

VETRI IAS STUDY CIRCLE

Current Affairs

(A book for TNPSC Examination)

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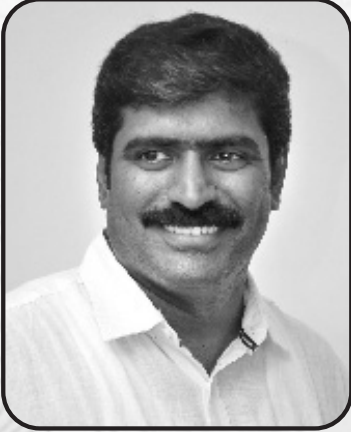
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Preface



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Greetings to all of you! "What we think we become" Gautama Buddha. We all have dreams. To make dreams come into reality it takes a lot of determination, dedication, self discipline and continuous effort.

We at VETRII IAS Study Circle are committed to provide the right guidance, quality coaching and help every aspirants to achieve his or her life's cherished goal of becoming a civil servant.

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We wish the aspirants ALL THE VERY BEST for their journey in Civil Services !

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INDEX

SCIENCE

General Science

1. National Institute for Pre-Clinical Research (NIPCR) 01

Latest Inventions In Science & Technology

2. WHO Approves First Malaria Treatment for Newborns 01

Space

3. G20 Satellite – 2027 01
4. Aryabhata 02
5. Vikram-1 Rocket 02
6. ISRO Village Mapping Project 03

GEOGRAPHY

Social Geography

1. B'nei Menashe Community 04

Environment And Ecology

2. Shekha Jheel Bird Sanctuary 04
3. Shekha Jheel Bird Sanctuary Declared Ramsar Site 04

INDIAN POLITY

1. 131st Constitutional Amendment Bill and Delimitation Bill 05
2. Pennaiyar River 07
3. ECI Rules on Mobile Phones & Photography inside Polling Stations 07
4. Online Gaming Promotion and Regulation Rules, 2026 08
5. Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal 08
6. NITI Aayog 08

INDIAN ECONOMY

1. International Monetary Fund (IMF) 10
2. Overall Core Sector Growth 10
3. Circular Economy 11
4. India's Expansion of Free Trade Agreements 12

TAMIL NADU

Initiatives /Schemes

1. Tamil Nadu Climate Resilient Villages 13

History & Culture

1. Bhonsala Inscriptions & the Shivaji-Afzal Khan Episode 13
2. Flowers as War Symbols in Tamil Culture 14
3. The Big Temple Chariot Symbol on Nayak Period Coins 15
4. Prehistoric Rock Art Site Rediscovered in Nilgiris 15
5. Holocene Fossil Bed Discovery in Tamil Nadu 16

Economy

1. Economic Growth of Tamil Nadu 16
2. Tamil Nadu Economic Performance 16

Environment

3. Pykara Lake 17
4. Nilgiri Tahr Census 18

NATIONAL - NEWS

1. New Digital Platform for Trade Services 19
2. Urban Challenge Fund 19
3. National Backward Classes Finance and Development Corporation 21
4. Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026 Defeated in Lok Sabha 21
5. India's First Semiconductor SEZ at Dholera 23
6. AI Governance and Economic Group (AIGEG) 24
7. India's First National Bat Assessment 24
8. National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM) 25
9. 'Abhay' AI Chatbot 26
10. Kankaria Depot: India's First Water-Neutral Railway Facility 26
11. Prajna 27
12. Supreme Court's Road Safety Guidelines 27
13. Muthuvan Tribe 28
14. Sustainable Aviation Fuel & ATF Blending 28
15. Disabled-Friendly Prisons in India 29
16. India's First Private Gold Mine 29
17. India's Bioeconomy Growth and Key Achievements 29
18. India's Achievement in Global Cheese Competition 30
19. India's Currency Swap Support to Maldives 30
20. Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE) 30
21. Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR) 31
22. Asia's First UNESCO Chair on Gender Inclusion 31
23. Virli Khandar Megalithic Site 32
24. Abhilekh Patal Portal 32

25. India's Digital Content Regulation	33
26. Google AI Data Centre Hub	33
27. Mission SAKSHAM by RBI	34
28. WHO Cervical Cancer Elimination Initiative	34
29. E-PRAAPTI Portal (EPFO)	35
30. Ganga Expressway	35
31. Sikkim & Organic Farming	36
32. Coal Sector Reform & UCG Integration	36
33. Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)	36
34. DPI 2.0 Roadmap	37

NATIONAL SCHEMES

1. Model Solar Villages	38
2. India's First State-of-the-Art 3D Glass Chip Packaging Plant	38
3. Bharat Maritime Insurance Pool (BMI Pool)	38
4. RELIEF	39
5. River Basin Management (RBM) Scheme	39
6. Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)	40
7. Pipeline Gas Project	41
8. Pradhan Mantri Vishwakarma Yojana	41
9. Launch of 'Vishwa Sutra' Initiative	42
10. Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005	43
11. Prime Minister Internship Scheme (PMIS)	43
12. Revised TDIP Scheme (2026-31)	44
13. Atal Pension Yojana (APY)	44
14. Project DANTAK	45
15. Nasha Mukta Bharat Abhiyaan (NMBA) App 2.0	45
16. Biodiversity Conservation Project	46
17. Small Hydro Power (SHP) Development Programme	46

IMPORTANT DAYS

1. World Hemophilia Day 2026	48
2. World Heritage Day	48
3. National Civil Services Day	48
4. Adi Shankara Jayanti Day	48
5. World Earth Day	48
6. World Book and Copyright Day	48
7. English Language Day	49

8. National Panchayati Raj Day	49
9. World Malaria Day 2026	50
10. World Intellectual Property Day	50
11. World Day for Safety and Health at Work 2026	50
12. Ayushman Bharat Diwas	50
REPORTS AND INDICES	
1. Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) Report	51
2. India's Position in Global Economy Rankings	51
3. Global Military Spending (SIPRI Report 2025)	52
4. National Statistical Office Health Survey	52
SPORTS AND GAMES	
1. Women's Candidates chess tournament	53
EMINENT PERSONALITIES	
1. C. Vijayaraghavachariar	54
2. Dheeran Chinnamalai's 271st Birth Anniversary	55
3. Bharathidasan	56
DEFENCE	
1. INS Dhruv	57
2. Mirage 2000–Astra Mk2 Integration: Boosting India's Air Power	57
3. India–Sri Lanka DIVEX 2026	58
4. India Receives Fourth S-400 Air Defence System	58
5. Exercise 'Pragati'	58
6. India Successfully Conducts First NASM-SR Salvo Launch	58
AWARDS AND HONOURS	
1. AI Innovation in Botany: Neophyte ID App	60
2. Samridhdh Gram Initiative	60
3. Guntur Municipal Corporation Wins GEM Award 2026	61
INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS	
1. United Nations Security Council	62
2. India–Africa Forum Summit (IAFS)	62
3. Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)	63
4. UAE Announces Exit from OPEC+	63
CURRENT FACTS	64

SCIENCE

LATEST INVENTIONS IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

GENERAL SCIENCE

National Institute for Pre-Clinical Research (NIPCR)

- **Context :** Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR) has upgraded the 'National Animal Resource Facility for Biomedical Research' (NARFBR) and renamed it as the 'National Institute for Pre-Clinical Research' (NIPCR).
- It serves as a critical bridge between laboratory discoveries and human clinical trials, validating biomedical innovations.
- The Cabinet Committee approved this institute on November 18, 2015, and it was formally established as a permanent ICMR institute on January 1, 2016.
- It is located in 'Genome Valley', Hyderabad. India's premier biotechnology hub, spanning across 100 acres.

Objectives and Functions

- The primary objective is to **strengthen India's self-reliance in drug discovery and medical technology through advanced pre-clinical research.**
- It operates not just as an animal resource facility, but as a comprehensive center for pre-clinical and translational sciences.
- It provides the necessary infrastructure to systematically test drugs, vaccines, biological products, medical devices, and cell & gene therapy methods before they are applied to humans.
- It provides scientific expertise and infrastructure support for biomedical innovation and validation to academic institutions, industries, and start-ups.

WHO Approves First Malaria Treatment for Newborns

- **Context:** The World Health Organization has cleared for the first time a malaria treatment made specifically for **newborns and young infants.**
- World Malaria Day is **observed annually on April 25th.**

Drug Details

- Child-friendly version of **Artemether-lumefantrine**
- Dual action: One drug rapidly reduces parasites and Other eliminates remaining parasites and prevents relapse
- Suitable for **infants weighing 2-5 kg**

Global Malaria Situation

- 282 million cases and 610,000 deaths in 2024
- **India has seen a significant decline,** but malaria still persists in some regions

SPACE

G20 Satellite – 2027

- **Context:** The Chairman of ISRO has announced that a 'G20 Satellite' designed to monitor climate change, air pollution, and weather conditions **will be launched into space in 2027.**
- This G20 satellite project is being developed for **the benefit of the G20 member nations; this consortium comprises 21 members, including the European Union, the African Union, India, the United States, Russia, and China.**
- India holds the unique distinction of being the **first nation to successfully place 104 satellites**

- into orbit using a single launch vehicle, without any collisions.
- To date, ISRO has commercially launched 433 satellites for 34 different countries, thereby securing a prominent position for India in the global space market.
- ISRO is actively working on a mission to send Indian astronauts to the Moon by the year 2040.
- Under the 'Saamudrayan' mission, ISRO is currently engaged in the development of a 'titanium sphere' capable of withstanding high pressure, intended for deep-sea research.
- This titanium sphere is being designed with a thickness of approximately 100 mm and a circumference of 2.2 meters; it is intended for use in manned deep-sea research expeditions.
- It featured a semi-spherical structure with 26 flat facets, measuring approximately 1.59 meters in diameter and 1.19 meters in height.
- Its solar panels covered an area of approximately 36,800 square centimeters and generated about 46 watts of power.
- Aryabhata was designed to conduct scientific experiments in the fields of solar physics and X-ray astronomy.
- Although a power failure occurred after just five days, the satellite successfully carried out initial X-ray observations and transmitted data for a brief period.
- It remained in orbit for approximately 17 years before re-entering Earth's atmosphere and burning up on February 10, 1992.
- This later became a symbol of national pride and paved the way for missions such as Chandrayaan, Mangalyaan, and Aditya-L1.

Aryabhata

- Context:** As Aryabhata marks the completion of 51 years since its launch, it stands as India's first indigenously developed satellite, having laid the foundation for the nation's advancements in space technology.

About the Aryabhata Satellite

- Aryabhata was India's first indigenously built satellite.
- It was named in honour of Aryabhata, the renowned 5th century Indian mathematician and astronomer.
- The satellite was launched into space on April 19, 1975, from Kapustin Yar with the assistance of the Soviet Union.
- With this successful launch, India became the 11th nation in the world to place a satellite into orbit.
- The satellite was developed by a small team of ISRO scientists led by Vikram Sarabhai and U. R. Rao.

Vikram-1 Rocket

- Context :** The hardware for 'Vikram-1', India's first private rocket developed by Skyroot Aerospace, has been dispatched from Telangana for its upcoming space launch.

About the Vikram-1 Rocket

- Vikram-I is India's first private orbital launch vehicle developed by the Hyderabad-based company, Skyroot Aerospace.
- Its maiden orbital launch is targeted for early 2026.
- It is named in honor of Dr. Vikram Sarabhai, the pioneer of the Indian space program.
- It is designed for the small satellite launch market, aiming to provide rapid and affordable access to space.
- It is designed to launch satellites weighing up to 350 kg into Low Earth Orbit (LEO).

- Low Earth Orbit is located at an altitude of **160 to 2,000 km** from the **Earth's surface**. The deployment of satellites into this orbit has significantly increased in recent years.
- Data shared with multiple government agencies

Integration with Governance

ISRO Village Mapping Project

- **Context:** The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) has **successfully completed a major project to map every village in India with high precision from space**.
- **Announcement made on National Panchayati Raj Day**
- **Integrated with Gram Manchitra portal of Ministry of Panchayati Raj**
- Supports Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDP)

Benefits

Mapping Details

- Land use and land cover mapped at 1:10,000 scale
- **1 cm on map = 100 meters on ground**
- High resolution allows distinction between features **like paddy fields and ponds**

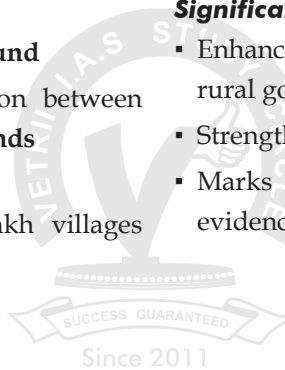
Coverage

- **Based on 2011 Census:** 6.49 lakh villages mapped

- Enables data-driven decision making at village level
- Helps identify land resources and usage patterns
- Improves planning and implementation of schemes

Significance

- Enhances transparency and accountability in rural governance
- Strengthens grassroots democracy
- Marks a major step towards digital and evidence-based governance



GEOGRAPHY

SOCIAL GEOGRAPHY

B'nei Menashe Community

- **Context:** Around 250 members of the **B'nei Menashe community from Manipur and Mizoram arrived in Tel Aviv**
- They claim ancestry from **one of the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel**

About B'nei Menashe

- Belong to the **Mizo and Kuki tribal groups in Northeast India**
- Identify themselves as descendants of the **Tribe of Manasseh from Jewish tradition**
- According to tradition, the **Tribe of Manasseh was exiled after the Assyrian conquest of Israel**
- Their migration narrative suggests movement through Persia and Afghanistan before reaching Northeast India.
- The B'nei Menashe represent a **unique blend of cultural, religious, and historical identity**
- Their story highlights the intersection of tradition, migration, and belief systems

ENVIRONMENT AND ECOLOGY

Shekha Jheel Bird Sanctuary

- **Context:** Shekha Jheel Bird Sanctuary was declared a Ramsar site in 2026. With this, **the total number of Ramsar sites in India has risen to 99.**

About Shekha Jheel Bird Sanctuary

- It is a freshwater wetland ecosystem in **Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh, created by the Upper Ganga Canal.**
- This inclusion increases the number of Ramsar sites in **Uttar Pradesh to 12.**
- The sanctuary is located on the **Central Asian Flyway**, a major migratory route for birds.
- It serves as a vital habitat for migratory birds such as the **Bar-headed Goose, Painted Stork,** and various duck species.

India's Recent Ramsar Sites

- **Siliserh Lake (Rajasthan):** 95th Ramsar site.

- **Kopra Jalashay (Chhattisgarh):** 96th Ramsar site.
- **Patna Bird Sanctuary (Uttar Pradesh):** 97th Ramsar site.
- **Chhari-Dhand Conservation Reserve (Gujarat):** 98th Ramsar site.

About Ramsar Sites

- A Ramsar site is a wetland recognized as being of international importance under the Ramsar Convention.
- The Ramsar Convention is one of the oldest intergovernmental treaties signed by member nations to conserve the ecological character of wetlands of international importance.
- It was signed on **February 2, 1971, in Ramsar, Iran,** and came into force in **1975.**
- **India** became a signatory to the **Ramsar Convention in 1982.**
- **Tamil Nadu** has **20 Ramsar** sites and holds the top position in India for having the highest number of these sites.

Shekha Jheel Bird Sanctuary Declared Ramsar Site

- **Context:** Shekha Jheel Bird Sanctuary in Uttar Pradesh has been designated as a Ramsar Site (wetland of international importance).
- **Uttar Pradesh now has 12 Ramsar sites**

- **National Count:** Total Ramsar sites in **India has increased to 99**

Significance

- Strengthens wetland conservation efforts
- Enhances biodiversity protection, especially for migratory birds
- Promotes sustainable ecosystem management

About Shekha Jheel Bird Sanctuary

- **Situated in Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh.**
- It is a perennial freshwater wetland that developed following the construction of the **Upper Ganges Canal in 1852.**
- The sanctuary is known for species like the **Indian river tern and the Sarus crane.**
- Recognized as an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area (IBA) by BirdLife International.

INDIAN POLITY

131st Constitutional Amendment Bill and Delimitation Bill

- **Context:** Three bills including the 131st Constitutional Amendment Bill and the Delimitation Bill have been introduced in the Lok Sabha with the aim of implementing a 33% reservation for women in the House, effective from the 2029 general elections onwards.
- Through this initiative, the total number of Lok Sabha constituencies is set to be increased from the current 543 to 815.
- According to this proposal, it is envisaged that 815 seats would be allocated to the States, while 35 seats would be allotted to the Union Territories.
- Out of the expanded total of 815 seats, 272 constituencies will be reserved for women, based on the 33% reservation quota.
- Within this reservation framework, a sub-quota will be provided for women belonging to the Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) categories.
- Under the legislation enacted in 2023, implementation was contingent upon the completion of the 2027 Census; **consequently, the reservation could not have been effected prior to 2034.** These amendments have been introduced specifically to circumvent this delay.
- The number of Lok Sabha constituencies in the Southern States will be increased from 129 to 195.
- The representation of the Southern States will witness a marginal increase, rising from 23.76% to 23.87%.

Proposed figures

- The table shows the estimated number of seats for southern States as announced by Union Home Minister

State	Current seats	As a share of current 543 seats	50% increase (approx.)	New status (as a share of 816 seats)
Karnataka	28	5.15%	42	5.14
Andhra Pradesh	25	4.60%	38	4.65%
Telangana	17	3.13%	26	3.18%
Tamil Nadu	39	7.18%	59	7.23%
Kerala	20	3.68%	30	3.67%
Total	129	23.76%	195	23.87%

Delimitation of Constituencies

- Delimitation is the process of redrawing the boundaries of electoral constituencies to ensure proportional representation in accordance with changes in population.
- This process ensures that the value of every voter's vote is equal and rectifies regional imbalances in representation.

Constitutional Provisions

- **Article 82:** Empowers Parliament to enact a 'Delimitation Act' after every census.
- **Article 170:** Explains the process of dividing constituencies for State Legislative Assemblies.
- **Article 330:** Provides for the readjustment of the number of seats reserved for Scheduled

Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Lok Sabha (House of the People).

- **Article 332:** Provides for the readjustment of the number of seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes in the Legislative Assemblies of the States.
- **Article 327:** Empowers Parliament to regulate, by law, all matters relating to elections to Parliament and State Legislatures.
- **Article 329(a):** Stipulates that orders issued regarding delimitation cannot be challenged in any court of law.

Composition and Appointment

- The Delimitation Commission is **appointed by the President of India in consultation with the Election Commission of India.**
- Members: It comprises a retired **Supreme Court Judge (as Chairperson), the Chief Election Commissioner, and the respective State Election Commissioners.**
- It functions independently, **free from executive interference.**
- Its orders possess the force of law; neither Parliament nor the State Legislatures can modify them.

The Necessity of Constituency Delimitation

- To resolve the anomaly where MPs from larger states represent a significantly higher number of voters compared to those from smaller states.
- To rectify the issue of certain constituencies becoming overcrowded due to rapid urbanization and migration.
- Delays in the delimitation process can lead to regional imbalances and distortions in political representation.

Constituency Delimitation Acts in India

- **Delimitation Act, 1952:** Based on the **1951 Census**, the **first Delimitation Commission (1952) was constituted.** It defined the initial constituencies for the Lok Sabha and State

Legislative Assemblies, and also provided for the reservation of seats for Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST).

- **Delimitation Act, 1962:** Based on the **1961 Census**, the **Commission constituted in 1963** redrew constituency boundaries to reflect demographic changes and updated the reserved seats for SC/ST categories.
- **Delimitation Act, 1972:** Based on the **1971 Census**, the **Commission constituted in 1973** readjusted constituency boundaries. Subsequently, through the **42nd Constitutional Amendment (1976)**, the total number of seats was frozen and kept unchanged.
- **Delimitation Act, 2002:** Based on the **2001 Census**, the **Commission constituted in 2002** revised constituency boundaries and the reservation of seats for SC/ST categories. However, due to a moratorium imposed until 2026, the total number of seats remained unchanged.

Judicial Stance

- **Kishorchandra Saghanlal Rathod v. Union of India (2024):** The Supreme Court ruled that orders issued by the Delimitation Commission can be subjected to judicial review by Constitutional Courts (High Courts and the Supreme Court) if such orders are patently arbitrary or violative of constitutional values.
- **Meghraj Kothari v. Delimitation Commission (1966):** Judicial intervention was restricted solely to avoid unnecessary delays in the electoral process; it did not impose an absolute bar on the power of Constitutional Courts to scrutinize the orders of the Delimitation Commission.

Constitutional Amendment Acts

- **42nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1976:** Froze the allocation of seats to the States in the Lok Sabha, as well as the division of each State into territorial constituencies, based on the 1971 Census, until the year 2000.

