

SEPTEMBER 2025 —

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INCLUDES

**PRACTICE
QUESTIONS
(PRELIMS
+ MAINS)**

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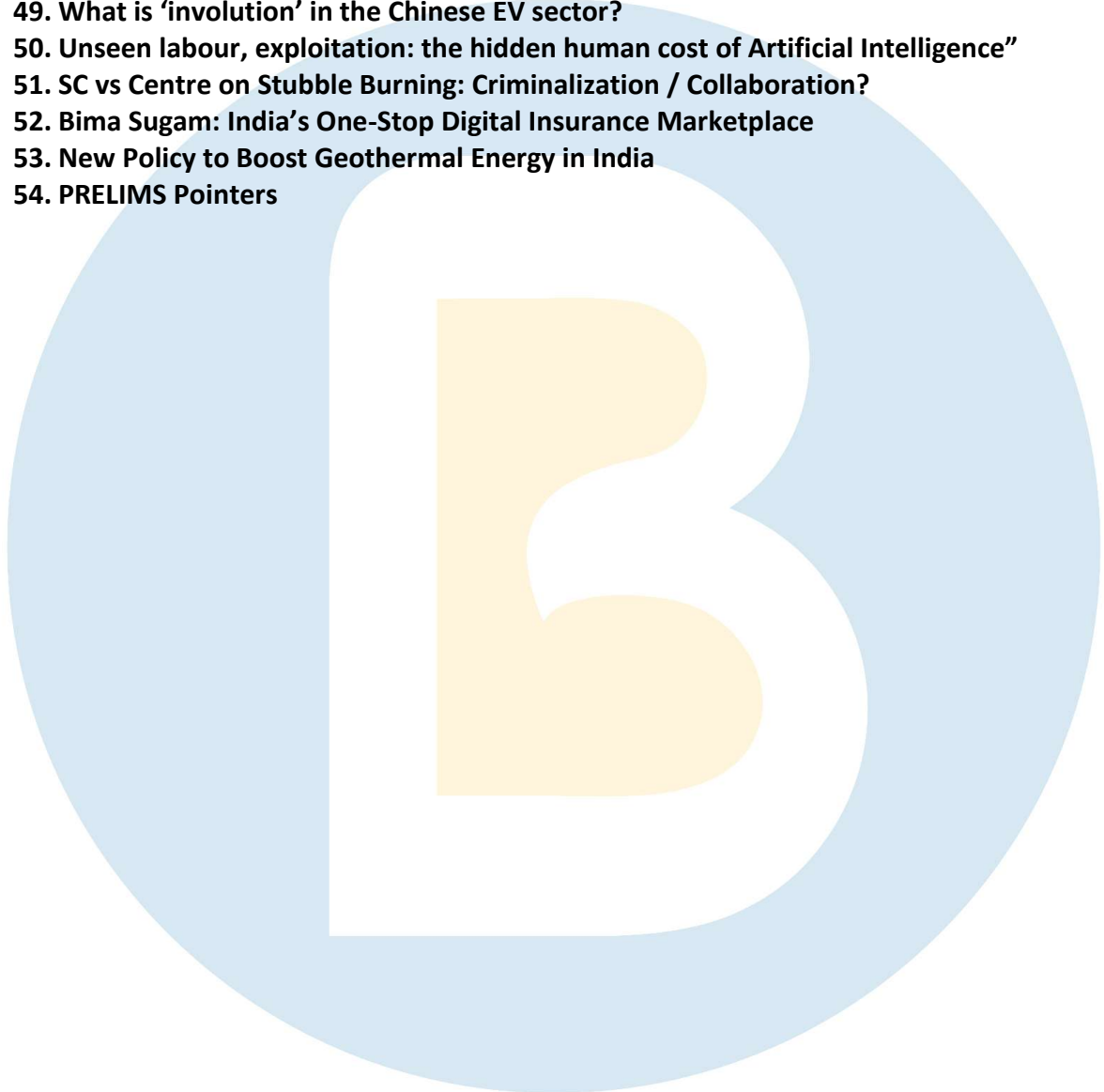
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INDEX

1. Mini-Cloudbursts & Monsoon 2025
2. Afghanistan Earthquake
3. Noise Pollution in Indian Cities – A Silent Public Health Crisis
4. Dehradun Flash Floods
5. India–China Commitments
6. Ukraine: A Battle Between America and Washington
7. Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Tianjin Summit
8. Election Commission on Special Intensive Revision (SIR)
9. Governors Can't Sit on Bills Endless
10. India Needs More Women Judges in the Supreme Court
11. The Supreme Court to the Soldier's Rescue
12. Concealing a judge's dissent, eroding judiciary's authority
13. Less than 40% of disabled persons have ID needed for benefits
14. Should reservations exceed the 50% cap?
15. Peace Pact with Kuki-Zo Groups
16. NIRF Rankings 2025
17. Manipur Violence – Revised Suspension of Operations Pact
18. SC Orders EC to Accept Aadhaar as ID in Bihar Voter List Revision
19. The 'domestic sphere' in a new India"
20. *Iran and India, ancient civilisations and new horizons*
21. Election of C.P. Radhakrishnan as Vice-President of India
22. Crisis in Nepal after PM K.P. Sharma Oli's resignation
23. The Way Forward on Katchatheevu & Palk Strait Disputes
24. A Joint and New Journey Along the SCO Pathway
25. To Build Roads is to Build Peace Why is Peace Elusive in Eastern DRC?
26. India and Mauritius not just partners but a family: Modi
27. A project of strategic and national importance
28. India–Pakistan Ties Through the Prism of the Indus Treaty
29. Patient Safety in India — World Patient Safety Day
30. "Judicial experimentalism versus the right to justice"
31. Welfare Board for Nomadic & Denotified Tribes Seeks Stronger Mandate
32. Ladakh Protests: Fast for Statehood & Sixth Schedule
33. Welfare at the Mercy of the Machine: Facial Recognition in Anganwadis
34. EU-India Strategic Roadmap: Trade, Technology, and Defence
35. H-1B's New \$100k Fee:
36. How Trump's H-1B Fee Threatens India's IT Firms and Big
37. India's Economic Churn, the Nectar of Growth
38. GST Revamp Highlights
39. GST Revamp – Mixed Sectoral Impact
40. Pulses Production – NITI Aayog's Plan for Self-Sufficiency
41. The Long March Ahead to Technological Independence

- 42. Clearing the fog: need for revised strategies against Aedes mosquitoes**
- 43. A project of strategic and national importance**
- 44. "A 'health check' for the new GST health-care reforms"**
- 45. Govt Exploring Isobutanol Blending with Diesel**
- 46. Vultures and Public Health: Preventing Future Pandemics**
- 47. Unlocking Innovation with India's Procurement Reforms**
- 48. India's economic ambitions need better gender data**
- 49. What is 'involution' in the Chinese EV sector?**
- 50. Unseen labour, exploitation: the hidden human cost of Artificial Intelligence"**
- 51. SC vs Centre on Stubble Burning: Criminalization / Collaboration?**
- 52. Bima Sugam: India's One-Stop Digital Insurance Marketplace**
- 53. New Policy to Boost Geothermal Energy in India**
- 54. PRELIMS Pointers**



GENERAL STUDIES - I

- 1. Art And Culture**
- 2. Modern History**
- 3. World History**
- 4. Indian Society**
- 5. Geography**

Mini-Cloudbursts & Monsoon 2025

- **Cloudbursts:** No increasing trend in classical cloudbursts (≥ 10 cm rain/hour over 20–30 sq. km). Still **impossible to forecast**.
- **Mini-cloudbursts:** Rise observed in events of ≥ 5 cm rain/hour.
- **Monsoon Rainfall (June–Aug 2025):**
 - Overall: **6% above normal**.
 - Northwest India: **+26%** (record rain → destruction in HP, J&K, Uttarakhand).
 - Central India: **+8.6%**, Southern Peninsula: **+9.3%**.
 - East & Northeast: **–17% deficit**.
- **August 2025:**
 - North India rain: Highest since 2001.
 - South Peninsula: 3rd highest since 2001.
 - **700+ heavy rainfall events** (2nd highest since 2021).
- **Cause of Extreme Rains:** Confluence of **western disturbances + Bay of Bengal storms**.
- **September Outlook:** 9% above normal; long-term trend shows **more September rain since 1980**.

Cloudburst:

Definition

- **Cloudburst:** Sudden, extreme rainfall ≥ 10 cm/hour over small area (20–30 sq. km).
- **Mini-cloudburst:** ≥ 5 cm/hour rainfall.

Causes

1. **Orographic lift:** Moist monsoon winds forced up mountain slopes → rapid condensation.

2. **Blocked circulation:** Western disturbances + Bay of Bengal low-pressure systems.
3. **High latent heat release** from saturated air masses.
4. **Climate change:** Warming atmosphere holds more moisture, increases extreme rainfall probability.

Impacts

- Flash floods, landslides (Himalayan states most vulnerable).
- Loss of life & property, damage to roads, hydel projects.
- Riverine flooding downstream.

Forecasting Challenges

- Highly localised → *IMD: impossible to predict precisely*.
- Radar & satellite monitoring can give short lead-time alerts.

Mitigation

- **Early Warning Systems** (radar in Himalayas).
- **Disaster preparedness** (NDMA: cloudburst protocols).
- **Urban drainage planning** for cities facing mini-cloudbursts.
- **Eco-sensitive zoning** in Himalayas.
- Community awareness & micro-level mapping of hotspots.

Afghanistan Earthquake

Disaster Overview

- A **6.0-magnitude earthquake** struck **27 km from Jalalabad** (USGS).
- Over **800 dead, 2,800+ injured** (toll expected to rise).

Noise Pollution in Indian Cities – A Silent Public Health Crisis

- Provinces affected: **Kunar (worst-hit), Nangarhar, Laghman, + 2 others.**
- Occurred **just before midnight**, when families were asleep.
- **Aftershocks** caused further collapses.

Background

- Afghanistan lies near the **Hindu Kush range** (Eurasian & Indian tectonic plate junction).
- Region is earthquake-prone: **12 quakes >7 magnitude since 1900.**
- Vulnerability amplified by:
 - Weak infrastructure (mud-brick houses).
 - Poor healthcare system.
 - Conflict and political instability limiting preparedness.

Humanitarian Impact

- **Low-rise, mud-brick homes** collapsed easily → high casualties.
- In **Kunar alone**: ~800 dead, 2,500 injured.
- **Rescue challenges**:
 - Many villages **inaccessible due to road blockages.**
 - Residents digging with **bare hands.**
 - Evacuations by **helicopter to Jalalabad hospitals.**
- Victims include **returnees from Iran & Pakistan**, struggling to rebuild lives.

Global & Domestic Response

- **Taliban govt.** leading massive rescue ops.
- **UN Secretary-General Guterres** expressed solidarity.
- **Pope Leo XIV** (Vatican) expressed grief.
- International humanitarian agencies warning of worsening crisis.

Current Situation

- **Decibel levels routinely exceed limits** near schools, hospitals, and residential zones.
- **WHO safe limits**: 50 dB(A) (day) and 40 dB(A) (night) in silent zones.
- Indian cities like **Delhi & Bengaluru** often record 65–70 dB(A).
- **Impacts**:
 - Public health → mental stress, disturbed sleep, cardiovascular risks.
 - Ecological → 2025 University of Auckland study: bird communication & sleep patterns disrupted after one night of noise.

Institutional Framework

- **Noise Pollution (Regulation & Control) Rules, 2000** → robust but poorly enforced.
- **CPCB's National Ambient Noise Monitoring Network (NANMN)** (2011): intended as real-time platform, but largely a passive database.
- **Enforcement gaps**:
 - Faulty sensor placement (25–30 feet high, against CPCB 2015 norms).
 - Poor accountability → fragmented between SPCBs, police, and municipalities.
 - RTI requests often unanswered.

Constitutional & Legal Dimensions

- **Article 21** → Right to life with dignity, includes environmental well-being.
- **Article 48A** → Duty of the State to protect environment.
- **SC Judgments**:

- *Noise Pollution (V), In Re (2005)*
→ recognised urban noise as a threat to mental well-being.
- Reaffirmed in **2024**, linking excessive noise to violation of fundamental rights.

