya Chakra

- ⇒ **Eligible Personnel:** Officers, men and women of all ranks of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Reserve Forces, Territorial Army, Militia, and other lawfully constituted forces; members of the Nursing Services of the Armed Forces; civilian citizens; members of Police Forces including Central Para-Military Forces and Railway Protection Force.
- ⇒ **Eligibility:** Awarded for acts of bravery not in the face of the enemy.
- ⇒ **Ashoka Chakra:** For most conspicuous bravery or some act of daring or pre-eminent act of valor or self-sacrifice.
- ⇒ **Kirti Chakra:** For conspicuous gallantry.
- ⇒ **Shaurya Chakra:** For gallantry.

### Selection Process

- ⇒ The Ministry of Defence invites recommendations from the Armed Forces and the Union Ministry of Home Affairs.
- ⇒ For Armed Forces personnel, cases for gallantry awards are initiated by the Unit and recommended by Commanders.
- ⇒ Civilian recommendations are received from the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA).
- ⇒ The Central Honours & Awards Committee (CH&AC), comprising the Defence Minister, three Service Chiefs, and the Defence Secretary, considers the recommendations.

### Awardees at the Defence Investiture Ceremony 2024

- ⇒ **Kirti Chakra:** 10 awarded (7 posthumously). Notable posthumous awardees include Inspector Dilip Kumar, Head Constable Raj Kumar Yadava, Constable Bablu Rabha, and Sambhu Roy of the 210 CoBRA Battalion, CRPF, for their bravery against Maoists in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur.
- ⇒ **Shaurya Chakra:** 26 awarded (7 posthumously). Major Vikas Bhambhu and Major Mustafa Bohara were posthumously awarded for steering their burning chopper away from human habitation, ultimately losing their lives in Arunachal Pradesh's Upper Siang district.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ The Gallantry Awards ceremony not only recognizes the exceptional bravery and sacrifice of the awardees but also inspires others to uphold the highest standards of courage and commitment in the service of the nation.

## INS DELHI HONORED AS TOP SHIP OF EASTERN FLEET 2024

### Introduction

- On July 14, 2024, the prestigious Fleet Awards Function took place in Visakhapatnam, celebrating the tactical successes of the Eastern Fleet over the past year.
- INS Delhi was recognized as the Best Ship of the Eastern Fleet for its outstanding performance and operational excellence.

### Recognizing Excellence

- The annual event acknowledges ships for their exceptional performance across various categories.
- INS Kavaratti was awarded Best Ship in the Corvettes, Offshore Patrol Vessels (OPVs), and Landing Ship Tanks (LSTs) category.
- Additionally, INS Shivalik, INS Sumedha, and INS Sumitra received accolades for their spirited efforts and handling of challenging tasks throughout the year.



### Distinguished Guests

- The ceremony was graced by notable naval officers, with Vice-Admiral Rajesh Pendharkar, the Flag Officer Commanding-in-Chief of the Eastern Naval Command, as the Chief Guest.
- Rear Admiral Rajesh Dhankhar, Flag Officer Commanding Eastern Fleet, organized the event, highlighting the fleet's teamwork and collaboration.

### Operational Achievements

- Throughout the past year, the Eastern Fleet has actively safeguarded naval interests in the Indian Ocean Region.
- Demonstrating combat readiness, the fleet conducted numerous air, surface, and subsurface weapon firings.
- It also participated in joint naval drills, amphibious operations, and Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR) exercises with the Indian Army and the Indian Air Force.

### Cultural Celebrations

- The Fleet Awards Function included a cultural program that fostered camaraderie, boosted morale, and celebrated the rich history and commitment of the Indian Navy.
- This annual event not only honors significant naval achievements but also strengthens the Eastern Fleet's readiness for strategic roles.

### About INS Delhi

- INS Delhi, a guided-missile destroyer, was commissioned into the Indian Navy on November 15, 1997.
- Designed by the Indian Navy's Directorate of Naval Design and constructed by Mazagon Dock Limited in Mumbai, it is the lead ship of the Delhi class.
- The ship displaces approximately 6,200 tons and measures 163 meters in length.
- Equipped with surface-to-surface missiles, surface-to-air missiles, anti-submarine torpedoes, and a main gun, INS Delhi is a formidable asset in naval combat.
- Additionally, the ship features advanced electronic warfare and sensor systems, enhancing its operational capabilities across various maritime scenarios.

## ENVIRONMENT & ECOLOGY

### INDIA BECOMES THE FIRST COUNTRY TO PREPARE FULL LIST OF FAUNA

#### Introduction

- India has recently achieved a significant milestone by launching the "Fauna of India Checklist Portal," a comprehensive collection listing 1,04,561 species.
- This accomplishment makes India the first country in the world to document all of its wildlife.

- ⇒ The portal was launched in Kolkata on the 109th Foundation Day of the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) with Union Environment Minister Bhupender Yadav leading the event.

### Significance of the Fauna Checklist

The 'Fauna of India Checklist Portal' includes 121 checklists covering 36 phyla and provides detailed information on known taxa, including endemic, endangered, and scheduled species. This initiative holds significant importance for various reasons:

- ⇒ **Conservation and Protection:** Establishes a fundamental framework for monitoring biodiversity changes and identifying species requiring immediate conservation efforts. This helps in prioritizing conservation actions and allocating resources efficiently to protect vulnerable species.
- ⇒ **Scientific Research:** Serves as a valuable resource for scientific research, offering a comprehensive list of the fauna in the region. This aids in understanding biodiversity and sustainable natural resource management. Researchers can use the data to study species distribution, behavior, and ecology, contributing to the broader knowledge of India's wildlife.
- ⇒ **Policy and Planning:** Provides detailed information that aids in the formulation of informed policies and programs for wildlife conservation, habitat protection, and overall environmental management. Policymakers can develop targeted strategies to address threats to biodiversity and ensure the sustainable use of natural resources.



### Global Leadership and Conservation Initiatives

India's success in creating this checklist highlights its leading role in documenting biodiversity and sets a benchmark for other countries. The Union Environment Minister emphasized several initiatives reflecting India's commitment to environmental conservation, including:

- ⇒ **"Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam":** A project aimed at promoting tree plantation. This initiative encourages individuals and communities to plant trees, enhancing green cover and contributing to ecological balance.
- ⇒ **International Big Cat Alliance:** An initiative focused on the conservation of big cats. This alliance aims to protect big cats such as tigers, lions, leopards, and cheetahs, ensuring their survival through collaborative conservation efforts.
- ⇒ The recent successful relocations of cheetahs are a testament to the effectiveness of these wildlife conservation strategies. Relocating cheetahs helps in restoring their population in their natural habitat, promoting genetic diversity, and strengthening ecosystem health.

### Impact and Future Prospects

- ⇒ The checklist will be invaluable for taxonomists, researchers, academics, policymakers, and conservationists.
- ⇒ It underscores India's dedication to biodiversity conservation and reinforces its position as a global environmental leader.
- ⇒ This groundbreaking work paves the way for continued leadership in global environmental stewardship and conservation efforts.
- ⇒ **For Taxonomists:** The checklist provides a reference for identifying and classifying species, aiding in the discovery of new species and understanding evolutionary relationships.
- ⇒ **For Researchers:** It offers a foundation for ecological and biodiversity studies, enabling researchers to analyze species diversity, distribution patterns, and ecological interactions.
- ⇒ **For Academics:** The data can be used in educational programs, raising awareness about wildlife conservation and inspiring future generations of conservationists.
- ⇒ **For Policymakers:** The comprehensive data supports the development of evidence-based policies, ensuring effective conservation measures and sustainable management of natural resources.
- ⇒ **For Conservationists:** The checklist helps in monitoring species populations and assessing the impact of conservation initiatives, facilitating adaptive management strategies.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ Overall, the "Fauna of India Checklist Portal" represents a significant step forward in wildlife conservation, providing a robust tool for protecting India's rich biodiversity and serving as a model for other nations to follow in their conservation efforts.

## JAIPUR MILITARY STATION: SECOND IN INDIA TO CONSTRUCT PLASTIC WASTE ROAD

### Introduction

- In a significant step towards sustainable development, Jaipur Military Station has become the second military station in India to construct a road using plastic waste.
- This eco-friendly initiative reflects the Indian Army's commitment to sustainability and environmental conservation.
- Following the success of Narangi Military Station in Assam, Jaipur's new road demonstrates the viability and benefits of utilizing plastic waste in infrastructure projects.



### Key Points

- **Second Military Station:** Jaipur Military Station is the second in India to construct a road using plastic waste, following Narangi Military Station in Assam.
- **Inauguration:** The road was inaugurated on June 26, 2024, by Major General R.S. Godara, General Officer Commanding of 61 Sub Area.
- **Road Details:** The 100-meter-long road stretches from Sagat Singh Road under bridge to Cubs Corner complex.
- **Sustainability:** Constructed under the Indian Army's policy to create sustainable and green military stations, with contributions from GE (South), CE Jaipur Zone, and Deep Constructions Pvt. Ltd.
- **Durability:** Plastic waste roads are more durable, suffer less wear and tear, resist water damage, and increase sustainability.

### First Military Station with Plastic Waste Road

- **Narangi Military Station:** Located in Guwahati, Assam, Narangi Military Station was the first in India to construct a plastic waste road in 2019.

### Government Policy on Plastic Waste Roads

- **2015 Policy:** The Indian government allowed the use of plastic waste in constructing National Highways on a pilot basis.
- **2017 Update:** Permitted mixing 10 percent plastic waste with hot bitumen for road construction.
- **2023 Mandate:** Made it mandatory to use plastic waste in the construction and repair of service roads of national highways within a 50-kilometer radius in urban-rural areas with populations of five lakh or more.

### Benefits of Plastic Waste Roads

- **Coal Tar Usage:** Consume 15 percent less coal tar.
- **Durability:** Last 10 years instead of the conventional five years.
- **Water Resistance:** Do not develop potholes due to plastic's water-resistant properties.

### Environmental Impact

- **Pollution Mitigation:** Helps reduce environmental pollution and air pollutants from burning plastics.
- **Agricultural Impact:** Prevents blockage of seed germination and water absorption in agricultural fields.
- **Animal Safety:** Reduces the risk of animals choking on plastic bags found in garbage.

### Pioneer of Plastic Roads

- **Professor Rajagopalan Vasudevan:** Developed and patented the technique for using plastic waste in road construction.
- **Technique:** Involves mixing plastic waste with heated bitumen and coating the mixture over stones used for making roads.
- **Recognition:** Known as the Plastic Man of India and honored with the Padma Shri in 2018.

### Success Stories

- **Adoption:** Cities like Chennai, Delhi, Jamshedpur, Pune, Indore, and Lucknow have adopted the technique.
- **Durability:** Roads built with plastic waste have proven to be more durable and environmentally friendly.
- **CPCB Audit:** Confirmed that roads built with plastic waste did not develop any potholes, rutting, or ravelling even after four years.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ Jaipur Military Station's initiative to construct a road using plastic waste aligns with the Indian Army's commitment to sustainability and environmental conservation.
- ⇒ This approach not only enhances the durability of the roads but also contributes significantly to mitigating plastic pollution and promoting green practices.

## PINK FLAMINGOS AND THEIR CHALLENGES

### Introduction

- ⇒ Climate change is having a significant impact on ecosystems worldwide, including the habitat of pink flamingos.
- ⇒ Recent alterations in water levels and salinity at Tanzania's Lake Natron have made nesting more difficult for these iconic birds, contributing to a decline in their population due to extreme weather conditions and human encroachment.



### Key Facts About Flamingos

#### About

- ⇒ **Family:** Phoenicopteridae
- ⇒ **Species:** There are six species of flamingo:
  - Greater flamingo (state bird of Gujarat)
  - Chilean flamingo
  - Lesser flamingo
  - Caribbean flamingo
  - Andean flamingo
  - Puna flamingo
- ⇒ **Habitats:** Lakes, mudflats, and shallow lagoons in the Americas, Africa, Asia, and Europe.

#### Distinctive Appearance

- ⇒ Flamingos are known for their vibrant pink feathers, which result from carotenoid pigments in their diet.
- ⇒ They have long legs and necks, webbed feet, and a distinctive downward-curving bill adapted for filter-feeding.
- ⇒ The color of flamingos can vary based on their diet and habitat, ranging from dark or bright pink to orange, red, or pure white.

#### Adaptations

- ⇒ Flamingos are well-adapted to extreme environments with high salinity and temperatures, where their predators are limited.
- ⇒ Their specialized bill allows them to feed on algae, crustaceans, and small invertebrates in these challenging habitats.

#### Ecological Role

- ⇒ Flamingos play a crucial ecological role by maintaining the health of their habitats.
- ⇒ Their feeding activities help in nutrient cycling and control algae populations, thus supporting the overall ecosystem.

#### Conservation Status

- ⇒ **IUCN Red List:**
  - Vulnerable: Andean flamingo
  - Near Threatened: Lesser flamingo, Puna flamingo, and Chilean flamingo
- ⇒ **CITES:** Appendix II
- ⇒ **Wildlife Protection Act, 1972:** Schedule II

#### Lake Natron

- ⇒ Lake Natron, located on the border between Tanzania and Kenya, is a unique salt lake in the eastern branch of the Rift Valley.

### Geographical Significance

- **Great Rift Valley:** A massive geological formation stretching around 6,400 kilometers from northern Syria to central Mozambique in East Africa. It includes the Jordan River, which flows through the Jordan Valley and empties into the Dead Sea on the border between Israel and Jordan.
- **Ramsar Site:** Lake Natron Basin was included in the Ramsar List in 2001, recognizing it as an internationally significant wetland under Article 2 of the Ramsar Convention.

### Ecological Composition

Lake Natron has a unique composition of warm waters, salt, caustic soda, and magnesite deposits. Its alkaline waters support a thriving ecosystem, including:

- Salt marshes and freshwater wetlands
- Flamingos and other wetland birds
- Tilapia and algae, which are the primary food sources for flamingos

### Conclusion

- The decline in the population of pink flamingos at Lake Natron due to climate change and human activities highlights the urgent need for conservation efforts.
- Protecting these birds and their habitats is crucial for maintaining biodiversity and the health of ecosystems that rely on their presence.

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## READ THE ROCKS TO IMPROVE INDIA'S GEOLOGICAL LITERACY

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### Context

- India's collective regard for its extensive geo-heritage is abysmal, despite its rich geological features and potential for education and conservation.

### India's Geological Features

- India boasts a diverse morphology, ranging from the world's highest peaks to low-lying coastal plains, showcasing landscapes that have evolved over billions of years.
- The country is home to a variety of rocks, minerals, and distinctive fossil assemblages. These geological features narrate India's spectacular 'origin' stories through scientific interpretations rather than mythology.
- India's tumultuous geological past, recorded in its rocks and terrains, should be considered part of its non-cultural heritage.
- Geo-heritage sites serve as educational spaces where people can gain much-needed geological literacy, a crucial aspect often overlooked in India.



### Scant Traction in India

- Geological conservation aims to ensure the survival of India's best geological features and events, allowing current and future generations to appreciate some of the world's finest natural laboratories.
- Despite global progress in this field, geo-conservation has not gained significant traction in India.
- Many fossil-bearing sites have been destroyed due to development and real estate growth, and destructive stone mining activities exacerbate this issue.
- The magnitude of these activities is highlighted by the fact that stone-mining operations cover more than 10% of India's total area.
- Ironically, while efforts are made to explore Mars for early life evidence, similar precious evidence on Earth is being destroyed.
- For example, the little-known Dhala meteoritic impact crater in Shivpuri, Madhya Pradesh, is between 1.5 billion to 2.5 billion years old and evidences a celestial collision from when life may have begun.
- Similarly, the Lonar crater in Buldhana district, Maharashtra, previously dated at about 50,000 years old, is now suggested to be around 576,000 years old.

- ⇒ The importance of shared geological heritage was first recognized in 1991 at a UNESCO-sponsored event, which foresaw the establishment of geo-parks to commemorate unique geological features and educate the public on their significance.

### Lack of Legislation in India

- ⇒ Unlike countries such as Canada, China, Spain, the United States, and the United Kingdom, which have developed geo-heritage sites into national parks, India lacks specific legislation or policy for geo-heritage conservation.
- ⇒ The Geological Survey of India (GSI) has notified 34 geological monuments but lacks the regulatory powers to enforce preservation measures.
- ⇒ A recent example is the Varkala cliff in Kerala, which overlooks the Arabian Sea and is composed of rocks deposited millions of years ago.
- ⇒ Despite being declared a geological heritage site by GSI, it faces challenges in preservation.

### Half-hearted Measures

- ⇒ The Government of India has made some attempts to address these concerns. In 2009, a National Commission for Heritage Sites Bill was introduced but eventually withdrawn.
- ⇒ More recently, in 2022, the Ministry of Mines prepared a draft Bill for preservation and maintenance, but no further progress has been reported.
- ⇒ The annexure to the Draft Geoheritage Sites and Geo-relics (Preservation and Maintenance) Bill, 2022, highlights the lack of specific legislation for conserving geo-heritage sites compared to the well-established measures for archaeological and historical monuments.

### Way Forward

India needs to take the following steps urgently:

- ⇒ **Create an Inventory:** Compile an inventory of all prospective geo-sites in the country.
- ⇒ **Frame Geo-conservation Legislation:** Develop geo-conservation legislation similar to the Biological Diversity Act of 2002.
- ⇒ **Establish a National Geo-Conservation Authority:** Form a 'National Geo-Conservation Authority' akin to the National Biodiversity Authority, ensuring it includes independent observers and does not lead to bureaucratic red tape, thereby preserving the autonomy of researchers and private collectors.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ By taking these steps, India can significantly improve its geological literacy and conservation efforts, preserving its rich geo-heritage for future generations.

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## A BEND IN THE RIVER: REVISITING THE INDUS WATERS TREATY

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### Context

- ⇒ The 1960 Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) between India and Pakistan is a significant transboundary water-sharing mechanism.
- ⇒ Despite its historic importance, disagreements persist.
- ⇒ Recently, India called for amendments to the treaty, expressing dissatisfaction with the dispute resolution process and accusing Pakistan of "intransigence" and material breaches.
- ⇒ Pakistan sought arbitration at The Hague over India's Kishenganga and Ratle hydroelectric projects, bypassing treaty-compliant Neutral Expert proceedings.



### What is the Indus Waters Treaty?

- ⇒ India and Pakistan signed the IWT in September 1960 after nine years of negotiations, with the World Bank being a signatory to the pact.
- ⇒ The treaty sets out a mechanism for cooperation and information exchange between the two sides on the use of the water of the Indus River and its five tributaries: Sutlej, Beas, Ravi, Jhelum, and Chenab.