- **84th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2001:** Extended this freeze until the year 2026. Furthermore, it empowered the authorities to undertake the readjustment of constituencies based on the 1991 Census.
- **87th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2003:** Permitted the delimitation of constituencies based on the 2001 Census, without altering the number of seats allocated to each State in the Lok Sabha.

Pennaiyar River

- **Context:** The Central Government has filed a petition in the Supreme Court seeking an additional six months' time to constitute a tribunal regarding the Pennaiyar river water dispute between the states of **Tamil Nadu and Karnataka**.
- In 2018, the Tamil Nadu government filed a lawsuit alleging that the Karnataka government's construction of a dam across the **Markandeya River (a major tributary of the Pennaiyar)** was illegal.
- On February 2, 2026, the Supreme Court of India directed the Central Government to constitute the Pennaiyar River Water Dispute Tribunal within one month.

About the Pennaiyar River

- The Pennaiyar is a major river in South India. It flows through the states of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. It is also known as the **Then Pennai, Dakshina Pinakini, Thenpennai, or Ponnaiyar**.
- Originating in the Nandi Hills, it flows southward through Karnataka and southeastward through Tamil Nadu, eventually emptying into the Bay of Bengal near Cuddalore.
- With a length of approximately 497 km, this river is the second-longest river in Tamil Nadu.
- The river basin is bounded by ranges of the Eastern Ghats, such as the Velikonda, Nagari, Javadhu, Shevaroy, Chitteri, and Kalvarayan Hills. The Bay of Bengal forms its eastern boundary.
- The Chinnar, Markandeya, Vaniyar, and Pambar are the river's major tributaries.
- Important reservoirs, such as the **Krishnagiri Dam and the Sathanur Dam**, play a crucial role in water management within the basin.
- **Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956:** This Act enables states to request the Central Government to constitute tribunals for the purpose of resolving disputes related to inter-state waters.
- The verdicts of these tribunals are binding in nature.

ECI Rules on Mobile Phones & Photography inside Polling Stations

- **Context:** The Election Commission of India has issued strict guidelines prohibiting the use of digital devices inside polling stations.

Ban on devices inside booths

- Mobile phones, cameras, smartwatches, and other electronic devices are not allowed inside polling stations

Violation & Punishment

- Taking photos, selfies, or videos inside polling booths can lead to: Up to 3 months imprisonment, or Fine, or both
- Devices used in violation may be confiscated

Legal Provision

- Photographing voting on EVM is a serious offence under Section 128 of the Representation of the People Act 1951 (maintaining vote secrecy)

Additional Powers

- The Election Commission may also disqualify offenders, restricting future voting rights

Purpose of Restrictions

- To ensure secrecy and integrity of voting process
- To maintain the sanctity of elections

Permitted Activity

- Voters may take selfies with inked fingers only after exiting the polling station

Online Gaming Promotion and Regulation Rules, 2026

- **Background:** The Government of India has officially announced the new “**Online Gaming Promotion and Regulation Rules, 2026**” to create an integrated national framework for the online gaming sector.
- Finalized by the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)**, these rules come into effect on May 1, 2026. These serve as guidelines operating under the Act enacted in 2025.

Key Features

- The objective is to eliminate fragmented state-level regulations and introduce standardized laws across the country. This is intended to address issues such as gaming addiction, financial fraud, and money laundering.
- A new body, the ‘**Online Gaming Authority of India**’ (OGAI), has been constituted under the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)**.
- Data localization has been made mandatory. To prevent prohibited real-money gaming, the framework facilitates the use of financial transaction systems as a tool to promote a legal and formal gaming environment.

Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal

- **Context:** The **Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal (MWDT)** has issued a final warning to the states of **Odisha and Chhattisgarh** to reach a consensus regarding the sharing of the Mahanadi river water.

About the Mahanadi River

- The Mahanadi is a major **east-flowing peninsular river** that flows through the states of **Chhattisgarh and Odisha**.

- It is the **second-largest peninsular river** in India in terms of water resources, **ranking just after the Godavari**.

- The river originates near **Pharsiya village, in the Nagri Sihawa area of Dhamtari district in Chhattisgarh**, at an elevation of approximately **442 meters above sea level**. It flows for about **851–900 km**.

- It drains into the **Bay of Bengal near False Point**, close to the Paradip Port, after splitting into several distributaries.

- The **Seonath, Hasdeo, Mand, Ib, Jonk, Ong, and Tel** are its major tributaries. It is known as one of the rivers that deposits the most silt in India.

Key Feature

- **Hirakud Dam:** It is the **world’s longest earthen dam**. It is used for irrigation, flood control, and hydroelectric power generation.

- The **Mahanadi Water Disputes Tribunal (MWDT)** was constituted in **2018** under the **Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956**.

Constitutional Provisions Regarding Inter-State River Water Disputes

- **Article 262 of the Constitution:** Deals with the adjudication of disputes relating to waters of inter-state rivers or river valleys.

- **Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956:** This Act empowers the Central Government to establish tribunals to adjudicate disputes between states regarding inter-state river waters.

- **River Boards Act, 1956:** This Act provides for the establishment of River Boards to advise on the regulation and development of inter-state rivers.

NITI Aayog

- **Context :** NITI Aayog is a **public policy think tank** of the Central Government that promotes economic growth and cooperative federalism.
- The Central Government has restructured the NITI Aayog.

- **Ashok Kumar Lahiri** has been appointed as the new Vice Chairman.
- 5 full-time members have been appointed - **K.V. Raju, M. Srinivas, Abhay Surantikar, Govardhan Das, Rajiv Gauba.**
- NITI Aayog serves as a key platform for policy formulation, cooperative federalism, administrative reforms, innovation and long-term strategic thinking.
- The Prime Minister is the **Chairman of NITI Aayog.**
- Ashok Kumar Lahiri is a former **Chief Economic Advisor** and a member of the **15th Finance Commission.**

About NITI Aayog

- NITI Aayog is the **premier public policy think tank** of the Government of India. It promotes economic growth through **cooperative federalism.**
 - It was established on **January 1, 2015**, through a **Cabinet resolution** as a replacement for the Planning Commission.
 - It shifted policy-making from a centralized "**top-down**" model to a decentralized "**bottom-up**" approach in which states participate.
 - Its key objectives include involving states in **economic decision-making, supporting long-term strategic planning and innovation, and integrating national security with economic policy.**
 - It functions as a policy-designing body, a knowledge hub, a monitoring and evaluation agency, and a reform driving force to improve administration.
 - The **Prime Minister of India serves as its Chairperson. The Vice-Chairperson is appointed by the Prime Minister with Cabinet rank.**
 - The Governing Council includes Chief Ministers of States, Chief Ministers of Union Territories with legislatures, and Lieutenant Governors of other Union Territories.
 - It includes **full-time professional members, up to four Union Ministers as ex-officio members,** and a **Chief Executive Officer (CEO)** appointed for a tenure determined by the Prime Minister.
- ### **NITI Aayog Initiatives**
- **Atal Innovation Mission (2016):** Encourages entrepreneurship and innovation through Atal Tinkering Labs, Atal Incubation Centres, and Atal New India Challenges.
 - **Aspirational Districts Programme:** Focuses on transforming 112 backward districts using real-time monitoring and central-state cooperation.
 - **Aspirational Blocks Programme:** Extends development initiatives to remote blocks to improve administration and service delivery through the convergence of schemes.
 - **POSHAN Abhiyaan:** Aims to improve the **nutritional levels of children, women, and mothers** using monitoring and inter-departmental convergence.
 - **e-AMRIT Portal:** Encourages the use of **electric vehicles** as part of the **India-UK** collaboration roadmap.
 - **LIFE (Lifestyle for Environment):** Encourages sustainable living and eco-friendly habits to build a global 'pro-planet' community.
 - **Poshan Gyan:** A digital nutrition knowledge platform that supports awareness regarding maternal and child health.
 - **Key Indices**
 - NITI Aayog has developed various indices to evaluate the performance of states across different sectors, including:
 - SDG India Index (in collaboration with the United Nations).
 - Composite Water Management Index.
 - Health Index.
 - Agricultural Marketing Reform Index.
 - India Innovation Index.

INDIAN ECONOMY

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

- **Context:** Despite the impact of prevailing geopolitical tensions in West Asia on the global economy, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) has stated that India will emerge as the **world's fastest-growing major economy in the years 2026 and 2027.**
- Due to disruptions caused to international markets and supply chains by conflicts in West Asia, the global economic growth forecast has been **downgraded from 3.3 percent to 3.1 percent.**
- Specifically, if tensions between the United States and Iran escalate further, global economic growth could decline to approximately 2 percent in 2026 a scenario that is particularly likely to materialize if energy infrastructure is compromised.
- Amidst such global challenges, **India's growth rate is projected to remain robust at 6.5 percent in both 2026 and 2027.**
- India's growth estimate for the year 2025 has been set at **7.6 percent**; this figure exceeds previous projections.
- Driven by rising global energy and food prices, India's inflation rate is expected to rise to 4.7 percent in 2026, before subsequently **moderating to 4 percent in 2027.**

About the International Monetary Fund (IMF)

- **Established in 1944 at the Bretton Woods Conference** (alongside the World Bank), the IMF **officially commenced its operations in 1945.**
- Its **headquarters are located in Washington, D.C.**
- Its core objectives include ensuring the stability of the international monetary system, fostering

global monetary cooperation, and facilitating international trade.

- It acts as the **"Lender of Last Resort"** for countries facing financial crises.
- Currently, it has **191 member countries. India is a founding member of the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The most recent country to join was Andorra (in 2020).**
- The **Union Finance Minister of the Government of India serves as the ex-officio Governor on the IMF's Board of Governors.** The Governor of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) serves as the Alternate Governor.
- The **SDR (Special Drawing Rights), created by the IMF in 1969,** is an international reserve asset. Its value is based on a basket of five major currencies: the US Dollar, the Euro, the Chinese Renminbi (Yuan), the Japanese Yen, and the British Pound Sterling.
- The IMF provides loans to member countries facing Balance of Payments (BoP) difficulties. Its primary lending instruments include the Stand-By Agreement (SBA) for short-term needs and the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) for medium-term structural issues.

Key Reports

- **World Economic Outlook (WEO)**
- **Global Financial Stability Report (GFSR)**

India's Position

- India currently ranks **8th in terms of Quota allocation.** Although India borrowed heavily during the economic crisis of 1991, it repaid all its debts by the year 2000.
- Since 2002, through the Financial Transaction Plan (FTP), **India has served as a creditor nation to the IMF.**

Overall Core Sector Growth

- **Context:** The combined **Index of Eight Core Industries (ICI) declined by 0.4 per cent**

(provisional) in March, 2026 as compared to the Index in March, 2025.

- The production of Fertilizers, Crude Oil, Coal and Electricity recorded negative growth in March, 2026. March 2026 Performance
- 4 out of 8 sectors contracted compared to March 2025.
- Weak performance driven by high base effect and external disruptions (e.g., West Asia crisis).

Fertiliser Sector Decline

- Output plunged 24.6% YoY in March 2026.
- Caused by input shortages due to geopolitical tensions.
- **Annual growth** : -0.1% in 2025-26, down from 2.9% in 2024-25.

Electricity Sector Weakness

- Contracted 0.5% in March 2026 (high base effect from 7.5% growth last year).
- Annual growth slowed to 0.9% (from 5.2%).

Construction-Linked Sectors Slow

- Steel growth fell to 2.2% (18-month low).
- Cement growth dropped to 4% (17-month low).
- Suggests slowdown in construction activity.

Natural Gas Shows Strength

- Grew 6.4% in March 2026.
- Boosted by government push to increase output amid supply constraints.

Crude Oil Continues Decline

- Contracted 5.7% in March 2026.
- Marks the 7th consecutive month of contraction.

Coal and Refinery Products

- **Coal sector**: Declined 4% in March 2026.
- **Refinery products**: Marginal growth of 0.1%.

Index of Industrial Production (IIP)

▪ The Index of Industrial Production (IIP) is a key economic measure that tracks **short-term fluctuations in the output of industrial goods in India**. It provides an overview of how the **industrial sector is performing, covering areas such as manufacturing, mining, and electricity generation**.

▪ **Published by**: National Statistical Office under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), Government of India

▪ **Base Year**: 2011-12

▪ **Coverage**: Includes three main sectors—Mining, Manufacturing, and Electricity

▪ **Objective**: Used to assess industrial performance, support policy formulation, and serve as an early signal of economic trends

▪ **Frequency**: Released every month

▪ Assists in evaluating sector-wise growth, understanding inflation patterns, and tracking the overall progress of industrial development

Circular Economy

▪ **Context**: At the 2nd Global Seminar on Resource Efficiency and Circular Economy held in New Delhi, the Union Minister emphasized **India's shift toward a circular economy model**.

▪ The Minister highlighted the growing importance of recycling and biotechnology in achieving sustainable industrial growth and reaching the **net-zero emissions target by 2070**.

About Circular Economy

▪ A circular economy is an economic system that **eliminates waste and pollution by keeping products and materials in use through maintenance, reuse, refurbishment, and recycling**.

- Unlike the linear “take-make-dispose” model, it **emphasizes closing the loop, reducing resource extraction, and regenerating natural ecosystems.**
- By 2050, **India’s circular economy is expected to achieve a market value of over \$2 trillion and generate approximately 10 million jobs.**
- According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), shifting to global circular economy models could yield **\$4.5 trillion in economic benefits by 2030**, while simultaneously **reducing carbon emissions and creating sustainable green jobs.**

India’s key initiatives in Circular Economy

- **Swachh Bharat Mission 2014 (SBM-U):** Strengthening urban waste management through the 3R (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) principles.
- **GOBAR-Dhan Scheme 2018:** Creating wealth from waste through biogas and organic waste processing. As of February 2025, the scheme is implemented in 67.8% of India’s districts, with 1,008 biogas plants in operation.
- **E-Waste Management Rules (2022):** Formalizing the recycling-based disposal of electronic waste.
- **Plastic EPR (Extended Producer Responsibility):** Encouraging manufacturers to take responsibility for plastic waste (single-use plastic was banned in 2022).
- **NITI Aayog’s Circular Economy Division (2022)**
 - It is a dedicated unit that coordinates between various ministries to finalize action plans for sectors such as e-waste, lithium-ion batteries, and end-of-life vehicles.

India’s Expansion of Free Trade Agreements

- **Context:** The Union Minister of Commerce and Industry has stated that Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) are currently being finalized with **12 additional countries and blocs, including Brazil.**
- India has already signed Free Trade Agreements with the **United Arab Emirates (UAE), the United Kingdom (UK), the European Union (EU), the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) which comprises four European nations Australia, Mauritius, Oman, and New Zealand.**
- Compared to the previous financial year, the country’s exports have registered an increase during the first three weeks of the current month of April. This growth has been recorded despite the challenges posed by the conflict in West Asia.
- India is currently engaged in negotiations for **Free Trade Agreements with Chile, Peru, Israel, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), Canada, South Africa** and its neighboring regions, Brazil and its neighboring countries, and Russia. Accordingly, 12 additional agreements are currently in the pipeline.

TAMIL NADU

INITIATIVES / SCHEMES

Tamil Nadu Climate Resilient Villages

- **Context:** The Economic Survey of India for 2025–26 has recognized Tamil Nadu’s ‘Climate Resilient Villages’ project as a model best practice.

About the ‘Climate Resilient Villages’ Project:

- **Launched in 2023** under the **Tamil Nadu Climate Change Mission**, this project aims to **enhance the adaptive capacity of rural areas** to withstand climate change.
- The project is implemented in collaboration with the **World Resources Institute (WRI)**, combining scientific assessment with the participation of local communities.
- The primary goal is to create **sustainable and disaster-resilient villages** capable of facing the impacts of climate change.
- The project ensures region-specific defense strategies tailored to various ecosystems, **including coastal areas, forests, mountains, river basins, and tourism-dependent zones.**
- The selected villages function as a ‘**Climate Smart Village**’ model. These include:
 - **Kodiakkarai, Muthupet, Pichavaram, Rameswaram, Yercaud, Ooty, Hogenakkal, Pulicat, and Tiruchendur.**

Tamil Nadu Climate Change Mission

- The Tamil Nadu Climate Change Mission was launched following an announcement in the **2021–22 State Budget.**
- It is established under the **Department of Environment and Climate Change.**
- Its primary role is to **coordinate climate adaptation and mitigation** efforts across various government departments and districts.

- The mission aims to enhance Tamil Nadu’s resilience to climate change, protect natural resources, minimize vulnerabilities, and promote sustainable development in alignment with climate change goals.

HISTORY & CULTURE

Bhonsala Inscriptions & the Shivaji-Afzal Khan Episode

Thanjavur Big Temple Inscriptions

- The **Brihadeeswarar Temple** contains extensive inscriptions, including the largest from the Maratha period.
- Found on the **south-western walls near the Vinayagar shrine.**
- Written in Marathi during the reign of **Serfoji II.**
- Provides a detailed account of the history and genealogy of the Maratha kings of Thanjavur.
- Includes praise for the **Danish missionary Christian Frederick Schwarz.**
- Records that **Serfoji II** sent military support and financial aid to the British.
- Mentions his assistance during the conflict against the **Marudu Brothers Rebellion.**
- Highlights the political alliances and historical context of the **Maratha rule in Thanjavur.**

Bhonsala Vamsa Charitra

- Published by **Sarasvati Mahal Library.**
- Chronicles Maratha history in Marathi and Tamil, with an English summary.
- Vividly narrates the famous encounter between **Chhatrapati Shivaji and Afzal Khan.**

Shivaji vs Afzal Khan – Strategy & Encounter

- Shivaji, guided by his **deity Tulja Bhavani**, planned the meeting at **Jawali Fort.**
- Secret instructions were sent to surround **Afzal Khan’s army** if needed.
- During the meeting, **Afzal Khan** attempted to stab Shivaji.

- Shivaji, protected by armor, retaliated using tiger-claws (wagh nakh) and killed him.

Aftermath of the Duel

- Afzal Khan's minister **Krishnaji Pant continued the fight.**
- Shivaji offered him mercy, respecting his Brahmin status, but he persisted and was killed by a bodyguard.
- Maratha forces attacked after the nagara (war drum) signal and defeated Afzal Khan's troops.
- Captured soldiers were treated with honour and released.

Religious & Cultural Beliefs

- Shivaji's victory was attributed to divine blessings of **Tulja Bhavani.**
- The narrative blends history, faith, and royal legitimacy.

Historical Significance

- The episode is one of the most dramatic in Indian history.
- Highlights Shivaji's strategic brilliance, courage, and ethics in warfare.
- The inscriptions preserve a unique Maratha perspective within a Chola monument.

Flowers as War Symbols in Tamil Culture

- In no other ancient culture in the world have flowers been used as symbols of the land.
- Flowers have also been used to symbolize events related to the exterior life and warfare, **known as the exterior life, only in Tamil culture.**
- This not only speaks of the close natural bond that existed among the Tamils. It also speaks of their botanical knowledge.
- In Sangam literature, flowers of war were used to **symbolize different stages of war and to express the mood of the soldiers.**
- A flower was used as a symbol for each war action to express the purpose of the war.

- These flowers were used to identify one's comrades on the battlefield and to show the determination of the soldiers.

- The book that describes the above-mentioned grammar of external objects is '**Purap Porul Venbamalai written by Aiyandar**' dated 9th century B.E. (AD). This is considered to be the only book written on **grammar of external objects after Tolkappiyam.**

Vetchi

- The Vetsi flower is used to attract the **herds of cows in the enemy country.** It is commonly known as Idlipoo in Tamil. In English, Flame flower, scientific name *Ixora coccinea*.
- It is recorded in Sangam literature that women wore these flowers on their heads. It is native to Southwestern Peninsular India and Sri Lanka. This tree is used in Ayurvedic medicine.

Vanji

- When a war is **waged against an enemy country and the land** is captured, the Vanji flower is used. The Vanji flag is called Sindhi. In English, Heartleaf vine, scientific name *Tinosporacordifolia*.
- The tree *Salix tetrasperma* / Indian willow is called the river Vanji, and some botanists believe that this is the flower of the willow tree that the literature refers to.

Karanthai

- They carry the Karanthai flower to rescue **herds of cows that have been attracted by it.** It is also called Sivakaranthai, and its scientific name is *Sphaeranthus indicus*.
- Its flowers, seeds, and leaves are used for medicinal purposes. It is used against inflammation, as an antimicrobial, and as a blood purifier.

Kanchi

- The flower Kanchi is used to protect its **country against the blazing fire of the Indian Elm.** It is called Aavu. Aaya.

- The English name is Indian Elm, the scientific name is *Holoptelia integrifolia*.
- Under the Vijayanagara Empire, Nayak kings issued various types of coins featuring chariot motifs.