- Behavioural change (e.g., “No Honking Day” → sustained programs).
- **Urban planning:**
 - Embed acoustic resilience (quiet zones, green buffers)

Global Contrast

- **Europe:**
 - Annual cost of urban noise = **€100 billion**.
 - Data-driven reforms: redesign of speed zones, zoning laws.
- **India:**
 - Regulatory fragmentation.
 - No national acoustic policy.
 - Weak grievance redress and enforcement.

Structural & Cultural Issues

- **Urban drivers:** infrastructure expansion, late-night construction, traffic.
- **Civic fatigue:** noise normalized → honking, drilling, loudspeakers.
- **Politics of silence:** invisibility of noise as pollutant (no visible residue).

Way Forward

- **Policy reforms:**
 - National Acoustic Policy (like NAAQS for air).
 - Define decibel levels, mandate audits, empower local enforcement.
- **Institutional action:**
 - Decentralise NANMN → local bodies use real-time data.
 - Link monitoring to penalties & zoning enforcement.
- **Cultural shift:**
 - Public awareness campaigns → “sonic empathy”.

Dehradun Flash Floods

Incident

- **Date:** September 16–17, 2025
- **Location:** Dehradun & surrounding areas (Uttarakhand)
- **Casualties:**
 - **13 dead**
 - **16 missing, 3 critically injured.**
 - **500+ rescued**, incl. students from Dev Bhoomi Institute (Paundha) & hotel guests in Mussoorie.



Rainfall

- **Sahastradhara:** 192 mm in 5–6 hours.
- **Mal Devta:** 141 mm.
- **Other areas (Mussoorie, Hathibarkala, Jolly Grant):** 90+ mm.
- **IMD Dehradun:** Issued **Red Alert**.

Impact

- **Infrastructure:**
 - 23+ roads blocked.
 - Several bridges damaged.
 - Shops, homes, hotels washed away in Sahastradhara.
 - **Tapkeshwar temple submerged.**

- **Tourism hit:** Sahastradhara, Tapkeshwar, Mussoorie — key tourist spots.
- **Education:** 500 students trapped in institute.

Government & Relief Response

- **State:**
 - CM Pushkar Singh Dhama inspected sites on an **earthmover**.
 - Relief & rescue by SDRF, police, district administration.
 - Constant monitoring via social media/X updates.
- **Centre:**
 - PM Modi, HM Amit Shah assured support.
 - **₹1,200 crore relief announced** by PM.
 - **Loss estimated at ₹7,500 crore** (State).

🔑 Wider Context

- **Monsoon 2025:** Uttarakhand has seen **extensive monsoon damage**.
- **Garhwal region worst hit:** Dharali village (Uttarkashi) engulfed in flash floods; 1 dead, 68 missing for 50+ days

GENERAL STUDIES - II

- 1. Constitution**
- 2. Polity**
- 3. Governance**
- 4. Social Justice**
- 5. International Relations**

India–China Commitments

Key Outcomes

- **Border Peace First:**
 - Modi underlined peace & tranquillity on the LAC as a prerequisite for bilateral ties.
 - Both leaders reaffirmed commitment to a “*fair, reasonable, mutually acceptable*” resolution of the boundary question.
 - Xi: Border should not define overall relations.
- **Trade & Economy:**
 - Agreed on balanced bilateral trade → reduce deficit, encourage investments.
 - Both see themselves as stabilisers of world trade amid U.S. tariff wars.
 - Modi: Growing India-China trade could “change world’s perception of China”.
- **People-to-People Links:**
 - More direct flights, visa facilitation.
 - Kailash Mansarovar Yatra resumed.
- **Global Cooperation:**
 - Counter-terrorism support.
 - Common ground in multilateral forums on fair trade.
 - Both highlighted *strategic autonomy* and avoided “third-country lens” (hint: U.S.).
- **Optics:**
 - Xi: India & China are “*partners, not rivals*” → called it a “*dragon-elephant cooperative pas de deux*”.
 - Modi echoed: “Development partners, not rivals”.

Indian Opposition’s Criticism

- **Congress View (Jairam Ramesh):**
 - Govt. is *legitimising Chinese aggression* post-Galwan (2020).

- Modi gave China a “*clean chit*” on June 19, 2020, despite Army demand for full restoration of status quo.
- Called this the “*new normal*” of **aggressive Beijing + spineless govt.**
- Cited **China–Pakistan tango** (Operation Sindoor, July 2025) → govt. has accepted it passively.
- Accused govt. of silence on:
 - China’s mega **hydel project on Yarlung Tsangpo** (risk to NE India).
 - **Chinese dumping** hurting Indian MSMEs.

Regional Context

- **Myanmar:** Modi reiterated support for *Myanmar-led* peace process, fair elections, and development assistance.
- **Maldives–China Meeting:** Xi–Muizzu pushed for **FTA implementation**, Belt & Road cooperation, and joint projects in fisheries & environment. Maldives continues “*India Out*” tilt.

Strategic Takeaways

1. **India’s Approach:** De-escalation + balancing → keep trade & multilateral cooperation alive, while shelving hard border issues for now.
2. **China’s Approach:** Decouple border dispute from larger relations, present itself as cooperative power.
3. **Domestic Critique:** Opposition fears reconciliation without restoration of LAC status quo amounts to surrender.
4. **Geopolitical Lens:** Both stress “no third-country lens” → U.S. trade wars are backdrop, but India avoids being seen as U.S. ally against China.
5. **Neighbourhood Angle:** China deepening Maldives ties + India engaging Myanmar shows **parallel competition in South Asia**

Ukraine: A Battle Between America and Washington

Main Argument

- The Ukraine war outcome is not shaped only by **U.S.–Russia** or **U.S.–Europe** diplomacy.
- The decisive factor: an **internal U.S. contest** → “*America (people’s mandate) vs. Washington (establishment)*”.

Trump’s 2024 Mandate

- **Campaign promise:** End the war “on Day 1”.
- **Public opinion:** 66% of Americans (Quincy Institute survey) wanted a *negotiated end* even with compromises.
- Trend: 6 of last 8 U.S. presidential winners supported **less interventionist foreign policy**.
- Position: Accept regional hegemony of powers (India, China, Russia) while U.S. focuses on its own hemisphere.

America First vs. Permanent Washington

- **America First / MAGA camp:** Anti-interventionist, represented by Trump, VP J.D. Vance, and Vivek Ramaswamy.
- **Permanent Washington:** Coalition of **neo-cons, commercial, and ideological elites** seeking continuous military action + global U.S. hegemony.
- This establishment has dominated U.S. foreign policy since JFK.

Trump’s Approach to Ukraine

- **Optics & narrative:**

- Publicly weakened Ukraine’s “deification” (rebuked Zelenskyy).
- Normalised diplomacy with Russia (Alaska Summit with Putin).
- **Policy actions:**
 - Brief halt to arms & intel aid to Kyiv.
 - But continued funding Ukraine’s defence.
 - Escalations like **secondary sanctions on India** for Russian oil purchases.
- Result: **Vacillation** between his promises and establishment pressures.

Alaska Summit (Aug 15, 2025)

- **Trump’s optics win:** Red-carpet for Putin, evoking Cold War grandeur → cast himself as peacemaker.
- **But no real concessions** to Russia → war continues.
- Reflects compromise: *Trump’s image vs. Washington’s interests*.

Global Stakes

- Ukraine war = closest humanity has come to **nuclear conflagration**.
- Solution lies less in **international diplomacy**, more in **domestic U.S. power struggles**.
- Future global contests (India’s rise, China rivalry) will also hinge on **America vs. Washington**.

Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Tianjin Summit

Condemnation of Terrorism

- The 10-member SCO **strongly condemned terrorism** in all forms.

- Specific mention:
 - **Pahalgam attack (India)**
 - **Jaffer Express & Khuzdar attacks (Pakistan)**
- Called for an **end to cross-border movement of terrorists**.
- Reaffirmed commitment to fight **terrorism, separatism, and extremism**.

Opposition to Unilateralism

- Members opposed **unilateral coercive measures**, especially of an **economic nature**, hinting at U.S. sanctions/tariffs.
- Xi Jinping: Criticised “**Cold War mentality**” and “**bullying behaviour**” in world order.

Global Governance & Multilateralism

- Xi proposed a **Global Governance Initiative (GGI)**:
 - Sovereign equality
 - Rule of law
 - Multilateralism
 - People-centric approach
 - Focus on **real actions**
- SCO stressed role of the **UN** and **multilateralism** in global governance.

Institutional Developments

- Decision to **merge observer & dialogue partner** statuses into one: “partner country”.
- **Laos accepted as partner**, expanding SCO strength to **27 (10 members + 17 partners)**.
- Agreement to establish **SCO Development Bank** (long-standing Chinese ambition).

Geopolitical Positions

- **Israel-Gaza conflict**: Expressed deep concern, condemned civilian casualties.
- **Strikes on Iran (by Israel & U.S.)**: SCO, including India, strongly condemned.
- **Afghanistan**: Called for **inclusive government** with broad ethnic participation.
- **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**: All members supported **except India**.

Chinese Commitments

- Pledged **¥2 billion in grants** to SCO members in 2025.
- **¥10 billion in loans** to SCO Interbank Consortium over 3 years.
- Push to establish **SCO Development Bank** quickly.

Strategic Significance for India

- **Positive**:
 - Condemnation of cross-border terrorism (India’s core concern).
 - Inclusion of Pakistan in same declaration on terrorism.
 - SCO condemning U.S. and Israel’s strikes on Iran → aligns with India’s interest in **strategic autonomy**.
- **Challenges**:
 - India isolated on **BRI** (continues to oppose due to sovereignty concerns with CPEC).
 - SCO leaning towards China’s leadership (GGI, Development Bank, grants).
 - Balancing act: Supporting Iran while maintaining ties with U.S./Israel

Election Commission on Special Intensive Revision (SIR)

Key Announcement

- **EC clarified:** Claims for inclusion/deletion in electoral rolls will be accepted **till the last date of nominations** (as per Para 12(a)(ii) of SIR order, June 24).
- These late claims (post-September 30 final roll) will be treated as **separate additions** to the rolls.

Supreme Court Intervention

- SC had asked EC to **accept Aadhaar or any of 11 listed documents** for voter inclusion.
- EC assured court it would accept **revision forms even after deadline**

Data Highlights

- **Draft electoral roll (Aug 1, 2025): 7.24 crore electors** (↓ 65 lakh from July list).
- **Applications received:**
 - 37,000 → re-inclusion of names.
 - 2,17,000 → exclusion of names.
 - 16,56,886 → new 18-year-old voters applied.
- **Document submission:** 99.5% compliance (7.24 cr electors).
- **Notices issued:** ~3 lakh for incomplete documentation.

Procedure & Legal Safeguards

- **ERO powers:**
 - Scrutinise claims.
 - Conduct suo motu inquiry.
 - Issue notice for incomplete/false entries.
- **Speaking Order:** Mandatory when excluding a voter → ensures decisions

are **reasoned, transparent, and legally defensible**, preventing arbitrariness.

Political & Administrative Significance

- **High scrutiny** in Bihar, where voter lists are often contested.
- Drop of **65 lakh names** raises political sensitivity.
- Emphasis on **transparency, inclusion of youth, and prevention of bogus voters**.

Governors Can't Sit on Bills Endlessly

Context

- The Supreme Court (Presidential Reference Bench, 5 judges) is examining the constitutional role of Governors regarding assent to Bills under **Article 200**.
- Trigger: Tamil Nadu Governor delayed assent to 10 Bills since 2020 → April 8 SC judgment imposed a **3-month deadline** for Governors/President to act. If not, Bills deemed assented.

Key Judicial Observations

1. **No indefinite delay**
 - a. Governors cannot hold Bills endlessly; it impedes legislative wisdom and constitutional functioning.
 - b. *Justice Narasimha*: "No organ can impair the functioning of the Constitution."
2. **Republic vs. Royalty**
 - a. Senior advocates argued Governors cannot act as "royalty in a Republic."

- b. The office must collaborate, not combat, with elected governments.
- 3. **Urgency of Legislation**
 - a. *Kapil Sibal*: Legislation is a sovereign act with urgency; Governors withholding assent defeats democracy.
- 4. **Absurdity of absolute power**
 - a. If Governors have unchecked discretion to withhold assent, it creates constitutional absurdity and political deadlock.

Broader Significance

- **Federalism at Stake:** Delays undermine elected state legislatures.
- **Constitutional Morality:** High offices should work *collaboratively, not combatively*.
- **Future Governance:** SC ruling may set precedent on time limits for constitutional functionaries.