### Changing Realities and the Need for Amendments

- ⇒ Emerging realities, particularly climate change, necessitate revisiting the treaty.
- ⇒ In 2015, NASA ranked the Indus basin as the world's second most over-stressed aquifer.
- ⇒ Approximately 31% of the net basin flow originates from climate-impacted glaciers and snowmelts, leading to more volatile and seasonal mean annual flows.
- ⇒ Unpredictable monsoons further increase flow variability.
- ⇒ Given the crucial role of the Indus in the agriculture-dominated economies of India and Pakistan, these changes pose significant challenges.
- ⇒ Over 90% of Pakistan's agricultural output depends on the Indus, and deteriorating water quality threatens food and nutritional security, human health, and biodiversity.

### Contentions and Trust Deficits

- ⇒ Disagreements within the IWT framework primarily revolve around infrastructure development impacts on downstream flows.
- ⇒ Pakistan, as a lower riparian state, expresses concerns over projects like India's Shahpurkandi barrage, accusing India of "water terrorism."
- ⇒ However, the Ravi's water flow into Pakistan is minimal, and the dam aims to streamline the river's flow, supporting power supply and agricultural growth within legal IWT limits.
- ⇒ The massive trust deficit between the two neighbors exacerbates these issues.

### Ecological Perspectives and Environmental Flows

- ⇒ There is a need to integrate an ecological perspective into the treaty's governance framework, including institutionalizing Environmental Flows (EFs).
- ⇒ According to the Brisbane Declaration, EFs are essential to sustain aquatic ecosystems, supporting human cultures, economies, sustainable livelihoods, and well-being.
- ⇒ Harmonizing EFs with principles from the 1997 UN Watercourses Convention, such as equitable and reasonable use and the duty to prevent significant transboundary harm, is crucial. International customary law, including the 2004 Berlin Rules on Water Resources, supports these concepts.
- ⇒ The Permanent Court of Arbitration's 2013 verdict on India's Kishanganga project underscored the obligation to release EFs downstream, setting a precedent for maintaining EFs in transboundary river basins.

### Addressing Climate Change and Population Pressures

- ⇒ A nuanced understanding of climate-change impacts and population pressures on river hydrology is essential.
- ⇒ Developing a mechanism for real-time data sharing between the two riparians and evaluating water quality and changing flow magnitudes in numeric terms can help.
- ⇒ A legally binding, World Bank-supervised data-sharing framework within the IWT would ensure accountability and enhance policy understanding of water-quality challenges.

### Re-establishing the Treaty in the Face of Climate Change

- ⇒ Recognizing climate change as a common vulnerability and shifting focus to holistic basin management can reinforce the treaty's significance in Indo-Pak relations.
- ⇒ Such an approach would address emerging challenges effectively and ensure sustainable water resource management for both countries.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ The Indus Waters Treaty has long served as a cornerstone for water resource management between India and Pakistan.
- ⇒ However, the changing climate and growing population pressures necessitate a revisitation and possible amendments to the treaty.
- ⇒ Integrating ecological perspectives, addressing trust deficits, and enhancing real-time data sharing can help both nations manage their water resources more effectively.

Ultimately, re-establishing the treaty with a focus on climate resilience and cooperation will be crucial for the sustainable development of the Indus basin.

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## SENNA SPECTABILIS

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### Introduction

- Environmental groups in Wayanad have raised concerns over the Forest Department's approach to managing *Senna spectabilis*, an invasive species threatening the native habitats in the Nilgiri Biosphere.
- This article delves into the background, impact, and ongoing efforts to control this species, highlighting the need for rigorous standards and transparency in removal practices.



### Background and Impact of *Senna spectabilis*

- *Senna spectabilis*, also known as *Cassia spectabilis*, is a deciduous tree native to tropical South America.
- Initially introduced for its ornamental value and shade-providing capabilities, it has become a significant environmental issue in various regions, including the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary.
- This species is known for its rapid growth and allelopathic properties, which inhibit the growth of native plants, leading to reduced biodiversity.
- The invasive nature of *Senna spectabilis* disrupts the local ecosystems by outcompeting native flora, altering habitats, and affecting the availability of resources for native fauna.
- Its presence in Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary poses a threat to the ecological balance and the well-being of indigenous wildlife.

### Intervention Strategies

- The Forest Department initially employed mechanical methods such as uprooting and girdling to eradicate *Senna spectabilis*.
- However, these methods proved ineffective as they often resulted in the proliferation of coppice shoots from the stumps.
- Additionally, inconsistencies in timber handling and pricing across different forest divisions raised concerns about the fairness and efficiency of these interventions.

### Proposal for Controlled Removal

- Badusha, President of the Wayanad Prakruthi Samrakshana Samithi, emphasized the recent agreement with Kerala Paper Products Limited (KPPL) to acquire 5,000 tonnes of *Senna spectabilis* at a reduced price compared to other regions.
- He advocated for the establishment of a Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) to ensure that the removal process does not further harm the environment.

### Need for Rigorous Standards and Transparency

- Activists and environmentalists point to the practices in other reserves like Muthumalai and Sathyamangalam, where extraction is regulated by stringent guidelines.
- They urge the implementation of a similar, well-researched strategy in Wayanad.
- Developing a detailed SOP is crucial for the safe and effective removal of *Senna spectabilis*, minimizing the impact on local wildlife and habitats.

### About *Senna spectabilis*

- Native and Invasive Nature: *Senna spectabilis* is native to tropical South America and has become invasive in parts of Africa and Asia, disrupting native ecosystems.
- Medicinal Uses: Despite its invasive status, it is valued for its medicinal properties, particularly in treating constipation and skin diseases.
- Ecological Benefits: The tree's bright yellow flowers provide nectar for bees, and it is utilized in reforestation projects on degraded lands.

### Conclusion

- The management of *Senna spectabilis* in the Wayanad Wildlife Sanctuary underscores the complexities of balancing ecological preservation with practical intervention strategies.

- ⇒ While the tree poses significant threats to local biodiversity, its controlled removal, guided by rigorous standards and transparent practices, is essential.
- ⇒ Collaborative efforts between environmental groups, the Forest Department, and other stakeholders will be crucial in safeguarding the sanctuary's ecological integrity.

## TOWARDS A LOW-CARBON, CLIMATE-RESILIENT FUTURE

### Introduction

- ⇒ In a landmark judgment, the Supreme Court of India recently recognized the right to be "free from the adverse impacts of climate change" in the case of M.K. Ranjitsinh and Others vs Union of India.
- ⇒ This right was derived from the fundamental rights to life and equality. This judicial recognition sets the stage for India to enact a robust legal framework aimed at low-carbon, climate-resilient development.



### Law to Inform Development Choices

- ⇒ To mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change, India must reorient its development strategies towards low-carbon and climate-resilient futures.
- ⇒ Any law addressing these goals must ensure that these objectives are embedded in routine decision-making across all development levels.
- ⇒ Given that climate change disproportionately affects vulnerable populations, and that a just energy transition is imperative, this legal framework must prioritize social justice.
- ⇒ Unlike the typical top-down approach associated with climate laws in developed countries, India's approach needs to integrate climate considerations into every developmental decision, weighing long-term synergies and trade-offs with low-carbon, climate-resilient futures.
- ⇒ To achieve this, the right to protection from adverse climate effects must be operationalized through well-defined legal procedures applicable across government levels.
- ⇒ A credible climate action framework requires a well-designed institutional structure that can strategize, prioritize, troubleshoot, and evaluate policies.
- ⇒ Umbrella laws defining government-wide goals, supplemented with accountability measures, are increasingly popular for mainstreaming climate action into government operations.

### A Low-Carbon Development Body

- ⇒ A framework climate law should establish an institutional structure capable of navigating developmental choices toward low-carbon growth and resilience.
- ⇒ An independent 'low-carbon development commission', staffed with experts and technical personnel, could provide practical solutions for achieving these goals at both national and state levels.
- ⇒ This body could also serve as a platform for inclusive decision-making, systematically consulting vulnerable communities and those impacted by technological changes.
- ⇒ Drawing from examples like South Africa's Presidential Climate Commission, India could benefit from a similar high-level strategic body—a 'climate cabinet' comprising core ministers and state representatives tasked with driving climate strategy across government.
- ⇒ The Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change should continue its central role, complemented by higher-level coordination, possibly through a reinvigorated Executive Committee on Climate Change with clearly defined legal powers and duties.

### Engaging with the Federal Structure

- ⇒ The law must address India's federal structure, recognizing that key areas for reducing emissions and improving resilience—such as electricity, agriculture, water, health, and soil—are managed by state and local governments.
- ⇒ Effective climate action must start at these local levels, where impacts are felt most directly.
- ⇒ Firstly, the law should facilitate access to national scientific expertise for subnational governments, potentially through the low-carbon development commission, to address local climate capacity gaps.

- ⇒ Secondly, it should articulate financing mechanisms for local actions, aligning centrally-sponsored schemes with climate goals and tagging national expenditures towards local climate resilience.
- ⇒ Thirdly, it should establish coordination mechanisms for the Centre and States to consult on major climate decisions, encouraging states to build complementary institutions to those at the Centre for knowledge sharing, strategy-setting, and coordination.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ The Supreme Court's pronouncement in M.K. Ranjitsinh opens the door to legal and governance changes enabling an actionable right against the adverse effects of climate change.
- ⇒ Realizing this promise requires enacting a climate law tailored to the Indian context, steering development choices towards a low-carbon and climate-resilient future while advancing social justice.
- ⇒ By embedding these principles into a comprehensive legal framework, India can navigate its development trajectory towards sustainable and equitable growth.

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## UTTAR PRADESH ESTABLISHES WORLD'S FIRST ASIAN KING VULTURE CONSERVATION CENTER

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### Introduction

- ⇒ In a landmark initiative, Uttar Pradesh has embarked on the construction of the world's first center dedicated to the conservation and breeding of the Asian king vulture, also known as the red-headed vulture.
- ⇒ This project, located in Maharajganj, is a critical step towards saving a species that has been listed on the International Union for Conservation of Nature's (IUCN) Red List since 2007 due to its severe population decline.



### Significance of the Asian King Vulture

- ⇒ The Asian king vulture once thrived throughout India but experienced a dramatic population decline due to diclofenac poisoning.
- ⇒ Diclofenac, a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drug, was commonly used to treat livestock.
- ⇒ Vultures that fed on the carcasses of animals treated with diclofenac suffered fatal kidney failure.
- ⇒ The rapid decline in their population highlighted the critical need for conservation efforts.
- ⇒ Recognizing the urgent threat to this species, the Asian king vulture was included in Schedule 1 of the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972, which provides the highest level of legal protection to wildlife in India.

### Objectives and Facilities at the Centre

The Jatayu Conservation and Breeding Center is designed to provide a safe and controlled environment for the Asian king vulture. The center is equipped with state-of-the-art facilities, including:

- ⇒ **Advanced Monitoring Systems:** The center uses high-tech tools and equipment to continuously monitor the health and behavior of the vultures.
- ⇒ **Dedicated Scientific Staff:** The center employs a team of experts, including a scientific officer and a biologist, to oversee the care and breeding of the vultures.
- ⇒ **Security Measures:** To prevent human interference and ensure the safety of the birds, the center has implemented strict security measures, including CCTV surveillance.
- ⇒ **Specialized Care:** The vultures receive a carefully controlled diet and are kept in a breeding environment designed to support their health and reproductive success.

### Breeding and Conservation Strategy

The breeding strategy at the Jatayu Conservation and Breeding Center focuses on encouraging natural breeding behaviors in a controlled setting. Key aspects of the strategy include:

- ⇒ **Monogamous Breeding:** Asian king vultures are monogamous, meaning they form long-term pair bonds and typically lay only one egg per year. The center pairs vultures to promote successful mating.
- ⇒ **Controlled Environment:** The center provides a safe and controlled environment that mimics natural conditions, reducing stress and increasing the likelihood of successful breeding.

- **Gradual Reintroduction:** The ultimate goal of the breeding program is to increase the population of Asian king vultures to a level where they can be reintroduced into their natural habitats. The center aims to release healthy, captive-bred vultures into the wild to help restore the wild population.

### Recent Developments and Future Plans

Since the arrival of its first vultures in December 2022, the Jatayu Conservation and Breeding Center has made significant progress:

- **Increased Population:** The center has successfully housed more vultures and plans to continue expanding the population by adding more females to the breeding program.
- **Breeding Success:** The ability of the vultures to mate and produce offspring is critical for the success of the conservation effort. By increasing the number of breeding pairs, the center aims to boost the population and improve the species' chances of survival.
- **Future Expansion:** The center plans to continue its efforts to conserve the Asian king vulture by expanding its facilities and increasing its capacity to house and breed more birds.

### Conclusion

- By focusing on the conservation and breeding of the Asian king vulture, the Jatayu Conservation and Breeding Center aims to protect this critically endangered species and eventually reintroduce healthy populations back into the wild, helping to ensure their long-term survival.

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## UTTAR PRADESH TO ESTABLISH RS 2000 CRORE BIOPLASTIC PARK

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### Introduction

- In a significant move towards sustainable development, the Uttar Pradesh government, led by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, has announced the establishment of a bioplastic park in Lakhimpur Kheri.
- This ambitious project, set to span 1000 hectares in Kumbhi village, Gola Gokarnnath tehsil, aims to address the mounting environmental concerns associated with petroleum-based plastics.
- With an investment of approximately Rs 2 billion, this initiative is poised to bring substantial economic and environmental benefits to the region.



### Strategic Location and Management

- The bioplastic park's strategic location in Lakhimpur Kheri is a key factor in its potential success.
- The area's strong agricultural base provides a reliable source of raw materials needed for bioplastic production, such as corn, sugar beets, and sunflowers.
- Balrampur Chini Mill, a significant player in the region's industrial landscape, will manage the project.
- This collaboration is an excellent example of a public-private partnership aimed at fostering economic growth and sustainable development.
- The Uttar Pradesh Expressways Industrial Development Authority (UPEIDA) will oversee the project's smooth execution, ensuring that all phases, from planning to completion, are efficiently managed.

### Understanding Bioplastics

- Bioplastics, the core focus of this project, are derived from renewable plant sources rather than fossil fuels.
- These materials are produced from natural polymers such as cellulose and starches, which can be sourced from plants or agricultural waste.
- Unlike traditional plastics, which can persist in the environment for hundreds of years, bioplastics are biodegradable and decompose much more quickly.
- This characteristic makes them a more environmentally friendly alternative, aligning with global efforts to reduce plastic pollution and its detrimental effects on ecosystems.

### Economic and Environmental Benefits

- The bioplastic park is expected to deliver numerous economic benefits.
- The project will create a significant number of jobs, providing new employment opportunities for local residents and stimulating the regional economy.

- Additionally, the development of the bioplastic industry will support related sectors, fostering overall economic growth in the region.
- From an environmental perspective, the transition from petrochemical plastics to bioplastics could lead to a substantial reduction in pollution.
- Traditional plastics contribute significantly to environmental degradation, accumulating in landfills and oceans and causing harm to wildlife and ecosystems.
- Bioplastics, being biodegradable, offer a viable solution to this problem, breaking down more naturally and reducing the long-term environmental footprint of plastic waste.

### Advancing Technology and Research

- Beyond its immediate economic and environmental impacts, the bioplastic park aims to become a hub for technological innovation and research.
- The facility will focus on developing new technologies for plastic production, recycling, and waste reduction.
- By providing a collaborative environment for scientists and experts, the park will drive advancements in bioplastic technology, leading to more efficient production methods and new applications for bioplastics.
- This research and development focus will not only enhance the park's economic viability but also contribute to global efforts to find sustainable solutions to plastic pollution.

### Conclusion

- The establishment of the bioplastic park in Uttar Pradesh marks a significant step forward in the state's commitment to sustainable development.
- By leveraging the region's agricultural strengths and fostering public-private partnerships, the project is set to deliver substantial economic and environmental benefits.
- The park's focus on bioplastics, a more eco-friendly alternative to traditional plastics, aligns with global sustainability goals and offers a promising solution to the pressing issue of plastic pollution.
- As a center for technological innovation and research, the bioplastic park will position Uttar Pradesh as a leader in sustainable industrial development, paving the way for a greener and more prosperous future.

## WATER SCARCITY THREATENS INDIA'S ECONOMIC GROWTH

### Introduction

- India's persistent water crises and increased vulnerability to climate change pose significant risks to its sovereign credit strength, as highlighted by Moody's Investors Service.
- This warning comes at a crucial time when India is poised to become the world's third-largest economy.
- The rare use of this non-economic metric underscores the immediate difficulties faced by millions in various cities and towns, exacerbated by a particularly harsh summer.



### How Water Scarcity Can Damage Economic Growth

- With meteorologists predicting more intense heat waves in the coming years, water security is critical to India's economic ambitions.
- Moody's emphasizes that any reduction in water supply could disrupt agricultural and industrial operations, leading to higher food prices and a decline in real incomes.
- The agency identifies coal-fired power generation and steel production as the industrial sectors most vulnerable to water stress, highlighting the potential for widespread economic disruption.

### The Status of Water Availability in India

- Government estimates indicate that per capita water availability in India is likely to fall from an already low 1,486 cubic meters to less than 1,400 cubic meters by 2030.
- This figure is well below the Ministry of Water Resources' benchmark of 1,700 cubic meters, signaling an urgent need for effective water management strategies.

### Water Conservation and Harvesting: An On-Paper Exercise

- ⇒ India's historical approach to water-related deficits has focused on supply-side solutions, leading to the uneconomical use of water resources, particularly the overutilization of groundwater.
- ⇒ Current water pricing mechanisms fail to reflect the critical state of the country's aquifers.
- ⇒ Despite the launch of initiatives like the Jal Shakti Abhiyan for rainwater harvesting and water conservation, implementation has been largely ineffective.
- ⇒ Major cities such as Delhi, Bengaluru, and Mumbai have laws requiring rainwater harvesting, but enforcement is lacking, and there is no comprehensive data on compliance.
- ⇒ State governments and municipal corporations have done little to incentivize or penalize water conservation efforts in the construction sector.

### The Gloomy Picture Ahead

- ⇒ Over the next 20 years, India is expected to add more than 270 million people to its urban population, intensifying competition for water between businesses and households. Discussions on water audits in industries are still in their infancy.
- ⇒ Moody's report could spark necessary conversations and actions.
- ⇒ For example, the International Energy Agency notes that 70% of India's projected electricity generation for 2040 will come from plants not yet commissioned, indicating a significant opportunity to implement technologies like dry cooling and non-fresh water cooling to reduce water resource pressure.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ The consideration of non-financial metrics, such as water scarcity, in determining the credit rating of an economy is a relatively new approach.
- ⇒ As the effects of climate change become more pronounced, these factors will increasingly influence growth prospects globally.
- ⇒ Moody's warning should prompt policymakers to develop innovative and sustainable water use strategies, ensuring long-term economic stability and resilience.