Uzhignai

- A flower that is used **to beautify a fort during a siege**.
- In Kumari district, the name Uzhignai is still given, but it is used to treat paralysis. It is widely known as Balloon vine.
- In English, Balloon vine, also known as *Cardiospermum halicacabum*.
- **Two types of coins found in the Chola region** have been identified as belonging to the Thanjavur Nayak period, as they feature the chariot symbol.
- This is a **copper coin weighing 2.3 grams**. It features an image of a **bull (Nandi)**, with the **sun and moon above it**, and a chariot depicted in the background.

Nochchi

- The flower **that the soldiers who break the siege rise up to**.
- It is mentioned as **Sindhu varam in line 89 of Kurinjipatu**. Scientific name: *Vitex negundo*.
- This is also a **copper coin, weighing 0.64 grams**. It features an image of **Lord Ganesha** on the obverse and a chariot symbol on the reverse.

Thumbai

- The flower that is used when the **leaders of two countries fight face to face**. Scientific name: *Leucas aspera*.
- The **Purananuru and Ainkurunuru** mention that men and women used to wear the **Thumbai flower**.
- **Prehistoric Rock Art Site Rediscovered in Nilgiris**
- **Context:** The Yaakai Heritage Trust has reported the **re-discovery of a prehistoric rock painting site in the Nilgiris district**.
- The site, situated near the famous rock art site of **Vellarikombai village in Kotagiri, is sacred to Irula and Kurumba indigenous communities**

Vaagai

- Vaagai, a flower that is burned as a **symbol of victory in war**, in detail. Of the above plants.
- The newly identified site, known locally among tribal communities as **'Oor Pare'**, lies **northwest of Vellarikkombai**.

The Big Temple Chariot Symbol on Nayak Period Coins

- **Context :** Numismatic researchers have stated that the symbol of the Thanjavur Big Temple (Brihadisvara Temple) chariot is engraved on the coins issued during the Thanjavur Nayak rule.
- **Tamil temple chariots are built in the Dravidian architectural style** and have been depicted not only in inscriptions, sculptures, paintings, and literature but also on coinage.
- It is believed that these coins were likely issued during temple festival seasons to commemorate the chariot festival.
- The region is already known for important rock art locations such as **Eluthuparai and Tholikiparai**, which have previously drawn scholarly attention.
- Used by tribal communities as a **resting spot during honey collection**.

Depictions & Themes

- Anthropomorphic (human-like) figures with conical headgear
- Elongated human forms and ladder-like structures
- Ritual symbols like dot-filled rectangular patterns
- Indicate ritualistic and supernatural beliefs

Chronology

- Paintings created over multiple phases
- Evidence of repainting and overlapping layers
- Similar nearby sites show up to four chronological layers

Holocene Fossil Bed Discovery in Tamil Nadu

- **Context:** The Union Environment Minister announced the discovery of a notable fossil site in Panaiyur are of Thoothukudi.
- The fossils date to the **middle-to-late Holocene period**
- A newly found site containing fossil remains that add significantly to India's Quaternary record
- Offers insights into the region's ancient life forms and ecosystems
- Came to light after heavy rains in 2023

About the Holocene Epoch

- The Holocene is the most recent phase of the **Quaternary Period, following the Pleistocene**
- Covers roughly the last 11,700 years
- The **Thoothukudi fossils are estimated to be 8,000–12,000 years old**

Key Features of the Holocene

- Warming climate after the last Ice Age
- Rise in sea levels due to melting glaciers
- Changes in animal life, including disappearance of large species and adaptation of modern fauna
- Growth of human settlements and agriculture

ECONOMY

Economic Growth of Tamil Nadu

- **Context:** Tamil Nadu has achieved a historic milestone by recording double-digit economic growth for the **second consecutive financial year**.

- According to recent data released by the Union Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, Tamil Nadu recorded an economic growth rate of 10.83 percent in the 2025-26 financial year.

- In the preceding year, the state's growth rate stood at 11.19 percent. As of the current assessment, Tamil Nadu stands out as one of the states in India with the highest economic growth rates.

- This marks a significant milestone, as it is the first time in approximately 14 years that Tamil Nadu has achieved double-digit economic growth for two consecutive years.

Comparison with National Growth

- State growth significantly higher than **national average (7.4%)**
- Reflects strong policy framework and economic resilience

Five-Year Growth Performance

- Average growth (2021–22 to 2025–26): **9.07%**
- Previous 5-year average (2016–17 to 2020–21): **5.21%**
- Pre-COVID average: 7.18%

GSDP Growth (Current Prices)

- **Increased from Rs.31.19 lakh crore (2024–25) to Rs.35.29 lakh crore (2025–26)**
- **Nominal growth rate:** 13.16% (fastest among States)

Sector-wise Growth (2025–26)

- **Secondary Sector (Industry): ~15% (main growth driver)**
- **Services Sector: ~8.5%**
- **Primary Sector (Agriculture): ~6%**

Per Capita Income

- Tamil Nadu's per capita income has now risen to **Rs.4.08 lakh**. While the national average per capita income stands at **Rs.2.05 lakh**
- **Second highest after Karnataka (Rs.4.33 lakh)**

Tamil Nadu Economic Performance

- **Context:** Tamil Nadu, which is the second-largest State economy, has sustained a high-growth trajectory, recording a **real Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) growth of 10.83% in 2025-26**, following 11.19% in 2024-25.
- This places the State well above the national average of 7.4% and marks two consecutive years of double-digit growth.

Sector-wise Growth

- **Secondary Sector:** Main driver, grew 15.02% (vs 6.6% national)
- **Manufacturing:** 14.22% growth
- **Construction:** 15.02% growth
- **Services Sector:** 8.54% growth; contributes 53.54% of GVA
- **Primary Sector:** Primary sector recorded 5.92% growth in 2025-26, higher than the national average (2.7%)

Industrial Strength

- Contributes 13.35% to India's manufacturing GDP
- Over 40,000 factories employing ~25 lakh workers
- **Ranks 1st in factory employment**

Per Capita Income

- Increased from ₹2.096 lakh (2020-21) to ₹4.08 lakh (2025-26)
- Second highest in India (after Karnataka)
- **Above national average (₹2.196 lakh)**

Investment & FDI

- FDI inflows rose from \$2,169 million (2022-23) to \$3,681 million (2024-25)
- Strong private investments in manufacturing, automobiles, electronics, renewable energy

Infrastructure & Human Capital

- Strong power supply, roads, ports, industrial corridors
- High skilled workforce and technical education base

Export Performance

- **Ranked 2nd in Export Preparedness Index (Score: 64.41)**
- Major contributor to India's exports

Inflation Control

- Retail inflation declined from 5.2% to 2.62% (Dec 2025)
- Balanced supply and demand conditions

ENVIRONMENT

Pykara Lake

- **Context:** The Madras High Court has declined to remove the temporary ban on tourist boating at Pykara Lake.

Location & Formation

- The lake lies around 20 km from Ooty in the Nilgiris district.
- It was created due to the construction of the Pykara Dam across the Pykara River.

River Significance

- The Pykara River originates from the Mukurthi Peak.
- It is the largest river in the district.
- It is regarded as sacred by the Toda tribal community.

Hydropower

- The dam includes a power station, among the oldest in South India.
- It produces approximately 60 MW of electricity.

Pykara Falls

- Located a short distance from the lake.
- The Pykara Falls features two cascades.
- Heights: about 55 meters and 61 meters.

Surroundings & Ecology

- The lake is encircled by dense forests of Mukurthi National Park.
- This park forms part of the Western Ghats.

- Recognized as a **UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1 July 2012.**

Nilgiri Tahr Census

- **Context:** To ensure the long-term protection of the Nilgiri Tahr, the state animal of Tamil Nadu, various special schemes are being implemented by the Government of Tamil Nadu. As part of this, an integrated Nilgiri Tahr census is being conducted in collaboration with the Kerala Forest Department.
- This census is conducted annually after the **winter calving season**, when young animals are seen with mature herds.
- In the **first integrated census held in 2024**, the number of Tahrs was estimated at 1,031.
- In the **second integrated census held in 2025**, the number of Nilgiri Tahrs was estimated at 1,303.
- During this study, the continuous use of newly re-colonized habitats like Pasumalai was confirmed, as well as the return of this species to areas that had not been seen for over a decade (10 years). In this, many of the surveyed landscapes align with the places described in Sangam literature.
- Following this, the 3rd integrated census operations began last Friday (April 24). This work, which continues until April 27, is being conducted over an area of more than 3,100 km across Tamil Nadu, covering 14 forest divisions, 43 forest ranges, 124 forest sections, and 177 survey blocks.
- The survey is being conducted from **Ashambu Mottai in Kanyakumari to Thavalamalai in Gudalur.**

About the Nilgiri Tahr

- The Nilgiri Tahr is the state animal of Tamil Nadu. Its cultural and environmental

importance was recorded 2,000 years ago in ancient Sangam literature such as Silappathikaram and Seevaga Chinthamani.

- "Ongu Maalvarai Varaiyaadu Uzhakalin Udaithungu Peruthen." The meaning of this is: "The Tahr that wanders on the high mountains," as mentioned in Seevaga Chinthamani.
- The Nilgiri Tahr is classified as Endangered on the IUCN Red List and is provided the highest level of legal protection under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.

Project Nilgiri Tahr

- The Government of Tamil Nadu launched the "Project Nilgiri Tahr" on December 28, 2022, to protect the Nilgiri Tahr species, expand its habitat, and create awareness among the public.
- The main objectives of this project are to calculate the population through research and radio telemetry, reintroduce them to historical habitats, eliminate threats, and increase awareness.
- The total estimated cost of this project is Rs.25.14 crore.
- This project is being implemented from **2022 to 2027.**
- **October 7** is observed as '**Nilgiri Tahr Day**' in honor of **E.R.C.Davidar**, who conducted one of the early studies on this species in 1975.
- The Nilgiri Tahr is the **only mountain-dwelling ungulate (hoofed animal)** found in South India.
- According to the 2015 report of the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF), their population was estimated to be around **3,122.**

NATIONAL - NEWS

New Digital Platform for Trade Services

- **Context:** The Commerce and Industry Ministry launched a new **integrated digital platform for the Department of Commerce.**
- Aimed at improving access to trade-related services and information
- Part of the government's push for stronger e-governance

Purpose

- Enhance ease of doing business in international trade
- Improve service delivery for exporters, importers, and stakeholders

Features of the New Website

Modern and user-friendly interface

- **Complies with:**
 - Digital Brand Identity Manual 3.0
 - Guidelines for Indian Government Websites
- **Provides:**
 - Seamless access to trade services
 - Transparent and efficient information delivery

Mobile Application

- Bilingual app available on: Android, iOS

Key features

- Offline access
- GPS integration
- Enables users to access services anytime, anywhere

Benefits

- Greater transparency in trade processes
- Improved efficiency and accessibility
- Supports stakeholders in foreign trade operations

Broader Significance

- Aligns with India's e-Governance vision
- Promotes digital transformation in trade facilitation
- Strengthens the overall trade ecosystem in India

Urban Challenge Fund

- **Context:** The Centre launched the operational guidelines for the **Urban Challenge Fund (UCF)**, which is aimed at **transforming urban infrastructure through market-linked competitive financing.**

- The government had made allocation for it in the Union Budget.

- The Centre will provide financial support to transformative and bankable urban projects through competitive challenge mode through this fund.

About Urban Challenge Fund (UCF)

- A Centrally Sponsored Scheme by Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA).
- Central Assistance: ₹1,00,000 crore (FY 2025-26 to 2030-31, extendable by 3 years).
- Aims to mobilize ₹4 lakh crore total investment in the urban sector.

Core Objective

- **Shift from grant-based funding to:**
 - Market-linked financing
 - Reform-driven development
 - Outcome-oriented infrastructure creation

Eligibility

- Cities with a projected **25 population of 10L+**
- Industrial Cities (manufacturing and cities) with a **projected 2025 population of 1L.**
- ULBs in **hill states/UTs, Northeastern States and ULBs with population blow 1L.**

Projects Admissible Under UCF

- Digital governance
- Projects for decongestion

- Revitalisation of old city areas; 5-20 square kilometer (sqkm)
- Non-Motorised transport
- Walkways
- Transit Hub upgradation
- Transit oriented infrastructure development
- Integrated waste processing
- Flyover Riverfront development

Key Approach

- Promote bankable urban projects through a competitive “challenge-mode”.
- Encourage cities to access market funding, not rely solely on public finance.

Focus Areas (Three Verticals)

- **Creative Development of Cities** – Revamping city cores and legacy infrastructure.
- **Cities as Growth Hubs** – Development of greenfield/semi-greenfield cities with strong economic drivers.
- **Water and Sanitation** – Clean cities, waste management, and sanitation improvement.

Reform Requirements

- Cities must implement reforms in: Urban governance, Urban finance, Urban planning

Infrastructure Priorities

- Rejuvenation of old city areas
- Garbage-free cities and sanitation
- Integrated Command and Control Centres (ICCCs)
- Dump site and legacy waste remediation

Funding Pattern

- 25% funding from UCF
- 50% to be raised from the market
- 25% from State/UT/ULB or additional market sources
- Encourages private sector participation (financial + managerial)

Support for Small Cities

- ₹5000 crore credit repayment guarantee corpus created
- Targets: Cities with population < 1 lakh and Cities in hilly and northeastern states/UTs

Credit Guarantee Benefit

- 70% loan repayment guarantee
- Up to ₹7 crore coverage
- Enables small Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) to access market finance

Significance

- First initiative enabling small cities to tap market funding
- Promotes inclusive urban growth and financial empowerment of ULBs
- Marks a paradigm shift in India’s urban development strategy

Coverage & Project Eligibility

- **The Urban Challenge Fund will include**
 - All cities with a population of 10 lakh and above (as per 2025 estimates)
 - All State and Union Territory capitals not falling in this category
 - Key industrial cities with a population of at least 1 lakh
- **Projects supported under the fund must**
 - Be financially viable (bankable)
 - Bring significant transformation
 - Align with the three focus areas (verticals)
 - Have well-defined outcomes and a reliable market-based financing plan
- Projects that are already receiving funding under schemes such as Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation 2.0 and Swachh Bharat Mission-Urban 2.0, or any other Centrally Sponsored Schemes, will not qualify, ensuring the fund is used for fresh and innovative projects.

National Backward Classes Finance and Development Corporation

- **Context:** The National Backward Classes Finance and Development Corporation achieved a record disbursement of Rs 613.75 crore in FY 2025-26, benefiting over 61,000 people.
- **Achieved a 16%** increase over the previous year.
- Ensured wide geographical coverage and near full fund utilization.

Special Initiatives

- Implements schemes like **VISVAS Interest Subvention Scheme**.
- Promotes concessional finance for OBCs and other eligible groups.

Beneficiary Groups

- Primarily supports Other Backward Classes (OBCs).
- **Also assists**
- Economically Backward Classes (EBCs)
- De-notified, Nomadic, and Semi-Nomadic Tribes
- Senior citizens, beggars, and transgender persons
- **Impact**
- Strengthens financial inclusion and self-employment.
- Promotes inclusive growth and social empowerment in India.

About NBCFDC

- National Backward Classes Finance and Development Corporation is a Government of India undertaking under the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
- Established in 1992 as a not-for-profit company under Section 25 of the Companies Act, 1956.
- Created to support Backward Classes and economically weaker sections.

Main Objectives

- Promote economic and development activities for Backward Classes.
- Provide financial assistance and loans for viable income-generating projects.
- Support education, training, and skill development.
- Enhance entrepreneurial and technical skills for self-employment.

Financial Support & Schemes

- Provides loans and assistance through State Channelizing Agencies (SCAs).
- Supports Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and micro-financing systems.
- Covers sectors like:
 - Agriculture and allied activities
 - Small business and traditional occupations
 - Technical and professional trades
 - Transport and service sectors

Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026 Defeated in Lok Sabha

- **Context:** A united Opposition defeated the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026, with **298 votes in favour and 230 against, falling short of the required two-thirds majority (352 votes) needed for constitutional amendments.**
- The Bill aimed to **redistribute Lok Sabha seats based on the 2011 Census**, linking it to the implementation of women's reservation ahead of the 2029 general elections.
- Following the defeat, the government withdrew two related Bills: **Union Territories Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2026, Delimitation Bill, 2026**

Types of Majorities in Indian Parliament

- The process of making a law in Parliament starts when a Bill is introduced and concludes once it receives the approval of the President.

- The Indian Parliament uses four different kinds of majorities to decide on various matters. They are **Simple majority, Absolute majority, Effective majority and Special majority**

Simple majority

- This refers to a situation where more than half of the members who are present and actually voting support a proposal.

It is reflected in provisions such as

- **Article 100** – Deals with voting in Houses, quorum, and functioning despite vacancies.
- **Article 108** – Provides for joint sittings of both Houses.
- **Article 169** – Relates to the creation or abolition of State Legislative Councils.
- **Article 356** – Concerns the imposition of President's Rule.

A simple majority is required for

- Passing ordinary bills in both **Parliament and State Legislatures**.
- Approving motions like **No-Confidence, Confidence, Adjournment, and Censure motions**.
- Passing resolutions related to **Financial Emergency and President's Rule**.
- Deciding on the **creation or abolition of a State Legislative Council**.
- Conducting elections for positions such as the **Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha**.

Absolute Majority

- This means securing more than half of the total strength of the House, irrespective of how many members are present or voting.
 - It is generally not used for routine legislative work in **Parliament or State Legislatures**.
 - It is mainly required when forming the government at the Centre or in the States after general elections, where a party or

coalition must prove it has the support of over half of the total members.

Effective Majority

- This refers to a majority of **more than 50% of the actual working strength** of the House, meaning the total membership minus any vacant seats.
- If the Lok Sabha has 545 seats but 15 are vacant, the effective strength becomes 530. In such a case, the effective majority required would be more than half of 530, i.e., 265.

It is mentioned in provisions like

- **Article 67(b)** – Removal of the Vice President
- **Article 90(c)** – Removal of the Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha
- **Article 94(c)** – Removal of the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha

This type of majority is used for

- Passing a resolution in the **Rajya Sabha to remove the Vice President, which must then be approved by the Lok Sabha with a simple majority**.
- Removing the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the Lok Sabha as well as similar presiding officers in State Legislatures.

Special Majority – I (Parliament)

- This type of majority requires more than half of the total strength of the House along with at least two-thirds of the members present and voting.

It is needed in situations such as

- **Article 368** - Amending the Constitution
- **Article 124** - Removal of Supreme Court judges
- **Article 217** - Removal of High Court judges
- **Article 148** - Removal of the Comptroller and Auditor General of India
- **Article 324** - Removal of the Chief Election Commissioner

- **Article 243K** - Removal of the State Election Commissioner
- **Article 352** - Approval by Parliament of a Proclamation of National Emergency

Special Majority – II (Parliament)

- This majority means at least two-thirds of the total membership of the House must support the motion.

It is specifically required for

- **Article 61-** Impeachment of the President
- The President can be removed before completing the **five-year term for violation of the Constitution.**
- The motion must be approved by **both Houses of Parliament with a two-thirds majority of their total strength.**

Special Majority – III (Parliament)

- This type applies only in the Rajya Sabha and requires **two-thirds of the members present and voting.**

It is used in cases such as

- **Article 312-** Recommending the creation of new All-India Services
- **Article 249-** Allowing Parliament to make laws on subjects in the State List

India's First Semiconductor SEZ at Dholera

- **Context:** The government has approved a new Special Economic Zone (SEZ) to be developed by **Tata Semiconductor Manufacturing Private Limited at Dholera, Gujarat.**
- This SEZ will cover 66.166 hectares and is expected to generate around 21,000 jobs.
- It will focus on **electronic hardware, software, and IT/ITES services**, supported by strong infrastructure and a single-window approval system for smoother operations.
- The project is significant as it represents **India's first chip fabrication (fab) facility.**

Policy Reforms to Boost Semiconductor Ecosystem

- The government has introduced major reforms in SEZ regulations to promote semiconductor and electronics manufacturing.