India Needs More Women Judges in the Supreme Court

Constitutional Debate

- **Article 200:** Governor's options on a Bill → Assent, Withhold, or Reserve for President.
- **Article 201:** President may assent or withhold.
- No explicit time limit prescribed.

Judicial Dilemma:

- Should courts impose a *general time limit* (e.g., 3 months) for assent?
- Concerns: Judicial overreach vs. ensuring legislative efficiency.

Positions in Court

- **States (Tamil Nadu, West Bengal):**
 - Delay = Subversion of democracy.
 - Governors must act with immediacy.
 - "Felt necessity of the times" makes timely assent crucial.
- **Centre's view (countered by Sibal):**
 - Governors may have discretion.
 - States cannot force political solutions.

Context

- As of September 2025, **Justice B.V. Nagarathna** is the only woman judge in the Supreme Court (SC) out of its sanctioned strength of 34.
- Only **11 women judges** have been appointed since 1950 → **3.8% representation** (out of 287 judges in history).
- Despite recent retirements and vacancies, women were overlooked in fresh appointments.

Key Issues

1. **Severe Gender Imbalance**
 - a. First woman judge: Justice Fathima Beevi (1989).
 - b. Maximum ever: **4 women (2021–22)** → just over 10%.
 - c. No woman from SC/ST communities; only one from a minority religion (Justice Beevi).
2. **Barriers in Judicial Career Path**
 - a. Very few women elevated directly from the Bar → only Justice Indu Malhotra.
 - b. Women appointed much later in age → short tenures, preventing rise to CJI/Collegium.

- c. Scheduled first woman CJI (Justice Nagarathna, 2027) will serve **only 36 days**.
- 3. **Opaque Collegium Process**
 - a. Collegium considers caste, region, religion for “representation,” but **not gender**.
 - b. Lack of transparency on criteria for selection; dissenting voices (like Justice Nagarathna’s) often ignored.

- Memorandum of Procedure** for judicial appointments.
- 2. **Transparent Collegium Process**
 - a. Publish detailed reasons for selection/non-selection, ensuring fairness.
- 3. **Promote Women from the Bar & High Courts**
 - a. Encourage elevation of senior women advocates and judges at younger ages to allow longer tenure.
- 4. **Policy Commitment to Diversity**
 - a. Written diversity policy covering **gender, caste, religion, and region**.

Why Women’s Representation Matters

- **Perspective & Sensitivity:** Women bring diverse lived experiences, which shape reasoning in cases on gender justice, family law, labour rights, and more.
- **Public Trust:** A gender-diverse Bench strengthens confidence in judiciary’s fairness.
- **Substantive Justice:** Different viewpoints enrich constitutional interpretation and democratic legitimacy.
- **Equality Principle:** Judiciary cannot preach gender equality while excluding women from itself.

The Supreme Court to the Soldier’s Rescue

Context

- The **Supreme Court of India**, taking **suo motu cognisance** of a media report, intervened in the case of **cadets disabled during military training** who had been “boarded out” without adequate benefits.
- The government, after SC’s notice, extended **medical benefits equal to ex-servicemen** to such cadets.

Comparative Note

- Many countries have institutionalised diversity criteria (e.g., Canada, South Africa).
- UN and international standards emphasise **gender parity in justice delivery institutions**.

Core Issue

- **Rigid bureaucracy vs. human realities:** Rules often fail to accommodate unique hardships faced by soldiers and their families.
- Injured cadets and servicemen face uncertainty, with relief often depending on chance interventions rather than institutional policy.

Way Forward

- 1. **Institutionalise Gender Criterion**
 - a. Make gender representation a formal factor in the

Illustrative Cases

1. Expectant widow (1989):

- a. Pension rules did not recognise an expectant mother as having a “child”.
- b. Bureaucracy refused flexibility, saying “rules are rules”.
- c. Took years to amend rules, despite the obvious injustice.

2. Injured pilot in Siachen (2000s):

- a. Severely injured pilot risked invalidation.
- b. Governor Shekhar Dutt and Defence Ministers Antony & Parrikar intervened personally → pilot given extensions.
- c. Relief was possible only because of extraordinary personal intervention.

Critical Concerns

- Relief often depends on “**stars aligning**”—personal goodwill, political will, or chance advocacy.
- No systemic mechanism for **flexibility and empathy**.
- Bureaucracy’s inertia repeatedly highlighted in media reports, but corrective action comes only after **judicial or political push**.

Broader Implications

1. Judiciary as guardian of justice

- a. SC’s suo motu action reflects its role in protecting rights of vulnerable groups where state action is inadequate.

2. Need for institutionalised empathy

- a. Rules must evolve to address varied human misfortunes of soldiers and cadets.
- b. Ad-hoc solutions undermine morale and fairness.

3. Civil-Military Trust

- a. Soldiers risk lives in extreme conditions (e.g., Siachen).
- b. Delay in addressing their legitimate needs erodes **moral sanction of the state** (Chanakya’s warning).

Way Forward

- **Codify compassionate provisions:** Institutionalise flexible policies for injured cadets/soldiers, instead of case-to-case exceptions.
- **Bureaucratic accountability:** Judicial oversight to ensure that military welfare issues are not neglected.
- **Empathy training:** Expose bureaucrats to ground realities (like George Fernandes sending officials to Siachen to understand snow scooter need).
- **Strengthen ex-gratia & pension policies:** Automatic recognition of dependents and equitable benefits across services

Concealing a judge’s dissent, eroding judiciary’s authority

The article critiques the **opacity of the Collegium system** in judicial appointments, highlighting how the concealment of Justice B.V. Nagarathna’s dissent on Justice Vipul M. Pancholi’s elevation reflects a **democratic and accountability deficit** in India’s higher judiciary.

Key Arguments

Culture of Justification

- Democracies thrive not just on laws but on a *culture of justification* → public authorities must **explain and defend** their decisions.

- Courts enforce this principle on the state, but fail to apply it to themselves.

The Nagarathna Dissent Episode

- Justice B.V. Nagarathna reportedly dissented against Justice Pancholi's elevation.
- Collegium resolution showed *unanimity*, no mention of dissent.
- Public learned of dissent only via **media leaks**, not official disclosure.
- Raises doubts: Was dissent even shared with the Union government?

Implication: Collegium decisions remain shielded from scrutiny → **loss of transparency & accountability.**

Flaws in Collegium System

- Origin: **Second Judges Case (1993) & Third Judges Case (1998).**
- Five senior-most SC judges deliberate in secrecy.
- Since 2017 → resolutions published, but skeletal.
- Brief 2018 experiment with fuller disclosure ended due to fear of harming reputations.
- Current practice → near-total opacity.

Weakness of Defences for Secrecy

- **Reputation risk for rejected candidates:** Can be mitigated with careful disclosure.
- **Political interference risk:** Secrecy has not prevented government delays/stonewalling.
- Other democracies (e.g., U.K., South Africa) manage **open judicial appointment processes.**

Democratic Stakes

- Judges shape key constitutional outcomes → civil liberties, executive limits, federalism.
- Without transparency in selection, **institutional legitimacy erodes.**
- Judiciary cannot demand accountability from other branches while exempting itself.

Democracy Beyond Majoritarianism

- Unelected judges are not anti-democratic; they protect liberty, equality, and rights from majoritarian excesses.
- For judiciary to retain legitimacy, its own **appointment process must embody accountability.**

Call for Reform

- Collegium has a history of resisting transparency reforms.
- Without reform, judiciary risks **diminishing its moral authority.**
- Greater openness will **strengthen independence** by rooting it in **public trust**

Less than 40% of disabled persons have ID needed for benefits

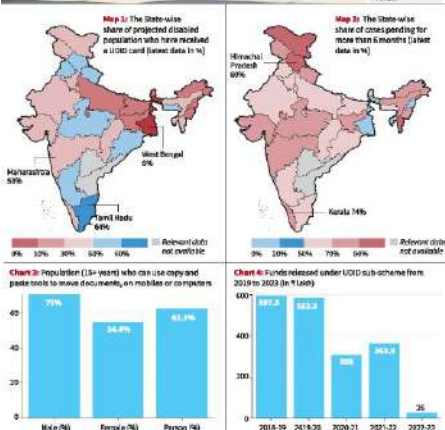
Key Findings

- **Coverage gap:** Less than **40% of PwDs** in India have received a **Unique Disability ID (UDID) card.**
- **Pending backlog:** 11 lakh+ applications pending → 60% delayed by over **6 months.**
- **State variations:**

- Better coverage: Tamil Nadu, Meghalaya, Odisha, Karnataka (>50%).
- Very poor coverage: West Bengal (~6%).
- AP & Telangana: No separate data.

Inaccessible benefits

The data for the charts were sourced from the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities, the Comprehensive Modular Survey: Telecom, and Lok Sabha Questions and Answers.



Why UDID Matters

- Centralized national database of PwDs.
- Access to schemes like **ADIP** (wheelchairs, crutches, prosthetics, hearing aids, Braille kits).
- Eligibility for **scholarships, reservations in govt. jobs, welfare schemes.**

- UDID application is *online-only*, requires uploading scanned documents.
 - Digital literacy remains low → only **60% of Indians 15+ can perform basic digital tasks.**
 - Lower among women, PwDs-specific data unavailable.
- Funding cuts:**
 - Despite rise in overall PwD schemes budget, **UDID sub-scheme funding reduced.**
 - Political neglect:**
 - PwDs = ~2.68 crore people (~2% of population, Census 2011).
 - Weak electoral constituency → low political incentive.

Broader Implications

- Without UDID, PwDs face **exclusion from welfare benefits**, reservations, and assistive devices.
- Reflects **digital exclusion + administrative inefficiency.**
- Shows gap between **policy intent (inclusion)** and **implementation reality.**

Should reservations exceed the 50% cap?

Reasons for Low Coverage

- Implementation gaps:**
 - Earlier state-level disability certificates → sudden shift to UDID not well-communicated.
- Delays in processing:**
 - Half of applications pending >6 months.
 - Himachal Pradesh, Ladakh, Mizoram → >80% delayed.
- Digital divide:**

Constitutional Framework

- **Article 15 & 16:** Guarantee equality → allow *special provisions* for SCs, STs, OBCs, and socially/educationally backward classes.
- **Reservation at Centre (2025):** OBC – 27%, SC – 15%, ST – 7.5%, EWS – 10% → **total 59.5%** (varies by State).

Judicial Standpoints

- **Balaji v. State of Mysore (1962):**
 - Reservations = *exception* to equality.
 - Should be “within reasonable limits” → **50% cap introduced.**
- **State of Kerala v. N.M. Thomas (1975):**
 - *Substantive equality* view → reservations = *assertion*, not exception.
 - No ruling on 50% cap.
- **Indra Sawhney (1992):**
 - Upheld OBC reservations (27%).
 - Reaffirmed **50% ceiling** (except in exceptional cases).
 - Introduced **creamy layer exclusion** for OBCs.
- **Janhit Abhiyan (2022):**
 - Upheld 10% EWS quota.
 - Said 50% cap applies to *backward classes*, not EWS.
- **Davinder Singh (2024):**
 - Suggested exploring **creamy layer within SC/ST.**
 - Govt. rejected proposal.

Key Issues

1. **Formal vs. Substantive Equality**
 - a. *Formal equality* = uniform treatment → reservations = exception.
 - b. *Substantive equality* = addressing historical disadvantage → reservations = continuation.
2. **Demand for Expansion**
 - a. Some political leaders (e.g., Tejashwi Yadav) call for **85% reservation** → to reflect caste demographics.
 - b. Requires caste census → last accurate numbers missing since 1931.
3. **Concentration of Benefits**

- a. **Rohini Commission:** 97% of OBC benefits go to ~25% of sub-castes. ~1,000 OBC communities had **zero representation.**
 - b. Similar concentration among SC/ST; no creamy layer exclusion.
4. **Vacancy Problem**
 - a. 40–50% of reserved seats often remain **unfilled.**
 - b. Critics: creamy layer in SC/ST unnecessary if vacancies not filled.
 - c. Risk: exclusion may increase backlog, later converted to general seats.