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## ASSAM FLOODS: A RECURRING CATASTROPHE

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### Introduction

- ⇒ Floods in Assam have become an annual catastrophe, disrupting lives, damaging infrastructure, and causing significant economic losses.
- ⇒ Recently, the state witnessed severe floods resulting in over 50 deaths and displacing 360,000 people.
- ⇒ This article explores the causes, impacts, and measures taken to manage floods in Assam.

### Understanding Floods

- ⇒ Floods occur when water submerges land that is usually dry.
- ⇒ They are the most frequent natural disaster, affecting 2 billion people globally between 1998-2017.
- ⇒ Causes include heavy rainfall, rapid snowmelt, and storm surges from tropical cyclones or tsunamis.

### Types of Floods

- ⇒ **Flash Floods:** Caused by rapid and excessive rainfall, leading to quick water level rise.
- ⇒ **River Floods:** Result from consistent rain or snowmelt, causing rivers to overflow.
- ⇒ **Coastal Floods:** Triggered by storm surges from tropical cyclones and tsunamis.

### Floods in India

- ⇒ India's geographical area includes over 40 million hectares of flood-prone land.
- ⇒ Flood-related damages have increased significantly over the years, with an average annual flood damage of Rs. 4745 crore between 1996-2005.

### Causes of Floods in Assam

- ⇒ **Rivers:** Assam's numerous rivers, including the Brahmaputra, accumulate sediment and debris, leading to frequent flooding.



- ⇒ **Monsoon:** Intense monsoons and pre-monsoon rains contribute significantly to flooding.
- ⇒ **Climate Change:** Melting glaciers and snow caps increase water flow in the Brahmaputra River.
- ⇒ **Human Intervention:** Construction of embankments, population growth, and jhum cultivation exacerbate flood risks.

### Implications of Floods in Assam

- ⇒ **Wildlife Loss:** Floods in Assam have resulted in the death of over 130 wild animals, including rare one-horned rhinos in Kaziranga National Park.
- ⇒ **Infrastructure Damage:** Roads and infrastructure suffer extensive damage, hampering rescue efforts.
- ⇒ **Displacement:** Over 2 million people are displaced, increasing the strain on relief resources.

### Measures to Manage Floods

- ⇒ **National Flood Management Programme (NFMP):** Launched in 1954, it provides a framework for states to choose interventions based on geographical and resource constraints.
- ⇒ **Rashtriya Barh Ayog (1976):** Established an integrated approach for flood control, emphasizing scientific analysis and national planning.
- ⇒ **National Water Policy (2012):** Advocates strategic reservoir operation and floodplain zoning.
- ⇒ **National Hydrology Project (2016):** Strengthens flood forecasting with real-time hydro-meteorological data.
- ⇒ **Flood Management and Border Areas Programme (FMBAP):** Focuses on catchment area treatment to reduce sediment load in rivers.
- ⇒ **Flood Plain Zoning:** Aims to demarcate flood-prone areas and regulate land use.
- ⇒ **Flood Proofing:** Elevating settlements and crucial infrastructure above flood levels.
- ⇒ **National Disaster Response Force (NDRF):** Specialized force for disaster response, constituted under the Disaster Management Act, 2005.

### Way Forward

- ⇒ **Early Warning Systems:** Modernizing flood warning systems with advanced weather stations and sirens.
- ⇒ **Improved Infrastructure:** Investing in well-designed drainage systems and constructing sluice gates on tributaries of Brahmaputra.
- ⇒ **Collaborative Effort:** Enhancing cooperation between state and central governments and strengthening bilateral hydrological data exchange with China.
- ⇒ **Sustainable Land Management:** Avoiding construction in floodplains, promoting responsible practices to prevent soil erosion, and stabilizing riverbanks.
- ⇒ **Implementing Task Force 2004 Recommendations:** Dedicating funds for embankment maintenance and expanding the central government's role in flood control.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ Floods in Assam are a significant challenge, impacting lives, wildlife, and the economy.
- ⇒ While various measures have been implemented to manage floods, continuous efforts in infrastructure improvement, early warning systems, and sustainable land management are essential to mitigate the adverse effects of this recurring natural disaster.

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## NEW HORNED FROG SPECIES DISCOVERED IN NORTHEAST INDIA

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### Introduction

- ⇒ Scientists from the Zoological Survey of India (ZSI) have identified a new species of horned frog, *Xenophrys apatani*, in the Tale Wildlife Sanctuary of Arunachal Pradesh, a heavily forested region in northeastern India.
- ⇒ Initially thought to be the Maoson horned frog (*Xenophrys maosonensis*) found in Vietnam and China, further research revealed distinct differences in morphology and genetics, establishing it as a separate species.





### Identification and Research

- The discovery was made by a team from ZSI facilities in Shillong, Pune, and Itanagar.
- Through extensive morphological and genetic analyses, they identified clear distinctions between the Indian and Vietnamese frogs.
- Genetic testing revealed a 4.4% to 5.5% difference from the Maason horned frog, confirming it as a new species.

### Biogeographical Significance

- The discovery highlights the biogeographic separation between the regions inhabited by these genetically distinct species.
- The habitats in Northeast India and Vietnam are approximately 1,600 km apart, underscoring the influence of geographical boundaries on species evolution and diversity.

### Integration with Local Culture

- The species is named after the Apatani tribe from the Lower Subansiri Valley, honoring their environmental conservation efforts in Arunachal Pradesh.
- This naming choice underscores the connection between indigenous communities and the region's biodiversity.

### About Xenophrys apatani

- **Discovery and Habitat:** Found in the Talle Valley Wildlife Sanctuary in Arunachal Pradesh, *Xenophrys apatani* resides primarily under leaf litter in subtropical forests. The species, first discovered by Indian researchers in 2019, emphasizes the importance of preserving ecologically sensitive areas amid habitat loss.
- **Distinctive Features:** This megophryid frog is characterized by its unique brown coloration with dark spots, providing effective camouflage in its natural habitat. Its distinctive appearance contributes to the diverse fauna of the Eastern Himalayas.
- **Conservation Significance:** The discovery of *Xenophrys apatani* highlights the critical need for the conservation of these habitats to protect their unique biodiversity.

### Conclusion

- The identification of *Xenophrys apatani* is a significant contribution to herpetology and underscores the importance of preserving the biodiversity of the Eastern Himalayas.
- It also reflects the vital role of indigenous communities in environmental conservation efforts.

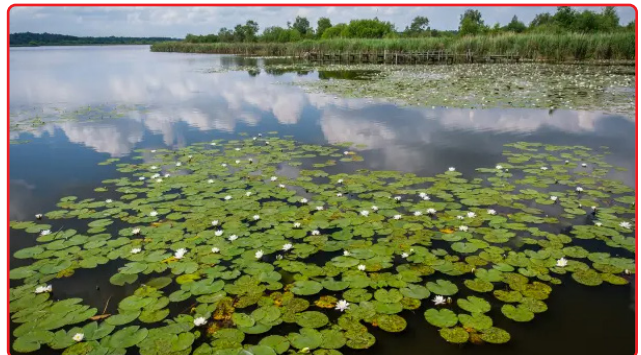
## UNESCO DESIGNATES 11 NEW BIOSPHERE RESERVES

### Introduction

- UNESCO has recently approved the designation of 11 new Biosphere Reserves (BR) across 11 countries, expanding the World Network of Biosphere Reserves to 759 sites in 136 countries.

### New Additions to the UNESCO Biosphere Reserve List

- Kempen-Broek Transboundary Biosphere Reserve (Belgium, Kingdom of the Netherlands)
- Darién Norte Chocoano Biosphere Reserve (Colombia)
- Madre de las Aguas Biosphere Reserve (Dominican Republic)
- Niimi Biosphere Reserve (Gambia)
- Colli Euganei Biosphere Reserve (Italy)
- Julian Alps Transboundary Biosphere Reserve (Italy, Slovenia)
- Khar Us Lake Biosphere Reserve (Mongolia)
- Apayaos Biosphere Reserve (Philippines)
- Changnyeong Biosphere Reserve (Republic of Korea)
- Val d'Aran Biosphere Reserve (Spain)
- Irati Biosphere Reserve (Spain)



## What is a Biosphere Reserve?

### About

- ⇒ A Biosphere Reserve is an international designation by UNESCO for representative parts of natural and cultural landscapes that extend over large areas of terrestrial or coastal/marine ecosystems, or a combination of both. Biosphere Reserves aim to balance economic and social development and the maintenance of cultural values along with the preservation of nature.

### Criteria for Designation

- ⇒ A site must contain a protected and minimally disturbed core area of value for nature conservation.
- ⇒ The core area must be a bio-geographical unit and should be large enough to sustain a viable population representing all trophic levels.
- ⇒ The involvement of local communities and the use of their knowledge in biodiversity preservation.
- ⇒ The area's potential for the preservation of traditional tribal or rural modes of living for harmonious use of the environment.

### Functions of Biosphere Reserves

- ⇒ **Conservation:** Managing genetic resources, endemic species, ecosystems, and landscapes, and protecting the wildlife, culture, and customs of tribal communities.
- ⇒ **Development:** Promoting economic and human growth that is sustainable on a sociocultural and ecological level, strengthening the three pillars of sustainable development: social, economic, and environmental protection.
- ⇒ **Logistic Support:** Promoting research activities, environmental education, training, and monitoring in the context of local, national, and international conservation and sustainable development.

## Biosphere Reserve Project in India

### Overview

- ⇒ Initiated by the Government of India in 1986, guided by the UNESCO MAB program.
- ⇒ Financial assistance provided in a 90:10 ratio to the North Eastern Region States and three Himalayan states, and in a 60:40 ratio to other states.
- ⇒ The State Government prepares the Management Action Plan, which is approved and monitored by the Central MAB Committee.
- ⇒ Implemented by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

### Zones of a Biosphere Reserve

- ⇒ **Core Zone:** The most protected area, containing endemic plants and animals, kept free from human interference.
- ⇒ **Buffer Zone:** Surrounds the core zone; activities here are managed to protect the core zone, including restoration, limited tourism, fishing, and grazing.
- ⇒ **Transition Zone:** The outermost part, where human activities and conservation are done in harmony, including settlements, croplands, managed forests, and areas for recreation and economic uses.

## Biosphere Reserves in India

- ⇒ As of 2024, India has 18 notified biosphere reserves, with 12 recognized by UNESCO's MAB.

S.No.	Year of Notification	Name	State	Area (in Sq Km)	Is MAB Recognized?
1	1986	Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve	Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka	5520	Yes
2	1988	Nanda Devi Biosphere Reserve	Uttarakhand	5860	Yes
3	1988	Nokrek Biosphere Reserve	Meghalaya	820	Yes
4	1989	Gulf of Mannar Biosphere Reserve	Tamil Nadu	10500	Yes
5	1989	Sundarbans Biosphere Reserve	West Bengal	9630	Yes
6	1989	Manas Biosphere Reserve	Assam	2837	No

7	1989	Great Nicobar Biosphere Reserve	Andaman and Nicobar Islands	885	Yes
8	1994	Similipal Biosphere Reserve	Odisha	4374	Yes
9	1997	Dibru-Saikhowa Biosphere Reserve	Assam	765	No
10	1998	Dihang-Dibang Biosphere Reserve	Arunachal Pradesh	5112	No
11	1999	Pachmarhi Biosphere Reserve	Madhya Pradesh	4982	Yes
12	2000	Khangchendzonga Biosphere Reserve	Sikkim	2620	Yes
13	2001	Agasthyamalai Biosphere Reserve	Kerala, Tamil Nadu	3500	Yes
14	2005	Achanakmar-Amarkantak BR	Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh	3835	Yes
15	2008	Great Rann of Kutch BR (Largest Area)	Gujarat	12454	No
16	2009	Cold Desert Biosphere Reserve	Himachal Pradesh	7770	No
17	2010	Seshachalam Hills Biosphere Reserve	Andhra Pradesh	4755	No
18	2011	Panna Biosphere Reserve	Madhya Pradesh	543	Yes

### International Status of Biosphere Reserves

- UNESCO designates Biosphere Reserves to minimize conflict between development and conservation.
- Reserves are nominated by national governments and must meet criteria under the Man and Biosphere (MAB) Reserve Program.
- Globally, there are 759 biosphere reserves across 136 countries, covering 7,442,000 square kilometers and home to about 275 million people.
- India has 12 internationally recognized biosphere reserves under the MAB Program.

### Man and Biosphere Programme (MAB)

- Initiated by UNESCO in 1971, the MAB Programme is an intergovernmental scientific initiative aiming to establish a scientific basis for improving relationships between people and their environments.
- It integrates natural and social sciences, economics, and education to enhance human well-being, ensure fair distribution of benefits, and preserve natural and managed ecosystems, promoting culturally suitable and environmentally sustainable approaches to economic development.

### Conclusion

- The designation of new Biosphere Reserves by UNESCO highlights the ongoing global efforts to balance conservation with sustainable development.
- These reserves serve as living examples of how humans can coexist with nature while respecting each other's needs, showcasing the importance of preserving biodiversity and cultural heritage.

## PINK BOLLWORM: A MAJOR THREAT TO COTTON CULTIVATION IN NORTH INDIA

### Context

- The pink bollworm (PBW) has emerged as a significant pest threatening cotton cultivation in Punjab, Haryana, and Rajasthan.
- The reduction in cotton acreage from 16 lakh hectares to 10 lakh hectares in these states underscores the severity of the issue.

### About Pink Bollworm (PBW)

- The pink bollworm (*Pectinophora gossypiella*), known as "gulabi sundhi" among Indian farmers, is a major pest affecting cotton farming.

- ⇒ The pest's larvae burrow into cotton bolls, causing extensive damage to the lint and rendering it unfit for use.
- ⇒ Despite the availability of prevention techniques, their adoption has been limited, leading to severe consequences for cotton cultivation.

### Physical Description

- ⇒ **Adult Moth:** Small, grey moth with thin, fringed wings.
- ⇒ **Larva:** Dull white caterpillar with distinct pink banding along its back, growing up to half an inch in length.

### Life Cycle

- ⇒ **Egg Laying:** Females lay eggs inside cotton bolls.
- ⇒ **Larval Stage:** Larvae burrow into cotton bolls, feeding on lint and seeds, causing significant damage.

### Damage Mechanism

- ⇒ **Feeding Impact:** Larvae chew through the cotton lint to access seeds, disrupting the protective tissue and creating entry points for other pests and fungi.
- ⇒ **Secondary Damage:** Damage from larvae can lead to further infestations and diseases.

### Challenges in Managing PBW

- ⇒ **Spread and Infestation:** Detected in North India during the 2017-18 season, PBW has since spread significantly, with increased frequency of attacks each year.
- ⇒ **Control Measures:**
  - **Curative Measures:** Use of insecticides, which are less effective once the pest has infested the crop.
  - **Preventive Measures:** Techniques like pheromone paste application and PBKnot technology, which have seen limited adoption.

### Problems with Adoption of Preventive Measures

- ⇒ **Traditional Conservatism:** Resistance to adopting new technologies due to high costs and lack of immediate visible benefits.
- ⇒ **Lack of Awareness and Training:** Significant gap in farmer awareness and training regarding new preventive techniques.
- ⇒ **Financial Constraints:** High costs of preventive measures are prohibitive for many smallholder farmers.

### Reasons for Ineffective PBW Management

- ⇒ **Focus on Curative rather than Preventive Measures:** Tendency to prioritize insecticide application over preventive measures.
- ⇒ **Inadequate Coordination and Management:** Lack of coordination across states and improper management of crop residues contribute to the pest's spread.

### Recommendations for Improvement

- ⇒ **Expand Preventive Measures:**
  - Increase adoption through subsidies, financial support, and awareness campaigns.
  - Demonstrate effectiveness through field trials and success stories.
  - Combine preventive and curative techniques for comprehensive pest management.
- ⇒ **Enhance Coordination and Support:**
  - Foster collaboration between states for effective management.
  - Strengthen support systems for farmers, including training, financial aid, and technical assistance.
- ⇒ **Improve Residue and Seed Management:**
  - Implement proper disposal practices for infected crop residues.
  - Ensure cotton seeds are free from infestation to reduce new outbreaks.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ Addressing the pink bollworm challenge requires a multifaceted approach that combines preventive and curative measures, enhances farmer education and support, and promotes state-level coordination.
- ⇒ By tackling these challenges comprehensively, the impact of PBW on cotton cultivation can be mitigated, potentially restoring cotton production in the affected states.

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## THE ISSUE WITH TREE PLANTING SCHEMES

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### Context

- ⇒ The widespread exploitation of forest resources has led to severe degradation of forests globally.

- ⇒ To address this, the United Nations has declared 2021–2030 as the Decade of Ecosystem Restoration, aiming to restore 350 million hectares of degraded land and bolster global efforts in forest conservation and biodiversity through mass tree planting initiatives.

### Introduction

- ⇒ The degradation of forest landscapes due to unsustainable exploitation of resources has been a pressing issue.
- ⇒ According to the World Bank, the world has lost approximately 10 million square kilometers of forests since the start of the 20th century.
- ⇒ In response to this, the United Nations has designated 2021–2030 as the Decade of Ecosystem Restoration, targeting the restoration of 350 million hectares of degraded land.
- ⇒ This initiative aims to generate \$9 trillion in ecosystem services and sequester between 13 to 26 gigatons of greenhouse gases from the atmosphere.



### Importance of Tree Planting

- ⇒ Tree planting is a recognized method to support biodiversity and address climate-related challenges.
- ⇒ It plays a crucial role in biological carbon sequestration, which helps in removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.
- ⇒ Mass-scale tree planting is seen as a global solution to combat climate change, supported by various governmental and non-governmental organizations.
- ⇒ In India, the Van Mahotsava ('festival of trees') program, initiated in July 1950, has promoted tree planting and improved forest areas through annual celebrations during the first week of July.

### Recent Tree Planting Initiatives

- ⇒ Recent years have witnessed an increase in tree planting drives led by various agencies, including governments.
- ⇒ These drives often feature catchy slogans and attract media attention, involving numerous individuals and organizations.
- ⇒ Notable global initiatives include the "One Trillion Project" by the World Economic Forum, the "Great Green Wall of China," Pakistan's "10 Billion Tree Tsunami," and the "Bonn Challenge," which aims to restore 350 million hectares of degraded land by 2030.