Amendments to the SEZ Rules, 2006 (notified on June 3, 2025) include

- Reduction in minimum land requirement from 50 hectares to 10 hectares
- Relaxation in land encumbrance conditions
- Inclusion of free supplies in Net Foreign Exchange (NFE) calculations
- Permission for domestic sales in the Domestic Tariff Area (DTA) after paying applicable duties

These changes aim to

- Attract high-value and capital-intensive investments
- Encourage innovation and advanced manufacturing
- Improve ease of doing business
- Build a globally competitive semiconductor ecosystem

Other Major Approved Semiconductor & Electronics SEZs

- **Micron Semiconductor Technology India Pvt Ltd**
 - Setting up an SEZ in Sanand
 - Focus: Assembly, Testing, Marking, and Packaging (ATMP)
 - Investment: ₹13,000 crore

Aequis Group

- Developing an electronics component SEZ in Dharwad

Expected Impact

- Development of domestic semiconductor value chains
- Creation of high-skilled employment opportunities

- Reduction in import dependence
- Strengthening India's position in the global electronics and chip manufacturing industry
- Promoting a whole-of-government approach to AI

It aims to

About Special Economic Zone (SEZ)

- A Special Economic Zone (SEZ) is a clearly defined area that operates as a duty-free region, considered outside the domestic customs territory for trade, tariffs, and taxation purposes.
- The **SEZ Act, 2005** lays down the legal structure governing exports, investment, employment generation, and infrastructure development within SEZs.
- Amendments to the SEZ Rules, 2006 in June 2025 reduced the minimum land requirement for semiconductor units from 50 hectares to 10 hectares, aiming to convert SEZs into dynamic industrial and development centres.
- **India set up Asia's first Export Processing Zone (EPZ) at Kandla, Gujarat, in 1965.** Today, the country has **368 notified SEZs**, providing employment to over 31 lakh people.
- **Align AI development with national strategy and priorities**
- **Balance technological growth with labour market realities**
- **Maintain social and economic stability**

Leadership and Composition

- **Chairperson:** Minister for Electronics & IT, Railways, and I&B)
- **Vice-Chairperson:** Minister of State for Electronics & IT and Commerce & Industry
- Members include senior officials from multiple sectors, such as: Policy-making, Science and technology, Security, Economic affairs

Institutional Framework

- AIGEG will function as the apex inter-ministerial authority for AI governance in India.
- It will be supported by a Technology and Policy Expert Committee (TPEC), which will
 - Provide technical and policy advice
 - Track global AI trends and innovations
 - Assess risks, regulations, and emerging challenges

AI Governance and Economic Group (AIGEG)

- **Context:** The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has set up the AI Governance and Economic Group (AIGEG) as a top-level inter-ministerial body for shaping and coordinating AI governance in India.
- The formation of AIGEG implements recommendations from
 - India's AI Governance Guidelines
 - The Economic Survey of India

Purpose and Role

AIGEG will act as the central institutional mechanism for

- Developing AI governance policies
- Ensuring coordination across **ministries, regulators, and departments**

Overall Significance

- Strengthens India's AI governance architecture
- Encourages coordinated policymaking across government
- Supports responsible and inclusive AI development
- Positions India to better respond to global AI advancements and challenges

India's First National Bat Assessment

- **Context:** India's first comprehensive bat assessment has been prepared by organisations such as the Nature Conservation Foundation

and Bat Conservation International, among others.

Biodiversity Findings

- The study records around **135 bat species in India**.
- Out of these, **16 species are endemic**, meaning they are found only in India.
- Seven species are listed as threatened under the IUCN classification.

Major Threats Identified

- Rapid urbanisation leading to habitat loss
- Increasing deforestation
- Impacts of climate change
- Continued public stigma and fear, especially following the COVID-19 pandemic

About Bats

- **Bats are mammals**, meaning they give birth to live young, are warm-blooded, and have bodies covered with fur.
- They are the only mammals capable of sustained powered flight.
- Most bats rely on echolocation, where they emit high-frequency sound waves to move, locate prey, and navigate in complete darkness.

Ecological Importance

- Bats play a crucial role in maintaining ecosystems by providing services such as:
- **Pollination of plants**
- **Natural pest control by consuming insects**
- Seed dispersal, helping forest regeneration

National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM)

- **Launched in 2011 under the Ministry of Rural Development**
- Aims to **reduce multidimensional rural poverty**
- Focuses on: Self-employment generation, Financial inclusion, Skill development and livelihood enhancement

Scale and Achievements in India

- Over 100 million households reached
- More than 9 million Self-Help Groups (SHGs) formed
- Around 20 million women earn over ₹1 lakh annually through SHGs
- Over 50 million women have accessed bank credit
- Credit linkage worth approximately ₹12 lakh crore facilitated
- Presence of women banking correspondents in 60%+ local governments
- Active implementation across 742 districts
- Total capital support of ₹51,368 crore provided

Women-Centric Empowerment

- Strong emphasis on women-led SHGs

Built systems of:

- Village, cluster, and block-level federations
- Community-based service delivery cadres
- Strong financial inclusion networks
- Helped increase female labour force participation since 2018

Global Influence and South-South Cooperation

- NRLM model increasingly studied and adopted by countries in Africa
- Delegations from: **Ethiopia, Tanzania, Malawi, Kenya, Rwanda**

Focus of learning:

- SHG scaling strategies
- Credit linkage mechanisms
- Community mobilisation systems
- Financial discipline and accountability structures

African Countries Are Adopting the Model

- **Promotes women's economic empowerment**
- Uses a low-cost, community-driven approach
- Suitable for large informal economies

- Strengthens local institutions and governance systems
- Encourages sustainable livelihood diversification
- Represents the use of artificial intelligence in strengthening cyber safety and public awareness.
- The initiative will be inaugurated by Hon'ble Chief Justice of the Supreme Court Surya Kant.
- Strengthens efforts to combat cybercrime and misuse of law enforcement identity.

India's Development Diplomacy

- NRLM reflects India's shift from aid-based support to knowledge export
- Promotes institutional and social innovation sharing
- Strengthens South-South cooperation through: Training programmes, Study visits, Capacity-building initiatives
- Proposed idea: creation of a Rural Livelihoods Knowledge Exchange Platform for global collaboration

Significance

- NRLM has become a flagship rural transformation programme in India
- It is now a global model for women-led, community-based development
- Demonstrates India's growing role in shaping international development practices beyond financial aid

Abhay' AI Chatbot

- Central Bureau of Investigation has launched an AI-powered chatbot named "Abhay".
- To help citizens verify the authenticity of official notices issued by the CBI.
- Aimed at protecting people from online frauds, especially rising "digital arrest" scams.
- Fraudsters often impersonate officials to extort money, creating fear and confusion among victims.
- The chatbot provides instant verification of notices to identify whether they are genuine or fake.
- Helps users avoid panic and prevent financial losses due to fraudulent communications.

Kankaria Depot: India's First Water-Neutral Railway Facility

▪ **Context:** Kankaria Coaching Depot in Ahmedabad has become India's first water-neutral railway depot.

- The initiative focuses on sustainable railway operations through wastewater treatment and reuse.
- The depot saves around 1.60 lakh litres of water daily, equivalent to over 300 household tanks.
- Water used in coach washing and maintenance is treated and recycled instead of being discharged.
- The core technology used is **Phytoremediation, which uses plants to naturally purify water.**
- The treatment process includes wetland-based purification, followed by carbon and sand filtration, and UV disinfection.
- The treated water is safely reused for operational purposes within the depot.
- Annual water savings are estimated at about 5.84 crore litres.
- The project reduces dependence on freshwater resources and promotes eco-friendly infrastructure.
- It serves as a model for water conservation and sustainable practices across Indian Railways.

Prajna

- **Context:** Prajna is an AI-enabled satellite imaging system developed to improve real-time decision-making for security agencies.

- It has been provided to the **Union Ministry of Home Affairs**.

Developed By

- Created by **Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)**.
- Built by its specialised lab, **Centre for Artificial Intelligence and Robotics (CAIR)**.

Key Features

- Uses Artificial Intelligence to analyse satellite imagery.
- Can process large volumes of data quickly.
- Detects patterns and anomalies that may be missed by traditional systems.

Purpose and Functions

- Enhances surveillance and intelligence gathering.
- Supports real-time operational response.
- Helps in better situational awareness.

Strategic Importance

- Useful for monitoring sensitive and border areas.
- Assists in tracking suspicious activities.
- Strengthens counter-terrorism and border management efforts.

Significance

- Represents a major technological advancement in security infrastructure.
- Improves efficiency, accuracy, and speed of decision-making using AI.

Supreme Court's Road Safety Guidelines

- **Context:** The Supreme Court of India issued nationwide (pan-India) guidelines to improve safety on expressways and national highways.
- Emphasised that highways must not become "corridors of peril" due to poor administration or infrastructure gaps.

Concern over Road Fatalities

- National highways make up only 2% of total road length but account for ~30% of road deaths.
- Indicates serious safety deficiencies.

Constitutional Perspective

- Court linked road safety to **Article 21 of the Constitution of India**.
- Declared that ensuring safe roads is a constitutional duty of the State.
- Used powers under **Article 142 of the Constitution of India to issue directions**.

Ban on Highway Parking

- Strict prohibition on parking/stopping heavy or commercial vehicles on highways.
- Allowed only at designated bays or lay-byes.

Use of Technology for Enforcement

- **Implementation through Advanced Traffic Management System (ATMS):**
 - Real-time alerts to police
 - GPS-based photographic evidence
 - Integrated e-Challan system

Institutional Responsibilities

- **Directions issued to:**
 - Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH)
 - National Highways Authority of India (NHAI)
 - State governments & UTs
 - District Magistrates to create Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs).

District Highway Safety Task Force

- To be set up in every district within 15 days.
- Includes officials from administration, police, NHAI, PWD, and local bodies.

Key Safety Measures Ordered

- Regular patrolling and surveillance
- Identification and fixing of accident blackspots

- Development of truck lay-bys and lighting systems
- Improved emergency response infrastructure

Muthuvan Tribe

- **Context:** A recent report by the Kerala Food Commission has exposed serious lapses in the distribution of ration supplies in Edamalakkudy, the state's only tribal panchayat.
- The inquiry found instances of shortages and irregular practices in the system.
- It has recommended swift legal action against those responsible and called for immediate corrective steps to safeguard food security for the Muthuvan Tribe living in the region.

About Muthuvan Tribe

- The Muthuvan Tribe, also known as **Mudugars**, are an indigenous community residing in the forested regions of the Western Ghats, mainly across Kerala and Tamil Nadu.
- They speak **the Muthuvan language, which is part of the Dravidian language family.**
- The tribe is divided into two sub-groups with slight linguistic differences, commonly referred to as **Malayalam Muthuvan and Pandi Muthuvan.**
- The Muthuvans are well known for their **harmonious relationship with nature, especially their deep understanding of forest ecosystems and wildlife.**
- They possess rich knowledge of traditional healing practices, using herbal medicines that have been carefully preserved and passed down through generations.
- This medicinal knowledge, along with the role of traditional healers, is often kept within the community and treated as confidential.

Sustainable Aviation Fuel & ATF Blending

- **Context:** The government has permitted the mixing of ethanol and synthetic hydrocarbons with **Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF).**
- ATF (jet fuel) is mainly derived from the refining of crude oil.

About Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF)

- Sustainable Aviation Fuel (SAF) is an alternative liquid fuel made from various feedstocks such as used oils and fats, municipal waste, and non-food crops.
- **Can reduce carbon dioxide emissions by up to 80% compared to conventional jet fuel**

Blending Limits

- SAF can be mixed with ATF in proportions typically ranging from **10% to 50%, depending on the source and production process**

India's Targets

- **India plans to**
 - Achieve 1% SAF blending in international flights by 2027
 - Increase to 2% by 2028
 - Reach 5% by 2030
- These targets align with the Carbon Offsetting and Reduction Scheme for International Aviation, led by the International Civil Aviation Organization

Disabled-Friendly Prisons in India

- **Context:** The Supreme Court of India has instructed the **formation of a high-level committee to design a roadmap for making prisons accessible to persons with disabilities.**
- **Committee Details:** Led by Justice S. Ravindra Bhat, the panel will broaden its scope to address accessibility, assistive facilities, and security needs of disabled inmates.

- **Constitutional Rights:** Prisoners with disabilities continue to enjoy protections under **Article 14 and Article 21**, ensuring equality and a life with dignity even while in custody.
- **Legal Protection:** Any denial of rights is punishable under the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.
- It is expected to **produce around 1 tonne (1,000 kg) of gold annually** for nearly 15 years.
- The project will **help reduce India's dependence on gold imports**, which exceed 800 tonnes per year.
- It represents a shift from state-controlled **mining to private sector participation**.

Key Issues Faced by Disabled Prisoners

- **Lack of Reliable Data:** India does not maintain official statistics on prisoners with disabilities, unlike global estimates (WHO: ~16% population; U.S. prisons: up to 38%).
- **Human Rights Concerns:** Incidents involving G. N. Saibaba and Stan Swamy highlight denial of essential aids, medical care, and basic dignity.
- **Institutional Shortcomings:** Key reform efforts such as the Model Prison Manual, Mulla Committee, and the Prison Act 2023 have largely overlooked disability inclusion, despite addressing other vulnerable groups.
- **Gap between Law and Practice:** Although legal safeguards exist, their implementation within prisons remains weak and inadequate.
- **Inadequate Infrastructure & Care:** Most prisons lack ramps, assistive devices, specialised healthcare, and mental health services, worsening the living conditions of disabled inmates.
- Advanced technologies such as **open-pit mining and carbon-in-leach extraction will be used**.

Open-pit mining

- Open-pit mining involves removing surface layers of **rock to extract minerals found near the ground**, making it cost-effective for large-scale operations.

Carbon-in-leach extraction

- Carbon-in-leach extraction is a method where **crushed ore is treated with cyanide, and activated carbon is used to absorb and recover the gold** efficiently.

India's Bioeconomy Growth and Key Achievements

- **Context:** Addressing an international conference, the Union Minister highlighted **bioeconomy-driven growth, projecting the sector to reach \$1 trillion by 2047**.
 - The bioeconomy refers to the utilisation, management, and conservation of biological resources, along with associated science, technology, and innovation, **to deliver products and services across sectors while promoting sustainability**.
- ### **India's Bioeconomy**
- The sector expanded from **\$10 billion in 2014 to about \$195.3 billion in 2025, contributing nearly 4.8% to GDP**.
 - The number of bioeconomy start-ups surged from around **50 in 2014 to over 11,800 in 2025**.
- ### **India's First Private Gold Mine**
- **Context:** India's first large-scale private gold mine **will be launched in Andhra Pradesh**.
 - The project is developed by Geomysore Services India Pvt Ltd, with backing from Thriveni Earthmovers and Deccan Gold.
 - The mine is located in **Kurnool district**, covering about 598 hectares across Jonnagiri, Erragudi, and Pagidirayi villages.

- Reduction in petrol imports has resulted in foreign exchange savings of \$12–14 billion, helping lower the current account deficit.
- The achievement highlights the **growing global recognition of India's artisanal dairy sector.**

Major Growth Factors

- Implementation of **20% ethanol blending in petrol.**
- Rising use of GLP-1 category drugs.
- Establishment of several **Global Capability Centers (GCCs).**
- Increased application of enzymes and microorganisms in industries such as textiles, detergents, food processing, and biofuels.

Research & Innovation Milestones

- **Creation of the world's first DNA-based COVID-19 vaccine (ZyCoV-D).**
- Development of indigenous **CAR-T cell therapy.**
- Progress in **mRNA vaccine technologies.**
- Introduction of **India's first homegrown antibiotic (Nafithromycin).**
- Setting up of a National Biobank facility.

India's Achievement in Global Cheese Competition

- **Context:** Prime Minister congratulated **Indian cheesemakers for their success.**
- India participated in **Mundial do Queijo do Brasil 2026**, a global dairy competition.
- India secured a total of **4 medals in the event.**
- **Medal tally:** 1 Super Gold, 2 Gold, 1 Silver.
- Super Gold was awarded to **Eleftheria Gulmarg (Brie Style).**
- Gold medals were won by **Yak Churpi-Soft (Nordic Farm, Leh, Ladakh)** and **Eleftheria Brunost (Whey Cheese).**
- Silver medal was awarded to **Eleftheria Kaali Miri (Belper Knolle Style).**
- Awardees included **Mausam Narang** and **Thenlay Nurboo.**

- It reflects India's strong entry into the international cheese industry.

India's Currency Swap Support to Maldives

- **Context:** India has approved the first disbursement of **₹30 billion to the Maldives under the SAARC Currency Swap Framework.**
- The framework includes an INR swap facility of ₹25,000 crore, in addition to an existing USD/Euro swap window.
- It aims to **encourage wider use of the Indian Rupee in international transactions.**

About SAARC

- The **South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation** is a regional body that **promotes cooperation, connectivity, and development in South Asia.**
- It was established in **1985** during its first summit held in Dhaka.
- It has 8 member countries: **India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bhutan, Maldives, Afghanistan**
- The **SAARC Secretariat** is located in Kathmandu.

Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE)

- **Context:** Recently, the **Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises (CGTMSE)** conducted a **Global Symposium on Credit Guarantees.**

About CGTMSE

- **Credit Guarantee Fund Trust for Micro and Small Enterprises was set up in 2000.**
- **Aim:** To promote and ease the flow of formal credit to **Micro and Small Enterprises (MSEs).**

- Jointly created by: **Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises and Small Industries Development Bank of India**

Funding Pattern

- Corpus funded by:
 - Government of India and SIDBI
 - Contribution ratio: 4 : 1

Eligible Lending Institutions

- Scheduled commercial banks (public, private, and foreign banks)
- Selected Regional Rural Banks (RRBs)
- National Small Industries Corporation
- North Eastern Development Finance Corporation
- SIDBI
- Selected Small Finance Banks and NBFCs

Credit Guarantee Support

- Provides guarantee cover of 75% to 85% on loans
- Helps strengthen credit access for MSEs

Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR)

- **Context** : The Union Minister has announced that India is set to become the second country in the world, after Russia, to operate a commercial-scale Fast Breeder Reactor.
- The **500 MWe Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR)** at **Kalpakkam** has achieved its '**First Criticality**'.
- The reactor was designed by the Indira Gandhi Centre for Atomic Research (IGCAR) and constructed by Bharatiya Nabhikiya Vidyut Nigam Limited (BHAVINI), showcasing India's indigenous capabilities.
- The reactor uses **Uranium-Plutonium Mixed Oxide (MOX)** fuel and operates on the '**breeder**' principle.
- This marks India's transition to the second stage of its three-stage nuclear power program, which focuses on the utilization of plutonium.

- It paves the way for the third stage (Thorium-based reactors), which is essential to utilizing India's vast thorium reserves.

- Currently, Russia is the only country operating commercial Fast Breeder Reactors (FBRs). Therefore, once fully operational, India will achieve a significant strategic position globally.
- As part of its long-term energy strategy, India aims to achieve **100 GW of nuclear power capacity by 2047**.
- The proposed '**SHANTI (Strategic Harmonization of Atomic Nuclear Technology and Innovation) Act 2025**', which aims to allow private sector participation in the nuclear energy sector, represents a major policy shift.
- The development of the PFBR strengthens India's closed nuclear fuel cycle, reduces dependence on uranium, enhances technological self-reliance, and contributes to achieving **India's Net Zero 2070 goal**.

Asia's First UNESCO Chair on Gender Inclusion

- **Context:** India has established **Asia's first UNESCO Chair on Gender Inclusion and Skill Development**

About the Initiative

- The UNESCO Chair is a global academic initiative focused on **reducing gender disparities in technical and vocational education**
- Launched on April 24, 2026 in **Pune**

Organizations Involved

- Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship
- UNESCO
- Symbiosis Skills and Professional University

Objective

- Aims to promote gender equality in skill development

- Seeks to ensure greater participation of women in emerging economic sectors
- Focuses on inclusive growth and social transformation

Key Features

- **Training women in advanced fields such as semiconductors, AI, robotics, defence, and advanced manufacturing.**
- Linked with international bodies like International Labour Organization, UNESCO-UNEVOC, and UNESCO Global Skills Academy.
- Targets women from underprivileged backgrounds with industry-relevant skills.
- Involves 40+ industry experts and policymakers to align training with job market needs.
- Backed by both the **Skill Development and Education ministries.**

Significance

- Positions India as a leader in gender-inclusive skill development in Asia
- Promotes women's empowerment and financial independence
- Prepares women for future-ready, high-value employment opportunities

Virli Khandar Megalithic Site

- **Context:** An ongoing excavation at a megalithic site in Virli Khandar has revealed distinctive burial architecture, rare artefacts and unusual pottery arrangements, offering fresh insights into ancient funerary practices in Vidarbha.
- The site, located in Pauni tehsil of Bhandara district, in Maharashtra was first reported in 2008.