Way Forward

- **Data-based policy:** Caste census (2027) essential for rational quota design.
- **Sub-categorisation:** Implement Rohini Commission → equitable OBC distribution.
- **Two-tier system for SC/ST:** Prioritise *most marginalised* first.
- **Balance equality & opportunity:** Avoid arbitrary expansion (85% may undermine equality clause).
- **Beyond quotas:** Skill development + private sector opportunities essential, since public jobs limited

Peace Pact with Kuki-Zo Groups

Context

- **Ethnic violence:** Clashes between **Kuki-Zo & Meitei communities** since **May 3, 2023.**
- **First pact since violence:** Signed just ahead of PM Modi’s visit to Manipur (Sept 13, 2025).
- Builds on **Suspension of Operations (SoO)** framework signed in **2008.**

Main Provisions of the New Agreement

- 1. Revised Ground Rules**
 - Upholds **territorial integrity of Manipur**.
 - Camps of insurgent groups to be **relocated**.
 - Verification of cadres; **foreign nationals to be identified & deported**.
- 2. Political Settlement Clause**
 - Inclusion of **“negotiated political settlement within the Constitution of India.”**
 - Seen as an upgrade from earlier 2008 text (which focused only on **autonomous territorial councils**).
- 3. Kuki-Zo Council (KZC) Commitment**
 - Agreed to open **NH-2 (Imphal–Dimapur highway)** for free movement of essentials & commuters.
 - Govt: highway shut for 2 years → critical for supplies to Imphal Valley.
 - KZC counters: highway never fully blocked, remained open.

Stakeholders' Positions

- **Kuki National Organisation (KNO)**
 - Says pact reaffirms Manipur's territorial integrity but also allows “political settlement” within Indian Constitution.
 - Reads it as flexibility: settlement beyond district/State, but within Union's framework.
- **Meitei community**
 - Concerned about territorial integrity; pact stresses “no division of Manipur.”
- **Civil society (KZC)**
 - Participation signals greater role in peace-building.

Significance

- First major agreement since May 2023 ethnic clashes.
- Could **ease blockades** and restore supply chains to the Valley.
- Moves dialogue beyond insurgency → **political settlement discourse**.
- Strengthens Centre–State coordination under **federal security management**.

Challenges Ahead

- **Trust deficit** between Kuki-Zo and Meitei remains.
- **Ambiguity in “political settlement”** – may trigger fresh demands.
- Enforcement of relocation & cadre verification could face resistance.
- Risk of spoilers from non-signatory insurgent outfits

NIRF Rankings 2025

Top Institutions

- **Overall & Engineering: IIT Madras** – 7th year overall, 10th year in engineering.
- **Universities & Research Institutions: IISc Bengaluru** – 10th & 5th consecutive year respectively.
- **Management: IIM Ahmedabad** – 6th consecutive year.
- **Medical: AIIMS New Delhi** – 8th consecutive year.
- **Pharmacy: Jamia Hamdard, New Delhi**.
- **Architecture & Planning: IIT Roorkee**.
- **Colleges: Hindu College, Delhi** (replacing Miranda House).
- **Law: NLSIU Bengaluru** – 8th consecutive year.
- **Open Universities: IGNOU, New Delhi**.

- **State Public Universities: Jadavpur University, Kolkata**, followed by Anna University (Chennai), Panjab University (Chandigarh), Andhra University (Visakhapatnam), Kerala University (Thiruvananthapuram).

Composition of Top 100 Institutions (Overall Category)

- 24 State universities
- 22 Private deemed universities
- 19 IITs + IISc
- 9 Private universities
- 8 NITs
- 7 Central universities
- 5 Medical institutions
- 4 IISERs
- 1 college
- 1 Indian Agricultural Research Institute

Methodology & Parameters

Current NIRF Parameters:

1. Teaching, Learning & Resources
2. Research & Professional Practice
3. Graduation Outcomes
4. Outreach & Inclusivity
5. **Peer Perception (10%)** – controversial

Criticism:

- Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan questioned *peer perception*, which tends to favour metro-based, elite institutions.
- State institutions & State govts. earlier alleged **regional bias**.

Future Reforms (as per Minister)

- More **data-driven** approaches.
- New parameters: e.g., **entrepreneurs created** by an institution.

- “**One Nation, One Data**” mechanism for rankings.
- Expansion to cover more **categories & institutions**.
- Goal: make NIRF one of the world’s best accreditation frameworks.

Significance

- Reflects **stable growth** of higher education sector (10th year of NIRF).
- Encourages **competition & quality improvement** among institutions.
- Highlights **regional disparities & institutional dominance** of IITs/IISc.
- Policy lesson: need for **balanced recognition of State & public universities**

Manipur Violence – Revised Suspension of Operations Pact

Why in News?

- The Centre signed a **revised Suspension of Operations (SoO) pact** with **24 Kuki-Zo insurgent groups** under **Kuki National Organisation (KNO)** and **United People’s Front (UPF)**.
- Objective: tighten oversight, relocate militant camps, and create conditions for dialogue and peace in violence-hit Manipur.

Background

- Since **May 2023**, Manipur has been gripped by ethnic violence between **Meiteis (valley-based)** and **Kuki-Zo (hill-based)** communities.
- The SoO framework (initiated in **2008**) allowed temporary suspension of hostilities between security forces and

insurgent groups, with cadres confined to designated camps.

- However, **alleged misuse of camps**, easy access to arms, and lack of monitoring worsened mistrust.

Key Features of the Revised SoO Pact

Stricter Monitoring

- **Joint Monitoring Group (JMG)** led by Manipur's Principal Secretary (Home).
- Verification of cadres, updated lists, and removal of **foreign nationals** from camps.

Relocation of Camps

- Camps reduced to **6 each for KNO & UPF**.
- Relocated away from **highways, populated areas, and Myanmar border**.

Financial Transparency

- Cadres' stipends via **Aadhaar-linked bank accounts** only.
- Payments tied to **physical verification** at camps.

Restrictions on Activities

- No fresh recruitment, no carrying weapons outside camps, no links with other armed outfits.
- Ban on offensive operations against security forces or rival communities.

Respect for Constitutional Framework

- Groups must abide by the **Constitution of India**.
- Explicit acceptance of **Manipur's territorial integrity**.

Free Movement & Confidence-Building

- Govt claimed **NH-02 (Imphal–Dimapur road)** opened for free movement.
- Kuki-Zo Council clarified highway was never officially blocked; only **buffer zones** are maintained between communities.
- Shows **fragility of peace** and **persistent mistrust**.

Political & Security Dimensions Within Kuki-Zo Society

- Zomi Council (Churachandpur) rejected KZC's claim of representing Zo people.
- Indicates **fragmentation among Kuki-Zo groups**, complicating negotiations.

Meitei Concerns

- Relocation of camps away from valley fringes = addresses long-standing Meitei demand (alleged camps used for valley attacks).

Naga Factor

- **United Naga Council** upset over exclusion from talks.
- Threatened trade embargo over **border fencing issue with Myanmar**.

Path Towards Political Settlement

- SoO seen as **confidence-building step**.
- Will lead to **tripartite talks** (Centre, Manipur govt, Kuki groups) for a **political solution within the Constitution**.
- Parallel efforts: engaging other insurgent groups like **UNLF (United National Liberation Front)** → designated camps being set up.

Broader Significance

- **Security:** Better control of insurgent groups & camps → reduced attacks.
- **Politics:** Centre reasserts control over peace process, limiting insurgent leverage.
- **Federalism:** Manipur govt included, but Centre leads → balance of power dynamics.
- **Peace-building:** Still fragile; ethnic mistrust remains high

SC Orders EC to Accept Aadhaar as ID in Bihar Voter List Revision

Context:

- During the **Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls in Bihar**, nearly **65 lakh voters** were excluded from the draft rolls (7.89 crore total voters).

Supreme Court's Directions:

- Aadhaar to be accepted as the **12th indicative document** for inclusion/exclusion in voter rolls.
- Can be used **only as proof of identity/residence, not citizenship**.
- EC must instruct **Electoral Registration Officers & BLOs** to accept Aadhaar.
- Aadhaar's "authenticity and genuineness" may be verified, similar to other 11 documents.

Arguments in Court:

- **Kapil Sibal (for RJD):** BLOs still refusing Aadhaar, EC penalising officers who accepted it → **gross contempt of SC orders**. Submitted 24 affidavits.
- **Rakesh Dwivedi (for EC):** Aadhaar not equivalent to passport; 99% excluded

voters already submitted claims → process not hampered.

Judicial Observations:

- *Justice Joymalya Bagchi:* Aadhaar already linked in RPA provisions as proof of residence.
- *Justice Surya Kant:* Aadhaar is like other official IDs but not proof of citizenship.
- Court had earlier (July 10, Aug 14, Aug 22) nudged EC to accept Aadhaar.

Significance:

1. **Electoral Rights:** Ensures that large numbers of voters aren't excluded due to rigid documentation norms.
2. **Aadhaar Debate:** Reinforces judicial position—Aadhaar is valid for identity/residence but **not conclusive proof of citizenship**.
3. **Institutional Tussle:** Highlights friction between **judiciary and EC**, with allegations of contempt for non-compliance.
4. **Upcoming Bihar Elections:** Could directly impact voter inclusion and political contest.

The 'domestic sphere' in a new India"

The Politics of the Domestic Sphere

- Under the present regime, issues of the **domestic sphere** are sidelined, allowing those in power to **hijack concepts like "nari shakti"** while maintaining regressive approaches to women's roles at home.
- Example: **RSS chief's statement (Aug 2025)** urging families to have at least three children, reducing women to **reproduction machines**.

Violence and Silence

- Between **2017–2022, 7,000 dowry deaths per year** → **35,000 women killed**.
- **NFHS-5**: 30% women reported **intimate partner violence**, but only 14% filed police complaints.
- **1/3rd of all crimes against women = domestic violence**, yet **RSS–BJP leaders remain silent**.
- They focus on “**love jihad**” but avoid addressing **domestic abuse**, consistent with **Manusmriti-based ideology**.

Historical Continuity of Patriarchy

- Opposition to **B.R. Ambedkar’s Hindu Reform Bills**, which granted **divorce rights** and challenged caste in marriage.
- Hindutva ecosystem perpetuates:
 - Pressure on women to “adjust” in violent marriages.
 - Endorsement of **honour crimes** through silence.
 - Resistance to **criminalising marital rape**, citing “Indian culture” and “institution of marriage”.

Women’s Work: Data from Time Use Survey (TUS) 2024

Employment & Recognised Work

- **25% women** (15–59 age group) in **employment**, working ~5 hrs/day.
- **23% women** in **family enterprises** (~2 hrs/day).
- **Men**: 75% in employment (~8 hrs/day); 14% in family enterprises (~2 hrs/day).

Unpaid Domestic & Care Work

- **93% women** do **domestic services** (~7 hrs/day).
- **41% women** do **unpaid caregiving** (~2.5 hrs/day).
- **Men**: 70% do **no domestic work**; those who do spend <1.5 hrs/day.
- On average, **men spend 26 minutes/day on housework** and **16 minutes/day on caregiving**.
- Conclusion: **Women work more total hours than men, with less time for food, sleep, leisure**.

Government’s Distorted Narrative

- **PIB (Feb 2025)** glorified inequality: “**care-giving responsibilities borne by females show the greatness of Indian family**.”
- **Women’s triple work burden** celebrated as “**Indian social fabric**”.
- Women in **anganwadis, mid-day meals, ASHA services** treated as “**volunteers**”, not workers → given **honorarium, not wages**.

Economic Undervaluation of Women’s Work

- **SBI Survey (2023)**: **Unpaid work = 7% of GDP** (₹22.5 lakh crore).
- Women’s unpaid work **subsidises low wages** by keeping subsistence costs low.
- **Invisible domestic work** → **essential for labour reproduction** but excluded from wage calculations.

Way Forward: Alternative Approach

1. **Prevent violence** against women in families through cultural, social & legal measures.

2. **Equal right to work & equal wages** for men and women.
3. **Universal childcare & eldercare facilities** provided by the state.
4. **Quality healthcare and education** accessible to all.
5. **Cultural promotion of shared domestic responsibility** between men and women.
6. **Justice for scheme workers** (anganwadi, ASHA, mid-day meal) → minimum wages, recognition as govt. employees.

Iran and India, ancient civilisations and new horizons

A World in Transition

- The **Western-led order** dominated by the U.S. faces decline.
- Indicators of crisis: **violations of international law, trade wars, misuse of force, weakened global institutions, media manipulation, environmental destruction.**
- The **classic Western toolkit** — finance, technology monopoly, human rights narrative, media control — is losing power.

Rise of the Global South

- Countries of the **Global South** are resisting domination through **indigenous science, technology, defence, and security models.**
- Ancient civilisations like **India and Iran** have a unique role in shaping this transformation.