### Criticisms of Mass Tree Planting Drives

- ⇒ Despite their good intentions, mass tree planting drives have faced criticism.
- ⇒ Issues include limited community participation, inadequate post-planting measures, and the promotion of monocultures, which reduce the effectiveness of carbon sequestration and biodiversity enhancement.
- ⇒ Environmentalists and scientists have expressed concerns about the lack of ecological and local relevance of these programs and the insufficient involvement of people.
- ⇒ Studies have shown that planting trees in certain areas, such as grasslands, can harm local ecosystems, destroy habitats, increase wildfire risks, and exacerbate global warming.

### Post-Planting Measures and Alternative Approaches

- ⇒ Planting saplings alone is not sufficient; effective post-planting measures and monitoring are crucial for success.
- ⇒ Many tree-planting drives, particularly those not supported by governments, lack these provisions.
- ⇒ Contrary to popular belief, tree planting is not always the most cost-effective climate solution compared to other methods like ecosystem restoration and creating tree islands, which involve planting in smaller, strategically chosen patches.

### India's Challenges

- ⇒ India faces significant challenges in its tree planting and forest restoration efforts.
- ⇒ Approximately 10 million hectares of Indian forests are under encroachment, and about 27.5 crore people rely on forests for their livelihoods.
- ⇒ Since Independence, India has lost nearly 5.7 million hectares of forest land for non-forestry purposes.

- ⇒ These challenges complicate India's goal to restore 26 million hectares of degraded forests by 2030 and improve forest cover through tree planting.

### Policy Changes and Future Strategies

- ⇒ India has implemented notable policy changes to tackle forestry challenges and enhance restoration efforts.
- ⇒ However, persistent problems continue to affect these initiatives.
- ⇒ Mass planting drives need reevaluation to prioritize adequate funding, active community participation, and technical considerations.
- ⇒ Reoriented strategies, along with public awareness campaigns, social media engagement, and incentivized community participation, can help bring about positive changes in forest ecosystems.
- ⇒ These efforts can create resilient forests with diverse capacities and capabilities, contributing to ecological balance and environmental sustainability.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ While tree planting is a vital strategy for restoring degraded landscapes and mitigating climate change, it requires proper planning, community involvement, and post-planting care to be effective.
- ⇒ Addressing the criticisms and improving strategies can enhance the effectiveness of these initiatives.
- ⇒ Ensuring sustainable practices and prioritizing ecological balance will help achieve long-term environmental goals, ultimately benefiting both the planet and its inhabitants.

## SCIENCE & TECHNOLOGY

### CRITICGPT: REVOLUTIONIZING AI-ASSISTED CODE REVIEW

#### Introduction

- ⇒ CriticGPT is a powerful AI tool developed using OpenAI's GPT-4 model, designed to assist AI judges in identifying errors in ChatGPT-generated code.
- ⇒ This innovative tool aims to enhance the accuracy and stability of code by detecting bugs that human reviewers might miss, marking a significant advancement in AI-assisted code review.

#### Research and Development

- ⇒ The creation of CriticGPT is thoroughly documented in a research paper titled "LLM Critics Help Catch LLM Bugs."
- ⇒ To refine the AI's error-detection capabilities, researchers trained CriticGPT with a dataset exclusively composed of intentionally incorrect code.
- ⇒ This rigorous training process enabled CriticGPT to identify and report code errors with exceptional precision.
- ⇒ The study's findings indicate that human annotators preferred the critiques provided by CriticGPT over those from human judges 63% of the time, especially when identifying mistakes related to large language models (LLM).
- ⇒ This high level of acceptance underscores the programming community's readiness to embrace AI-generated critical comments.

#### Innovations in Review Techniques

- ⇒ CriticGPT incorporates a cutting-edge technique known as "Force Sampling Beam Search" to assist human critics in producing more detailed and comprehensive reviews.
- ⇒ This method significantly reduces the risk of "hallucinations," where AI erroneously identifies non-existent or irrelevant errors.
- ⇒ One of the most noteworthy features of CriticGPT is its customizable error detection capability.
- ⇒ Users can adjust the thoroughness of error detection to find an optimal balance between identifying genuine bugs and minimizing unnecessary "error" flags.
- ⇒ This flexibility allows for a tailored review process that meets specific project needs.



### Economic and Environmental Benefits

- The establishment of the bioplastic park is expected to deliver numerous economic benefits.
- The project will create a significant number of jobs, providing new employment opportunities for local residents and stimulating the regional economy.
- Additionally, the development of the bioplastic industry will support related sectors, fostering overall economic growth in the region.
- From an environmental perspective, the transition from petrochemical plastics to bioplastics could lead to a substantial reduction in pollution.
- Traditional plastics contribute significantly to environmental degradation, accumulating in landfills and oceans and causing harm to wildlife and ecosystems.
- Bioplastics, being biodegradable, offer a viable solution to this problem, breaking down more naturally and reducing the long-term environmental footprint of plastic waste.

### Advancing Technology and Research

- Beyond its immediate economic and environmental impacts, the bioplastic park aims to become a hub for technological innovation and research.
- The facility will focus on developing new technologies for plastic production, recycling, and waste reduction.
- By providing a collaborative environment for scientists and experts, the park will drive advancements in bioplastic technology, leading to more efficient production methods and new applications for bioplastics.
- This research and development focus will not only enhance the park's economic viability but also contribute to global efforts to find sustainable solutions to plastic pollution.

### Conclusion

- CriticGPT stands as a remarkable leap forward in the realm of AI-assisted code review.
- By integrating the robust features of GPT-4 with specialized training and innovative techniques, it significantly improves the code review process.
- While it excels in many areas, its limitations in handling complex and lengthy coding tasks highlight the need for continued development.
- Nonetheless, CriticGPT's ability to provide precise and reliable error detection marks a significant milestone in enhancing the efficiency and accuracy of software development.

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## DARKNET OR DARK WEB

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### Introduction

- The increasing reliance on digital platforms has made understanding the various layers of the internet crucial, particularly as cybersecurity threats evolve.
- Recently, the National Testing Agency (NTA) faced a new threat from the 'darknet', highlighting the importance of comprehending these hidden realms.

### About

- The internet can be visualized as an iceberg, categorized into the surface web, deep web, and darknet (or dark web).



### Surface Web (Visible Web)

- **Definition:** The portion of the internet that is indexed by search engines and accessible to the general public.
- **Content:** Includes websites, blogs, news articles, and online shopping platforms.
- **Access:** Easily accessible through search engines like Google.
- **Extent:** Represents only about 10% of the entire web.
- **Examples:** News websites, educational resources, e-commerce platforms.

### Deep Web

- **Definition:** Parts of the internet not indexed by search engines; not intentionally hidden but inaccessible through conventional means.
- **Access:** Requires specific URLs or credentials but not specialized software.

### Examples:

- **Password-protected Sites:** Email accounts, online banking portals.
- **Private Databases:** Company intranets, academic databases, government records.
- **Dynamic Content:** Pages generated in response to specific queries (e.g., search boxes or forms).

### Darknet or Dark Web

- ⇒ **Definition:** A hidden layer of the internet accessible only through specialized software and overlay networks, known for its anonymity and encryption.
- ⇒ **Access:** Requires tools like the Tor (The Onion Router) browser, which anonymizes user traffic through a network of relays.
- ⇒ **Nature:** Hosts content that is intentionally hidden and encrypted.
- ⇒ **Origin:** Initially developed for secure, anonymous exchanges, particularly for military and governmental purposes.
- ⇒ **Usage:** While used for legitimate purposes such as protecting privacy, it has also become associated with illegal activities, including the sale of weapons, narcotics, and illicit services.

### Key Points

- ⇒ **Surface Web:** The visible portion of the internet, constituting everyday websites and online services.
- ⇒ **Deep Web:** The larger, hidden part of the internet not indexed by search engines, comprising private and secure data.
- ⇒ **Darknet:** A subset of the deep web, accessible only via specialized software, often associated with anonymous and illicit activities.

### Implications and Security Concerns

- ⇒ The darknet's potential for misuse poses significant security threats.
- ⇒ For instance, recent threats to the NTA's exam security underscore the need for robust cybersecurity measures.
- ⇒ Understanding these internet layers is essential for developing effective strategies to mitigate risks and safeguard sensitive information.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ In today's digital age, the internet's multifaceted nature requires comprehensive understanding and vigilance.
- ⇒ While the surface web represents the familiar and accessible part of the internet, the deep web and darknet encompass vast, often hidden realms that hold both secure communications and potential threats.
- ⇒ As cyber threats continue to evolve, enhancing awareness and strengthening cybersecurity measures are imperative to ensure safe and secure online environments.

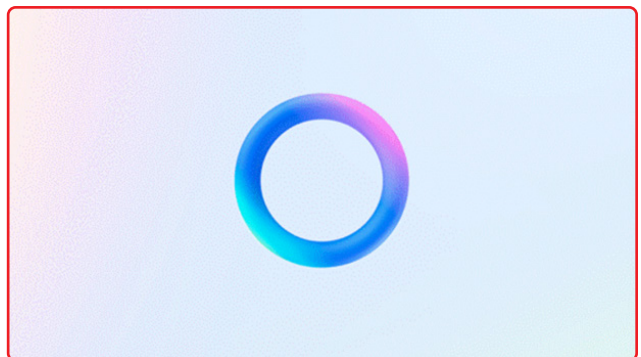
## META AI: LLAMA 3-POWERED CHATBOT LAUNCHED IN INDIA ON WHATSAPP, FACEBOOK, INSTAGRAM

### Introduction

- ⇒ Meta has recently introduced its advanced Llama 3-powered AI chatbot, Meta AI, to users in India.
- ⇒ This launch marks a significant step in expanding AI-driven interactions across major social media platforms such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Messenger, and Facebook.
- ⇒ Previously available only to a select group of users in a few countries, Meta AI is now accessible to a much broader audience following the general elections in India.

### Functionality and Accessibility

- ⇒ Meta AI brings a suite of features comparable to other top-tier chatbots like ChatGPT, Google's Gemini, and Anthropic's Claude.
- ⇒ Users can leverage Meta AI for a wide range of tasks, including writing summaries, planning workouts, generating cooking ideas, and composing emails.





- ⇒ On Instagram, the AI can suggest related Reels, enhancing the content discovery experience.
- ⇒ On Facebook, interactions are personalized based on the user's feed, making the social media experience more engaging and tailored to individual preferences.

### Unique Features and Cultural Sensitivity

- ⇒ Despite its advanced capabilities, Meta AI has shown biases during tests, particularly in picture generation.
- ⇒ It often depicted stereotypical images of Indian settings, such as Indian men wearing turbans.
- ⇒ Meta acknowledges these issues and is committed to continually updating and improving the model to ensure more accurate and unbiased representations.
- ⇒ This commitment to improvement underscores Meta's dedication to creating a more inclusive and culturally sensitive AI experience.

### Privacy and Interaction

- ⇒ Privacy is a critical concern for Meta AI. The chatbot does not retain information from previous group conversations, ensuring that user interactions remain private and secure.
- ⇒ While the AI feature cannot be entirely disabled, users have the option to avoid using it during searches.
- ⇒ This rollout is particularly significant in India, a country with 500 million WhatsApp users.
- ⇒ By integrating the AI into group chats, Meta AI enhances functionality, assisting users with tasks such as trip planning and movie selection.
- ⇒ However, the AI only comprehends the context of active interactions, ensuring a focused and relevant user experience.

### About Llama 3-powered AI Chatbot

- ⇒ The Llama 3-powered AI chatbot is based on Meta's third version of the Language Model for Applications (LLaMA).
- ⇒ This model is renowned for its efficiency in handling natural language processing tasks, even with fewer computational resources.
- ⇒ Designed for a wide range of applications, Llama 3 offers robust language understanding and response generation capabilities.
- ⇒ This aligns with Meta's privacy-focused approach, ensuring that personal data is not inadvertently used during training, thereby maintaining user confidentiality and trust.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ The launch of Meta AI in India signifies a major milestone in the integration of advanced AI technologies into everyday digital interactions.
- ⇒ By offering a versatile and culturally sensitive AI chatbot across popular social media platforms, Meta is poised to enhance user engagement and provide a more personalized and secure online experience.
- ⇒ As Meta continues to refine and update the Llama 3-powered AI, users can look forward to an increasingly sophisticated and user-friendly digital assistant.

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## RADIATION BIOSIMETRY: THE ABCS OF RESPONDING TO A RADIOLOGICAL EVENT

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### Introduction

- ⇒ Radiological events, such as an Improvised Nuclear Device detonation or a reactor accident, necessitate the rapid identification of individuals exposed to significant radiation doses.
- ⇒ This identification is crucial for administering recently approved drugs for treating radiation sickness.
- ⇒ Radiation biodosimetry is pivotal in this context, offering a means to determine radiation exposure levels in individuals.



### What is Biodosimetry?

- ⇒ Biodosimetry is a scientific method that quantifies radiation exposure based on biological changes in blood, urine, or hair.
- ⇒ This technique is especially useful when individuals lack personal radiation monitoring devices.

- ⇒ The gold standard assay in biodosimetry is the measurement of chromosome aberrations in white blood cells.
- ⇒ When DNA in these cells is irradiated, it can break and incorrectly repair, forming Dicentric Chromosomes (DC) - a specific marker of radiation exposure.
- ⇒ To measure DC, lymphocytes from exposed individuals are cultured, and their chromosomes are spread on a slide and stained.
- ⇒ The DCs are then counted using microscopy, a process that takes about 2-3 days.
- ⇒ Despite its precision, this Dicentric Chromosome Assay (DCA) is labor-intensive and impractical for large-scale events due to its limited throughput.

### Alternative Assays

- ⇒ The Cytokinesis Block Micronucleus Assay (CBMN) is a simpler alternative to DCA.
- ⇒ This assay involves inducing cell division in white blood cells, arresting the process to form binucleated cells, and identifying micronuclei that indicate DNA damage.
- ⇒ Though slightly easier to perform, the CBMN assay requires about three days for results due to extended cell culturing.
- ⇒ A more rapid assay is the gamma-H2AX assay, which measures the phosphorylated form of a specific histone protein, indicative of radiation exposure.
- ⇒ This test can distinguish between exposed and unexposed individuals and differentiate low from high-dose exposures within 6-8 hours.
- ⇒ However, it must be conducted within 24 hours of exposure due to the kinetics of histone phosphorylation.

### Increasing Throughput

- ⇒ Traditional methods to increase biodosimetry assay throughput involve lab networks sharing samples globally.
- ⇒ However, this approach is inadequate for large-scale radiological events.
- ⇒ The Center for Radiological Research at Columbia University has developed automatable versions of major biodosimetry assays using 96-well plates.
- ⇒ The Rapid Automated Biodosimetry Tool (RABiT) and its second iteration (RABiT-II) utilize custom robotics and High Throughput Screening (HTS) platforms to perform assays with significantly higher throughput.
- ⇒ These systems, widely used in the pharmaceutical industry and academia, allow for the rapid analysis of thousands of samples per day per machine.

### Benefits of High Throughput Screening Platforms

HTS platforms offer several advantages, including:

- ⇒ **Increased Throughput:** Capable of analyzing thousands of samples per day, essential for large-scale radiological events.
- ⇒ **Reliability:** Rigorous quality control and continuous operation ensure system reliability during crises.
- ⇒ **Trained Personnel:** A broad base of trained users and maintenance personnel ensures efficient operation.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ High throughput automated biodosimetry provides a crucial capability for dose assessment in large-scale radiological or nuclear incidents.
- ⇒ It complements existing triage systems by categorizing exposed individuals for appropriate treatment and facilitating long-term epidemiological follow-up.
- ⇒ This technology represents a significant advancement in the ability to respond effectively to radiological emergencies.

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## SPACEX'S POLARIS DAWN MISSION: FIRST COMMERCIAL SPACEWALK

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### Introduction

- ⇒ SpaceX is set to launch the Polaris Dawn mission, a groundbreaking commercial space project, soon.
- ⇒ This mission represents a significant advancement in civilian space travel, featuring the first private extravehicular activity (spacewalk) with an all-civilian crew.

### Recent Context and Significance

- ⇒ The mission, scheduled no earlier than July 31, 2023, follows SpaceX's Inspiration4 mission, which was the first all-civilian spaceflight in September 2021.

- Polaris Dawn is significantly funded by U.S. billionaire Jared Isaacman, highlighting the growing influence of private individuals and organizations in space exploration.

### Objectives and Innovations

- Polaris Dawn aims to achieve several key milestones. Foremost among these is the first private spacewalk.
- The mission will also conduct scientific research critical to human health in space, including low-gravity experiments.
- Additionally, the mission will test the integration of Starlink WiFi into their spacecraft, potentially revolutionizing communication for future space missions.



### Mission Details

- The mission will utilize the SpaceX Crew Dragon capsule, previously used for crewed spaceflights.
- Jared Isaacman is among the four crew members set to embark on Polaris Dawn.
- The mission targets a high orbit of approximately 700 kilometers above Earth, the highest manned flight since the Apollo missions.
- The crew will spend about five days in orbit, providing ample time to conduct planned experiments and the historic spacewalk.
- Success of the Polaris Dawn mission could significantly influence future policies and advancements in international space exploration, enhancing the viability of civilian space travel and pioneering new technologies.

### More About SpaceX

- **Pioneering Achievements:** Founded by Elon Musk in 2002, SpaceX has achieved numerous milestones, including the launch of Falcon 1 in 2008, the first privately funded liquid-fueled rocket to reach orbit, and Dragon's 2010 mission, the first commercial spacecraft to deliver cargo to the International Space Station (ISS).
- **Innovative Projects:** In 2018, SpaceX launched Falcon Heavy, the world's most powerful operational rocket. The company initiated the Starlink project in 2015, aiming to provide global internet connectivity through a constellation of satellites.
- **Crewed Space Missions:** In 2020, SpaceX's Crew Dragon spacecraft completed its first crewed flight, marking the first U.S. crewed launch since the Space Shuttle era and cementing SpaceX's leadership in manned space exploration.

### Conclusion

- The Polaris Dawn mission represents a pivotal moment in civilian space exploration, with its ambitious objectives and innovative technologies.
- Its success could pave the way for future civilian-led missions, attract private investment, and boost public interest in space travel.
- SpaceX continues to push the boundaries of space exploration, demonstrating the transformative potential of private enterprise in the final frontier.