Unique Burial Pattern

- Features stone circles with menhirs inside (composite megalithic structure)
- Distinct from nearby sites like Pimpalgaon Nipani and Tirota Kheri, which mainly have dolmen burials

Artifacts Discovered

- Copper items (e.g., necklace)
- Iron tools: axes, chisels, ladles, arrowheads
- Semi-precious beads, including etched carnelian
- Gold earring recovered

Pottery Findings

- Unique pottery cluster not previously reported in the Vidarbha region
- Around 50 pots arranged systematically in one burial
- Larger pots covered with inverted bowls

Burial Structure Details

- Pots placed over black cotton soil layer
- Soil laid above natural lateritic (murum) base

Abhilekh Patal Portal

- **Context:** Prime Minister encouraged citizens to explore the Abhilekh Patal portal to better understand India's historical heritage

About the Abhilekh Patal Portal

- Abhilekh Patal Portal is a comprehensive online platform providing access to archival materials
- Developed and maintained by the National Archives of India

- Functions as a digital repository of historical records

Objective

- Aims to make historical documents easily accessible to users worldwide
- Designed to bridge geographical barriers and reach a global audience

Content Available

- Over 7 million digitised records

Includes:

- Government records from various ministries and departments
- Private papers of notable individuals

- Photographs, maps, microfilms, and rare documents
- Digitised archival files preserved by NAI

About National Archives of India

- Established in **1891 in Kolkata as the Imperial Record Department**
- **Largest archival institution in South Asia**
- Custodian of non-current government records
- Holds diverse collections such as **public records, private papers, oriental and cartographic materials**
- Headquarters in **New Delhi, Operates under the Ministry of Culture**

Significance

- Enhances public access to India's historical documents
- Supports research, education, and administrative reference
- Promotes awareness of India's rich historical legacy

India's Digital Content Regulation

- **Context:** India has joined a select group of nations where platforms like **Meta (Facebook, Instagram) automatically curb flagged online content at scale**

Sahyog Portal

- The Sahyog Portal is a centralised online system launched in **2024**
- Developed by the **Ministry of Home Affairs and managed by the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre (I4C)**
- Functions as a **single-window platform** for law enforcement agencies to issue quick and coordinated requests to remove or block illegal online content

Evolution of the Portal

- Initially created as an emergency response tool during the pandemic
- Later transformed in late 2024 into a key mechanism for regulating online content

Legal Framework

- Based on Information Technology Act, 2000 under Section 79(3)(b)
- This provision states that intermediaries lose "safe harbour" protection if they fail to promptly remove unlawful content after government notice
- Section 69A: Provides a formal blocking process with safeguards like written justification
- Section 79(3)(b): Used via Sahyog Portal as a quicker, parallel route for content takedown without the same procedural steps

Significance

- Enables faster enforcement of digital laws
- Strengthens government oversight of online platforms
- Raises discussions around balance between regulation and safeguards

Google AI Data Centre Hub

- **Context:** Andhra Pradesh is set for a technological leap the foundation stone for **Google's massive \$15 billion (₹1.35 lakh crore) AI data centre hub at Tarluvada, near Visakhapatnam, on April 28.**

- It is one of the largest FDI projects in India

Project Execution

- Managed by Raiden Infotech in Partnership with Adani Infra
- Developed under 'Speed of Doing Business' policy

Technical Features

- Planned capacity: **1 Gigawatt (GW)**
- **Google's first major AI-driven data centre campus in India**
- **Includes**
 - Submarine cable landing stations
 - Dedicated fiber networks
 - Ensures low-latency global connectivity

Economic & Employment Impact

- Creation of thousands of high-value jobs
- Opportunities in: **Data science, Cybersecurity, AI operations**
- Boost to allied sectors like: **Renewable energy, Advanced manufacturing**

Strategic Importance

- Positions Visakhapatnam as a global AI and cloud hub
- Supports development of 6.5 GW digital ecosystem
- Seen as a major driver of long-term economic transformation

Mission SAKSHAM by RBI

- **Context:** The Reserve Bank of India introduced Mission SAKSHAM the initiative is intended to strengthen the Urban Co-operative Banking (UCB) sector by improving its overall functioning

Launch & Objective

- Reserve Bank of India launched Mission SAKSHAM on April 28, 2026
- Aims to strengthen the Urban Co-operative Banking (UCB) sector
- Focus on improving skills, governance, and operational efficiency

About Mission SAKSHAM

- "SAKSHAM" stands for Sahkari Bank Kshamta Nirman
- Designed as a mission-mode capacity-building programme
- Targets personnel working in Urban Co-operative Banks across India

Core Focus Areas

- Enhancing professional skills and institutional capacity
- Strengthening governance practices
- Improving day-to-day banking operations

Approach

- Not limited to training alone
- Aims for long-term transformation in functioning of UCBs

Development Process

- Formulated after consultations with: Umbrella Organization of UCBs and Various cooperative federations
- Designed to address practical challenges faced by the sector

Significance

- Promotes stronger and more efficient cooperative banks
- Supports financial stability and better service delivery
- Enhances capacity of UCB workforce across India

WHO Cervical Cancer Elimination Initiative**Global Goal**

- Led by World Health Organization
- **Aim:** Make cervical cancer a rare disease
- **Target incidence:** 4 cases per 1,00,000 women

2030 Targets

- 90% of girls vaccinated against HPV before age 15
- 70% of women screened using HPV test at ages 35 & 45
- 90% of detected cases receive proper treatment

India's Progress

- Has crossed halfway mark since global declaration
- Still significant gap in achieving 2030 targets

National HPV Vaccination Campaign

- Launched on February 28, 2026
- Initiated by Prime Minister
- Reflects strong political commitment to women's health

Public Health Importance

- Focus on awareness among parents
- Free vaccination available at government health centres for 14-year-old girls

Significance

- Aims to ensure a cervical cancer-free future
- Contributes to the vision of Viksit Bharat by 2047

Tamil Nadu HPV Vaccination Programme**Expansion**

- The Government of Tamil Nadu started the HPV vaccination initiative on 27 January 2026
- Main objective is to protect 14-year-old girls from cervical cancer, a major cause of cancer deaths among women

Objective

- Emphasis on early vaccination to lower future disease burden
- Supports broader efforts to strengthen preventive healthcare

Initial Implementation

- First introduced in four districts: Ariyalur, Tiruvannamalai, Perambalur, Dharmapuri
- These areas were chosen based on population characteristics and healthcare access

Expansion Phase

- After a successful pilot, the programme is being extended across the State
- Backed by the Government of India under the national HPV vaccination drive

Future Goal

- Target is universal coverage among eligible adolescent girls
- Expected to significantly reduce cervical cancer cases over time

E-PRAAPTI Portal (EPFO)

- **Context:** The Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) is set to launch E-PRAAPTI, a dedicated digital platform to facilitate identification, tracking, unique

account number (UAN) linking, and activation of old EPF accounts.

E-PRAAPTI: EPF Aadhaar-Based Access Portal for Tracking Inoperative Accounts**Key Features**

- Aadhaar-based authentication for secure access
- Enables retrieval of old EPF accounts without UAN
- Facilitates profile updation, UAN linking, and activation
- Reduces manual processes and paperwork

Benefits

- Minimises documentation and manual intervention
- Enhances transparency, efficiency, and accessibility
- Simplifies EPF account management for members

Ganga Expressway

▪ **Context:** Prime Minister inaugurated the newly built (greenfield) Ganga Expressway in

Hardoi

- It is the longest expressway in Uttar Pradesh, stretching about 594 km with 6 lanes, expandable to 8 lanes
- The route passes through 12 districts, linking Meerut (west) to Prayagraj (east)
- Travel time between the two cities is expected to reduce by nearly 6 hours
- Features a 3.5 km emergency airstrip at Shahjahanpur for use by the Indian Air Force
- **To boost economic activity,** the state plans to develop 12 industrial clusters and logistics hubs along the corridor, supporting manufacturing and e-commerce growth

Sikkim & Organic Farming

- **Context:** During the celebration of **50 years of statehood of Sikkim**, Prime Minister highlighted that the State is setting an example for **India's organic food mission**.

About Organic Farming

- A sustainable farming approach that avoids synthetic fertilisers, pesticides, and GMOs
- Depends on natural practices like crop rotation, use of crop residues, animal manure, and organic waste

Benefits

- Reduces input costs for farmers
- Enhances soil fertility and biodiversity
- **Produces safe, chemical-free food**
- **Minimises water and environmental pollution**

Sikkim's Organic Farming Model

- Launched the **Sikkim Organic Mission in 2010**
- Became the **world's first fully organic state in 2016**
- Received the **Future Policy Gold Award (2018)** from the Food and Agriculture Organization for leadership in organic agriculture

Coal Sector Reform & UCG Integration

- **Context:** The Ministry of Coal executed **Coal Mine/Block Production and Development Agreements (CMDPAs)** with successful bidders for four coal mines marking the **first-ever tranche of commercial coal mines in India to carry embedded provisions for Underground Coal Gasification (UCG)**

About UCG

- **Underground Coal Gasification converts coal into synthetic gas (syngas) within the seam**
- Eliminates need for conventional mining

- Enables use of deep, thin, and unmineable coal reserves

Strategic Significance

- Expands India's usable coal resource base
- Supports cleaner and more efficient energy production
- Aligns with energy transition and self-reliance goals

UCG-produced syngas can be used for

- Fertiliser production (urea, ammonia) → reduces imports
- Chemicals & petrochemicals (methanol, DME, synthetic fuels)
- Substitutes imported natural gas and naphtha

Policy Direction

- Focus on increasing domestic coal production
- Promotes transparent and investor-friendly auction system
- Encourages adoption of advanced technologies like UCG

Significance

- Marks a transformational shift in coal utilisation
- Strengthens energy security, industrial growth, and import substitution
- Positions India as a leader in innovative energy solutions

Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)

- **Context:** NITI Aayog launched **DPI@2047 for Viksit Bharat on 27th April 2026**, a strategic roadmap that charts the next phase of **India's Digital Public Infrastructure journey as a driver of inclusive, non-linear, and productivity-led growth**.

About Digital Public Infrastructure

- According to the United Nations, Digital Public Infrastructure refers to the core digital systems that support the functioning of modern societies.

- These systems enable smooth and secure interactions among individuals, businesses, and governments.
- They make it possible to verify identities, open bank accounts, carry out instant digital payments, and exchange data safely.
- With over 85% of households owning smartphones, people can now access banking, education, healthcare, and welfare services anytime and anywhere.

DPI 2.0 Roadmap

Sectoral Focus

- It helps people to:
 - Easily establish their identity from anywhere
 - Use banking, insurance, and other financial services
 - Receive government benefits directly into their accounts
 - Access opportunities in education, healthcare, and markets
- Targets 8 key sectoral transformations
- Covers **MSMEs, agriculture, education, and health**
- Strengthens enablers like credit, decentralised energy, and welfare delivery

Core Approach

- Expands digital infrastructure beyond identity, payments, and welfare
- Focus on livelihoods, productivity, and market access
- Builds connective digital infrastructure for faster innovation diffusion

Role of Technology

- Promotes AI adoption at scale
- Encourages open digital ecosystems and trusted data flows
- Supports innovation across citizens and small enterprises

Strategic Shift

- Moves from digital inclusion to productivity and capability-led growth
- Focus on scalable and inclusive economic transformation

Implementation Focus

- Emphasis on district-level execution and local needs
- Anchored in trust, interoperability, and safeguards.

Significance of Digital Public Infrastructure

- It helps people to:
 - Easily establish their identity from anywhere
 - Use banking, insurance, and other financial services
 - Receive government benefits directly into their accounts
 - Access opportunities in education, healthcare, and markets

India's digital ecosystem is built on the JAM trinity, which includes

- Aadhaar
 - A biometric ID system that provides every resident with a unique identity.
 - It enables secure authentication for government schemes and financial services.
 - With over 144 crore IDs issued, it ensures portability and reliability.
- Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana
 - **Launched in 2014**, this major financial inclusion initiative brought millions into the formal banking system.
 - It offers access to **credit, insurance, pensions, and RuPay cards**.
 - Bank accounts increased from 14.7 crore in 2015 to 57.7 crore by 2026.
- Mobile Connectivity
- Widespread smartphone **usage and expanding 5G networks have improved digital access across both rural and urban areas.**

NATIONAL SCHEMES

Model Solar Villages

- **Context:** The Green Energy Corporation has intensified its efforts to prepare a project report for establishing 37 model solar villages across Tamil Nadu.
- To encourage the use of solar power in households, the **Central Government** launched the 'PM-Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana' scheme in 2024.
- Under this scheme, a **subsidy of ₹30,000 per kilowatt** is provided for setting up rooftop solar power systems in households.
- As part of this initiative, a project to establish **model solar villages in every district is also currently being implemented.**
- Accordingly, a decision has been made to set up a solar power plant within each village and to distribute the electricity generated from it to local households and public utility buildings including Panchayat offices.
- The **Central Government provides financial assistance of ₹1 crore for the establishment of a single solar village.**
- In Tamil Nadu, the Green Energy Corporation a subsidiary of the Electricity Board is undertaking the work of creating solar villages across 37 districts, excluding Chennai.
- For this purpose, villages with a population exceeding 5,000 have been selected to be developed as model solar villages.

Pradhan Mantri Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana

- The Government of India launched the 'Pradhan Mantri Surya Ghar: Muft Bijli Yojana' in February 2024.
- The objective of this scheme is **to install Rooftop Solar (RTS) systems in one crore**

households within the residential sector by the financial year 2026-27.

- This scheme operates under **the aegis of the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE).**
- The scheme also envisions the creation of one **'Model Solar Village' in every district across the country.**
- This scheme is implemented at the national level through the **'National Project Implementation Agency' (NPIA) and at the state level through 'State Implementing Agencies' (SIAs).**

India's First State-of-the-Art 3D Glass Chip Packaging Plant

- **Context:** The foundation stone for India's first state-of-the-art 3D (three-dimensional) glass chip packaging plant was laid in Bhubaneswar, the capital of Odisha.
- The Union Minister for Electronics and Information Technology and the Chief Minister of Odisha jointly inaugurated this project.
- The Central Government has approved the development of this project with an investment of approximately Rs.1,943 crore.
- Chip packaging is the final and crucial stage of semiconductor manufacturing, through which finished chips are made ready for use.
- The chips manufactured at this facility will be utilized in key sectors such as aerospace, defense, Artificial Intelligence (AI), 5G, and data centers.

Bharat Maritime Insurance Pool (BMI Pool)

- **Context:** The Union Cabinet has approved the **establishment of the Bharat Maritime Insurance Pool** with a sovereign guarantee of ₹12,980 crore.
- It is a **government-backed domestic insurance mechanism to ensure uninterrupted coverage for shipping vessels.**
- Covers Indian-flagged ships, Indian-controlled vessels, and ships bound for Indian ports.

- Acts as a financial safeguard to maintain trade continuity even if global insurers withdraw due to sanctions or geopolitical conflicts.

Governance and Structure

- A newly constituted governing body will manage implementation and operations.
- **Domestic insurance companies** will function as pool members.
- Combined underwriting capacity of around ₹950 crore will support policy issuance.

Objectives

- Reduce dependence on the **international Protection and Indemnity (IGP&I) Club system**.
- Provide affordable insurance for vessels in high-risk or sensitive maritime routes.
- Prevent sudden increases in freight and trade costs.
- Strengthen India's control over maritime risk management.

Coverage Scope

- Hull and Machinery (ship structure and equipment damage).
- Cargo insurance for transported goods.
- Protection and Indemnity (third-party liabilities such as pollution, crew injury, wreck removal).
- War risk coverage for conflict-affected maritime zones.

Key Features

- Backed by a ₹12,980 crore sovereign guarantee ensuring financial stability and claim settlement capacity.
- Applicable to Indian vessels, India-bound foreign ships, and vessels operating from Indian ports.
- Insurance policies will be issued domestically for India-specific requirements.
- Expected to develop national expertise in marine insurance, claims management, and maritime law.

RELIEF

- **Context:** Rising geopolitical tensions in West Asia and its continuing impact on maritime logistics across the Gulf and adjoining regions, the Government has expanded the list of eligible destinations under RELIEF – Resilience & Logistics Intervention for Export Facilitation, a time-bound intervention under the Export Promotion Mission (EPM).

About RELIEF

- **RELIEF (Resilience & Logistics Intervention for Export Facilitation)** was launched on **19 March 2026** under the Export Promotion Mission (EPM).
- The scheme addresses challenges such as **high freight costs, increased insurance premiums, and war-related export risks**.
- It provides support across the export cycle, including both past shipments during disruption and upcoming exports.
- **Export Credit Guarantee Corporation of India is the nodal agency responsible for implementing the scheme.**
- Assistance includes insurance support for exporters, facilitation of coverage for new shipments, and reimbursement aid for eligible MSMEs facing extra costs.
- **Egypt and Jordan** have been newly added to the list of eligible destinations under the scheme.

River Basin Management (RBM) Scheme

- **Context:** The RBM Scheme is proposed to be continued during the 16th Finance Commission period from 2026–27 to 2030–31 with a fully funded estimated financial outlay of ₹2183 crore.
- In the previous phase, covering 2021–22 to 2025–26, the total budget allocation for the scheme was ₹1276 crore.

About River Basin Management (RBM)

Scheme

- RBM is a **Central Sector Scheme under the Department of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, Ministry of Jal Shakti.**
- It focuses on integrated planning and development of water resources at the river basin level.
- The scheme covers both **surface water and groundwater systems.**
- It aims to promote comprehensive and sustainable management of water resources.
- Implementing agencies include the **Brahmaputra Board, Central Water Commission, and National Water Development Agency.**
- Supports preparation of river basin master plans for long-term water resource management.
- Facilitates survey and investigation of water resource projects.
- Promotes planning and development of multipurpose projects such as irrigation, hydropower, and flood control.

Objectives of the Scheme

- The River Basin Management Scheme is designed to **address the diverse challenges associated with water resource planning and development at the basin level.**
- The objective of the scheme is **to focus on promoting sustainable use of water while supporting irrigation, hydropower, and flood management.**
- These objectives guide the overall planning and implementation of the scheme.
- Geographical Scope and Priority Areas
- The RBM Scheme primarily focuses on strategically important and water-rich but underdeveloped regions, particularly:

- North Eastern Region river basins.
- Indus Basin in Jammu & Kashmir / Ladakh.
- Key basins such as Brahmaputra, Barak, Teesta, and Indus.

These basins are prioritised due to their importance in

- National water security.
- Cross-border water management.
- Flood control and erosion management.
- Ecological stability.
- The scheme also addresses capacity gaps in **states such as Jammu & Kashmir, Sikkim, Mizoram, Manipur, and Nagaland,** which require central support for project planning and development.

Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)

- **Context:** The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister has given its approval for the continuation of **Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana-III (PMGSY-III) beyond March 2025 upto March 2028.**

About Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana (PMGSY)

- Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana was launched on **25 December 2000** as a **flagship rural development programme.**
- Objective: **To provide all-weather road connectivity to unconnected rural habitations through a single reliable road.**

Eligibility Criteria

- Based on population size and connectivity status of habitations.
- In plain areas: **Habitations with a population of 500 or more are eligible.**
- In North-Eastern, Himalayan states and Union Territories: **Threshold reduced to 250 or more (as per 2001 Census).**

Implementation Mechanism

- Implemented by **State Governments and Union Territory Administrations** through designated Executing Agencies.
- At the district level, Programme Implementation Units (PIUs) handle planning, coordination, and execution.
- PIUs are staffed with qualified technical personnel.
- Coordination with District Rural Development Agencies ensures smooth implementation and fund flow.

Administration

- Funds are released through DRDAs.
- Nodal Ministry: **Ministry of Rural Development** oversees the scheme

Benefits

- Extension of PMGSY-III timeline **will ensure completion of targeted rural road upgradation.**
- Enhances socio-economic benefits by improving connectivity in rural areas.
- Boosts rural economy and trade by improving market access for agricultural and non-farm products.
- Reduces transportation time and costs, leading to higher rural incomes.
- Improves access to education and healthcare, especially in remote and underserved regions.
- Ensures timely delivery of essential services.
- Generates employment opportunities through construction and related activities.
- Promotes growth of rural enterprises and services.
- Helps bridge the rural-urban divide.
- Contributes to inclusive and sustainable development.
- **Supports the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.**

Pipeline Gas Project

- **Context:** The Central Government in New Delhi has formulated a pipeline gas project worth ₹12,500 crore, with the objective of reducing the road-based transportation of gas and enhancing energy security.
- Currently, there is a heavy reliance on road transport, as gas imported from abroad is transported to refineries via tanker trucks.
- To address this situation, **the Petroleum and Natural Gas Regulatory Board (PNGRB) has planned the establishment of a pipeline network.**
- Under this project, direct pipeline linkages will be established connecting gas import terminals, refineries, and cylinder filling centers.
- **Consequently, the use of tanker trucks will decrease, making gas distribution safer and more efficient.**
- As the first phase of this project, nine locations across the country have been identified; specifically, plans are in place to lay pipelines spanning approximately 2,500 kilometers across four key regions.
- It is anticipated that once implemented, **this project will enable a significant reduction in road-based gas transportation by the year 2030.**
- Overall, this project marks a pivotal step toward modernizing India's energy distribution infrastructure while simultaneously enhancing its safety and efficiency.