Shared Civilisational Values

- **Iran and India** shaped global culture for centuries.
- Core values: **peaceful coexistence, spiritual growth, respect for diversity, triumph of good over evil.**
- **Islamic influence** enriched India; Iranian values survived through Islamic civilisation.
- Both nations historically resisted domination — **India through NAM, Iran through oil nationalisation & Islamic Revolution.**

Costs of Independence

- **Iran:** endured sanctions, economic terrorism, cognitive warfare.
- **India:** faced global pressures, yet retained identity and independence.
- Both nations embody **peace, spirituality, resistance to domination.**

New Horizons for Cooperation

- **South-South cooperation** as an alternative global path.
- **BRICS:** challenges Western economic dominance, supports **de-dollarisation.**
- **International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC):** not just trade, but a **civilisational bridge** linking Eurasia, West Asia, India, Africa.

The Palestine Question

- **Palestine struggle** = core of Global South's resistance.
- West's **hypocrisy and brutality** most visible here.
- Iran defends **Palestinian rights, peaceful nuclear energy, diplomacy, and international law.**

- Palestine becomes symbolic of **resisting occupation and expansionism**.

U.S. Interventions and Regional Instability

- In **West Asia**: U.S. & allies fuel instability via support for **Israel** and conflicts in **Palestine, Lebanon, Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Iran**.
- In **South Asia**: U.S. created and manipulated **terrorist groups**, using “counter-terrorism” as a tool of intervention.
- Iran opposes threats to **sovereignty and territorial integrity** of West Asian nations.

The Road Ahead

- The world is at a **turning point**.
- **Iran and India** can model a new order:
 - Rooted in **justice, equality, participation, dignity**.
 - Free from **domination and superiority**.
- Ancient civilisations must lead in building a **multipolar, humane world order**.

Election of C.P. Radhakrishnan as Vice-President of India

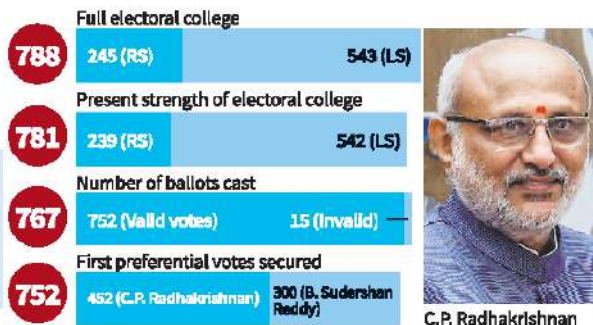
Background

- The election was conducted on **September 9, 2025**, to choose the **17th Vice-President of India**.
- Electoral College: **781 members** (after 7 vacancies) from both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha.

- Turnout: **767 MPs cast their votes (98.2%)**.

Comfortable victory

Radhakrishnan won by a margin of **152 votes**, as **98.2%** of the total electorate, comprising both Houses of Parliament, cast their ballot



Results

- **C.P. Radhakrishnan (NDA nominee, Maharashtra Governor): 452 first-preference votes.**
- **Justice B. Sudershan Reddy (Opposition nominee, former Supreme Court Judge): 300 votes.**
- **Invalid votes: 15.**
- **Abstentions: 14 MPs.**
- **Margin of victory: 152 votes.**

Key Highlights

- **Cross-voting Evidence**
 - NDA strength: 439 → secured **452 votes (+13)**.
 - Opposition expected: 324 → secured **300 (-24)**.
 - Indicates **cross-voting by Opposition MPs**, undermining Opposition unity.

Implications

- **For NDA**
 - Reinforces **dominance in Parliament**.
 - Cross-voting suggests **wider acceptance of NDA leadership** among non-allied MPs.

- Strengthens BJP's ideological claim of **nationalism as a unifying factor**.
- **For Opposition**
 - Despite unity under INDIA alliance, **shortfall in votes highlights cracks**.
 - Moral high ground claimed, but loss exposes **lack of discipline and cohesion**.
 - Yet, improved vote share compared to 2022 provides some **consolation and momentum**.
- **For Indian Politics**
 - Vice-President as **Chairman of Rajya Sabha**: His handling will shape **legislative debates and Opposition space**.
 - Sets the stage for **2026 Rajya Sabha elections** and political alignments ahead of **2029 General Elections**.

Vice-President of India – Key Facts

- **Constitutional Provisions**: Article 63–71 of the Indian Constitution.
- **Position**: 2nd highest constitutional office after the President.
- **Election**:
 - Elected by an **electoral college of both Houses of Parliament** (Lok Sabha + Rajya Sabha).
 - Voting: **Proportional representation by single transferable vote (STV)**, through secret ballot.
- **Eligibility**:
 - Citizen of India, **35 years or above**.
 - Qualified for election as **Rajya Sabha member**.
- **Tenure**: 5 years; eligible for re-election.

Functions

1. **Ex-officio Chairman of Rajya Sabha** – Presides over the Upper House, maintains order, ensures legislative functioning.
2. **Acting President** – Discharges functions of President in case of death, resignation, or removal until a new President is elected.
3. Represents India in **official ceremonies** and fosters **parliamentary discourse**.

Significance

- Ensures **checks and balances** within parliamentary democracy.
- Crucial in **safeguarding Opposition's voice** in Rajya Sabha.
- Role combines **political neutrality** (as presiding officer) with **constitutional responsibility** (as successor to President)

Crisis in Nepal after PM K.P. Sharma Oli's resignation

- **Trigger**: Oli government's **ban on social media platforms** (Sept 2025) → cited misinformation & national security.
- **Youth Anger**: Gen Z, digital natives, saw this as an attack on freedom of expression.
- **Underlying Issues**:
 - Deep **corruption** and **lavish lifestyles** of politicians' families.
 - Rising **youth unemployment** and lack of development.
 - Nepotism and political stagnation since Nepal's 2006 democratic transition.

Escalation of Protests

- **Day 1:** Protests turned violent; police firing killed **19 young people** → sparked nationwide outrage.
- **Day 2:** Despite curfew, protests intensified:
 - Parliament, Supreme Court, Singha Durbar (government HQ) set on fire.
 - Residences of former PMs Oli, Deuba, Dahal targeted and burnt.
 - Media houses like *Kantipur Publications* attacked.
- **Central Slogan:** *“Nepal’s political class lives lavishly at the expense of our parents’ tax money.”*

Political Fallout

- **PM K.P. Oli resigned** → submitted letter to President Ram Chandra Poudel.
- **Home Minister Ramesh Lekhak resigned** on “moral grounds.”
- Parliament paralysed; political leadership discredited.
- **Emerging Figures:**
 - **Balendra Shah (Kathmandu Mayor):** Independent, sympathetic to protests, possible interim leadership role.
 - **Rabi Lamichhane (RSP leader, recently released from jail):** Populist outsider, could ally with Shah.
- **Speculation:** Rise of outsider politics challenging mainstream parties.

Army & State Response

- **Army Chief Gen. Ashok Raj Sigdel:** Appealed for restraint, urged protesters to engage in dialogue.
- Army to **take control of law & order** → raising concerns about future military role in politics.

India’s Position

- **PM Modi:** Called violence “heart-wrenching”; appealed in Nepali for peace, unity, and normalcy.
- **MEA:**
 - Stressed **neutrality**; avoided taking sides.
 - Cautious, due to sensitivity of Nepal’s politics.
 - Issued **travel advisory** for Indians in Nepal.
- **India’s Concerns:**
 - Stability of a key neighbour.
 - Preventing anti-India narratives.
 - Avoiding perception of interference in Nepal’s internal politics.

Structural Issues Behind the Crisis

- **Democratic Fatigue:** Since 2006, Nepal has seen frequent government changes, unstable coalitions.
- **Failure of Federal Institutions:** Corruption, slow development, poor governance.
- **Youth Alienation:** A large young population (Gen Z) sees no credible leadership.
- **Anti-Institutional Sentiment:** Unlike Jana Andolan movements (1990, 2006), current protests are **leaderless, nihilistic, and anti-system.**

Regional & Comparative Context

- **Bangladesh:** Student-led protests toppled Sheikh Hasina but led to instability.
- **Sri Lanka:** Aragalaya (2022) ended Rajapaksa dominance but produced populist outsiders (JVP rise).
- **Nepal Parallel:** Risk of **authoritarian regression** or **outsider populism** filling the vacuum.

Implications for Nepal

- **Political Vacuum:** Caretaker PM, burnt institutions, fragmented parties.
- **Danger of Anti-System Capture:** Pro-monarchy nostalgia and outsider populism could destabilise democracy.
- **Role of Army:** Its stance may decide if Nepal stabilises democratically or slips into authoritarian control.

Implications for India & South Asia

- **India–Nepal Relations:**
 - India’s careful neutrality avoids alienating any side.
 - Instability may affect **border management, trade, and security.**
- **Regional Pattern:** Adds to a cycle of **youth-led uprisings** in South Asia → governance failure, corruption backlash, erosion of democratic institutions.
- **China Factor:** Instability may invite Beijing’s opportunistic moves in Kathmandu.

Way Forward

- **Inclusive Dialogue:** Between political class, protesters, civil society, and army.
- **Reforms in Governance:** Anti-corruption measures, youth employment, accountability.
- **International Role:** India, UN, and SAARC neighbours to encourage peaceful transition, avoid interference.
- **Balancing Protest & Institution:** Need to transform anger into constructive democratic reform rather than institutional destruction

The Way Forward on Katchatheevu & Palk Strait Disputes

Context

- India has historically promoted peace via Panchsheel, NAM, SAARC, and the “Neighbourhood First Policy”.
- Yet, **fisheries disputes in the Palk Straits** and the **sovereignty of Katchatheevu island** remain irritants in India–Sri Lanka relations.
- PM Modi’s April 2025 visit to Colombo revived dialogue, stressing a **“humane approach”** balancing livelihoods with conservation.

Core Issues Fisheries Conflict

- **Shared waters:** Traditionally used by Tamil Nadu fishers and Sri Lanka’s Northern Province communities.
- **Problem:** Indian mechanised trawlers cross into Sri Lankan waters, causing:
 - Destruction of coral & shrimp habitats.
 - Declining fish stocks.
 - Loss for both Sri Lankan and Tamil Nadu’s artisanal fishers.
- **Legal/Ecological framework:**
 - UNCLOS: Equitable & sustainable use.
 - FAO (1995): Ban on destructive methods like bottom trawling.
 - Sri Lanka banned trawling (2017), but illegal incursions continue.

Intra-Tamil Conflict

- **Trawler operators** (profit-driven, destructive).
- **Artisanal fishers** (sustainable, subsistence-dependent).

- Livelihood clash within Tamil communities.

Katchatheevu Issue

- **Myth vs Reality:**
 - Portrayed as “gifted” by Indira Gandhi (false).
 - 1974 Maritime Boundary Treaty placed it under Sri Lanka, based on historic administrative control.
- **Legal status:**
 - Treaty binding under international law (“pacta sunt servanda”).
 - Cannot be revoked without destabilising order.
 - Katchatheevu sovereignty **settled**, unrelated to fishing rights.
- **Historical precedents:**
 - *ICJ Minquiers & Ecrehos Case (1953)* – administrative control > historical claim.
 - *Rann of Kutch Arbitration (1968)*.

Possible Solutions

- **Differentiate Stakeholders**
 - Protect artisanal fishers, not trawler operators.
 - Allow regulated/seasonal access for Tamil Nadu’s small fishers with Sri Lankan consent.
- **Community Sensitisation**
 - Tamil Nadu media & leaders to highlight hardships faced by Sri Lankan Tamils during the civil war.
 - Emphasise bonds of fraternity (e.g., Tamil refugees in TN during conflict).
- **Joint Management Models**
 - UNCLOS Art. 123: Cooperation in semi-enclosed seas.
 - Examples: Baltic Sea Fisheries Convention.
 - Possible steps:
 - Shared quotas & seasonal fishing days.

- Joint marine research station on Katchatheevu.
- Investment in India’s deep-sea fishing (reducing pressure on near-shore waters).

Multi-level Engagement

- Govt-to-Govt: Treaty obligations, trust.
- State/Provincial: Tamil Nadu & Northern Provincial Council cooperation.
- Community dialogue: Fisher unions on both sides.

Way Forward

- **Fisheries issue:** Needs ecological balance, livelihood protection, and empathy for artisanal fishers.
- **Katchatheevu issue:** Legally settled, should not cloud real concerns.
- **Bigger picture:** Prioritise South Asian peace, prosperity, and interdependence over narrow disputes.