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## AIR INDIA WELCOMES FIRST A320 NEO AIRCRAFT

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### Introduction

- Air India, owned by the Tata Group, has recently acquired its first narrow-body plane with a new uniform.
- The Airbus A320 Neo, designated with the color code VT-RTN, arrived at Indira Gandhi International Airport on July 7 from Toulouse, France.
- This acquisition marks a significant milestone in Air India's ongoing transformation journey.

### Air India's Fleet Enhancement

The newly released Airbus A320 Neo features a three-class configuration, marking a first for the airline's narrow-body fleet. The aircraft is equipped with:

- **132 Economy Class Seats:** Designed for comfort and efficiency.

- ⇒ **24 Premium Economy Seats:** Offering extra legroom for added comfort.
- ⇒ **Luxury Business Class Seats:** Ensuring a premium experience for business travelers.

This new addition is set to commence short-haul domestic flights in August 2024, enhancing the travel experience for passengers across different service classes.

### Current and Future Plans

- ⇒ Air India currently operates three A320 Neo aircraft within its domestic network, all featuring similar three-class layouts but bearing older liveries.
- ⇒ Starting in early 2019, the airline initiated a comprehensive fleet upgrade, incorporating both narrow-body and wide-body planes to enhance customer experience further.

### Historical Overview of Air India

- ⇒ Founded by J.R.D. Tata, Air India took its maiden flight on October 15, 1932.
- ⇒ Over the years, it has expanded into a vast network covering domestic and international destinations.
- ⇒ After 69 years of government ownership, the airline was reacquired by the Tata Group in January 2022, signaling a new era of revitalization and growth.

### Transformation Journey

- ⇒ Under the project Vihaan.AI, Air India is striving to transform into a world-class airline while retaining its Indian heritage.
- ⇒ The initial phase, dubbed the "Taxi" phase, involved crucial changes such as reactivating long-idled planes, recruiting additional staff, upgrading technology, and improving customer service standards.

### Global Partnerships

- ⇒ As a member of the Star Alliance, Air India benefits from an extensive global network, facilitating seamless connectivity to major destinations worldwide.
- ⇒ This strategic alliance enhances passenger convenience and travel options. The addition of the A320 Neo to Air India's fleet is a testament to Tata's commitment to elevating service quality and operational excellence.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ The arrival of the new Airbus A320 Neo marks a significant step in Air India's ambitious transformation plan.
- ⇒ With enhanced features and improved service classes, the airline is poised to offer a superior flying experience to its passengers.
- ⇒ As Air India continues to modernize its fleet and expand its global reach, it stands ready to reclaim its position as a leading carrier in the aviation industry, embodying both excellence and the rich legacy of its Indian roots.

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## IIT MADRAS AIMS TO MAKE INDIA A GLOBAL CHESS POWERHOUSE

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### Introduction

- ⇒ In an ambitious move to elevate India's status in the world of chess, the IIT Madras Center of Excellence in Sports Science and Analytics (CESSA) has announced a comprehensive plan to transform the country into a leading chess hub.
- ⇒ This announcement was made during the "Sports Tech Start-Up Conclave" held in New Delhi.

### Recent Developments

- ⇒ At the conclave, which was sponsored by prominent companies like Dream Sports, Vedanta, and SFA Play, several strategic plans were unveiled.
- ⇒ These plans focus on leveraging advanced technology to promote chess across India, engage more fans, and prevent cheating in the sport.

### Government and Institutional Support

- ⇒ Sandip Pradhan, the Director-General of the Sports Authority of India, expressed strong support for this initiative.
- ⇒ He commended IIT Madras for its pioneering role in this tech-driven sports transformation.



- ⇒ Prof. V. Kamakoti, Director of IIT-M, highlighted the potential of high-performance computing and artificial intelligence to enhance chess training, which heavily relies on pattern recognition and strategic planning.

### Educational and Training Programs

- ⇒ Beyond technology, IIT Madras CESSA aims to revolutionize sports education and training.
- ⇒ The center is set to launch new courses on the National Program on Technology Enhanced Learning (NPTEL) platform, focusing on skills essential for the sports industry.
- ⇒ These training programs are designed to equip athletes, coaches, and other sports professionals with advanced knowledge in sports science and management.

### Future Plans

- ⇒ Looking ahead, IIT Madras CESSA plans to introduce a variety of training programs, including a Bachelor of Science in Sports Science and a Master of Arts in Sports Management.
- ⇒ These programs aim to provide future sports professionals with the expertise needed to excel in this expanding field.
- ⇒ Additionally, there are discussions about launching certificate programs in Artificial Intelligence/Machine Learning (AI/ML) and Data Science tailored for sports applications.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ By integrating cutting-edge technology with comprehensive educational programs, IIT Madras CESSA aspires to establish India as the foremost chess nation globally and beyond.
- ⇒ This initiative not only aims to enhance India's chess capabilities but also seeks to make a significant impact on the global chess community.

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## ISRO'S SATELLITE LAUNCH CAPACITY AND CHALLENGES

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### Introduction

- ⇒ The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is recognized globally for its robust launch vehicle capabilities.
- ⇒ However, recent developments highlight a significant gap between these capabilities and the actual demand for satellite launches.

### Current Launch Vehicle Capabilities

ISRO operates a fleet of launch vehicles tailored for different payload capacities and mission requirements:

- ⇒ **Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV):** Designed for launching small satellites into low Earth orbits efficiently.
- ⇒ **Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV):** Known for its versatility, capable of launching satellites into various orbits, including sun-synchronous and geosynchronous transfer orbits.
- ⇒ **Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle (GSLV):** Specifically used for placing heavier payloads into geosynchronous orbits.
- ⇒ **Launch Vehicle Mark-III (LVM-3):** ISRO's most powerful launcher, capable of deploying payloads up to four tonnes into geosynchronous orbits. It is pivotal for ambitious missions like Chandrayaan and future human spaceflight endeavors.



### Demand-Driven Model Shift

- ⇒ In recent years, India's space policy has shifted towards a demand-driven model. This approach mandates that satellites are developed and launched only in response to identified market demands.
- ⇒ It marks a departure from the earlier supply-driven model where ISRO would build satellites and then seek customers.

### Educational Challenges for Demand Creation

- ⇒ A critical hurdle for ISRO lies in generating demand for satellite services across diverse sectors.
- ⇒ This requires extensive educational efforts to inform potential users about the benefits and applications of satellite technology.
- ⇒ Key stakeholders include government agencies, defense establishments, private enterprises, and academic institutions.

### Technological Advancements and Capability Gaps

While ISRO's current launch vehicles are proficient for many missions, there are gaps in capabilities for certain advanced missions. For instance:

- **Chandrayaan Missions:** Future lunar exploration missions like Chandrayaan 4 require higher payload capacities and specialized launch configurations.
- **Next Generation Launch Vehicle (NGLV):** ISRO is developing the NGLV to meet evolving demands, aiming to enhance payload capacity to up to 10 tonnes to geostationary transfer orbits (GTO).

### Economics of Launch Vehicles

The economic viability of launch vehicles is crucial for sustaining ISRO's operations:

- **Reusability:** Initiatives to develop reusable rocket stages aim to reduce launch costs significantly, making space missions more affordable.
- **Green Propellants:** Research into eco-friendly propellants aims to minimize environmental impact and operational costs associated with rocket launches.

### Role of Private Sector and Government

- India's space sector reform emphasizes greater involvement of the private sector in satellite manufacturing and launch services.
- The government's role is transitioning from being a primary service provider to a facilitator and customer of private enterprises.

### Conclusion

- In conclusion, while ISRO possesses advanced launch capabilities, bridging the gap between supply and demand remains a critical challenge.
- Addressing this requires concerted efforts in educating potential users, advancing technological capabilities, and fostering a conducive regulatory environment.
- By enhancing collaboration between government agencies, private firms, and educational institutions, India can effectively harness its space assets for sustained growth and innovation in the global space arena.

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## MEDICAL DEVICES INFORMATION SYSTEM (MEDEVIS)

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### Introduction

- The Medical Devices Information System (MeDeVIS), recently launched by the World Health Organization (WHO), represents a significant advancement in global healthcare.
- This publicly accessible online tool is designed to enhance the distribution and utilization of medical devices worldwide.

### Objective of MeDeVIS

- The primary purpose of MeDeVIS is to assist governments, healthcare officials, and end users in making informed decisions regarding the procurement, selection, and use of various medical devices.
- It serves as a comprehensive directory offering valuable information for these stakeholders.

### Scope of Medical Devices Covered

- MeDeVIS includes a catalog of 2,301 different types of medical devices, addressing a broad spectrum of health issues.
- These range from reproductive, maternal, newborn, and child health to critical infectious diseases such as Covid-19 and other non-communicable diseases.

### Global Impact and Necessity

- Globally, over 10,000 different types of medical devices are available, from simple tools to sophisticated devices like heart stents and radiotherapy machines.
- MeDeVIS aims to organize this vast array of data, enabling healthcare systems worldwide to make more efficient and informed decisions.



- Previously, information on medical devices was fragmented across various international and regulatory databases, complicating access to accurate information.
- MeDeVIS centralizes this information, addressing the need for a unified source.

### Features of MeDeVIS

- MeDeVIS provides a comprehensive, centralized database containing essential details about each medical device.
- This includes information on the technology type, required healthcare system level, device size, and necessary infrastructure compatibility.
- By making this information readily accessible, WHO aims to improve global public health and healthcare delivery.
- The platform not only facilitates better decision-making but also helps bridge gaps in global healthcare knowledge.

### Conclusion

- The introduction of MeDeVIS by WHO marks a pivotal moment in global healthcare.
- By centralizing and making medical device information easily accessible, MeDeVIS enhances the ability of healthcare providers and decision-makers to improve public health outcomes.
- This tool plays a crucial role in addressing the complexities and challenges of medical device management and usage worldwide, ultimately contributing to a more informed and effective healthcare system.

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## NASA'S CHAPEA PROJECT: PREPARING FOR MARS MISSIONS

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### Introduction

- NASA's CHAPEA (CHallenge and Preparation for Extra-Atmospheric Activity) project is a groundbreaking initiative aimed at simulating the conditions of a Mars mission.
- Central to this project is "Mars Dune Alpha," a 1,700-square-foot habitat created with 3D printing at the Johnson Space Center in Houston, Texas.
- This innovative structure includes bedrooms, bathrooms, a work area, a robot station, a gym, and a vertical farm.
- Adjacent to it is a 1,200-square-foot area designed to simulate outdoor Martian activities, complete with red, rocky cliffs and simulated Martian soil to enhance the realism of the experience.



### Mission Objectives and Experiences

- The primary objective of the CHAPEA project is to gather data on the physical and mental impacts of a Mars-like environment.
- This includes understanding the effects of isolation, limited resources, and delayed communication.
- These insights are crucial for preparing astronauts for the challenges of long-term space missions.
- Crew members engage in various tasks, from simulated spacewalks to growing vegetables, providing NASA with valuable information on maintaining human health in confined and remote settings.

### Participants of the Simulation

- The CHAPEA project selected a diverse team of professionals, including research scientists and doctors, through a rigorous application process that assessed their health, motivation, and professional qualifications.
- The current crew includes Kelly Haston, Anca Selariu, Ross Brockwell, and Nathan Jones, each bringing unique expertise to the mission.

### Understanding Mars' Environment

- Mars presents a hostile environment for human habitation, with rapidly changing temperatures and an atmosphere composed primarily of carbon dioxide.
- The Martian landscape features canyons, volcanoes, and massive dust storms, posing significant challenges for manned missions.

- Beyond preparing for the logistical and moral challenges of Mars exploration, the mission aims to enhance our understanding of the planet's history and its implications for Earth.
- Following this initial CHAPEA mission, additional simulations are scheduled for 2025 and 2026, with the goal of sending humans to Mars by the 2030s.

### India's Involvement in Martian Exploration

- Alongside NASA's advancements, India's ISRO (Indian Space Research Organisation) has shown significant interest in Mars exploration.
- ISRO's successful 2014 Mars Orbiter Mission (MOM) marked a milestone in interplanetary study.
- As India continues to focus on space exploration, it plans to undertake more Martian missions in the future.

### Conclusion

- The CHAPEA project represents a significant step toward realizing human missions to Mars.
- By simulating the conditions of Mars on Earth, NASA is gathering critical data to ensure the safety and well-being of astronauts on future missions.
- The collaboration between NASA and international space agencies like ISRO highlights the global effort to explore and understand Mars, paving the way for potential human settlement on the Red Planet in the coming decades.

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## REGENERATIVE BRAKING IN ELECTRIC VEHICLES

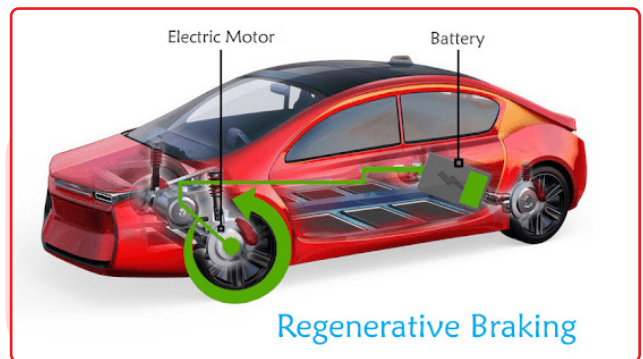
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### Introduction

- In the landscape of electric vehicles (EVs), regenerative braking stands as a pivotal innovation aimed at enhancing energy efficiency and sustainability.
- Here's a detailed exploration of regenerative braking, its operational mechanics, advantages, and implications:

### Understanding Braking

- Braking in vehicles is the process by which kinetic energy, possessed by a moving vehicle, is converted into another form of energy to slow down or stop.
- Traditionally, this is achieved through frictional mechanisms such as disc brakes or drum brakes, where mechanical energy (kinetic) is transformed into thermal energy (heat).



### What is Regenerative Braking?

- Regenerative braking differs significantly from traditional braking methods.
- It harnesses the kinetic energy that would typically be lost as heat during braking and converts it into electrical energy.
- This energy is then stored in the vehicle's battery or a supercapacitor for later use.
- The process essentially turns the electric motor of the vehicle into a generator during braking phases.

### How Does Regenerative Braking Work?

- **Reversal of Motor Function:** In an electric vehicle, the motor acts as a generator during regenerative braking. When the driver lifts their foot off the accelerator or applies the brake, the motor's operation switches from consuming electricity to propel the vehicle to generating electricity from the kinetic energy of the wheels.
- **Energy Storage:** The generated electrical energy is directed back into the vehicle's battery pack or a dedicated energy storage unit. This stored energy can then be used to power the vehicle's electric motor during acceleration or maintain operations when demand for power is high.
- **Types of Braking Systems:** Alongside regenerative braking, electric vehicles often integrate traditional friction brakes to supplement braking force, especially during emergency stops or at higher speeds where regenerative braking efficiency decreases.

### Advantages of Regenerative Braking

- **Enhanced Energy Efficiency:** By capturing and reusing kinetic energy that would otherwise be lost, regenerative braking improves the overall energy efficiency of electric vehicles. This is particularly beneficial in urban driving conditions with frequent starts and stops.



- ⇒ **Extended Driving Range:** The ability to recover and store energy through regenerative braking contributes to extending the vehicle's driving range on a single charge, reducing the need for frequent recharging.
- ⇒ **Reduced Environmental Impact:** Lower energy consumption translates to reduced emissions and environmental impact, aligning with global efforts towards sustainable transportation solutions.

### Challenges and Considerations

- ⇒ **Limitations at Lower Speeds:** Regenerative braking efficiency decreases at lower speeds, where kinetic energy available for recovery is minimal, necessitating supplementary braking systems.
- ⇒ **Complete Braking Requirement:** In certain scenarios, regenerative braking alone may not provide sufficient braking force to bring the vehicle to a complete stop, requiring integration with traditional friction brakes.
- ⇒ **Technological Integration:** The successful implementation of regenerative braking requires advanced engineering and seamless integration with the vehicle's powertrain and control systems.

### Future Implications and Conclusion

- ⇒ Regenerative braking exemplifies the evolving landscape of electric vehicle technology, emphasizing efficiency, sustainability, and innovation.
- ⇒ As automakers and engineers continue to refine and expand the capabilities of regenerative braking systems, its role in enhancing the performance and environmental credentials of electric vehicles is set to grow.
- ⇒ This technology not only contributes to reducing operational costs for EV owners but also plays a crucial part in achieving broader environmental and energy sustainability goals worldwide.

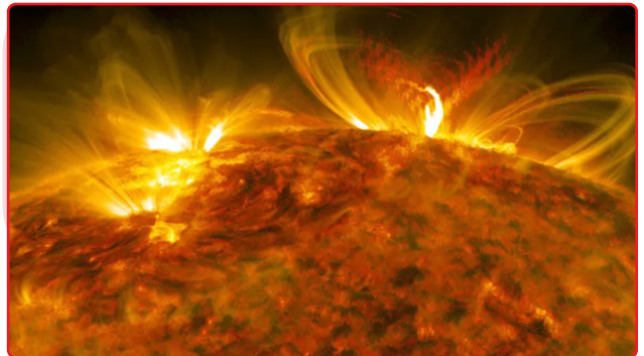
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## WHAT IS AN EXTREME SOLAR PARTICLE EVENT?

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### Introduction

- ⇒ Recent studies have shown that "extreme solar particle events," although very rare, can have significant impacts on Earth and pose serious dangers.
- ⇒ These events, which occur approximately once every thousand years, involve the sun expelling large quantities of protons into space.
- ⇒ The most recent recorded event was in 993 AD. When these protons reach Earth, they can have substantial effects.



### Understanding Extreme Solar Particle Events

- ⇒ An extreme solar particle event, also known as a solar storm, occurs when the sun emits a large number of protons into space.
- ⇒ These events are much more intense than regular solar flares and can potentially cause more damage to Earth.

### Impact on the Ozone Layer

- ⇒ One of the primary risks of solar particle events is the potential damage to Earth's ozone layer.
- ⇒ The ozone layer acts as a shield, protecting life on Earth by blocking and absorbing most of the sun's harmful ultraviolet (UV) radiation.
- ⇒ If this layer is damaged, more UV light would reach the Earth's surface.

### Potential Human Health Risks

- ⇒ Increased exposure to UV radiation can have severe health consequences.
- ⇒ According to experts Alan Cooper and Pavle Arsenovic, a compromised ozone layer could lead to higher rates of skin cancer and other DNA damage.
- ⇒ The duration and severity of these health risks depend on the intensity of the solar event and the condition of Earth's magnetic field.

### Long-Term Effects and Global Impact

- ⇒ Research indicates that a powerful solar particle event occurring during a period when Earth's magnetic field is weak could result in prolonged and severe consequences.
- ⇒ UV exposure could increase by up to 25%, and sun-induced DNA damage could rise by 50%. These effects could persist for up to six years.