Pradhan Mantri Vishwakarma Yojana

- **Context:** **The Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) has provided training to over 2,500 beneficiaries under the 'Pradhan Mantri Vishwakarma Yojana' scheme on the usage of Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools.**

About Pradhan Mantri Vishwakarma Yojana

- The 'Pradhan Mantri Vishwakarma Yojana' was **launched in 2023** as a **fully funded Central Sector Scheme** by the **Government of India** to support traditional artisans and craftspeople.
- This scheme is **implemented under the leadership of the Ministry of MSME**, in collaboration with the **Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship** and the **Department of Financial Services under the Ministry of Finance**.
- The scheme will remain operational for a **period of five years**, spanning from the **financial year 2023-24 to 2027-28**, thereby ensuring long-term support for artisans across India.
- Its objective is to **empower traditional workers engaged in family-based trades such as blacksmithing, goldsmithing, pottery, carpentry, and sculpting by integrating them into the modern economy**.
- The scheme places special emphasis on inclusive growth by extending support to women, marginalized sections (SCs, STs, and OBCs), persons with disabilities, transgender individuals, and residents of the North-Eastern, island, and hilly regions.
- **Only artisans aged 18 years and above** who are working in the unorganized sector are eligible for this scheme. Only one beneficiary per family is permitted.
- Beneficiaries of schemes such as the **Prime Minister's Employment Generation Programme and PM SVANidhi over the past five years**, as well as government employees and their families, have been excluded from this scheme.
- Collateral-free business development loans of up to **₹3 lakh** are provided at a concessional

interest rate of 5%. The Government of India provides an interest subvention of 8% for this purpose.

- **This scheme covers 18 traditional trades** across both rural and urban areas, thereby ensuring wide-ranging reach and impact.

Launch of 'Vishwa Sutra' Initiative

- **Context:** The Ministry of Textiles launched **Vishwa Sutra - Weaves of India for the World**.
- A designer collection under this initiative was showcased at the 61st Femina Miss India held in Bhubaneswar.

Implementing Agencies

- Developed by the Office of the Development Commissioner (Handlooms).
- In collaboration with the National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT).

Objective of the Initiative

- To present Indian handlooms in a modern, global design context.
- Aims to blend traditional weaving with contemporary fashion trends.

Unique Concept

- Features 30 distinct handloom weaves from different Indian states.
- Each weave is reimagined using design inspirations from 30 different countries.
- Reflects a fusion of Indian tradition and global aesthetics.

Policy Vision

- Aligns with the government's "Vocal for Local to Global" approach.
- Promotes the 5F Framework.

Importance of Handloom Sector

- Helps preserve India's cultural heritage.
- Generates sustainable livelihoods for artisans.

- Strengthens India's global presence in textiles and fashion.
- The scheme is demand-driven; employment must be provided whenever it is requested.

Significance

- Positions Indian handlooms as globally competitive and fashion-forward.
- Encourages innovation while retaining traditional craftsmanship.
- **If employment is not provided within 15 days of the request being made, beneficiaries are entitled to receive an unemployment allowance.**

Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005

- **Context:** To mitigate the impact of geopolitical tensions in West Asia on supply chains and the prices of essential commodities, the Central Government has allocated ₹17,744 crore to the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (the '100-day work scheme').
- The 100-day work scheme will remain operational until the **Viksit Bharat-G RAM G Scheme, 2025' comes into effect.** Wages will be disbursed in a timely manner.
- The unemployment allowance is disbursed at a rate equal to one-fourth of the **minimum wage for the first 30 days**, and at half the minimum wage thereafter.
- The scheme is implemented across all parts of the country specifically in rural areas with the exception of districts that are entirely urbanized.

About the Viksit Bharat – G RAM G Scheme

- This scheme guarantees 125 days of wage employment to rural households within a financial year.
- The scheme introduces a funding-sharing mechanism between the Central and State governments, set at a ratio of 60:40 for most states and 90:10 for special category regions.

About the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, 2005

- The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) was launched in 2005 as a Centrally Sponsored Scheme under the Ministry of Rural Development.
- State governments are permitted to declare up to a maximum of 60 days within a financial year as "non-work days."
- This scheme guarantees wage employment for a **minimum of 100 days** in a financial year to those willing to work within rural households. Thereby, it ensures livelihood security.
- In addition to upholding the employment guarantee, the scheme ensures budgetary predictability through planned financial allocations.
- **Adults aged 18 years and above**, belonging to registered rural households and willing to undertake unskilled manual labour, are eligible to benefit under this scheme.
- The scheme promotes institutionalized convergence and integrated infrastructure planning to foster enhanced rural development.
- In areas affected by drought or natural disasters, **an additional 50 days of employment is provided with the aim of strengthening rural resilience.**

Prime Minister Internship Scheme (PMIS)

- **Context:** The Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) has expanded eligibility under the Prime Minister Internship Scheme.

New Eligibility Criteria

- Final-year undergraduate and postgraduate students can now apply
- Age limit: 18–25 years
- Must meet existing eligibility conditions

Objective of Expansion

- Provide early industry exposure before graduation
- Enhance employability and job readiness
- Bridge the gap between academics and industry needs

Alignment with Policy

- Supports goals of National Education Policy
- Promotes experiential learning, internships, and skill development

Scheme Features

- Provides structured, paid internships across sectors
- Minimum ₹9,000 monthly stipend
- Opportunities available in top companies

Revised TDIP Scheme (2026–31)

- **Context:** The Ministry of Communications has overhauled the **Technology Development and Investment Promotion (TDIP) Scheme** to enhance India's presence and influence in the global telecommunications sector.
- Time period: 2026–2031

Core Objectives

- Strengthen India's global telecom footprint
- Boost participation in global standard-setting bodies
- Promote indigenous telecom innovation
- Accelerate 5G Advanced and 6G ecosystem development

Global Standardization Focus:

- Enhance India's role in: **International Telecommunication Union (ITU), 3GPP, oneM2M**

Support for

- Participation in global meetings
- Technical contributions
- Leadership roles
- Hosting international events in India

Expanded Scope

- Inclusion of: Startups, MSMEs, Academia & research institutions, Telecom service providers & industry players and Encourages collaborative innovation across the ecosystem

Implementation Agencies

- Telecommunications Standards Development Society India
- Telecom Centres of Excellence India
- Telecommunications Consultants India Limited

Complementary Initiatives

- Works alongside: Telecom Technology Development Fund, Bharat 6G Mission

Expected Outcomes

- Position India as a global standard-setter in telecom
- Boost intellectual property creation & exports
- Strengthen competitiveness of domestic telecom technologies
- Advance India's leadership in 6G and future communication systems

Atal Pension Yojana (APY)

- **Context:** Atal Pension Yojana has **crossed 9 crore total enrolments as of April 21, 2026.**

Achieved highest-ever annual addition

- Over 1.35 crore new subscribers in FY 2025–26

Launch & Administration

- Launched in May 2015
- Administered by Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA)

Objective

- Provide universal social security
- Focus on low-income groups and unorganised sector workers

Growth Drivers

- Support from banks, regional rural banks, cooperative banks, and Department of Posts
- Government-led awareness campaigns & outreach programs

Key Benefits

- Guaranteed monthly pension of ₹1,000 to ₹5,000 after age 60
- Spouse continues pension after subscriber's death
- Nominee receives accumulated corpus after both subscriber and spouse pass away

Eligibility

- Open to Indian citizens aged 18–40 years
- Not eligible for those who are or have been income tax payers

Project DANTAK

- **Context:** 'Project DANTAK', operating under the Border Roads Organization (BRO), was established in April 1961. It celebrated its 66th Raising Day on April 24, 2026, marking over six decades of service in Bhutan.

About the Project DANTAK

- It plays a pivotal role in strengthening bilateral relations between India and Bhutan by developing strategic infrastructure and enhancing transport connectivity.

- The project has constructed over 1,500 km of roads, including the strategically significant East-West Highway connecting Trashigang to Thimphu.

- It has developed the Phuentsholing–Thimphu Highway, Paro International Airport, and Yonphula Airport, along with various bridges, hospitals, schools, and telecommunication networks.

- It has significantly contributed to Bhutan's socio-economic development, particularly in the areas of hydropower and connectivity.

- Recently, the project has continued to grow through modernization, road widening, disaster management capabilities, and new road-bridge initiatives.

Nasha Mukh Bharat Abhiyaan (NMBA)**App 2.0**

- **Context :** The Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment is set to launch the upgraded 'Nasha Mukh Bharat Abhiyaan' (NMBA) App 2.0 to strengthen monitoring under the 'National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction' (NAPDDR).

About Nasha Mukh Bharat Abhiyaan (NMBA)

- The 'Nasha Mukh Bharat Abhiyaan' (Drug-Free India Campaign) was launched on August 15, 2020, by the Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment in 272 districts identified as being highly vulnerable to drug abuse.

- It was expanded to cover all districts across the country effective from August 15, 2023.

- The core objective of the campaign is to reduce the demand for drugs and to create awareness among youth, women, and the general public about the harmful consequences of drug abuse.

Significance of the NMBA App 2.0

- This app has been developed as a centralized digital platform under the ‘**National Action Plan for Drug Demand Reduction.**’ It will ensure real-time monitoring, reporting, and coordination among stakeholders at all levels.
- The app aims to increase transparency and accountability. It features dashboards that provide necessary data and awareness materials to states, districts, organizations, and volunteers.
- This initiative strengthens institutional coordination and digital governance for drug demand reduction. It also facilitates easier public access to rehabilitation and mental health support services.
- **Target Landscapes:** The project includes key landscapes such as the Sathyamangalam-Mudumalai region in Tamil Nadu and the Garo Hills region in Meghalaya. This also covers protected areas like the Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve and the Nokrek Biosphere Reserve.
- **Community-Based Conservation:** It promotes community-based conservation through multi-stakeholder platforms involving the Forest Department, local bodies, and civil society.
- **Financial Innovation:** It encourages innovative financing methods through Access and Benefit Sharing (ABS), CSR funding, and green micro-enterprises for sustainable livelihoods.
- **Inclusivity:** It prioritizes the participation of women, Scheduled Castes (SC), and Scheduled Tribes (ST) in governance and economic activities.

Biodiversity Conservation Project

- **Context :** The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change and the National Biodiversity Authority have launched a five-year project (2025-2030) titled “Strengthening Institutional Capacities for Safeguarding Biodiversity Commitments.”
- **Funding:** This project is being implemented with a financial outlay of 4.88 million USD, supported jointly by the Government of India, the Global Environment Facility (GEF), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).
- **Focus:** It focuses on integrating biodiversity into Gram Panchayat Development Plans (GPDP) and strengthening local governance institutions such as Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs).
- **Alignment:** The project functions in alignment with national and global frameworks, such as the National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (NBSAP 2024-2030), the 30x30 global biodiversity target, and the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement.

Small Hydro Power (SHP) Development Programme

- **Context :** The Union Cabinet has recently approved the **Small Hydro Power (SHP) Development Programme.**

About Small Hydro Power (SHP) Development Scheme

- Approved by the Union Cabinet of India
- Focus on Small Hydro Projects (1-25 MW capacity)

- Implementation period: FY 2026–27 to FY 2030–31
- Total outlay: ₹2,584.60 crore
- Target: Add ~1,500 MW capacity

Focus Areas

- Priority to hilly and North Eastern States
- Aims to improve energy access in remote regions
- Promotes decentralised and local power generation

Financial Assistance

- For NE & border districts: ₹3.6 crore/MW or 30% of project cost (max ₹30 crore/project)
- For other regions: ₹2.4 crore/MW or 20% of project cost (max ₹20 crore/project)

Investment & Economic Impact

- Expected to attract ₹15,000 crore investment
- Encourages indigenous machinery manufacturing
- Supports Atmanirbhar Bharat initiative

Project Pipeline Development

- Support for Detailed Project Reports (DPRs)
- At least 200 projects planned
- ₹30 crore allocated for DPR preparation

Employment Generation

- Around 51 lakh person-days during construction
- Long-term jobs in operation & maintenance
- Benefits rural and remote populations

Advantages of SHP

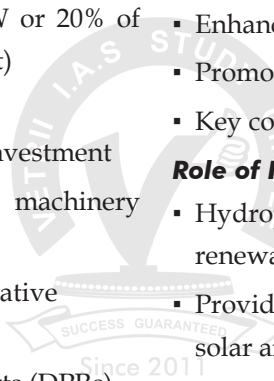
- Decentralised power reduces transmission losses
- Clean energy with no fuel use or emissions
- Supports rural development and infrastructure
- Generates local employment and livelihoods
- Low ecological impact with minimal land use

Significance

- Enhances energy security and grid reliability
- Promotes sustainable and inclusive growth
- Key contributor to India's clean energy future

Role of Hydro Power

- Hydropower is a reliable and mature renewable energy source
- Provides round-the-clock (RTC) power, unlike solar and wind
- Ensures grid stability, energy security, and system resilience
- Crucial for India's clean energy transition



IMPORTANT DAYS

World Hemophilia Day 2026

- World Hemophilia Day 2026 is observed on **April 17**.
- The theme for 2026 is: **“Diagnosis: First Step to Care”**.

World Heritage Day

- Every year on **April 18**, the world observes World Heritage Day, also called the International Day for Monuments and Sites.
- The theme for World Heritage Day 2026 is **“Emergency Response for Living Heritage in Contexts of Conflicts and Disasters.”**

National Civil Services Day

- National Civil Services Day is observed on **April 21st** to commemorate the address delivered by **Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel** to civil service officers in **1947**.
- It marks the foundation of the administrative structure—often referred to as the **“Steel Frame”**—which is citizen-centric in independent India.
- This day fosters introspection among civil service officers, reinforces their dedication to public service, and promotes national unity.
- The theme for 2026 centers on **“Viksit Bharat” (Developed India) through digital governance and the development of Aspirational Blocks**.
- Lord Cornwallis** is regarded as the **“Father of Civil Services”** in the pre-independence era, whereas **Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel** is hailed as the architect of the modern civil services.
- The framework for civil services within the Indian Constitution is based on **Article 312 and the All India Services Act of 1951**.

Adi Shankara Jayanti (2026)

- Adi Shankara Jayanti, marking the **birth anniversary of Adi Shankara**, is celebrated on **April 21, 2026**.
- Adi Shankara was the **foremost philosopher of Advaita Vedanta**, emphasizing the oneness of the individual soul (Atman) and the ultimate reality (Brahman).
- He was born in **Kalady, Kerala**, to parents **Aryamba and Shivaguru**.
- He revived and consolidated **Sanatana Dharma** through his teachings based on the Vedas and Upanishads.
- He preached concepts such as the **Atman, Paramatman, Vairagya (renunciation), and Moksha (liberation)**.
- He **established four major Mathas (monasteries) across India**
 - Sringeri (Sharada Peetham)
 - Puri (Govardhana Matha)
 - Dwarka (Kalika Matha)
 - Jyotirmath (Badrinath region)

World Earth Day

- World Earth Day is observed annually on **April 22** to promote **environmental protection and sustainability**.
- It was first observed in the **United States in 1970** as a response to the increasing environmental degradation.
- In **2009**, the **United Nations General Assembly** adopted a resolution officially designating **April 22 as ‘International Mother Earth Day’**.
- The theme for 2026 is: **“Our Power, Our Planet”**.

World Book and Copyright Day

- World Book and Copyright Day 2026 is **observed globally on 23 April** each year.
- The day highlights and honours the importance of books, writers, and the culture of reading.

English Language Day

- English Language Day 2026 is observed worldwide on 23 April each year.
- The day recognises the significance of the English language in facilitating global communication and connection.

National Panchayati Raj Day

- **Context:** National Panchayati Raj Day is observed annually on April 24th.
- This day commemorates the 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act (1992), which came into effect in 1993.
- The amendment granted constitutional status to Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs), marking a significant milestone toward decentralization and participatory democracy in India.
- The Panchayati Raj system is based on traditional Indian village self-governance structures like Sabhas and Samitis.
- In modern India, it was first recommended by the Balwant Rai Mehta Committee in 1957.
- Rajasthan became the first state to implement this system in 1959.
- The 73rd Constitutional Amendment Act later provided constitutional status to PRIs and added Part IX to the Constitution.
- It established a three-tier structure: Gram Panchayat at the village level, Panchayat Samiti (or Block Panchayat) at the intermediate level, and Zilla Parishad at the district level.
- The first National Panchayati Raj Day was celebrated in 2010, under the leadership of then-Prime Minister Manmohan Singh.

Digital Transformation of Panchayati Raj Institutions

- **eGramSwaraj:** Used for planning, budgeting, accounting, and integration with the Public Financial Management System (PFMS). More than 2.55 lakh Panchayats are connected to this portal, with transactions exceeding ₹53,000 crore.
- **SabhaSaar:** An Artificial Intelligence (AI) powered tool that automatically records the proceedings of Gram Sabha meetings. It supports 23 Indian languages and is currently used in over one lakh Panchayats.
- **Meri Panchayat App:** Enhances citizen participation and transparency in local governance.
- **Gram Urja Swaraj:** Helps track renewable energy assets at the Panchayat level and aids in data-driven rural energy planning.
- **SVAMITVA Scheme**
 - Launched in 2021 to provide legal ownership of rural properties by mapping inhabited areas using drone and GIS technology.
 - It aims to reduce land disputes and enable rural citizens to use their property as a financial asset.
 - Over 3.10 crore property cards have been issued under this scheme, strengthening rural planning, improving land records, and increasing financial inclusion in villages.

Financial Empowerment of Panchayati Raj Institutions

- **15th Finance Commission:** Approximately ₹2.36 lakh crore was allocated to rural local bodies from 2021 to 2026.

- **16th Finance Commission:** For the period 2026 to 2031, this allocation has been increased to approximately ₹4.35 lakh crore.
- These funds are **utilized for drinking water, sanitation, and rural infrastructure** development, ensuring greater financial autonomy and flexibility at the local level.

World Malaria Day 2026

- World Malaria Day is observed **every year on April 25**.
- The day aims to raise awareness about malaria and encourage coordinated global efforts to eliminate the disease.
- The theme for 2026 is: **“Driven to End Malaria: Now We Can. Now We Must.”**

World Intellectual Property Day

- **World Intellectual Property Day** is observed every year on **April 26** to raise awareness about the importance of intellectual property rights in promoting creativity, innovation, and economic growth.
- It is spearheaded by the **World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)**, a specialized agency of the United Nations dedicated to protecting intellectual property rights globally.
- The theme for World Intellectual Property Day 2026 is: **"IP and Sports: Ready, Set, Innovate."**
- The 2026 theme focuses on the **role of intellectual property in driving innovation, technology, and creativity in the sports industry**.

World Day for Safety and Health at Work 2026

- World Day for Safety and Health at Work is marked on **April 28** to encourage safe and healthy working environments worldwide.
- Initiated by the International Labour Organization.

Ayushman Bharat Diwas

- Ayushman Bharat Diwas is marked on April 30 to highlight the achievements of Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana, the country's flagship health insurance programme.
- It offers cashless treatment coverage of up to ₹5 lakh per family and has benefited more than 10.74 crore families across India.

Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana

- The Ayushman Bharat-Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana is the world's largest public healthcare scheme that aims at providing health insurance of up to Rs. 5 lakhs to each eligible household annually.
- AB-PMJAY was launched seven years ago on Sept. 23, 2018 to achieve universal health care. It is the world's largest public healthcare scheme with crores of vulnerable Indian families enrolled in it.
- AB-PMJAY makes quality healthcare more affordable for over 12 crore vulnerable families.
- More than 86 lakh senior citizens have been enrolled in the scheme.
- It is a part of the Ayushman Bharat scheme with multiple components; together they deliver affordable and quality healthcare to achieve universal health.

REPORTS & INDICES

Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) Report

- **Context:** Conducted by the National Statistical Office (NSO) under the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation, the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) is a key source of data regarding employment, unemployment, and labour force participation in India.
- **Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR - March 2026):** The overall LFPR for individuals aged 15 years and above stands at 55.4%. Within this, the rural LFPR is 58.0%, while the urban LFPR remains unchanged at 50.3%.
- **Women's Participation:** The LFPR for women, which stood at 35.3% in February 2026, witnessed a slight decline to 34.4% in March 2026. Specifically, the rural female LFPR is 38.9%, and the urban female LFPR is 25.2%.
- **Worker-Population Ratio (WPR):** This remains stable at an overall level of 52.6%. It stands at 55.5% in rural areas and 46.8% in urban areas.
- **Unemployment Rate (UR):** In March 2026, the unemployment rate rose to 5.1% (up from 4.9% in February). This increase is primarily attributed to a rise in urban unemployment, which reached 6.8%.
- **Rural Scenario:** In rural areas, the unemployment rate for women remained stable, whereas the unemployment rate for men witnessed a slight increase.

About the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)

- Launched in 2017 by the National Statistical Office (NSO), the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) serves as **India's primary source for providing data on employment, unemployment, and wages.**

- It was introduced as a replacement for the previous 'National Sample Survey' (NSS) method, with the aim of providing data on the labour market more frequently and reliably.