A Joint and New Journey Along the SCO Pathway

Context

- PM Narendra Modi attended the **SCO Summit in Tianjin, China (2025)**.
- 23 countries + 10 international organisations participated, making it the **largest SCO summit ever**.
- Marks 75 years of **India–China diplomatic ties**.

Key Outcomes of the SCO Tianjin Summit

- **Security Cooperation**

- Establishment of **four security centres** including:
 1. SCO Universal Centre for Countering Security Challenges and Threats.
 2. SCO Anti-drug Centre.
- Announcement of **SCO Development Bank**.
- **Development Agenda**
 - Adoption of **SCO Development Strategy 2025–2035**.
 - China announced:
 1. 3 cooperation platforms: energy, green industry, digital economy.
 2. 3 cooperation centres: science & technology, higher education, vocational training.
- **Global Governance Role**
 - Xi Jinping's **Global Governance Initiative (GGI)**:
 1. Sovereign equality, international rule of law.
 2. Multilateralism, people-centred development.
 3. Real action vs rhetoric.
- Focus on **development as the common denominator**.
- Cooperation in **trade, investment, technology, education, culture, tourism, poverty alleviation**.
- Promote **think-tank, media, youth, and political party exchanges**.
- **Good-Neighbourliness**
 - Uphold **Panchsheel principles**.
 - Respect each other's **core interests**.
 - Do not let **boundary question define relations**.
 - Prevent disputes from overshadowing cooperation.

The Road Ahead

- As **two largest developing countries** and **Global South leaders**, India and China share common goals:
 - Development and modernisation.
 - World peace & stability.
 - Reforming global governance.
- Both to hold **BRICS presidency in 2026 & 2027** respectively.
- China pledges to support India's role in BRICS & SCO.
- Shared vision: **oppose bullying/hegemony, uphold fairness & justice, build a community with shared future for humanity**.

India–China Bilateral Takeaways

- Xi & Modi: Agreed to strengthen ties as **partners, not rivals**.
- Symbolism: “Dragon and Elephant must dance together”.
- Modi: India will view ties from a **long-term perspective**.

Pathways for India–China Relations

- **Strategic Mutual Trust**
 - Learn from past 75 years.
 - Resume dialogue/exchange mechanisms.
 - Mutual respect, peaceful coexistence, common development.
- **Expand Exchanges & Cooperation**

To Build Roads is to Build Peace

Core Argument

- In India's **Maoist-affected tribal regions**, roads are more than infrastructure — they are **symbols of state presence** and pathways to peace.

- Roads enable governance, weaken insurgent control, and expand democratic legitimacy.

Why Roads Matter in Conflict Zones

- **State Visibility**
 - Roads often mark the **first arrival of governance** in neglected tribal hinterlands.
 - Enable electricity, jobs, schools, clinics, and police access.
- **Weakening Parallel Governance**
 - Insurgents fill governance gaps with courts, taxation, welfare, or health services (e.g., Naxalite “jan adalats”).
 - Such systems create **legitimacy through coercion** but lack constitutional safeguards.
 - Roads reclaim this space for **formal, accountable institutions**.
- **Research Evidence**
 - Rural roads correlate with **lower crime and more services** (Jain & Biswas, 2023).
 - Globally, poorly connected areas show **higher violence** (Prieto-Curiel & Menezes, 2020).
 - Chhattisgarh strategy (B.V.R. Subrahmanyam): roads first → schools, clinics, police.

Risks & Safeguards

- Roads can symbolise **inclusion or repression**, depending on use.
- Without **justice, healthcare, and community consultation**, infrastructure risks alienating locals.
- Informal norms (e.g., khap panchayats, caste councils) can also perpetuate exclusion.
- Development must embed **pluralistic, rights-based, constitutional values**.
- _____

Way Forward

- Roads should be **built with the village, not just through it** → participatory development.
- Combine infrastructure with **institutional safeguards**: justice mechanisms, welfare services, community engagement.
- Goal: Transform road-building from **movement** → **belonging, control** → **legitimacy, infrastructure** → **peace**

Why is Peace Elusive in Eastern DRC?

Background of the Conflict

- **Legacy of 1994 Rwandan Genocide & Congo Wars** → displaced militias, ethnic rivalries, and regional spillover.
- **Presence of 100+ armed groups** in eastern DRC (North & South Kivu provinces).
- **M23 rebellion** (predominantly Tutsi group) accused of receiving Rwandan support.
- Competition over **rich mineral resources** (cobalt, coltan, gold, tin, diamonds).
- Weak state institutions, porous borders, and mistrust between Rwanda–DRC exacerbate instability.

U.S. Entry and Interests

- **Strategic Economic Interest:**
 - DRC holds **\$24 trillion mineral reserves**.
 - 70% of **global cobalt reserves** → critical for EV batteries & green tech.
 - U.S. seeks to **counter China’s dominance** in DRC’s mining sector.

- **Security & Geopolitical Interest:**
 - Promoting “licit mineral trade” → weaken illicit funding of militias.
 - Expanding U.S. influence in Africa amid great power competition.

The Peace Attempts

- **U.S.-brokered Washington Agreement (June 2025)**
 - DRC & Rwanda pledged cessation of hostilities, end to support for armed groups.
 - Creation of **Joint Security Coordination Mechanism (JSCM)** and **Economic Integration Framework**.
 - Promised disarmament & conditional integration of rebels.
- **Doha Ceasefire (July 2025)**
 - Direct deal between DRC govt. & M23.
 - M23 to withdraw from seized regions; DRC to release M23 prisoners.
 - Declaration of Principles for comprehensive peace by August 18.

Why the Ceasefire Failed

- **Non-compliance by both sides:**
 - M23 did not withdraw; DRC did not release prisoners.
- **Renewed Violence:**
 - M23 offensives in North & South Kivu; 140+ killed in July (Human Rights Watch).
- **Underlying causes unresolved:**
 - Ethnic grievances, Rwanda’s alleged support for M23, competition over resources.
 - Distrust between state and rebel groups; history of broken ceasefires.

Why Peace Seems Elusive

- **Structural Problems:**
 - DRC’s weak governance, corruption, and fragile institutions.
 - Parallel economies based on **illicit minerals & armed group taxation**.
- **Regional Rivalries:**
 - Rwanda accused of backing M23; Uganda & Burundi have competing stakes.
- **Ethnic Tensions:**
 - Long-standing hostility between Hutu, Tutsi, and other communities.
- **External Interests:**
 - U.S., China, EU → competing for mineral access.
 - Regional powers pursue security & economic influence.
- **Failure of Implementation:**
 - Peace deals signed under pressure but not followed on ground.

The Road Ahead

- **Comprehensive peace process** addressing ethnic grievances & regional rivalries.
- **Inclusive governance reforms** in DRC → strengthen state legitimacy.
- **International monitoring & guarantees** to ensure compliance.
- **Balancing great power competition** → avoid minerals becoming new conflict trigger.
- Sustained dialogue + economic cooperation (licit mineral trade, development projects) → key to lasting peace

India and Mauritius not just partners but a family: Modi

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, hosting Mauritius PM Navinchandra Ramgoolam in Varanasi, highlighted that India and Mauritius are “not just partners but a family,” emphasizing their deep civilizational and cultural links. He reiterated that both countries share the goal of ensuring a stable, prosperous, free, and secure Indian Ocean. Several **key agreements and initiatives** were announced:

- A **special economic package** for Mauritius to boost infrastructure, jobs, and healthcare.
- Establishment of the **first Jan Aushadhi Kendra outside India** in Mauritius.
- Cooperation in setting up an **AYUSH Centre of Excellence**, a **500-bed hospital**, a **veterinary school**, and an **animal hospital**.
- MoUs in **science and technology**, **oceanographic research**, **power sector**, and **Phase 2 of small development projects**.
- Collaboration on a **hydrography project** for navigation charts and surveys of Mauritius’ EEZ.
- **Education and research partnerships**, including IIT-Madras and University of Mauritius collaborations.
- Introduction of **Mission Karmayogi training modules** in Mauritius.

India–Mauritius Relations: A Note Historical and Cultural Ties

- Mauritius has deep-rooted cultural and civilisational links with India, with over **68% of its population of Indian origin** (mostly descendants of

indentured labourers from the 19th century).

- Indian languages, traditions, and festivals remain central to Mauritian society.
- Mauritius is often described as India’s “extended family” in the Indian Ocean region.

Political and Strategic Dimension

- India and Mauritius enjoy warm diplomatic relations; Mauritius consistently supports India in global forums.
- Strategic cooperation is vital given Mauritius’s location in the **Indian Ocean**, making it central to India’s **SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region)** vision.
- Mauritius has been a beneficiary of India’s **Neighbourhood First Policy** and **Indian Ocean outreach**.

Economic and Developmental Partnership

- India provides significant **development assistance** to Mauritius, including concessional credit, infrastructure projects, and healthcare support.
- Mauritius is a key partner in India’s **trade and investment**, with historical importance as a source of FDI inflows into India.
- Recent initiatives include **digital cooperation**, **capacity building**, **renewable energy**, and **small development projects**.

Defence and Security Cooperation

- Both countries conduct **joint naval exercises** and cooperate in maritime security.

- India assists Mauritius with **patrol vessels, surveillance aircraft, hydrography, and capacity building** for its security forces.
- Partnership helps safeguard against piracy, illegal fishing, and other maritime threats.

Education and People-to-People Links

- Indian institutions collaborate with Mauritian universities in research and innovation.
- Mauritius is a popular destination for **Indian students and professionals**.
- Scholarships and training programs strengthen cultural and educational ties

A project of strategic and national importance

The article defends and explains the **Great Nicobar Island Project**, calling it a development of **strategic, defence, and national importance**. The project includes:

- **International Container Transhipment Terminal (ICTT)** (14.2 million TEU capacity)
- **Greenfield International Airport**
- **450 MVA gas & solar-based power plant**
- **Township development over 16,610 hectares**

Strategic and Developmental Importance

- The project aims to make Great Nicobar a **maritime and air connectivity hub** in the Indian Ocean Region.

- It is expected to **boost defence preparedness, economic growth, and employment generation**.

Environmental Safeguards

- Comprehensive **Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)** and **Environmental Management Plans (EMP)** were conducted.
- ₹81.55 crore has already been released for **wildlife conservation studies** before construction began.
- Out of 130.75 sq. km of forest land required, **65.99 sq. km will remain green** without tree felling.
- Compensatory afforestation is planned in **Haryana** (97.30 sq. km) due to lack of non-forest land in the islands.
- **Wildlife corridors** and viaducts are planned for safe passage of animals.

Tribal Safeguards

- **No displacement** of Shompen or Nicobarese tribes is planned.
- **Consultations** with Anthropological Survey of India, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, and AAJVS (Andaman Adim Janjati Vikas Samiti) have been conducted.
- Out of 84.10 sq. km tribal reserve affected, **73.07 sq. km will be de-notified but 76.98 sq. km re-notified**, leading to a **net increase of 3.912 sq. km** in tribal reserve.
- Provisions comply with **Jarawa Policy (2004)** and **Shompen Policy (2015)**.
- A monitoring committee has been set up for **tribal welfare during and after project execution**.

Scale and Phasing

- Total area: **166.10 sq. km** (35.35 sq. km revenue land + 130.75 sq. km forest land).

- Phased development:
 - Phase I (2025–35): 72.12 sq. km
 - Phase II (2036–41): 45.27 sq. km
 - Phase III (2042–47): 48.71 sq. km

Balancing Ecology and Economy

- Institutions like ZSI, BSI, SACON, and WII have been involved in ecological studies.
- The project is portrayed as “**economy and ecology complementing each other**”, ensuring environmental safeguards alongside development.
- Only **~2% of A&N Islands’ total area** and **~1.82% of its forest cover** will be diverted.

India–Pakistan Ties Through the Prism of the Indus Treaty

Why in News?

- India suspended the **65-year-old Indus Waters Treaty (IWT)** after the **April Pahalgam terror attack**, calling for a **review and renegotiation**.
- Water sharing is emerging as a **new flashpoint**, alongside terrorism and Kashmir.