### Study and Monitoring

- The study on the impacts of these events was conducted by Alan Cooper from Charles Sturt University and Pavle Arsenovic from the University of Natural Resources and Life Science (BOKU).
- Their research highlights the importance of monitoring solar activity to protect the Earth effectively from potential hazards.

### Conclusion

- Extreme solar particle events are rare but can have profound and long-lasting effects on Earth.
- Damage to the ozone layer and increased UV exposure pose significant risks to human health and the environment.
- Continued research and vigilant monitoring of solar activity are crucial in mitigating these potential dangers and safeguarding our planet.

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## DRUG USED TO TREAT CLOTS CAN PROTECT AGAINST COBRA VENOM DAMAGE

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### Introduction

- The red-spitting cobra (*Naja pallida*), a strikingly colored serpent native to Tanzania, poses a significant threat with its venomous capabilities.
- Measuring around 1.2 meters in length, this snake uses its venom as a primary defense mechanism.
- When threatened, it first tries to deter its attacker with a menacing display.
- If this fails, it deploys its venom in a two-step attack: a venomous spray aimed at the eyes, nose, and mouth, followed by a bite that delivers a substantial quantity of venom into the victim's bloodstream.



### The Physiology of Cobra Venom

- **Venom Delivery Mechanism:** The cobra's venom glands are surrounded by muscles that, when contracted, forcefully eject venom onto the threat. This spray causes immediate pain and irritation, impairing the victim's ability to see or defend itself. The cobra then takes advantage of this distraction to bite, injecting a larger dose of venom.
- **Toxic Effects:** Cobra venom contains a complex mixture of enzymes, proteins, and peptides that disrupt cellular functions and damage the nervous system. This can lead to paralysis, tissue necrosis, and in many cases, death. While the venom is lethal to most of its natural prey, humans can suffer severe injuries or permanent disabilities if bitten.

### Challenges with Current Antivenoms

- **Prevalence and Impact:** Venomous snakebites result in about 140,000 deaths annually, predominantly in tropical regions of Africa and Asia. Despite the high mortality rate, the treatment methods for snakebites remain outdated and inadequate.
- **Antivenom Production:** The traditional method for producing antivenom involves immunizing domestic animals such as horses and sheep with small doses of snake venom. These animals develop antibodies against the venom, which are then extracted from their blood and used as antivenom. This process, established in the late 19th century, is fraught with challenges, including:
  - ➔ **Production Difficulties:** The process of producing and purifying antivenom is complex and labor-intensive.
  - ➔ **Storage and Transportation:** Antivenoms require careful storage and transportation under controlled conditions, which can be costly and logistically challenging.
  - ➔ **Cost and Side Effects:** Antivenoms are expensive and can cause severe allergic reactions or other adverse effects in patients.

### Breakthrough Research on Tinzaparin

- **Study Overview:** A groundbreaking study published in July 2024 in Science Translational Medicine explored the potential of tinzaparin, a drug commonly used as an anticoagulant (blood thinner), to counteract the effects of spitting cobra venom. The study was conducted by a team of researchers from Australia, the UK, Canada, and Costa Rica.

- ⇒ **Findings:** The researchers discovered that tinzaparin significantly reduces cellular damage caused by spitting cobra venom. In experiments, tinzaparin not only protected cells from venom-induced damage but also reduced skin damage in mice exposed to the venom.
- ⇒ **Genetic Insights:** The researchers linked the venom's toxicity to the presence of specific genes involved in the synthesis of heparan sulphate, a sugar compound essential for blood vessel formation and clotting. The absence of these genes in certain experimental models was associated with reduced venom toxicity.
- ⇒ **Mechanism of Action:** Tinzaparin mimics heparan sulphate and interferes with the venom's interaction with its cellular receptors. By introducing tinzaparin, the researchers effectively blocked the venom's ability to bind to and damage cells.

### Blood Thinner as an Antidote

- ⇒ **Hypothesis and Results:** The study hypothesized that inhibiting the biological pathways involved in heparan sulphate synthesis could mitigate the venom's toxic effects. Tinzaparin, by resembling heparan sulphate, was found to disrupt these pathways. This protective effect was observed when tinzaparin was administered immediately after venom exposure, and even up to an hour later.
- ⇒ **Binding Mechanism:** Tinzaparin works by binding to the venom molecules, preventing them from interacting with their receptors on the cells. This interaction disrupts the venom's ability to cause damage.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ The research into tinzaparin as a potential treatment for snakebite venom represents a significant advancement in addressing a long-neglected problem.
- ⇒ By applying modern techniques, including the CRISPR gene-editing approach, to study venom toxicity, scientists have opened new avenues for developing effective treatments.
- ⇒ This breakthrough could potentially revolutionize the field of antivenom research, offering a more accessible and less costly alternative to traditional antivenoms, and renewing global interest in understanding and combating snake venom toxicity.

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## THIRTY METER TELESCOPE (TMT)

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### Context

- ⇒ Indian researchers at the Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA) in Bengaluru have developed a new online tool to create a comprehensive star catalogue for the Adaptive Optics System (AOS) of the upcoming Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT).

### Key Features of Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT)

#### About

- ⇒ **International Collaboration:** The Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) is an ambitious international project located at Mauna Kea in Hawaii, involving India, the US, Canada, China, and Japan.
- ⇒ **Indian Involvement:** India plays a crucial role in the TMT project, with the India TMT Center at IIA leading the national collaboration.
- ⇒ **Advanced Observatory:** TMT is designed to provide unprecedented resolution and sensitivity with its massive 30-meter primary mirror, advanced adaptive optics system, and state-of-the-art instruments.
- ⇒ **Future of Astronomy:** The TMT, along with the Giant Magellan Telescope and the European Southern Observatory's Extremely Large Telescope, represents the future of ground-based astronomy.

#### Primary Goals

- ⇒ **Early Universe:** The TMT aims to study the formation and evolution of the first galaxies and stars after the Big Bang.
- ⇒ **Galaxies:** It seeks to investigate the formation, structure, and evolution of galaxies across cosmic time.
- ⇒ **Black Holes:** The TMT will study the relationship between supermassive black holes and their host galaxies.
- ⇒ **Stars and Planets:** It aims to investigate the formation of stars and planetary systems.
- ⇒ **Exoplanets:** The TMT will characterise exoplanets and study their atmospheres.



## Adaptive Optics System (AOS)

- ⇒ **NFIRAOS:** The Narrow Field Infrared Adaptive Optics System (NFIRAOS) uses deformable mirrors and laser guide stars to correct atmospheric turbulence, enhancing image resolution.
- ⇒ **Laser Guide Stars:** The system will project up to nine lasers into the sky to create artificial guide stars. However, atmospheric turbulence affects these laser beams, necessitating correction from three Natural Guide Stars (NGS).
- ⇒ **New Online Tool:** Developed by Indian researchers, this automated tool creates a catalogue of Near Infrared (NIR) stars by computing expected NIR magnitudes from various optical sky surveys.

## Other Major Telescopes

- ⇒ PRATUSH Telescope
- ⇒ James Webb Telescope
- ⇒ Square Kilometre Array Observatory (SKAO)
- ⇒ Kodaikanal Solar Observatory
- ⇒ Euclid Mission for Dark Matter and Dark Energy
- ⇒ Tokyo Atacama Observatory
- ⇒ 3-D Map of the Universe

## Other Similar Projects India is Part of

- ⇒ **CERN:** European Council for Nuclear Research, including the "God particle" project.
- ⇒ **CMS:** Experiment that discovered the Higgs Boson, or 'God particle'.
- ⇒ **ALICE:** Created conditions similar to those at the time of the Big Bang.
- ⇒ **FAIR:** International Facility for Antiproton and Ion Research, studying the building blocks of matter and the evolution of the Universe.
- ⇒ **NUSTAR:** Nuclear Structure, Astrophysics and Reactions.
- ⇒ **CBM:** Compressed Baryonic Matter.
- ⇒ **PANDA:** Antiproton Annihilation at Darmstadt.

## Conclusion

- ⇒ The Thirty Meter Telescope (TMT) project marks a significant milestone in international scientific collaboration, promising groundbreaking advancements in our understanding of the universe.
- ⇒ With India's active participation, particularly through the development of advanced tools for the Adaptive Optics System, the project exemplifies the global effort to push the boundaries of astronomical research.
- ⇒ The TMT's ambitious goals, from studying the early universe to characterizing exoplanets, highlight its potential to unlock new insights into the cosmos.
- ⇒ As ground-based astronomy evolves with such cutting-edge projects, the collaborative spirit and technological innovations driving the TMT underscore the importance of continued investment in scientific research and international cooperation.

## ETHICS

### HUMILITY IN PUBLIC DISCOURSE

#### Context

- ⇒ Mohan Bhagwat, the chief of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), recently addressed the issue of deteriorating public discourse following elections.
- ⇒ He emphasized the prevalence of verbal aggression and personal attacks over substantive debate, a concern that resonates globally in liberal democracies.
- ⇒ **Mohan Bhagwat has highlighted a troubling trend in public discourse:** the shift from respectful debate to verbal aggression.



- ⇒ This issue is not unique to India but is a global phenomenon affecting many liberal democracies, where personal attacks frequently overshadow meaningful discussions on societal issues.

### Analysis of Discourse Degradation

- ⇒ Philosopher Elizabeth Anderson critiques the blending of first-order moral claims (actions) with second-order moral claims (character judgments).
- ⇒ This conflation undermines genuine moral concerns in debates.
- ⇒ Political rhetoric increasingly relies on personal attacks, sidelining substantive issues and fostering societal division.

### Impact of Personal Attacks

- ⇒ **Marginalization of Meaningful Discourse:** Hate speech and personal attacks divert attention from understanding opposing views to character assassinations.
- ⇒ **Hindrance to Constructive Dialogue:** This trend prevents mutual understanding and perpetuates societal polarization.

### Lack of Humility and Understanding

- ⇒ Participants in debates often fail to acknowledge their own limitations and those of their opponents.
- ⇒ This lack of humility hinders genuine dialogue and problem-solving.
- ⇒ The cultivation of virtues like humility and care is often overshadowed by aggressive rhetoric and self-promotion.

### Historical and Philosophical Perspectives

- ⇒ **Montesquieu:** Emphasized civic education aimed at cultivating public-spiritedness and humility, contrasting with contemporary political discourse lacking these virtues.
- ⇒ **Dr. B. R. Ambedkar:** Highlighted the importance of leaders' quality in implementing effective governance, reflecting enduring challenges in public administration.

### Freedom of Speech and Intellectual Humility

- ⇒ Historically, freedom of speech aimed to arrive at the truth through open dialogue and criticism, contingent on humility and tolerance.
- ⇒ Modern individualism challenges intellectual humility by emphasizing knowledge as power and personal achievement.

### Traditional Indian Thought and Intellectual Humility

- ⇒ Indian philosophy, exemplified by texts like the Mahabharata, values character and humility in the pursuit of knowledge.
- ⇒ This contrasts with contemporary individualistic views.
- ⇒ Scholar Vrinda Dalmiya underscores the relational aspect of intellectual humility, which involves empathy and openness to diverse perspectives.

### Call for Reorientation

- ⇒ Bhagwat's remarks call for a reevaluation of public discourse, advocating for a return to virtues like humility and care.
- ⇒ Emphasizing the moral dimensions of knowledge and discourse, Bhagwat seeks to promote a more constructive and respectful public sphere.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ To address the degradation of public discourse, there must be a revival of virtues like humility and empathy.
- ⇒ These virtues are essential for fostering genuine dialogue and societal harmony.
- ⇒ Bhagwat's comments serve as a reminder of the ethical dimensions of public discourse, urging a shift towards a more inclusive and respectful approach in political and social interactions.

## HEALTH

### HEALTHBREAKING THE TABOO AROUND MEN'S REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

#### Context:

- ⇒ The issue of male infertility is a significant yet often overlooked aspect of reproductive health.
- ⇒ The article discusses the prevalence, causes, and treatment options for male infertility, emphasizing the need for awareness, lifestyle interventions, and open discussions to support affected couples.

## Introduction

- ⇒ World Population Day, observed on July 11, serves as a reminder of global population challenges, including the often-stigmatized issue of male infertility.
- ⇒ This condition can lead to significant emotional and psychological stress and hinder advancements in reproductive health solutions.



## Prevalence of Male Infertility

- ⇒ **Global Statistics:** According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 60 to 80 million couples worldwide faced infertility in 2004.
- ⇒ **India Specific:** An estimated 13 to 19 million couples in India struggle with infertility, with male infertility accounting for 50% of these cases. Environmental pollution and lifestyle changes are contributing factors expected to increase infertility rates.

## Understanding Male Infertility

- ⇒ **Manifestations:** Male infertility can manifest as an absence of sperm, low sperm count, or low sperm motility.
- ⇒ **Causes:**
  - **Stress:** A significant factor affecting sperm production and quality.
  - **Hormonal Imbalances:** Disruptions in hormonal levels can impact fertility.
  - **Genetic and Anatomical Factors:** Issues such as blocked sperm flow, undescended testicles, or abnormal urethral openings.
  - **Epigenetic Influences:** Environmental factors that affect gene expression.
  - **Infections:** Certain infections can damage reproductive organs.
  - **Environmental Pollutants:** Chemicals and toxins that affect sperm production.
  - **Lifestyle Factors:** Diet, sleep patterns, work schedules, and consumption of alcohol and tobacco.
  - **Age Factor:** Late marriages pose challenges due to declining sperm quality with age.

## Importance of Awareness and Lifestyle Interventions

- ⇒ **Awareness:** Knowledge about reproductive and sexual health should be imparted from secondary school to junior college.
- ⇒ **Parental Guidance:** Parents, especially fathers, should educate their sons about reproductive health.
- ⇒ **Healthy Lifestyle Practices:**
  - Proper diet and regular sleep.
  - Avoidance of alcohol, tobacco, and other intoxicants.
  - Limiting excessive use of mobile phones and laptops near the body.
  - Stress reduction through regular exercise, yoga, and meditation.

## Treatment Options for Male Infertility

- ⇒ **Diagnostic Steps:** Routine semen analysis, conducted after two to seven days of sexual abstinence.
- ⇒ **Surgical Corrections:** Address physical or anatomical issues such as blocked sperm flow or undescended testicles.
- ⇒ **Treatment for Absence of Sperm:**
  - Intra-cytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI).
  - Donor sperm insemination.
  - Adoption.
- ⇒ **Low Sperm Count and Motility:**
  - Couples with good sperm motility may conceive naturally.
  - Those with low sperm count and motility may require intrauterine insemination (IUI), in vitro fertilisation (IVF), or ICSI.
- ⇒ **Genetic Counselling:** Crucial for addressing gene mutations before pursuing assisted reproductive technologies.

## Conclusion

- ⇒ There is an urgent need for open and informed discussions on reproductive health, especially regarding male infertility.

- ⇒ By building awareness, providing sex education, and ensuring timely medical interventions, society can support couples on their journey to parenthood.
- ⇒ Breaking the taboo surrounding male infertility and fostering a supportive environment is essential for helping many couples achieve their dream of having children.

## CHANDIPURA VIRUS (CHPV) INFECTION

### Overview:

- ⇒ Chandipura virus (CHPV) is a single-stranded RNA virus from the Rhabdoviridae family, which also includes the lyssavirus responsible for rabies.
- ⇒ Recently, the virus has caused the death of six children in Gujarat, with 12 suspected cases reported.

### Transmission:

- ⇒ CHPV is primarily transmitted through bites from infected sandflies, particularly Phlebotomine sandflies and Phlebotomus papatasi, as well as some mosquito species such as Aedes aegypti (also a vector for dengue).
- ⇒ The virus resides in the salivary glands of these insects and can be transmitted to humans and other vertebrates through bites. CHPV is not contagious between humans.



### Symptoms:

- ⇒ **Initial Symptoms:** Flu-like symptoms including acute onset of fever, body ache, and headache.
- ⇒ **Severe Symptoms:** The infection can progress to more severe neurological symptoms such as altered sensorium, seizures, and encephalitis. Other symptoms reported include respiratory distress, bleeding tendencies, and anemia.
- ⇒ **Rapid Progression:** Once encephalitis develops, the disease progresses rapidly, often leading to death within 24–48 hours of hospitalization. The infection primarily affects children under the age of 15.

### Management:

- ⇒ **Current Status:** There is no specific antiretroviral therapy or vaccine available for CHPV infection.
- ⇒ **Symptomatic Treatment:** Management involves symptomatic treatment, focusing on reducing brain inflammation to prevent mortality.

### Affected Regions:

- ⇒ **Initial Identification:** CHPV was first identified in 1965 in Maharashtra during an investigation of a dengue/chikungunya outbreak.
- ⇒ **Major Outbreaks:** Significant outbreaks occurred in 2003–04 in Maharashtra, northern Gujarat, and Andhra Pradesh, resulting in over 300 child deaths.
- ⇒ **Endemic Areas:** The virus remains endemic to central India, particularly in rural, tribal, and peripheral areas where sandflies and mosquitoes are prevalent.
- ⇒ **Seasonal Outbreaks:** Outbreaks are more common during the monsoon season when sandfly populations increase.

### Sandflies:

- ⇒ **Characteristics:** Sandflies, the primary vectors for CHPV, are small flies about a quarter of the size of mosquitoes. They thrive in warm, rural, and forested areas.
- ⇒ **Other Diseases:** Sandflies are also known to transmit leishmaniasis, an infectious disease caused by a protozoan parasite.
- ⇒ **Behavioral Changes:** Recent surveillance has noted changes in sandfly behavior, with sightings at higher altitudes than usual.

### Conclusion:

- ⇒ Chandipura virus infection poses a significant health threat, particularly to children in rural and endemic areas of central India.
- ⇒ The lack of specific treatment or vaccines makes early detection and symptomatic management crucial.

- ⇒ Effective control of vector populations and enhanced surveillance, especially during the monsoon season, are vital in preventing outbreaks and reducing mortality.
- ⇒ Public health initiatives should focus on educating communities about the risk factors and prevention methods to mitigate the impact of CHPV.

## INDIGENOUS HPV VACCINE: RHETORIC AND REALITY

### Introduction

- ⇒ The introduction of the indigenous HPV vaccine 'Cervavac' by the Serum Institute of India (SII) has sparked debates over its efficacy, accessibility, and the broader implications of global patent regimes on healthcare solutions in India.