Two Approaches to Measuring Employment

- **Usual Status (US):** Based on activities over the past one-year period (reflecting long-term trends).
- **Current Weekly Status (CWS):** Based on activities over the past 7 days (reflecting short-term changes). This dual approach accurately captures the dynamic and informal nature of India's labor market.
- **Effective from 2025,** the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) adopts the calendar year cycle (January–December), replacing the previously followed agricultural year cycle (July–June).

India's Position in Global Economy Rankings

- **Context:** In the ranking of major economies released by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), **India has slipped from the 5th position to the 6th position.**
- It is reported that India has dropped **one spot due to the depreciation of the Indian Rupee against the US Dollar and the revision of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) base year from 2011-12 to 2022-23.**
- According to IMF data, **India's GDP stood at US\$ 3.76 trillion in 2024.**
- While India's GDP was valued at US\$ 3.92 trillion last year, the United Kingdom's GDP rose to US\$ 4 trillion.
- The value of the **Indian Rupee against the US Dollar depreciated from 84.57 in 2024 to 88.48 in 2025.**
- It is expected to depreciate further this year, reaching 92.59. Conversely, the value of the British Pound is strengthening against the US Dollar.

- Based on IMF data, it is indicated that India will retain the 6th position among major economies this year, based on current exchange rates.
- However, in the coming year, India is expected to advance to the 4th position, surpassing not only the United Kingdom but also Japan. If this trend continues, India is projected to overtake Germany by 2031, rising to the 3rd position.
- Top 5 Countries: United States, China, Germany, Japan, United Kingdom.

Global Military Spending (SIPRI Report 2025)

- **Context: India ranks fifth** on the list of countries with the highest military spending.
- According to a report released by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), a Sweden-based organization:
- In 2025, **India spent 92.1 billion US dollars on its military requirements. This represents an increase of 8.9% compared to the previous year.**
- India has significantly increased its defense expenditure to ensure military readiness, driven by factors such as 'Operation Sindoor' and prevailing tensions in border regions.
- India's share of **global military spending stands at 3.2 percent.**
- By spending 92.1 billion US dollars in 2025, India has secured the fifth position on this list.
- In this ranking, the **United States holds the first place, followed by China in second, Russia in third, and Germany in fourth.**
- The United States spent 1,480 billion US dollars, while China spent 336 billion US dollars on their respective militaries.
- Pakistan currently ranks 31st on the list of countries with the highest military spending.

National Statistical Office Health Survey

- **Context:** The National Statistical Office (NSO) recently released the results of its 80th round

survey on 'Household Social Consumption: Health (2025).'

- According to the NSO survey, health-seeking behaviour in India has improved. The Proportion of People Reporting Ailments (PPRA) has nearly doubled between the periods of 2017-18 and 2025.
- **This figure rose from 6.8 percent to 12.2 percent in rural areas, and from 9.1 percent to 14.9 percent in urban areas.**
- Government health insurance coverage has expanded significantly, driven by schemes such as the **Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB PMJAY).**
- This coverage increased from 12.9 percent to 45.5 percent in rural areas, and from 8.9 percent to 31.8 percent in urban areas.
- **Hospital-based deliveries have reached record highs of 95.6 percent in rural areas and 97.8 percent in urban areas, indicating improved healthcare access for mothers.**
- There has been a shift in the disease profile, characterized by a **decline in the prevalence of infectious diseases and a concurrent rise in Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), such as diabetes and cardiovascular ailments.**
- The utilization of government health facilities has increased, particularly in rural areas. Outpatient service utilization has risen from 28 percent in 2014 to 35 percent in 2025.
- This improvement in the utilization of government healthcare services is bolstered by the expansion of primary healthcare services which prioritize prevention, health promotion, and early diagnosis and treatment along with the provision of free medicines and diagnostic tests.

About the National Statistical Office (NSO)

- The National Statistical Office (NSO) is the principal statistical agency of the Government of India.

- It functions under the **Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI)**.
- It was established in 2019 through the merger of the Central Statistical Office (CSO) and the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) to enhance coordination, data quality, and efficiency.

Authority and Role

- It is responsible for the **collection, compilation, analysis, and dissemination of official statistics at the national level**.
- It acts as the central authority for statistical standards, methodologies, and classifications utilized by Central Ministries and State governments.
- It supports evidence-based policy formulation, planning, and the monitoring of development programs.

Key Functions

- It conducts large-scale sample surveys on socio-economic indicators such as employment, consumption, health, education, and housing.
- It compiles National Accounts Statistics, including Gross Domestic Product (GDP), Gross Value Added (GVA), savings, investment, and capital formation.
- It releases key macro-economic indicators such as the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) and the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

Key Data Products

- National Accounts Statistics (GDP and related aggregates).
- Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS).
- Consumer Expenditure Survey (CES).
- Annual Survey of Industries (ASI).
- Index of Industrial Production (IIP).
- Consumer Price Index (CPI – Rural, Urban, and Combined).

Organizational Structure

- Headed by the **Chief Statistician of India (CSI)**.
- Operates through specialized divisions handling Surveys, National Accounts, Prices, Industrial Statistics, and Data Dissemination.
- Works in coordination with the Directorates of Economics and Statistics of the States for field-level data collection.

Significance

- Provides reliable and comparable statistics for economic planning, fiscal policy, targeting welfare schemes, and monitoring Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- Enhances the transparency and credibility of India's official statistical ecosystem.
- Plays a pivotal role in measuring economic performance and social progress.

SPORTS & GAMES

Women's Candidates chess tournament

- R. Vaishali won the Women's Candidates chess tournament in Cyprus and thus qualified for the World championship match to be played later this year.
- The Grandmaster from Chennai scored a crushing victory over Russia's Kateryna Lagno in the final round to emerge as the clear winner.

EMINENT PERSONALITIES

C. Vijayaraghavachariar

Early Life & Education

- Born in Pon Vilaindha Kalathur near Chengalpattu.
- Father Sadagopachariar was a Sanskrit scholar, but he chose a different path.
- Mastered the Vedas early, yet developed a strong passion for English.
- Left home and stayed with his uncle in Madurantakam to pursue studies.
- Graduated from Presidency College, Madras.

Early Career & Turning Point

- Worked as a lecturer in a government college in Mangaluru.
- Resigned in protest against racial discrimination by a European principal.
- Moved to Salem and qualified for the Bar privately.

Rise to National Prominence

- Gained fame through success in the Salem riots case.
- Earned titles like "Hero of Salem" and "Lion of South India."
- Became a member of the committee drafting the constitution of the Indian National Congress.

Role in Freedom Movement

- Supported Bal Gangadhar Tilak during the Congress split (moderates vs extremists).
- Returned to active politics after the 1916 Congress reunification.
- Influenced Mahatma Gandhi to demand Swaraj (self-rule) beyond specific issues.

- Presided over the 1920 Nagpur Session of Congress where Non-Cooperation was adopted.

Contribution to Constitutional Development

- Played a key role in drafting the Swaraj Constitution.
- Member of the committee led by Motilal Nehru.
- Responded to the constitutional challenge posed by Lord Birkenhead.

Social Reform Efforts

- Advocated:
 - Post-puberty marriage for women
 - Property rights for daughters
 - Reform in Hindu personal law
- Campaigned against untouchability.
- Promoted upliftment of minorities and encouraged Muslim participation in Congress.

Principles & Values

- Opposed racial discrimination.
- Supported labour rights.
- Rejected titles and positions of power, staying committed to ideals over office.

Andaman Sentence & Legal Victory

- The Andaman and Nicobar Islands, known as "Kala Paani", served as a dreaded colonial penal settlement.
- Many freedom fighters like Vinayak Damodar Savarkar and Bhai Parmanand were imprisoned there.
- Vijayaraghavachariar was sentenced to 10 years of transportation after the 1882 Salem riots case.
- He appealed to the Madras High Court and got his conviction quashed on January 9, 1883.
- Continued legal efforts helped secure the release of other accused persons as well.

Resistance Against British Authority

- Removed from the Salem Municipal Council for being labeled an “undesirable person.”
- Challenged the decision legally and won the case, receiving ₹100 as damages.
- His actions demonstrated strong resistance to colonial injustice and abuse of power.

Role in Indian National Congress

- Became the first Tamil President of the AICC at the Nagpur Session of Congress.
- Played a major leadership role in shaping the Congress during a critical phase of the freedom movement.

Support from Press

- Received strong backing from newspapers like **The Hindu and Amrita Bazar Patrika**.
- Media support amplified his fight against colonial injustice.

Ideals & Influence

- C. Rajagopalachari (Rajaji) recalled his guiding principle:
 - Lawyers must engage in public life.
 - They should defend people against unjust authority.
- Known for his independence, courage, and commitment to justice.

Memorial Library & Public Hall

- **The C. Vijiaraghavachariar Memorial Library Public Hall was established in Salem.**
- Built on land gifted by the local municipal body.
- Functioning since July 1951.
- **Opened by P. S. Kumaraswami Raja.**
- **Foundation stone laid in August 1950 by T. Prakasam.**

Statues in Salem

- Library statue unveiled in 1982 by former Union Finance Minister R. Venkataraman.

- Second statue unveiled in 1984 by M. G. Ramachandran.

Recognition & Tribute

- R. Venkataraman praised him as a “pioneer of fundamental rights.”
- Widely remembered for his contributions to constitutional development and civil liberties.

Legacy

- Served as a symbol of legal brilliance and fearless nationalism.
- **His 82nd death anniversary is observed on April 19.**

Dheeran Chinnamalai's 271st Birth Anniversary

- Dheeran Chinnamalai was a Palayakkarar (feudal chieftain) of the Kongu region who fought against the British East India Company.
- He was born on April 17, 1756, near Kangayam in the present-day Tiruppur district, under the name Theerthagiri Sarkarai Mandradiar.
- He was one of the Palayakkarars who received training from both the French and Tipu Sultan.
- Inspired by his association with Tipu Sultan, he became highly proficient in guerrilla warfare, archery, horsemanship, and military tactics.
- Initially, he opposed the exploitative taxation policies of Mysore; subsequently, he became a staunch opponent of the British East India Company.
- To establish autonomy in the Kongu region, he defeated the Mysore forces in a battle fought on the banks of the Noyyal River.
- Following the demise of Tipu Sultan in 1799, he constructed the Odanilal Fort to serve as a strategic base for resistance against the British.
- He played a pivotal role as a key resistance leader during the Second Palayakkarar War (1800–1805).

- Employing guerrilla warfare techniques, he defeated British forces in battles fought at Kaveri (1801), Odanilal (1802), and Arachalur (1804).
- His final battle took place in 1805. During this conflict, Chinnamalai was betrayed by his cook and was subsequently hanged at Sankagiri Fort on July 31, 1805.
- His maxim, "Until the subjugation of women ends, the subjugation of the land will not end," highlights the pivotal role of women in bringing about social change.
- His major literary works include **Kudumba Vilakku, Pandiyan Parisu, Tamizhiyakkam, Kannagi Puratchi Kappiyam, Tamizhachiyin Kathi, and Pisirandhaiyar.**

Bharathidasan

- The 136th birth anniversary of Poet **Bharathidasan** was celebrated.
- The "Revolutionary Poet" Bharathidasan was born in Puducherry on **April 29, 1891, and passed away on April 21, 1964.**
- His birth name was **Kanagasubburathinam; influenced by Subramania Bharathi, he changed his name to "Bharathidasan."**
- His prominent titles include **Pavendar, Puratchikavi, and Pagutharivu Kavignar.**
- He was a social reformist poet who championed the **Tamil language, social justice, equality, and rationalism.**
- He was closely associated with the ideologies of the **Dravidian Movement and the Self-Respect Movement.**
- He advocated for progressive concepts such as **women's education, widow remarriage, the abolition of caste, and communism.**
- His versatility as a writer is demonstrated through works such as the rights-based play **Amaithi and the satirical play Irunda Veedu.**
- He translated Shakespeare's **The Merchant of Venice into Tamil, thereby introducing world literature to the Tamil literary landscape.**
- Through periodicals such as **Kuyil**, he fostered the growth of Tamil literature and disseminated social reformist ideas.
- His verses—such as "**Tamizhukkum Amuthendru Per**" and "**Puthiyathor Ulagu Seivom**" underscore the themes of social change and equality.
- **Bharathidasan University, located in Tiruchirappalli, was established in his honour.**
- The Government of Tamil Nadu honors his literary and social contributions by annually presenting the '**Pavendar Award**'.
- **Bharathidasan was posthumously awarded the Sahitya Akademi Award in 1969 for his play, Pisirandhaiyar.**

DEFENCE

INS Dhruv

- **Context:** The Indian Navy deployed its advanced missile-tracking and ocean surveillance ship INS Dhruv in the Arabian Sea just ahead of Pakistan's scheduled live missile testing period.

About INS Dhruv

- It is India's first specialised vessel designed for tracking nuclear missiles and conducting ocean surveillance.
- It was constructed by Hindustan Shipyard Limited with support from Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) and National Technical Research Organisation (NTRO).

Key Functions of INS Dhruv

- The vessel can map the seabed, which helps in studying and identifying enemy submarines.
- It serves as a highly confidential strategic platform capable of

Monitoring ballistic missile launches

- Collecting electronic intelligence (ELINT) to strengthen India's defence capabilities

It plays a crucial role in

- Providing early alerts of missile threats
- Assisting in improving India's ballistic missile defence systems*by analysing flight paths and impact behaviour

Operational Control

INS Dhruv is jointly operated by

- The Indian Navy
- National Technical Research Organisation (NTRO)

- Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)

Mirage 2000–Astra Mk2 Integration: Boosting India's Air Power

- Indian Air Force and Defence Research and Development Organisation are studying integration of the **Astra Mk2 missile on Mirage 2000 jets**.
- The upgrade aims to enhance long-range interception capability and strengthen aerial dominance.
- The Mirage 2000 "Vajra" fleet is already upgraded with improved avionics and extended service life.
- Integration would transform it into a **long-range interceptor capable of striking without close combat engagement**.

Astra Mk2 Missile Features

- Astra Mk2 missile is an advanced indigenous **Beyond-Visual-Range Air-to-Air Missile (BVRAAM)**.
- Range: Approximately 200–240 km (at high altitude).
- Propulsion: **Dual-pulse solid rocket motor for extended engagement capability**.
- Guidance: AESA seeker with ECCM features for resistance to jamming.
- Designed for long-range BVR interception missions.

Strategic Significance

- Offers significantly greater range compared to Astra Mk1 (~110 km).
- Comparable to advanced missiles like China's PL-15.
- **Enhances India's "first-shot" advantage in aerial combat**.

- Boosts indigenous defence capability and reduces reliance on foreign systems.
- With the aim of further bolstering missile defense capabilities against Pakistan, this system is expected to be deployed along the Rajasthan border.

India–Sri Lanka DIVEX 2026

- **Context:** INS Nireekshak arrived in Colombo to participate in DIVEX 2026.
- The exercise is a bilateral naval drill involving the Indian Navy and the Sri Lanka Navy.
- **Participation: Diving teams from both navies collaborate during the exercise.**

Objectives

- Enhance interoperability between the two navies
- Improve operational cohesion
- Enable exchange of best practices in diving and rescue operations

India Receives Fourth S-400 Air Defence System

- **Context:** In 2018, the Central Government signed a contract with Russia to procure the state-of-the-art S-400 air defense systems. Under this agreement, Russia is obligated to supply five S-400 defense systems.

- Russia has dispatched the **fourth S-400 air defense system to India.**

- Against this backdrop and coinciding with the one-year anniversary of the military operation 'Operation Sindoor' Russia has handed over the fourth S-400 air defense system to India.

- **'Operation Sindoor'** was launched against Pakistan following the terrorist attack in Pahalgam. During that operation, the S-400 system performed exceptionally well.

- The missiles integrated into this system are **capable of striking and destroying any aerial target located east of the Indus River in Pakistan, from a distance of 400 kilometers.**

Exercise 'Pragati'

- **Context:** The Indian Army is set to host military delegations from 11 friendly countries for the inaugural edition of the multilateral exercise 'Pragati' at the Foreign Training Node in Umroi, Meghalaya.

- Pragati stands for 'Partnership of Regional Armies for Growth and Transformation in the Indian Ocean Region'

Nature of Exercise

- A multilateral military exercise
- Focus on joint training and cooperation

Objectives

- Strengthen defence cooperation among nations
- Enhance interoperability between armed forces
- Build mutual trust and coordination

Strategic Significance

- Promotes collective security
- Supports regional peace and stability
- Reflects commitment to international military collaboration

India Successfully Conducts First NASM-SR Salvo Launch

- **Context:** The Defence Research and Development Organisation, in collaboration with the Indian Navy, has successfully conducted the first salvo launch of the Naval Anti-Ship Missile–Short Range (NASM-SR).

- The trial took place from a naval helicopter off the coast of Odisha, marking a major advancement in India's indigenous missile technology.

- This test is notable as it represents India's inaugural salvo launch of an air-launched anti-ship missile system.
- All mission goals were successfully met, with sophisticated tracking tools including radar, telemetry, and electro-optical systems—monitoring the operation at the Integrated Test Range Chandipur.
- It uses a solid-fuel booster along with a long-duration sustainer, enabling efficient flight and extended range.

The missile is equipped with several high-end systems, including

Advanced features of NASM-SR

- The NASM-SR incorporates advanced indigenous technologies, making it a strong addition to India's naval arsenal.
- A fibre-optic gyroscope-based navigation system
- A highly accurate seeker for target acquisition
- Advanced control and guidance algorithms
- A high-bandwidth two-way data link
- A radio altimeter for precise targeting



AWARDS & HONOURS

AI Innovation in Botany: Neophyte ID App

- N. Alim Yusuf received the WWF National Award.
- Award presented at the National ECHO Youth Innovation Summit 2026 in Telangana.
- Includes a seed grant of ₹1.5 lakh from World Wide Fund for Nature.

Neophyte ID App

- Developed at Malabar Botanical Garden and Institute for Plant Sciences, Kozhikode.
- App named **Neophyte ID identifies nearly 100 invasive plant species in Kerala.**
- Launched at the **Kerala Science Congress (February, Kochi).**

Technology Used

- Powered by YOLOv11, an advanced machine learning model.
- Users can identify plants by simply capturing an image.

Key Features

- Available in Malayalam and English.
- Integrates geospatial tracking to map spread of invasive species.
- Provides valuable data for researchers and the Forest Department.

Significance

- Helps in early detection and management of invasive species.
- Supports biodiversity conservation efforts in Kerala.

- Demonstrates the role of AI in environmental protection and research.

Samriddh Gram Initiative

- Context : The Samriddh Gram initiative has been nominated for the **WSIS Prizes 2026 under the “Enabling Environment (AL C6)” category.**
- The award recognizes India’s efforts in leveraging digital infrastructure for inclusive rural development.

About the Samriddh Gram Initiative

- This initiative is **implemented by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT), Government of India.**
- It is built on **BharatNet, the world’s largest rural broadband connectivity project.**
- It establishes centres that provide integrated **“phygital” (physical + digital) services.**
- It provides access to key sectors such as **healthcare, education, agriculture, governance, financial inclusion, and e-commerce.**
- It enables services like **telemedicine, smart classrooms, digital governance, and technology-driven agriculture.**
- **High-speed broadband, FTTH connectivity, and public Wi-Fi support the delivery of these services.**
- It improves digital literacy, reduces travel time and costs, and enhances livelihood opportunities in rural areas.
- The model is scalable, sustainable, and based on a **community-driven entrepreneurial approach.**

- The first Samriddhi Kendra was inaugurated in Umri village, Madhya Pradesh.

About the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS)

- It is a global multi-stakeholder platform established in 2004 to advance digital development and inclusive information societies.
- **WSIS Prizes**
- **Launched in 2012**, these awards recognize **ICT-driven projects that contribute to sustainable development and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.
- The prizes act as a global mechanism to identify and promote impactful digital initiatives.
- They honor stakeholders as **'Winners' and 'Champions'** for advancing **WSIS Action Lines and the Global Digital Compact**.

Guntur Municipal Corporation Wins GEM Award 2026

- Guntur Municipal Corporation received the **GEM Award 2026 in Vienna**.
- The award was given for deploying over **200 women as e-auto drivers for waste collection services**.
- The initiative promotes clean energy use, **improves solid waste management, and supports eco-friendly practices**.
- It also focuses on women empowerment by providing sustainable livelihood opportunities.
- The award was presented by **United Nations Industrial Development Organization**.
- It was conferred during the **International Day of Women in the Industry 2026** celebrations held in Vienna.