Divergent Perspectives on the IWT

- **Allocation:**
 - Pakistan received **80% of Indus waters** (western rivers: Indus, Jhelum, Chenab).
 - India got **20%** (eastern rivers: Ravi, Beas, Sutlej).
- **India’s View:**
 - Nehru saw it as a “**purchased peace**” and gesture of goodwill.
 - Critics (e.g., EAM Jaishankar) see it as **appeasement**.
- **Pakistan’s View:**

- Never celebrated 80:20 division — doing so would weaken its **victimhood narrative**.
- Uses Treaty clauses to challenge India’s J&K projects.

- **Result:** Both sides remain **dissatisfied**, though for opposite reasons.

Pakistan’s Insecurity Over Indus Waters

- Fears India may **disrupt flows** despite Treaty guarantees.
- Water insecurity tied to **Kashmir dispute**.
- General Ayub Khan (1960s) linked Kashmir’s annexation to **Pakistan’s water security**.
- Repeated use of **dispute mechanisms** to stall Indian hydropower projects in J&K (e.g., Kishanganga, Baglihar).

Why the IWT Endured So Long?

- Survived **4 wars, terrorism, and decades of hostility**.
- India, as **upper riparian**, bore the main responsibility:
 - Ensuring **minimum flows**.
 - **Data sharing** on river flows.
- If Pakistan were upper riparian, many argue the Treaty may not have lasted.
- Pakistan exploited Treaty’s **technical mechanisms** to delay Indian projects, despite not being directly affected upstream.

The Future of the IWT

- **Pakistan’s Position:**
 - Reluctant to renegotiate — enjoys favourable terms.
 - Push for involving **China (8% basin)** and **Afghanistan (6% basin)**.
- **India’s Position:**

- Insists on **bilateral framework** (no World Bank, no third parties).
- Focus now on **maximising use of western rivers** within Treaty limits (storage, hydro projects in J&K).
- Suspension of **Permanent Indus Commission** meetings reduces structured dialogue.
- **Strategic Shift:** India signals willingness to use **upper riparian leverage** to pressure Pakistan on **terrorism and water disputes**

Patient Safety in India — World Patient Safety Day

Context

- **Global issue:** 1 in 10 patients harmed during hospitalisation; 4 in 10 in outpatient care.
- **India's challenge:**
 - Shift to **chronic diseases** (cancer, diabetes, CVDs, mental health).
 - **Acute care risks** from multi-speciality coordination failures.
 - Vulnerability to **hospital-acquired infections, unsafe injections, blood transfusions, prescription errors, delayed diagnosis, preventable falls.**

Causes of Patient Harm in India

- **Systemic gaps:** weak protocols, poor audits, breakdown of safety systems.
- **Provider burden:** staff shortages, fatigue, attrition, heavy workloads.
- **Patient passivity:** lack of awareness, hesitancy to question doctors.
- **Resource gaps:** <5% hospitals accredited by NABH → low compliance with global safety standards.

Current Framework & Initiatives

- **National Patient Safety Implementation Framework (2018–25):**
 - Roadmap for adverse event reporting, embedding safety into clinical programs.
- **NABH Accreditation:**
 - Infection control, patient rights, medication management standards.
- **Professional networks:** Society of Pharmacovigilance → tracks adverse drug reactions.
- **Civil society efforts:**
 - Patient Safety & Access Initiative (medical devices regulation clarity).
 - Patients for Patient Safety Foundation (reaches 14 lakh households weekly, equips 1,100 hospitals & 52,000 professionals).

Global Models & Learnings

- **WHO Global Patient Safety Action Plan:** Blueprint for safety integration.
- **Patient Advisory Councils (PACs):**
 - Bring patient voice into hospital decision-making.
 - Improve trust, safety, communication (proven in high-income countries).

Way Forward

- **Policy & Governance:**
 - Renew commitment beyond 2025 framework.
 - Mobilise resources for patient safety programs.
 - Integrate safety modules into **medical & nursing education.**
- **Hospitals & Providers:**
 - Adopt **NABH standards** at scale.

- Establish **PACs** for patient engagement.
- Co-develop **digital safety tools** (flagging harmful drug interactions, aiding communication).
- **Community & Civil Society:**
 - Patients & families to maintain records, report adverse events, avoid self-medication.
 - Media to highlight failures and best practices.
 - Corporates to support safety campaigns via **CSR**.
- **Technology:**
 - AI-driven drug safety alerts.
 - Telemedicine protocols for safe chronic care.
 - Digital patient records for error prevention

- **Lalita Kumari (2013):** Required preliminary inquiry before FIR in matrimonial cases.
- **2008 CrPC Amendment:** Introduced “principle of necessity” for arrests.
- **Arnesh Kumar (2014):** Issued guidelines to curb arbitrary arrests.
- **Satender Kumar Antil (2022):** Bail to be granted if *Arnesh Kumar* safeguards not followed.

Impact (NCRB Data)

- Cases under 498A increased (1.13 lakh in 2015 → 1.40 lakh in 2022).
- Arrests **declined** (1.87 lakh → 1.45 lakh), showing safeguards worked without denying justice.

Problem with the ‘Cooling Period’ & FWCs

- No **statutory authority** exists to run FWCs.
- Victims are **denied timely access to justice** since police cannot act until 2 months lapse.
- Undermines **autonomy of criminal justice agencies** (police, magistrates).
- Creates procedural hurdles beyond legislative intent.

Parallel with Rajesh Sharma (2017) Case

- Supreme Court earlier directed similar FWC system with a one-month wait.
- Widely criticised as **regressive** and struck down in *Social Action Forum for Manav Adhikar (2018)*.
- Present ruling is seen as a **repetition of failed judicial experiment**.

Conclusion: Judicial Overreach vs Victim’s Justice

- Misuse of 498A is already checked through legal and judicial safeguards.

“Judicial experimentalism versus the right to justice”

Context

The editorial by Neeraj Tiwari critiques the Supreme Court’s July 2025 ruling in *Shivangi Bansal vs Sahib Bansal*, where it upheld the Allahabad High Court’s 2022 guidelines mandating a **two-month “cooling period”** and referral of Section 498A/BNS 85 complaints to **Family Welfare Committees (FWCs)** before any coercive action.

Purpose of Section 498A / BNS 85

- Originally enacted to protect women from cruelty and domestic violence in marriage.
- Courts, however, flagged **misuse** of this section through false FIRs and arbitrary arrests.

Judicial Safeguards Already in Place

The judiciary and legislature had already introduced checks:

- Cooling period and FWCs amount to **judicial experimentalism** outside legislative intent.
- Supreme Court must **revisit the ruling** to protect victims' **right to prompt justice** and uphold functional autonomy of criminal justice institutions

Welfare Board for Nomadic & Denotified Tribes Seeks Stronger Mandate

Context

- The **Development and Welfare Board for De-notified, Nomadic, and Semi-Nomadic Communities (DWBDNC)**, set up in **2019**, has written to PM Modi seeking:
 - **Permanent Commission status** with statutory backing.
 - More members, financial powers, staff, and budget allocations.
- Without reforms, the Board says its ability to address community grievances is "seriously hindered".

Who are Denotified, Nomadic & Semi-Nomadic Tribes (DNT/NT/SNT)?

- **Denotified Tribes (DNTs):** Communities once notified as "criminal tribes" under the **Criminal Tribes Act, 1871** (repealed in 1952).
- **Nomadic Tribes (NTs):** Communities traditionally moving from place to place for livelihood (pastoralists, entertainers, artisans).
- **Semi-Nomadic Tribes (SNTs):** Groups that shift residence periodically between settled and nomadic life.

Fact: Together, they represent **~10 crore people (2011 estimates)**, among the most marginalised groups in India.

Institutional History

- **Idate Commission (2015–2018):** MHA-appointed panel listed ~1,200 DNT/NT/SNT communities (already in SC/ST/OBC lists) + 269 still unclassified. Recommended a **Permanent Commission**.
- **DWBDNC (2019):** Set up under **Ministry of Social Justice & Empowerment (MoSJE)** instead of a Commission to avoid jurisdictional overlaps.

Key Demands of Board Members (2024–25 Letter to PMO)



- **Statutory Status:** Convert Board into **Permanent Commission**.
- **Dedicated Budget:** Central & State allocations for welfare of DNT/NT/SNT.
- **Administrative Strengthening:** Appointment of Chairman, financial adviser, secretaries, adequate office space.
- **Community Recognition:** Gazette notification of Idate Commission list as SC-DNT, ST-DNT, OBC-DNT, or General-DNT.
- **Policy Reforms:**
 - Modify **SEED Scheme** → wider coverage, land for housing, NOCs for long-term residents, parity in education benefits with SC/ST.

- Standardize **community certificates** (currently issued by only 7 States).
- **Data Gaps:** Conduct region-specific surveys for evidence-based policymaking.
- **Parity in Service Conditions:** Align members' pay with Joint Secretary level as per notification rank

Ladakh Protests: Fast for Statehood & Sixth Schedule

Context

- Ladakh activist **Sonam Wangchuk's hunger strike** has entered its **7th day** in Leh.
- Protest organized under the **Leh Apex Body (LAB)** demands:
 - **Statehood** for Ladakh.
 - Inclusion under **Sixth Schedule** of the Constitution (tribal safeguards).
- The movement has been declared "**apolitical**", with political party members asked to step aside.

Background

- **2019:** Ladakh became a **Union Territory (UT)** after bifurcation of J&K.
- Civil society groups have since demanded **constitutional safeguards** to protect:
 - Land & natural resources
 - Culture & identity of Ladakhis
 - Local employment opportunities
- **June 2024:** President notified **four regulations** for Ladakh →
 - 85% reservation in government jobs for residents.
 - Policies on **reservation, languages, domiciles, hill council composition.**

- Despite this, demand for **Statehood + Sixth Schedule inclusion** continues.

Key Stakeholders

- **Leh Apex Body (LAB):** Umbrella of civil society groups, Buddhist associations, political leaders.
- **Sonam Wangchuk:** Activist, face of ongoing protests.
- **Thupstan Chhewang:** Former BJP MP; rejoined LAB after earlier resignation.
- **Union Home Ministry:** Engaged in talks but accused of slow progress.
- **Local Communities:** Tribal Ladakhis (Buddhist & Muslim) worried about land, ecology, and demographic change.

Issues & Demands

- **Sixth Schedule Status**
 - Sixth Schedule (Art. 244, 275) provides **autonomous councils** with legislative & financial powers for tribal areas (currently in NE states + some areas in J&K).
 - Would help protect **land, culture, customary laws** in Ladakh.
 - Govt's stand: Ladakh already has **Autonomous Hill Councils**; Sixth Schedule may create administrative overlaps.
- **Statehood**
 - UT status limits **legislative powers**; governance concentrated in Delhi.
 - Statehood → greater **political autonomy & accountability.**
- **Employment & Resources**
 - Fear of outsiders taking land & jobs.
 - Demand for **legal safeguards** in line with Article 371 or Sixth Schedule.

Significance

- **National Security:** Ladakh shares borders with **China (LAC) & Pakistan** → stability crucial.
- **Tribal Rights:** Highlights constitutional questions about safeguarding indigenous communities outside NE India.
- **Centre–Periphery Tensions:** Echoes similar demands for special provisions (Nagaland, Mizoram, Himachal, NE states).
- **Upcoming Hill Council Elections (Oct–Nov 2025):** Protest timing adds political weight.

Way Forward

- **Dialogue Mechanism:** Institutionalize talks between Centre, LAB, and Kargil Democratic Alliance.
- **Balanced Autonomy:** Explore a **hybrid model**—strengthened Hill Councils + tailored constitutional safeguards.
- **Legal Safeguards:** Consider special domicile/land protection laws (like in Himachal or NE states).
- **Trust-Building:** Transparent roadmap on cultural, linguistic, and employment protections.
- **Strategic Perspective:** Balance **local aspirations** with **national security imperatives** in a sensitive border region

Welfare at the Mercy of the Machine: Facial Recognition in Anganwadis

Context

- The Union government has made **Facial Recognition Software (FRS)** mandatory for women and children availing **Take Home Rations (THR)** under the **Integrated Child**

Development Services (ICDS) via the Poshan Tracker app.

- This shift in welfare delivery has sparked concerns of **exclusion, inefficiency, and dehumanisation**, especially for vulnerable communities.

Background: Anganwadi System & Nutrition Schemes

- **Anganwadis (est. 1975):** Part of ICDS → combat child malnutrition, provide preschool care, THR, and support for pregnant & lactating women.
- **Scale:** ~14.02 lakh centres, each staffed by an **Anganwadi Worker (AWW)** + helper (local women).
- **Legal Backing: National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013** makes child and maternal nutrition a **right**.
- **Poshan Tracker (2021):** App-based monitoring system requiring AWWs to record nutrition data of beneficiaries.