### Overview of HPV Vaccination Debate in India

- ⇒ HPV vaccines are designed to prevent human papillomavirus infection, a common sexually transmitted infection linked to cervical cancer.
- ⇒ However, debates persist over the vaccine's efficacy, as not all HPV strains are cancer-causing.
- ⇒ Despite declining global trends in cervical cancer rates, vaccination efforts remain contentious.



### Development and Introduction of Indigenous HPV Vaccine

- ⇒ **Introduction of 'Cervavac':** Developed by SII, 'Cervavac' is marketed as an affordable solution targeting high-risk populations in India. It arrived nearly two decades after patented vaccines were introduced in Western countries, highlighting delays caused by global patent monopolies.
- ⇒ **Technological Basis:** 'Cervavac' utilizes virus-like particles (VLPs) produced via recombinant DNA technology, akin to the Hepatitis-B vaccine. This technology, dating back to the 1970s, underscores India's capability in vaccine production.

### Impact of Patent Regimes and Globalization

- ⇒ Historically, vaccine development was open and shared until the 1980s, when changes in global patent laws, particularly the U.S. Patent Act and TRIPS agreement, standardized patent regimes.
- ⇒ This hindered India's pharmaceutical industry from developing generic HPV vaccines until patents expired.

### Pricing and Accessibility Issues

- ⇒ **Pricing Challenges:** Despite initial support from entities like the Gates Foundation, 'Cervavac' remains priced high compared to production costs. Limited competition from domestic alternatives keeps prices elevated, exacerbating accessibility issues.
- ⇒ **Market Dynamics:** Consolidation and global partnerships in the pharmaceutical industry have further restricted local competition, affecting pricing strategies and affordability of vaccines like 'Cervavac.'

### Public Health Implications and Policy Concerns

- ⇒ **Government Initiatives:** India's government recommends 'Cervavac' universally for girls aged 9 to 26, priced affordably at ₹500 for two doses within government programs. However, costs escalate to ₹2,000 for those outside government coverage, highlighting disparities in healthcare access.
- ⇒ **Debate Over Efficacy:** Questions persist over the universal efficacy of HPV vaccination in preventing cervical cancer, necessitating further research and transparency in vaccination policies.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ The introduction of 'Cervavac' represents a significant step in India's indigenous vaccine development efforts, albeit amidst challenges of pricing, patent regimes, and efficacy debates.
- ⇒ Addressing these issues requires transparent pricing mechanisms, fostering local vaccine production capabilities, and ensuring equitable access to healthcare solutions across socioeconomic groups.
- ⇒ The ongoing debate underscores the complexities of global health policy and vaccine distribution within India's evolving healthcare landscape, urging policymakers to prioritize transparency, affordability, and effective public health strategies in HPV vaccination programs.



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## U-WIN PORTAL

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### Introduction

- The Indian government has introduced the U-WIN portal, an innovative online platform designed to streamline and enhance the management of vaccinations for children under six and pregnant women.
- Building on the successful CoWIN platform used during the Covid-19 vaccination drive, U-WIN aims to improve immunization coverage across the country.



### What is U-WIN?

- U-WIN is a comprehensive digital system for tracking immunization records.
- By registering with a government ID and a cellphone number, users can manage their vaccination schedules efficiently.
- The platform replaces traditional vaccination books with a color-coded digital certificate, streamlining access and record-keeping nationwide.

### How Does U-WIN Work?

- Once registered, U-WIN users can add all required vaccinations, receive SMS reminders for upcoming doses, locate vaccination centers, and schedule appointments.
- This system ensures timely and accurate vaccination, significantly reducing the risk of missed or incorrect doses.

### Integration with Existing Systems

- U-WIN is integrated with eVIN (Electronic Vaccine Intelligence Network), which monitors vaccine stock and cold chain management.
- This integration helps optimize vaccine distribution and minimize wastage, leveraging existing digital frameworks familiar to health workers.

### Benefits of U-WIN

- **Improved Compliance:** Automated SMS reminders enhance adherence to vaccination schedules.
- **Portability:** Vaccination records can be accessed across different regions, accommodating mobile populations.
- **Error Reduction:** The digital platform includes safeguards against incorrect dose administration.
- **Granular Data:** Detailed individual records help identify coverage gaps, addressing the issue of "zero dose" children.
- **Centralized Database:** A comprehensive data repository supports informed policy-making and improved immunization strategies.

### Features of U-WIN

- **Digital Vaccination Certificates:** U-WIN generates QR-based, digitally verifiable e-certificates, accessible anytime by citizens.
- **Universal Immunization Programme (UIP):** The portal records every vaccination event for pregnant women and children under five.
- **Real-Time Updates:** It updates vaccination status, pregnancy details, and delivery outcomes in real-time.
- **Self-Registration:** Citizens can register, select vaccination centers, and schedule appointments via the web portal or mobile app.
- **Automated Alerts:** SMS notifications confirm registrations, doses administered, and upcoming vaccinations.
- **Ayushman Bharat Health Account (ABHA) IDs:** The platform facilitates the creation of ABHA IDs for comprehensive health record maintenance.
- **Support for Frontline Workers:** Health workers can digitally record all vaccination events, ensuring complete and accurate record maintenance.

**Current Status and Future Prospects**

- Currently, U-WIN is in pilot mode across all states and Union Territories, except West Bengal.
- The pan-India launch is expected by the end of August 2024.
- By maintaining an electronic registry of routine immunizations and ensuring timely administration of vaccine doses, U-WIN represents a significant advancement in India's healthcare delivery and governance.

**Conclusion**

- The U-WIN portal is poised to revolutionize childhood immunization in India, promising enhanced healthcare outcomes through robust digital infrastructure and improved governance.
- By leveraging modern technology, U-WIN aims to ensure that every child and pregnant woman in India receives timely and accurate vaccinations, ultimately leading to a healthier future for the nation.

**ART & CULTURE**

**ABHAY MUDRA IN BUDDHISM**

**Introduction**

- Mudras, the ritualistic hand gestures used in Indian spiritual practices, carry deep symbolic meanings and are integral to the iconography of various religions.
- Among these, the Abhaya Mudra stands out for its profound message of fearlessness and protection.
- This mudra is not only a crucial element in Buddhist teachings but also resonates across different cultural and religious contexts.
- Recently, the political invocation of the Abhaya Mudra in India has brought renewed attention to its significance and symbolism.



**Context**

- The Leader of the Opposition in the Indian Parliament invoked the image of Lord Shiva and the Abhaya Mudra during a parliamentary speech.
- This gesture was used to criticize the government's perceived threats to the constitution and the idea of India.
- By employing this symbolic gesture, the leader sought to convey a message of resistance, protection, and fearlessness against such perceived threats.

**Role of Leader of Opposition in Lok Sabha**

- The Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in the Lok Sabha (LS) plays a pivotal role in the Indian parliamentary system.
- This position is held by the leader of the largest opposition party, provided the party has at least one-tenth of the total seats in the Lok Sabha.
- The LoP is integral to various parliamentary committees and selection panels for key statutory positions, providing necessary checks and balances to government policies and decisions.
- While the position is not constitutionally mandated, it was given statutory recognition in 1977, highlighting its importance in a functioning democracy.

## Understanding Abhay Mudra

- ⇒ **Mudras:** Mudras are symbolic hand gestures used in various Indian spiritual practices, including yoga, meditation, and dance. These gestures are believed to influence the flow of prana (vital energy) within the body and are used to convey specific meanings, emotions, and spiritual concepts.
- ⇒ **Abhay Mudra:** The Abhay Mudra, or the "gesture of fearlessness," is a prominent mudra in Buddhist and Hindu iconography. It is depicted with the right hand raised to shoulder height, palm facing outward, and fingers pointing upwards. This gesture symbolizes protection, reassurance, and the dispelling of fear.
- ⇒ **Origin:** The Abhay Mudra is traditionally associated with the Buddha immediately after his enlightenment. It represents the moment when the Buddha tamed a mad elephant, illustrating his ability to provide fearlessness and protection to his followers. This mudra symbolizes security, serenity, and compassion emanating from enlightenment.
- ⇒ **Association with Other Religions:** The Abhay Mudra is also found in other religious traditions, including Christianity and Jainism, where it similarly symbolizes protection and fearlessness.

## Other Types of Mudras in Buddhism

### DharmaChakra Mudra:

- ⇒ **Description:** Hands held in front of the chest with the thumb and index finger forming a circle, representing the wheel of Dharma.
- ⇒ **Significance:** Symbolizes the Buddha's first sermon after enlightenment, representing the initiation of teaching Dharma and the constant cycle of birth, death, and rebirth.

### Bhumisparsha Mudra:

- ⇒ **Description:** Right hand touching the ground, left hand resting on the lap.
- ⇒ **Significance:** Represents the Buddha's enlightenment and the earth witnessing his attainment of enlightenment, symbolizing overcoming obstacles through meditation.

### Varada Mudra:

- ⇒ **Description:** Right hand extended downward, palm facing outward.
- ⇒ **Significance:** Symbolizes generosity and the five perfections: generosity, morality, patience, effort, and meditative concentration.

### Dhyana Mudra:

- ⇒ **Description:** Hands placed on the lap, right hand on top of the left, thumbs touching.
- ⇒ **Significance:** Represents meditation, concentration, and inner peace.

### Anjali Mudra:

- ⇒ **Description:** Palms pressed together in front of the chest.
- ⇒ **Significance:** Represents respect, greeting, and gratitude, similar to Namaskara or Namaste.

### Vitarka Mudra:

- ⇒ **Description:** Right hand up, thumb and index finger forming a circle.
- ⇒ **Significance:** Symbolizes the transmission of knowledge and the communication of the Buddha's teachings.

### Uttarabodhi Mudra:

- ⇒ **Description:** Hands in front of the chest, left fingers pointing upward, right fingers pointing downward, thumbs together forming a triangle.
- ⇒ **Significance:** Represents the union of wisdom and compassion and the attainment of enlightenment.

### Karana Mudra:

- ⇒ **Description:** Left hand at the heart, palm facing forward, index and little fingers pointing up.
- ⇒ **Significance:** Symbolizes protection and the dispelling of negativity.

### Jnana Mudra:

- ⇒ **Description:** Index finger and thumb together forming a circle, other fingers extended.
- ⇒ **Significance:** Represents the unity of individual consciousness with universal consciousness.

### Tarjani Mudra:

- ⇒ **Description:** Index finger extended upward, other fingers curled.
- ⇒ **Significance:** Known as the "threatening gesture," used as a symbol of warning or protection against evil forces.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ The Abhay Mudra, like other mudras in Buddhism, holds profound spiritual and cultural significance.
- ⇒ It symbolizes fearlessness, protection, and the compassionate guidance of the enlightened Buddha.
- ⇒ The recent political reference to the Abhay Mudra in India underscores its enduring relevance and powerful symbolism.
- ⇒ In a broader context, mudras like Abhay serve as timeless symbols of spiritual ideals, guiding individuals towards inner peace and resilience.
- ⇒ As we navigate contemporary challenges, these ancient gestures continue to inspire and remind us of the universal quest for fearlessness and protection.

## EVOLUTION OF THE INDIAN MUSIC SYSTEM

### Why in News?

- ⇒ A recent study revealed that chimps can dance in tune with rhythmic music, suggesting an evolutionary link in our sense of rhythm.
- ⇒ Archaeological evidence, like a 40,000-year-old flute made from animal bone, offers insights into the origins of human musical expression.

### Findings of the Recent Study

- ⇒ **Origin of Music in Humans:** Singing likely began after speech developed during the Old Stone Age, around 2.5 million years ago.
- ⇒ Playing musical instruments started about 40,000 years ago, with the discovery of a seven-holed flute made from animal bone.
- ⇒ **Musical Notations:** Indian musical notes ('sa, re, ga, ma, pa, da, ni') originated during Vedic times (1500-600 BCE), forming the foundation of Indian classical music.
- ⇒ In Europe and the Middle East, spaced notations ('do, re, mi, fa, sol, la, ti') developed independently around the 9th century BCE.



### Evolution of Indian Music System

#### Ancient Period:

- ⇒ **Sama Veda:**
  - The roots of Indian music trace back to the Sama Veda, harmonizing slokas with music. Narada Muni introduced music to humanity and imparted knowledge of Naada Brahma, the cosmic sound.
- ⇒ **Development of Vedic Music:**
  - Vedic music evolved from single notes to incorporating two and three notes, leading to the establishment of the seven basic notes (sapta swaras).
  - Vedic hymns were integral to religious rituals such as yagas and yagnas, where they were sung and danced to the accompaniment of string and percussion instruments.
- ⇒ **Early Tamil Contributions:**
  - Scholars like Ilango Adigal and Mahendra Verma significantly contributed to ancient Tamil musical ideas, documented in texts like Silappadikaram and Kudumiyamalai inscriptions.
  - Ancient Tamil treatises, such as Karunamrita Sagara, provided insights into ragas represented by various 'pans' and the understanding of sthayi (octave), srutis, and swara sthanas.

#### Medieval Period:

#### Unified Musical System:

- ⇒ Until the 13th century, India had a cohesive musical system based on saptaswaras, octaves, and sruti (microtones).

#### Introduction of Terms:

- ⇒ Haripala coined the terms Hindustani and Carnatic music, marking the distinction between northern and southern traditions.

**Impact of Muslim Rule:**

- Muslim rulers in North India brought Arabian and Persian musical influences, broadening Indian music's scope.
- This interaction expanded the variety of instruments and styles.

**Influence of Bhakti Movement:**

- Saint singers and poets like Purandara Dasa systematized talas and contributed to devotional song compositions.
- The 7th century onwards saw the rise of numerous saint singers and religious poets across India, including Purandara Dasa in Karnataka, who systematized talas (rhythmic cycles) and contributed significantly to devotional song compositions.

**Emergence of Musical Forms:**

- Forms like Khayal, Thumri, and Tarana gained prominence, enriching Hindustani classical music.
- Gharanas:
- Distinct musical traditions, or gharanas, like Agra, Gwalior, Jaipur, Kirana, and Lucknow, developed unique stylistic elements.
- Gharanas flourished, each contributing unique stylistic elements to Hindustani music.

**Modern Period:****Legendary Musicians:**

- Icons like Ustad Alladia Khan, Pt. Omkarnath Thakur, Pt. Vishnu Digambar Paluskar, and Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan enriched Hindustani music with their innovations.
- These musicians became the torchbearers of their traditions, passing on their knowledge to future generations.

**Preservation through Notation:**

- Notation systems preserved and made musical compositions accessible across generations.
- The advent of notation systems ensured the preservation and accessibility of musical compositions across generations, safeguarding invaluable musical heritage.

**Systematization of Hindustani Ragas:**

- Pandit Vishnu Narayan Bhatkhande systematized Hindustani Ragas under the 'Thaat' system, establishing a structured foundation for musical education.
- His work provided a comprehensive framework for understanding and teaching Hindustani music.

**Scholarly Compositions:**

- Scholarly forms like Kritis, Swarajatis, Varna, Pada, Tillana, Jawali, and Ragamalikas evolved in sophistication, drawing inspiration from ancient prabandhas.
- These compositions drew inspiration from ancient prabandhas while evolving in musical and lyrical sophistication.

**Conclusion**

- Indian music has evolved through ancient, medieval, and modern periods, influenced by cultural exchanges and regional developments, creating a rich and diverse art form.
- The continuity and adaptability of Indian music have allowed it to thrive and remain relevant, making it an integral part of India's cultural heritage.
- The evolution of Indian music is a testament to its resilience and the profound cultural exchanges that have shaped it over millennia.

**SRINAGAR DESIGNATED AS 'WORLD CRAFT CITY' BY WORLD CRAFTS COUNCIL****Introduction:**

- Srinagar, the largest city in the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, has recently been honored with the prestigious title of 'World Craft City' by the World Crafts Council.
- This recognition, announced by the Office of the Lieutenant Governor of Jammu and Kashmir, Manoj Sinha, celebrates the city's rich tradition in craftsmanship and is expected to have a significant impact on both the local community and economy.

### Significance of the Award:

- The designation of Srinagar as a “World Craft City” is a testament to the exceptional skill and dedication of its artisans.
- This honor not only acknowledges the city’s rich cultural heritage but also aims to preserve and promote the unique crafts that have flourished in Srinagar for generations.
- The award serves as an important recognition of the city’s contribution to the global crafts community.



### Impact on Local Community and Economy:

The recognition as a “World Craft City” is anticipated to bring numerous benefits to Srinagar:

- **Tourism Boost:** The award is likely to attract more tourists to the city, thereby supporting local businesses and increasing the sale of traditional crafts.
- **Economic Growth:** Increased tourist activity and craft sales will contribute to the economic development of the region.
- **Youth Engagement:** The recognition is expected to inspire young people in the area to learn and uphold traditional crafts, ensuring the continuation of these skills for future generations.

### About World Crafts Council:

- The World Crafts Council (WCC) is a non-profit organization founded in 1964 by Aileen Osborn Webb.
- Its mission is to promote and encourage craftsmanship around the world. The WCC operates in five regions: Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Latin America, and North America, with its headquarters in Belgium.
- To date, the WCC has designated over 40 towns globally as “Cities of Crafts,” recognizing their exceptional contributions to the craft sector.
- In 2020, the organization was renamed World Crafts Council International to reflect its global reach.

### Conclusion:

- Srinagar’s new status as a “World Craft City” is a pivotal moment in its history, bringing global attention to its artisanal excellence and fostering cultural appreciation and economic growth in the region.

## NALANDA’S HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE AND FUTURE PROSPECTS

### Context:

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s inauguration of the new Nalanda University campus at Rajgir brings renewed attention to Nalanda’s historical legacy and aspirations for its future.

### Historical Overview

#### Establishment and Patronage:

- **Founded by Kumaragupta-I:** Around 427 AD, Nalanda was established during the Gupta dynasty. It quickly became a renowned center of learning and spirituality.
- **Support from Pala Kings:** The university flourished under the patronage of the Pala kings, who ensured its growth and sustained its prominence. The monks at Nalanda received substantial support, particularly from the Pithipatis of Bodh Gaya.



#### Prominent Scholars and Contributions:

- **Aryabhata:** The famed mathematician and astronomer, known for his significant contributions to trigonometry and the concept of zero, was one of the prominent scholars associated with Nalanda.
- **Harsha:** An emperor and scholar, Harsha contributed to Nalanda’s legacy of interdisciplinary learning.
- **Dharmapala and Nagarjuna:** These Buddhist scholars played a pivotal role in the development of Buddhist philosophy and logic at Nalanda.
- **Dharmakirti:** Renowned for his works on Buddhist logic and epistemology.