INTERNATIONAL

United Nations Security Council

- **Context:** India has emphasized that, as part of the reforms to the UN Security Council (UNSC), **"Veto" power must be granted to any new permanent members.**

About the UN Security Council

- The United Nations Security Council was **established in 1945.** Its headquarters is **located in New York.**
- It consists of a total of 15 members. Five nations the **United States, Britain, France, Russia, and China** serve as permanent members possessing "Veto" power.
- The remaining 10 non-permanent members are elected by the UN General Assembly for a **two-year term, based on geographical representation.**
- Countries such as **India, Germany, Japan, and Brazil** have long been advocating for permanent membership in the UN Security Council.
- It is noteworthy that since 1960, the Security Council has undergone reform only once; during this instance, the number of **non-permanent members was increased from 6 to 10.**

Powers and Functions

- Determining whether a threat to peace, a breach of peace, or an act of aggression exists.
- Issuing binding resolutions upon UN member states (while recommendations from other UN

bodies are often non-binding, the decisions of the Security Council are legally binding).

- Imposing economic sanctions and arms embargoes on specific nations.
- Authorizing peacekeeping missions and military interventions.
- Recommending the admission of new members to the United Nations.
- Recommending the appointment of the UN Secretary-General.
- Transferring or referring cases involving violations of international law to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

India–Africa Forum Summit (IAFS)

- **Context :** The **fourth edition of the India–Africa Forum Summit (IAFS) is set to be held in India in late May 2026.**

About the India–Africa Forum Summit (IAFS)

- The IAFS is the official institutional platform for India-Africa relations. It serves as a high-level consultative mechanism between the Government of India and the member states of the African Union (AU) to promote South-South cooperation.
- It was **first held in New Delhi in 2008**, followed by summits in **Addis Ababa in 2011 and New Delhi in 2015.**
- India is set to host the **4th summit in 2026**, after a gap of over a decade.
- The summit aims to **deepen South-South cooperation and expand engagement beyond trade and Lines of Credit toward Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and industrial partnerships.**

- It focuses on sectors such as **health, education, human resource development, agriculture, ICT, and infrastructure.**
- It supports initiatives like the **IIT Madras campus in Zanzibar** for capacity building.
- India is strengthening diplomatic ties by expanding its presence to 45 missions across Africa.
- It promotes cooperation in **security, defense, and maritime stability.**
- It helps align the positions of India and African nations on global issues such as trade, governance, and development.
- It plays a key role in ensuring resource security and stable supply chains during global disruptions.
- It reflects a shift from a donor-recipient model to a partnership-based, investment-driven relationship.
- The 2026 summit gains significant importance amid global supply chain uncertainties, highlighting Africa's strategic significance.

Organization of the Petroleum

Exporting Countries (OPEC)

- The **UAE announced that it will leave the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) effective May 1**, stripping the oil cartel of one of its largest producers and further weakening its leverage over global oil supplies and prices.

About OPEC

- Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries is a **permanent intergovernmental organization of oil-exporting nations**
- It was established in 1960 by five founding members: **Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and Venezuela**
- The organization currently has around 12 member countries, including Algeria, Nigeria, Libya, UAE, and others
- Angola exited the group on **January 1, 2024**
- Headquarters is located in **Vienna**

UAE Announces Exit from OPEC+

- **Context:** The United Arab Emirates declared that it is exiting both OPEC and the wider OPEC+ grouping.

About OPEC+

- OPEC+ is a coalition of **leading oil-exporting countries.**
- It was created in 2016 as an expanded framework of OPEC.
- The group includes 22 oil-producing nations that meet periodically to determine crude oil output levels for the global market.
- Its membership consists of the **12 OPEC countries** along with Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Brunei, Kazakhstan, Russia, Mexico, Malaysia, South Sudan, Sudan, and Oman.
- These countries coordinate their production policies to regulate supply and maintain stability in global oil prices.

CURRENT FACTS

- Part III, Article 25- Freedom of conscience and free profession, practice and propagation of religion
- Part III, Article 25 (2) (a) - Nothing in this article shall affect the operation of any existing law or prevent the State from making any law – regulating or restricting any economic, financial, political or other secular activity which may be associated with religious practice
- **Constituency Delimitation Amendments**
 - 42nd Constitutional Amendment Act, 1976: Froze the allocation of seats to the States in the Lok Sabha and the division of each State into territorial constituencies based on the 1971 Census until the year 2000.
 - 84th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2001: Extended this freeze until the year 2026. Furthermore, it empowered the readjustment of constituencies based on the 1991 Census.
 - 87th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2003: Permitted the delimitation of constituencies based on the 2001 Census, without altering the number of seats allocated to each State in the Lok Sabha.
- Oru Ilakkivavathiyin Arasiyal Anubhavangal by writer Jayakanthan he argued that Annadurai's positions on literature, art, language, economics, and sociology were simplistic and catered to "idiots and ruffians."
- India's first passenger train ran on April 16, 1853, from Bori Bunder (Mumbai) to Thane. Comprising 14 coaches and carrying approximately 400 passengers, the train covered a distance of 34 kilometers. The 173rd anniversary of this historic event which laid the foundation for Indian Railways will be celebrated in 2026.
- **Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY)**
 - This scheme was launched on September 10, 2020.
 - It is implemented by the Department of Fisheries under the Union Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry, and Dairying.
 - The scheme has been approved for implementation from 2020-21 to 2024-25, with an investment of approximately Rs.20,050 crore, aimed at the comprehensive development of the fisheries sector.
 - Under this scheme, financial assistance is allocated in a 60:40 ratio for general states, a 90:10 ratio for Northeastern and Himalayan states, and as 100% Central Government assistance for Union Territories.
 - Its objective is to increase fish production to approximately 220 lakh tonnes and to enhance the contribution of the fisheries sector to the agricultural Gross Domestic Product (GDP).
 - The scheme focuses on both marine and inland fisheries, including brackish water and freshwater aquaculture.
 - With a contribution of approximately 8% to global fish production, this scheme plays a pivotal role in strengthening India's position as the world's second-largest fish producer.

- **South India's oldest hydroelectric project was launched in 1932**
 - The Pykara Hydroelectric Project in the Nilgiris is one of South India's oldest hydropower projects.
 - Its aim was to tap into the power generation potential of River Pykara, which originates in the Western Ghats.
 - Commissioned in 1932, it was conceived with three units of a total capacity of 6.65 MW.
- **Soviet Cultural Centre started Tal Chess Club in Chennai in 1972**
 - Chennai's association with chess started in the 1970s.
 - The Soviet Cultural Centre established the Tal Chess Club in 1972.
 - India's first International Master Manuel Aaron played an instrumental role in the club.
 - It became the ultimate incubator for local talent, famously producing India's first Grandmaster Viswanathan Anand.
- **Valparai Plateau in the Western Ghats is a crucial wildlife habitat**
 - Valparai Plateau, part of the Western Ghats, is an ecologically significant zone.
 - It is known for tea and coffee plantations and is a crucial habitat for wildlife, especially for elephant migration.
 - During the annual migration season, elephants migrate from Kerala to the Valparai Plateau, which is also part of the Anamalai Tiger Reserve.
- **A titan of number theory, who proved Waring's Problem**
 - While Ramanujan is globally celebrated, another mathematician from Tamil Nadu, S.S. Pillai of Tirunelveli, was a titan of number theory.
 - In the 1930s, he proved the conundrum known as Waring's Problem.
 - He died in a plane crash while travelling to the Institute for Advanced Study, Princeton.
- **Social Reform & Education at Cheranmahadevi**
- **Gurukulam Controversy & Political Impact**
 - In 1924, a Gurukulam founded by V. V. S. Iyer at Cheranmahadevi practiced caste-based segregation in dining.
 - Brahmin and non-Brahmin students were made to eat separately.
 - This incident triggered widespread debate on caste discrimination.
 - It became a turning point for Periyar E. V. Ramasamy, who left the Congress and later founded the Dravidar Kazhagam.
- **Soosaiappan Primary School – A Progressive Model**
 - Soosaiappan Primary School in Cheranmahadevi stood out during a time of intense social unrest over caste discrimination.
 - Located on Arasadi Street, the school had already completed 50 years of service at the time of Cheranmahadevi incident.
 - Founded by a Catholic community elder without missionary assistance.
 - Functioned as a pioneering institution for Scheduled Castes (SCs) education.

▪ **Inclusive Education Approach**

- Promoted social equality by educating students from all castes.
- Stood in contrast to caste-based discrimination seen elsewhere at the time.
- Became a symbol of empowerment through education.

▪ **Operation Numkhor**

- Operation Numkhor is a nationwide crackdown on smuggling of premium second-hand vehicles.
- Focuses on illegal routes through Bhutan and forged registrations involving Motor Vehicle Department (MVD) officials.
- Highlights growing cooperation between India and Bhutan to curb cross-border crime.
- Initiated by the Customs (Preventive) Commissionerate, Kochi.

▪ **National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM)**

- Launched in 2011 by the Ministry of Rural Development.
- A flagship programme of the India government.
- Aims to reduce multidimensional poverty in rural areas.
- Focuses on enabling households to achieve sustainable livelihoods.
- Promotes self-employment opportunities.
- Encourages access to gainful employment for rural poor.

▪ Meghalaya has declared the indigenous Khasi and Garo languages as official languages of the state, alongside English.

▪ Nominated member Harivansh has been elected as Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha for the third consecutive time.

▪ **Launch of the Tourism Anthology**

- The Vice Chairman of NITI Aayog, Suman Bery, released a new anthology titled "Divya Bharat: A Window to the Soul of India" in New Delhi.
- The book is designed as a year-round tourism guide covering all States and Union Territories of India.

▪ **Government schemes supporting tourism growth include:**

- Dekho Apna Desh initiative
- Swadesh Darshan scheme
- Plan to develop 50 global-standard destinations

▪ **Women's Reservation Bill**

The 106th Amendment Act, 2023

- This Act is known as the 'Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam' or the 'Women's Reservation Act'.
- This Act provides for a one-third (33%) reservation of seats for women in the Lok Sabha, State Legislative Assemblies, and the Legislative Assembly of Delhi.
- Reservation for women is also provided within the constituencies already reserved for Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST).

- It was introduced with the objective of strengthening women's political representation in elected bodies.
- This Act will not come into force immediately; it will become operational only after the next delimitation exercise and the subsequent census data become available.
- The reserved constituencies will be rotated periodically.
- This reservation applies only to the directly elected Lower Houses (Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies); it does not apply to the Rajya Sabha or the State Legislative Councils (Upper Houses).
- This Bill had been introduced multiple times since 1996 and was finally passed in 2023 with strong support from the Parliament.
- **Key Features of the 106th Constitutional Amendment Act**
 - Article 239AA: Reservation of one-third (33%) of seats for women in the Legislative Assembly of Delhi.
 - Article 330A: Reservation of one-third of seats for women in the Lok Sabha. This includes seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (SC/ST).
 - Article 332A: Reservation of one-third of seats for women in State Legislative Assemblies. This includes seats reserved for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (SC/ST).
 - Article 334A: Implementation following delimitation of constituencies, a 15-year time limit, and provisions for the extension of the reservation and for rotation of seats.
- The Tharu tribe is an indigenous community inhabiting the Terai plains along the Indo-Nepal border. They are considered the largest and one of the earliest settled ethnic groups in the Terai region.
- The Chenchu community mainly lives in the Nallamalai forest region of Andhra Pradesh. They are recognized as one of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) in the state.
- **Adjournment sine die**
 - Adjournment sine die refers to ending a session of Parliament for an unspecified period, without fixing any date for it to meet again.
 - The authority to declare such an adjournment rests with the presiding officer of the House.
 - The presiding officer also has the power to reconvene the House earlier than the scheduled adjournment or even after it has been adjourned sine die, whenever considered necessary.
- **Delimitation in India: Evolution, Freeze, and Emerging Challenges**
 - Articles 82 and 170(3) mandate periodic readjustment of Lok Sabha and State Assembly seats and constituency boundaries after every Census.
 - The first delimitation (1950–51) was based on estimated population figures due to urgency, followed by a proper exercise after the 1951 Census.
 - Subsequent delimitations occurred after the 1961 and 1971 Censuses, with the 1976 exercise based on 1971 data.
 - The 42nd Constitutional Amendment froze delimitation until the 2001 Census to avoid penalising States that successfully controlled population growth.

- After 2001, the freeze on increasing the number of seats continued, though constituency boundaries were redrawn using 2001 Census data to maintain population balance.
 - The 84th Amendment (2001) extended the freeze on fresh delimitation until after the first Census post-2026, aiming to encourage population stabilisation.
 - The assumption was that population growth would stabilise uniformly across States within 25 years, which has not fully materialised.
 - Migration and uneven population growth have led to disparities in constituency population sizes.
 - The Delimitation Bill, 2026 proposes using 2011 Census data, raising concerns about outdated population figures.
 - Continued migration and demographic changes may lead to inequalities in representation even after delimitation is completed.
 - Article 81(2) emphasises equal population-to-seat ratio across States, but broader considerations may be needed.
 - There is scope to include additional factors beyond population while allocating seats, especially with a likely increase in total seats.
 - Ensuring fair representation while maintaining balance among States is crucial for strengthening the federal structure.
- **Nammalu, a short story by Sahitya Akademi Award-winning writer Imayam.**
 - **SMILE Scheme**
 - SMILE (Support for Marginalized Individuals for Livelihood and Enterprise) scheme was launched in 2022.
 - It is implemented by the Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment.
 - It is India's first integrated national framework that provides support ranging from identifying marginalized people to providing rehabilitation and building livelihoods.
 - It includes services such as healthcare, counseling, education, skill development, and long-term economic independence.
 - It includes a sub-scheme to identify individuals involved in begging, collect their details, and provide rehabilitation with their consent.
 - The scheme also focuses on the empowerment, welfare, and social inclusion of transgender individuals.
 - **TTRO - Tertiary Treatment Reverse Osmosis**
 - Tamil Nadu is home to six particularly vulnerable tribal groups (PVTGs) – Toda, Kota, Kurumbas, Irular, Paniyan, and Kattunayakan.
 - Anaithu Grama Anna Marumalarchi Thittam (AGAMT), launched in 2006 by then Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi, was aimed at developing infrastructure in rural panchayats.
 - Tamil Nadu Village Habitations Improvement (THAI) scheme, which was specifically targeted at marginalised clusters to ensure a more equitable distribution of resources.

- In a first, Tamil Nadu has a dedicated helpline for deaf persons on voting day. They can contact sign language interpreters through videoconference and calls.
- **cVIGIL**
 - cVIGIL is a mobile application developed by the Election Commission of India (ECI) to enable citizens to report violations of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) during elections.
 - To report a violation, users simply need to open the app, select the type of violation, and provide details of the incident, including location, time, and photographs or videos.
 - The app also allows users to track the progress of their complaints.
 - The cVIGIL app has been praised for its simplicity, ease of use, authenticity, and user secrecy.
 - It has also been credited with helping to increase the number of MCC violations reported during elections.
 - If you see a violation of the MCC, you can use the cVIGIL app to report it. The app is a valuable tool for ensuring that elections are conducted fairly and transparently.
- **Here are some of the features of the cVIGIL app**
 - Allows users to report violations of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC)
 - Provides a platform for citizens to participate in the electoral process
 - Uses GPS to track the location of the violation
 - Allows users to capture the live incidents only
 - Tracks the progress of the complaint
 - Feature to report the case of MCC violation anonymously
- **ECINET**
- ECINET mobile app is a one-stop digital platform for voters.
- It allows users to:
 - View candidate information
 - File Model Code of Conduct (MCC) complaints
 - Search their name in the voter list
 - Raise voter ID (card) related complaints
 - Download e-voter card
 - Check polling trends
 - Connect with election officials
- **Saksham App**
 - The Election Commission of India is working towards easing the voter identification and registration process for people with disabilities (PwDs) by offering them customized services.
 - Under a new program, PwDs need to share their essential details with Election Commission.
 - The Saksham App provides a number of features to help PwDs register to vote, find their polling station, and cast their vote.

- The Saksham App is a valuable tool for PwDs to participate in the electoral process. The app is easy to use and provides a number of features that make it easier for PwDs to register to vote, find their polling station, and cast their vote.
- **These features include**
 - Voice assistance: The app provides voice assistance for PwDs who are visually impaired.
 - Text-to-speech: The app provides text-to-speech for PwDs who are hearing impaired.
 - Accessibility features: The app has a number of accessibility features, such as large fonts and high-contrast colors, to make it easier for PwDs to use.
 - Information on polling stations: The app provides information on polling stations, including the location of the polling station, the accessibility features available at the polling station, and the contact details of the polling officials.
 - Complaints: The app allows PwDs to file complaints about any problems they face while participating in the electoral process.
- India has introduced a nationwide toll-free helpline (1855) to make the Census 2027 process easier and help citizens take part more smoothly and effectively.
- **Measles**
 - Highly contagious and serious airborne viral disease.
 - Caused by a virus belonging to the paramyxovirus family.
 - Infections spreads through respiratory droplets from coughing.
 - Initially infects the respiratory tract then spreads throughout the body
 - Can lead to: Severe illness, Complications, Death in serious cases
 - The State's immunisation coverage stands at 99%.
 - The Measles-Rubella vaccine, administered at nine and 18 months - has about 85% efficacy and provides adequate protection.
- **Anti-Defection Law**
- **Tenth Schedule of the Indian Constitution (Anti-Defection Law):** Explains the disqualification of Members of Parliament (MPs) and Members of Legislative Assemblies (MLAs) due to changing political parties.
- **A member may be disqualified in the following circumstances**
 - When they voluntarily give up their membership in their political party.
 - When they vote or abstain from voting contrary to the party's direction (whip) without prior permission.
 - When an independent member joins any political party after the election.
 - When a nominated member joins any political party after six months from the date of taking office.
- **Exemptions**
 - If at least two-thirds of the members agree to merge with another party, they will not be disqualified.

- To maintain neutrality, the Speaker or Chairperson may resign from their party membership, and they will not be disqualified if they rejoin after their term ends.

▪ Key Features

- The authority to decide on disqualification lies with the Speaker or Chairman of the House.
- According to the *Kihoto Hollohan vs. Zachillhu* (1992) case, the Speaker's decision is subject to judicial review.

▪ 91st Constitutional Amendment Act (2003)

- Removed the provision regarding political split (which previously allowed one-third of members to split).
- Limited the number of ministers to 15% of the total strength of the House.
- Disqualified members cannot hold any ministerial position or any remunerative political office until they are re-elected.

▪ Wind Power Generation

- The country's wind power generation capacity has increased to 56 Gigawatts (GW). In the last year alone, a generation capacity of 6 GW has been added.
- India ranks 4th in the world in terms of wind power generation capacity.
- States like Tamil Nadu, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan are pioneers in this sector. Massive renewable energy parks are currently being developed in areas like Kutch, Patan, and Banaskantha in Gujarat.

- The Government has reconstituted the NITI Aayog. Economist Ashok Kumar Lahiri has been appointed as the Vice Chairperson of the Aayog. He will replace the current Vice Chairman, Suman K. Bery.

- Part XV, Article 324- Superintendence, direction and control of elections to be vested in an Election Commission

- Part XV, Article 326- Elections to the House of the People and to the Legislative Assemblies of States to be on the basis of adult suffrage

- MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions).

- SHANTI Act are expected to facilitate greater participation of the private sector in scaling up the country's nuclear energy capacity and achieve the 100-gigawatt nuclear energy target by 2047.

- Rithika Sri from Tamil Nadu has made history by becoming India's first transgender cricket umpire. This achievement comes after the Tamil Nadu Cricket Association introduced an 'Other' category in its umpire examination system, paving the way for greater inclusivity.

- Part VI, Article 162- Extent of executive power of State

- Part III, Article 21- Protection of life and personal liberty

▪ Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

- The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, established in 2001 in Shanghai, is one of the largest regional organisations promoting political, economic and security cooperation.
- Its member states include India, Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Iran, and Belarus.

- India became a full member of the grouping in 2017, and assumed its rotating presidency in 2022-23, underlining its growing role in regional security and multilateral cooperation.

▪ **Cauvery Water Management Authority**

- The Cauvery Water Management Authority and the Cauvery Water Regulation Committee were constituted under the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956, through the Cauvery Water Management Scheme (CWMS) notified on June 1, 2018.
- This scheme was formulated to implement the final order of the Cauvery River Water Tribunal, as modified by the judgment of the Supreme Court of India dated February 16, 2018.
- The Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA) has been empowered to ensure adherence to and implementation of the Tribunal's final order, including the storage, apportionment, regulation, and control of Cauvery waters.
- With the assistance of the Cauvery Water Regulation Committee (CWRC), it monitors the operation of reservoirs and regulates water releases.
- The State of Karnataka is required to ensure a uniform water discharge at the inter-state gauging station located at Biligundlu.
- The Yash Pal Committee (1993) recommended the "Learning Without Burden" approach to reduce the educational burden on children.
- The National Curriculum Framework (2005) emphasized child-centered learning and the construction of knowledge, rather than rote memorization.