- ⇒ **Hiuen Tsang's Visit:** The Chinese pilgrim and scholar Hiuen Tsang spent five years at Nalanda during the reign of Harshavardhan in the 7th century. His detailed accounts provide valuable insights into the rigorous academic life and administration at Nalanda.

### International Influence:

- ⇒ Nalanda's reputation attracted scholars from across Asia, including China, Japan, Korea, Tibet, and Southeast Asia.
- ⇒ **Sumatra's Monastery:** A king from Sumatra endowed a monastery at Nalanda, showcasing the university's influence beyond India.

### Controversies and Destruction

#### Bakhtiyar Khalji's Raids:

- ⇒ **Historical Accounts:** Historians like Satish Chandra and Habib recount the destruction brought by Bakhtiyar Khalji around 1200 AD, including the burning of Nalanda's vast library.
- ⇒ **Conflicting Views:** Some argue that Khalji's attacks targeted a different fort and not Nalanda itself. This perspective is based on interpretations of Minhaj-i-Siraj's writings, suggesting Nalanda might have escaped the full extent of the Muslim conquests.

#### Decline of Buddhism:

- ⇒ By the time of the Turko-Persian invasions, many Buddhist sites had been abandoned or converted to Brahminical temples. This contributed to Buddhism's decline in India and Nalanda's eventual obscurity.
- ⇒ **Rediscovery in the 19th Century:** Nalanda was rediscovered during British colonial rule, reigniting interest in its historical significance and contributions to global knowledge.

### Rediscovery and Revival

#### New Nalanda University Campus:

- ⇒ **Modern Reincarnation:** The new campus at Rajgir aims to revive Nalanda's legacy by creating a contemporary center for higher education and research, grounded in the ancient tradition of interdisciplinary learning.
- ⇒ **Global Academic Hub:** The university aspires to attract scholars and students from around the world, fostering a spirit of intellectual exchange and collaboration.

#### Vision for the Future:

- ⇒ **Cultural Renaissance:** The new Nalanda University seeks to become a beacon of knowledge, cultural exchange, and innovative research, much like its ancient predecessor.
- ⇒ **Educational Excellence:** With state-of-the-art facilities and a curriculum that blends traditional wisdom with modern advancements, the university aims to contribute significantly to global education.

### Conclusion

- ⇒ Nalanda's rich history serves as a reminder of the resilience and enduring power of knowledge.
- ⇒ The new university campus symbolizes a bridge between past and future, aiming to restore Nalanda's historical prestige while adapting to contemporary educational needs.
- ⇒ As we delve into Nalanda's illustrious past, we recognize its potential to shape future generations.
- ⇒ The renewed focus on Nalanda provides an opportunity to celebrate and build upon its legacy, ensuring that it once again becomes a vital center of learning and cultural exchange.
- ⇒ As Oscar Wilde aptly put it, "The word is nothing; interpretation is everything." This holds true for Nalanda, where the interpretation of its past can guide its future towards renewed glory and academic excellence.

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## SAMAYAPURAM TEMPLE

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### Introduction

- ⇒ The Hindu Group of Publications has released a coffee-table book titled "Samayapuram - The Sacred Seat of Shakti," authored by Vrinda Ramanan.
- ⇒ This book explores the rich history and cultural significance of the Samayapuram Temple, a revered site dedicated to Goddess Mariamman.

### Historical and Cultural Significance

- ⇒ **Location:** The temple is situated in Tiruchirapalli, Tamil Nadu, and is a significant pilgrimage site for devotees of Goddess Mariamman.

- **Dedication:** The temple is dedicated to Goddess Mariamman, who is considered an incarnation of various powerful deities such as Goddess Durga, Mahakali, Adi Shakti, or Nishumbha Sudhini.

### Historical Background

- **Antiquity:** The Samayapuram Temple is over 1,200 years old, making it one of the ancient temples in Tamil Nadu.
- **Legends:** The temple is steeped in legends associated with Goddess Mariamman, revered for her powers to cure illnesses and bless her devotees.
- **Construction:** Although there is no precise historical evidence pinpointing the date of its original construction, it is believed that the temple existed during the Chola period.
- **Current Structure:** The present temple complex was built by Vijayanagara King Vijayaraya Chakkaravarthi in the 18th century, adding to its architectural and historical significance.

### Wealth and Importance

- **Affluence:** The Samayapuram Temple is one of the wealthiest temples in Tamil Nadu, attracting thousands of devotees and tourists every year.

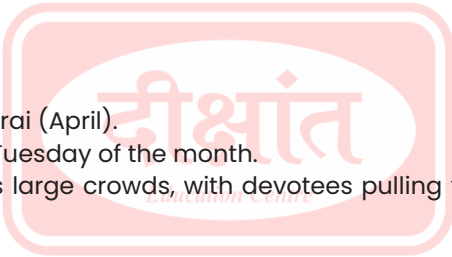
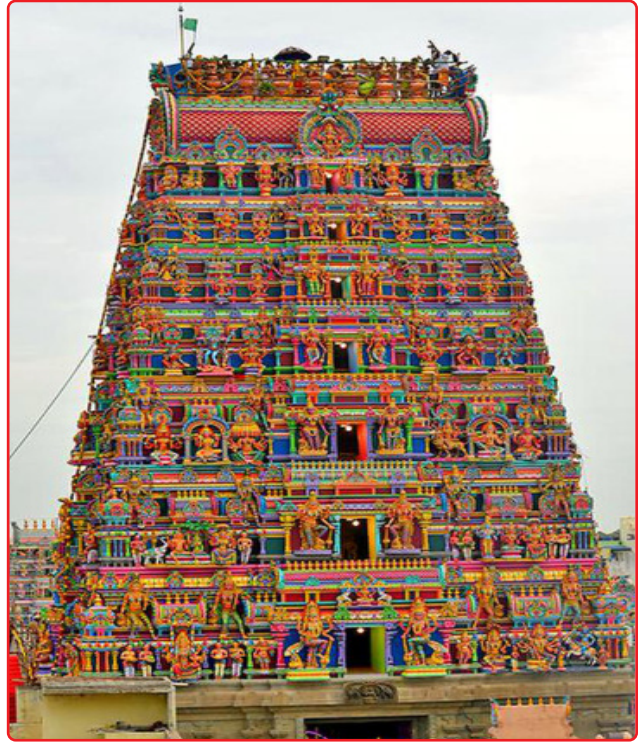
### Festivals:

#### ➤ Chithirai Ther Thiruvizha (Chariot Festival):

- ➔ Celebrated annually in the Tamil month of Chithirai (April).
- ➔ The festival lasts for 13 days, starting on the first Tuesday of the month.
- ➔ The Chariot Festival is a major event that draws large crowds, with devotees pulling the chariot in a grand procession.

### Conclusion

- The Samayapuram Temple stands as a testament to the enduring faith and devotion of its followers.
- Its rich history, coupled with its cultural significance, makes it a pivotal religious site in Tamil Nadu.
- The coffee-table book by Vrinda Ramanan not only highlights the temple's historical aspects but also celebrates its spiritual essence, offering readers a comprehensive insight into this sacred seat of Shakti.



## VIRAAT RAMAYAN MANDIR

### Introduction:

- The Viraat Ramayan Mandir, set to become the world's largest Ramayan temple, is making significant strides in its construction in East Champaran, Bihar.
- This monumental project not only aims to be an architectural marvel but also a beacon of cultural and spiritual significance.
- As the second phase of construction commences, the project is poised to redefine religious tourism in India.

### Key Milestone:

- The construction of the Viraat Ramayan Mandir has entered its second phase as of July 09, 2024.
- This phase follows the successful completion of the first phase in just 10 months, marking significant progress towards creating the world's largest Ramayan temple.





**Project Overview:**

- Initiated in June 2023, the Viraat Ramayan Mandir project is estimated to cost approximately ₹500 crore.
- Once completed, the temple will be three times larger than the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, spanning an enormous area of 3.76 lakh sq. ft.
- The temple's architectural design draws inspiration from historical landmarks such as Angkor Wat in Cambodia and renowned Indian temples in Rameswaram and Madurai.

**Architectural Features:**

- **World's Largest Shivling:** A highlight of the temple will be the 33-foot tall shivling housed in the main sanctum sanctorum.
- **Diverse Sanctum Sanctorums:** The temple will feature 22 sanctum sanctorums dedicated to various deities, reflecting a broad spectrum of religious reverence.
- **Smaller Temples:** Surrounding the main structure will be 22 smaller temples, each dedicated to significant characters from the Ramayana.

**Construction Phases:**

- The second phase focuses on raising the temple's structure to the plinth level, which stands at about 26 feet high.
- This phase also includes the intricate installation of the enormous shivling.
- The final phase will involve constructing the shikhars (temple spires), with the central shikhar expected to reach a height of 270 feet, surpassing that of Ayodhya's Ram Mandir.

**Completion and Significance:**

- The Viraat Ramayan Mandir is slated for completion by 2025, transforming it into a major pilgrimage site.
- This project not only embodies architectural grandeur but also serves as a cultural symbol, narrating the spiritual tale of the Ramayana.
- Once finished, the temple will be a testament to faith, unity, and the exquisite beauty of Indian architecture.

**Conclusion:**

- The Viraat Ramayan Mandir in Bihar stands as a testament to India's rich cultural heritage and architectural prowess.
- As it progresses towards completion, it promises to become a landmark of spiritual significance and a focal point for religious tourism, drawing devotees and tourists from around the world.
- This ambitious project encapsulates the enduring legacy of the Ramayana, offering a space for reflection, worship, and cultural appreciation.

**ASSAM'S CHARAIDEO MAIDAM NOMINATED FOR UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE****Introduction**

- Charaideo Maidam in Assam has been nominated for UNESCO World Heritage status, marking a significant step towards recognizing North East India's cultural heritage on a global stage.
- Announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the 46th session of the World Heritage Committee, the nomination aims to place Charaideo Maidam as India's 43rd World Heritage Site, joining the ranks of Kaziranga National Park and Manas National Park, which are listed under the natural category.

**Significance of Charaideo Maidam****Historical and Cultural Importance:**

- Charaideo Maidam, located in the state of Assam, is a site of profound historical and cultural significance.
- The site consists of over 90 ancient burial mounds, known as Maidams, which were constructed during the reign of the Ahom dynasty from the 13th to the 18th century.
- These mounds served as the final resting places for Ahom kings and nobles.
- They are considered sacred by the Ahom community and are integral to the region's cultural identity.

**Unique Burial Practices:**

- ⇒ The Maidams are unique in their burial practices.
- ⇒ The deceased's remains were interred in underground chambers, while the mound above served as a memorial.
- ⇒ This practice reflects the Ahoms' respect for their rulers and their elaborate funerary traditions.
- ⇒ The Maidams also contain valuable artifacts and treasures, which were buried alongside the deceased, adding to their historical value.

**Nomination and Selection Process****Prime Minister's Announcement:**

- ⇒ The nomination of Charaideo Maidam was announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the 46th session of the World Heritage Committee, which took place in New Delhi from July 21-31, 2024.
- ⇒ The proposal was selected from among 52 sites across India, highlighting its importance and uniqueness.

**Significance of the Timing:**

- ⇒ The nomination is particularly notable as it aligns with the 400th birth anniversary of Lachit Barphukan, a legendary Ahom general known for his victory over the Mughal Empire.
- ⇒ This timing underscores the historical importance of the site and the Assam Government's commitment to preserving and showcasing the state's rich cultural heritage.

**Potential Impact:**

- ⇒ If Charaideo Maidam is accepted as a UNESCO World Heritage Site, it will be the first cultural site in North East India to receive this prestigious status.
- ⇒ This recognition would bring global attention to Assam's rich cultural history and contribute to the preservation and promotion of the region's heritage.

**Historical and Cultural Context****The Ahom Dynasty:**

- ⇒ The Ahom dynasty ruled Assam for nearly six centuries and left behind a rich legacy of unique cultural practices, architectural achievements, and craftsmanship.
- ⇒ The Charaideo Maidam is a testament to this heritage, embodying the distinctive burial practices and architectural style of the Ahoms.

**Cultural Representation:**

- ⇒ Often referred to as the "Pyramids of Assam," the Maidams are more than just burial sites; they are emblematic of the Ahom dynasty's grandeur and the region's historical evolution.
- ⇒ The nomination for UNESCO World Heritage status aims to highlight this cultural richness and ensure that the site receives the global recognition it deserves.

**Conclusion**

- ⇒ The nomination of Charaideo Maidam for UNESCO World Heritage status represents a significant milestone for both Assam and North East India.
- ⇒ The recognition would not only honor the historical and cultural significance of the site but also promote global awareness of Assamese heritage.
- ⇒ By seeking this prestigious status, India aims to preserve and celebrate the unique aspects of its cultural history, ensuring that the legacy of the Ahom dynasty and the Charaideo Maidam continues to be appreciated and remembered for generations to come.

**SPORTS****INDIA WINS T20 WORLD CUP 2024, BCCI ANNOUNCES RS 125 CRORE PRIZE****Introduction**

- ⇒ India's cricket team achieved a historic victory by winning the T20 World Cup 2024, defeating South Africa in a thrilling final held in Barbados.
- ⇒ This victory, marking their first T20 World Cup title in 13 years, was particularly significant due to several high-profile retirements and the impending change in team management.

**High-Profile Retirements**

- The win was emotionally charged as key players Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli announced their retirement from T20 internationals.
- Following them, Ravindra Jadeja also declared his retirement from T20Is.
- However, these legends will continue to play other formats of cricket.
- The departure of these stalwarts signifies a major shift in the team dynamics, heralding a new era for Indian cricket.
- Additionally, the final match was the last for Rahul Dravid as the head coach of the Indian team.
- His departure is expected to pave the way for a new coaching era, focusing on nurturing the next generation of cricketers.



**Celebratory Reactions and Recognition**

- The victory was celebrated widely, with accolades pouring in from various quarters.
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi, along with cricket legends Sachin Tendulkar and Mahendra Singh Dhoni, congratulated the team.
- The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) announced a substantial prize of Rs. 125 crore for the players in recognition of their remarkable achievement.

**Critical Match Moments**

- The final match was a nail-biter, with South Africa needing only 30 runs from 30 balls with seven wickets in hand.
- However, crucial performances by Jasprit Bumrah, Arshdeep Singh, and Hardik Pandya turned the game in India's favor, leading to a final score of 169-8 in India's favor.
- Captain Rohit Sharma praised his team's resilience and determination, highlighting their ability to perform under pressure and work cohesively as a unit.

**Full List of T20 World Cup Winners and Runners-up**

Edition	Host Nation	Winners	Runners-up
2007	South Africa	India	Pakistan
2009	England	Pakistan	Sri Lanka
2010	West Indies	England	Australia
2012	Sri Lanka	West Indies	Sri Lanka
2014	Bangladesh	Sri Lanka	India
2016	India	West Indies	England
2021	UAE and Oman	Australia	New Zealand
2022	Australia	England	Pakistan
2024	USA and West Indies	India	South Africa

**Impact and Future Prospects**

- This T20 World Cup victory is a monumental moment for Indian cricket, signifying a period of transformation and renewal.
- The team's triumph is expected to inspire the next generation of players, fostering a new era of excellence in Indian cricket.
- The BCCI's substantial prize and the wide recognition of the team's achievement underline the importance of this victory, not just as a sports milestone but as a significant event in India's sporting history.
- This win also reflects the strength and depth of Indian cricket, setting a high benchmark for future international competitions.
- The retirement of key players and the change in coaching staff are likely to bring fresh perspectives and strategies, ensuring that Indian cricket continues to grow and succeed on the global stage.

LATEST FIFA RANKINGS RELEASED: INDIA REMAINS 124TH

Introduction

- India has maintained its 124th position in the latest FIFA men's rankings released on Thursday, providing a small relief for the football community in the nation.
- Despite experiencing a downward trend in recent months, the ranking offers a glimmer of hope for the success-starved Indian football landscape.



Recent Performance

- The Indian men's national football team faced setbacks in June when it dropped three places in the FIFA rankings.
- This decline was primarily due to their failure to qualify for the third round of the 2026 World Cup Qualifiers, suffering losses to Qatar and Afghanistan.

Historical Context

- India achieved a significant milestone last year by breaking into the top 100, reaching its best-ever ranking of 99.
- However, since December, the team has been on a downward spiral.
- Maintaining the 124th position marks a moment of stability amidst recent challenges.

## Asian Standing

- In the Asian football hierarchy, India remains in the 22nd position, trailing behind regional competitors such as Lebanon, Palestine, and Vietnam. This position highlights the need for continued development and investment in Indian football to improve its standing on the continental stage.

Global Rankings: Shifts and Surprises

Argentina's Dominance

- Argentina, the reigning world champion and Copa America winner, has solidified its position as the world's top-ranked team.
- Their successful defense of the Copa América crown has cemented their dominance.

European Powerhouses

- France:** Maintains its position as the second-ranked team, following their impressive run to the semifinals of EURO 2024.
- Spain:** Climbed 5 places to 3rd after being crowned European champions.
- England:** Moved up one spot to 4th, overtaking Brazil after their strong performance in the EURO 2024 final.

South American Representation

- Brazil:** Slipped one place to 5th, now finding themselves outside the top four.
- Colombia:** Returned to the top 10, rising three places to 9th despite a narrow defeat to Argentina in the Copa América final.

European Reshuffling

- Belgium:** Dropped three places to 6th.
- Netherlands:** Ranked 7th.
- Portugal:** Dropped two places to 8th.
- Italy:** Rounds out the top 10.

Top 10 FIFA Rankings Table

Rank	Country	Points
1.	Argentina	1901.48
2.	France	1854.91
3.	Spain	1835.67

4.	England	1812.26
5.	Brazil	1785.61
6.	Belgium	1772.44
7.	Netherlands	1758.51
8.	Portugal	1741.43
9.	Colombia	1727.32
10.	Italy	1714.29

### About FIFA

- **FIFA President:** Giovanni Vincenzo Infantino
- **Location:** Zürich, Switzerland
- **Established:** May 21, 1904
- The Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) is the international governing body of football.
- Founded in 1904, it oversees international competitions, including the FIFA World Cup.
- Headquartered in Zürich, Switzerland, FIFA aims to develop and promote football worldwide, ensuring fair play and fostering the growth of the sport across all continents.

### Conclusion

- While India's retention of the 124th position in the FIFA rankings provides a momentary respite, it underscores the ongoing challenges and the need for strategic improvements in the nation's football infrastructure and performance.
- As global rankings witness significant shifts, with powerhouses like Argentina, France, and Spain leading the pack, India's focus must remain on building a robust football ecosystem to climb the rankings ladder and achieve greater success on the international stage.



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