Government's Rationale for FRS

- Prevent **fake beneficiaries** accessing THR.
- Stop **leakages** or diversion of food by AWWs or middlemen.
- Ensure transparency and real-time monitoring of nutrition schemes.

Issues on the Ground

- **Exclusion Risks**
 - OTP-based e-KYC problematic as many women lack stable phone numbers.
 - Poor face-match accuracy → repeated attempts frustrate both workers and beneficiaries.
 - Rights-holders denied food if app fails → *"authentication without authority override."*
- **Burden on Anganwadi Workers**

- Low-end smartphones hang with heavy apps.
- Patchy network in rural areas → delays & disruptions.
- Workers face **anger of beneficiaries** when tech fails, despite personally knowing them.
- **Misplaced Priorities**
 - Key problems in THR: poor quality, irregular supply, outdated budget (₹8/day since 2018), corruption in contracts.
 - FRS does not address these structural issues.
- **Ethical Concerns**
 - FRS typically used in **criminal investigations** → applying it to welfare beneficiaries stigmatizes women & children as “potential frauds.”
 - Violates principle of **natural justice** (innocent until proven guilty).
 - FRS banned in San Francisco (tech hub) for ethical reasons, yet being piloted on vulnerable citizens in India.
- **Community Verification:** Local Anganwadi workers, SHGs, and Mahila Mandals can vouch for authenticity.
- **Evidence-Based Reform:** Publish data on alleged “fake beneficiaries” before introducing tech-heavy tools.
- **Consultation with Workers:** Policy design must include frontline feedback.
- **Strengthen Core Issues:** Improve quality, budget, and decentralised production of THR (per SC 2004 order).
- **Rights-Centric Approach:** Tech should complement—not replace—trust, dignity, and accessibility in welfare

A Judicial Nudge Following Stuck Legislative Business

Context

- Supreme Court heard arguments on the **Presidential Reference** about Governor’s powers under **Article 200** (assent to State Bills).
- Earlier, SC directed that Governors/President must act on Bills **within 3 months**.
- This has sparked debate: Can judiciary impose timelines when Constitution itself does not?

Article 200: Governor’s Options

When a Bill is passed by a State legislature, the Governor can:

1. Assent to it.
2. Withhold assent.
3. Return it (for reconsideration).
4. Reserve it for President’s consideration.

Wider Implications

- **Digital Welfare Push:** Continuation of Aadhaar-based authentication debates (exclusion vs efficiency).
- **Technocratic Governance:** Prioritises data and monitoring over **ground realities & dignity of citizens**.
- **Frontline Worker Stress:** AWWs caught between rigid technology and community needs.
- **Rights vs Technology:** Risk of welfare turning into “*engineer’s paradise*” rather than **people’s entitlement**.

Way Forward

✗ *Constituent Assembly deliberately dropped words “in his discretion” from Government of India Act, 1935 →*

Governor must act on **aid & advice** of Council of Ministers.

Judicial Principles & Commissions

- **Shamsher Singh (1974)**: Governor usually bound by aid & advice, but hinted at limited discretion.
- **Nabam Rebia (2016)**: Governor not independent; real power lies with elected government.
- **State of TN vs Governor of TN (2025)**: Governor cannot unilaterally withhold assent/reserve Bills → otherwise becomes “super-constitutional figure.”
- **Sarkaria & Punchhi Commissions**: Governor should normally follow advice; very rare exceptions (e.g., patently unconstitutional Bill).
- **D.D. Basu**: UK sovereign has *no discretion*—similar principle applies in India.

Timeline Controversy

- **SC fixed 3-month timeline** → to prevent Governors from sitting on Bills indefinitely.
- **Govt objection**: Constitution does not prescribe timeline → judiciary overstepping.
- **SC reasoning**: When Governors sit on Bills for years, legislative process is paralysed—contrary to Constitution.
- **Article 355**: Union has duty to ensure State governance is per Constitution. Court implies Union should nudge Governor to act.

Judicial Creativity vs Judicial Overreach

1. Critics: Court “amended” Constitution by imposing timeline.
2. Defense: Judiciary interprets to address *new constitutional crises*.
 - Example: **Article 21 expansion** (Maneka Gandhi, 1978) beyond A.K. Gopalan’s narrow view.

3. Here too, SC interpreted to preserve **federalism** & prevent **executive obstruction**.

Significance

1. **Strengthens Federalism** → prevents unelected Governors from blocking elected legislatures.
2. **Judicial Innovation** → timeline ensures legislative continuity.
3. **Reiterates Governor’s Role** → constitutional head, not parallel power centre.
4. **Checks Misuse of Office** → addresses reality of Governors “sitting on Bills” for political reasons

EU-India Strategic Roadmap: Trade, Technology, and Defence

Context

- The **European Union (EU)** recently unveiled a **new strategic roadmap with India**, aiming to strengthen ties across **trade, technology, defence, connectivity, and climate action**.
- The initiative comes amid **shifting global geopolitics**, recognizing India as a **vital partner for Europe** in promoting growth, security, and a rules-based global order.
- The roadmap was announced by **European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen** and is part of the EU’s **New Strategic EU-India Agenda**.

Background and Vision

- The roadmap seeks to **elevate bilateral cooperation** to a long-term strategic level.
- Highlights include:
 - Europe is already **India’s largest trading partner**.

- Plans to **finalize a Free Trade Agreement (FTA)** with India by the end of the year, potentially the largest of its kind globally.
- EU acknowledges points of contention, e.g., India's **purchase of Russian oil** and participation in **Russian military exercises**.

Key Areas of Cooperation

- **Trade and Economic Ties**
 - Diversification of supply chains and enhancement of **investment flows**.
- **Technology and Innovation**
 - Focus on **emerging technologies, digital transformation, and EU-India Trade & Technology Council (TTC)**.
 - Initiatives to support **startups, research, and participation in Horizon Europe programme**.
- **Defence and Security Cooperation**
 - Proposed **EU-India Security and Defence Partnership** covering maritime security, cyber defence, crisis management, and counterterrorism.
 - Negotiations for a **Security of Information Agreement** to facilitate classified information sharing.
- **Connectivity and Global Governance**
 - Cooperation in **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) and EU Global Gateway projects**.
 - Labour mobility initiatives via **European Legal Gateway Office**, covering study, work, and research.
- **Climate Change and Sustainability**
 - Joint action on **climate mitigation, clean energy, sustainable development, and green technology cooperation**.

India's Response and Global Implications

- PM Modi welcomed the roadmap, reaffirming **India's commitment to stronger EU ties**.
- India emphasised a **peaceful resolution of the Ukraine conflict** and invited the **next India-EU Summit** to be hosted in India.
- The roadmap reflects India's **growing global influence** and the EU's recognition of India as a **strategic partner**.
- While disagreements exist, both sides prioritise **shared interests in maintaining a rules-based international order**.

Significance

- Strengthens **economic and technological cooperation**, including critical emerging technologies.
- Enhances **defence and security collaboration**, improving India's maritime, cyber, and crisis management capabilities.
- Supports **climate action and sustainable development**, aligning with global climate responsibilities.
- Positions India as a **strategic partner in Europe's Indo-Pacific engagement** and global governance frameworks

H-1B's New \$100k Fee:

- The U.S. has introduced a one-time \$100,000 fee for new H-1B visa applications (previously only a few thousand dollars).
- The move disproportionately impacts new applicants, not continuing workers.

Gender Disparity in the H-1B Pool

- Continuing workers (FY24): 74% men, 26% women.
- New applicants (FY24): 63% men, 37% women. Women's share is higher among fresh applicants, meaning they are hit harder by the new fee.
- Salary Gaps: New vs. Continuing Workers

- Age factor: 75% of women approved for new jobs were under 35, compared with 65% of men.
- The new entry cost hits early-career professionals, especially women, the hardest.

Education Trends

Initial employment (FY24):

- 25th percentile: \$77k
- Median: \$97k
- 75th percentile: \$130k
- **Continuing workers:**
 - 25th percentile: \$102k
 - Median: \$132k
 - 75th percentile: \$169k
- New workers earn much less, making employer sponsorship costlier and less viable.

- Among women approved for new jobs:
 - o 44% had Master's degrees vs. 39% of men.
 - o Fewer women had only a Bachelor's degree.
 - o At PhD/professional levels, gender differences were negligible.
 - Despite higher qualifications, women still face salary disadvantages and higher barriers due to the fee.
- Indian Women Most Vulnerable

Gender Pay Gap in H-1B Salaries

Initial employment, FY24:

- Women's 25th percentile: \$71k vs. Men's \$80k
- Median: \$91k vs. \$99k
- 75th percentile: \$125k vs. \$131k
- Across all levels, women earn less, making them less attractive to employers under the high-cost regime.

- Indians form 60% of female and 75% of male H-1B beneficiaries.
- The triple disadvantage for Indian women:
 1. Lower salaries compared to men.
 2. Younger age profile → higher exposure to entry costs.
 3. Large representation in the applicant pool.

India vs. China Comparison

- India and China together = 83% of beneficiaries (FY24).
- Gender skew more pronounced in India: Indian women earn and participate less than men, unlike their Chinese counterparts.

Younger Women Disproportionately Hit

How Trump's H-1B Fee Threatens India's IT Firms and Big

What the Policy Does

- Imposes a \$100,000 annual fee per new H-1B visa.
- Targets labour arbitrage models where Indian engineers are brought to the U.S. at lower costs.
- Applies only to new applications, not existing visas.

Why It Hits India's IT Firms Hard

- Traditional model: Indian IT firms (TCS, Infosys, Wipro) relied on cheap H-1B filings (few thousand dollars each) → imported engineers → offered clients competitive rates.
- New reality: At \$100,000 per visa, mass filings are uneconomical. Firms face two bad choices: Raise prices → lose competitiveness vs. U.S. firms. Shift offshore → move entire functions abroad, cutting even more U.S. jobs.
- MSMEs in IT services will be the hardest hit, as they lack the cash reserves of giants.

Implications for U.S. Tech Companies

- Until now, HR treated H-1B applications like "lottery tickets." Now each petition becomes a boardroom-level decision.
- Benefits: Filters out frivolous filings, forces focus on exceptional hires.
- Risks:
 - o Startups and mid-sized firms may be priced out; giants like Google or Microsoft can absorb costs more easily → talent concentration in Big Tech.
 - o Potential slowdown in innovation across the wider ecosystem.

Talent and Innovation Risks

- 65% of U.S. IT workforce is on H-1B visas (up from 32% in 2003).
- U.S. universities produce thousands of STEM grads, but unemployment among CS grads = 6.1%, computer engineers = 7.5%.
- Still, America has long attracted the world's best students and researchers.

Collateral damage:

- o International students (~\$40B contribution annually) may look to Canada, UK, Australia instead.
- o U.S. risks losing its competitive edge to China and rivals in AI, semiconductors, and emerging tech.

Unintended Consequences

- Offshoring boom: Companies may move whole functions abroad rather than hire H-1Bs, cutting U.S. jobs.
- Market distortion: Large tech firms absorb the costs, startups cannot → innovation bottlenecks.
- Global competition: Canada, UK, Australia lower barriers as U.S. raises them → brain drain accelerates.
- Geopolitical risk: Talent loss strengthens China and others in strategic tech sectors

GENERAL STUDIES - III

- 1. Indian Economy**
- 2. Agriculture And Food**
- 3. Environment And Biodiversity**
- 4. Science And Technology**
- 5. Disaster Management**
- 6. Internal Security**

India's Economic Churn, the Nectar of Growth

From Crisis to Renewal

- India's economy likened to *Samudra Manthan* — turbulence yields renewal.
- **1991 crisis → liberalisation, COVID-19 → digital surge.**
- Today's churn: resilience, **faster growth, stronger buffers, broader opportunities.**

India's Growth Story

- **GDP Growth:** Q1 FY 2025-26 → **7.8%**, a five-quarter high.
- **Broad-based growth:** Manufacturing (7.7%), Construction (7.6%), Services (9.3%).
- **India = World's 4th-largest economy,** fastest-growing major economy.
- On track to overtake **Germany → 3rd-largest** by decade's end.
- Contributes **15% of global incremental growth** → target 20%.

Global Recognition

- **S&P Global rating upgrade** (first in 18 years) → lowers borrowing costs.
- Counters "**dead economy**" narrative.

Inclusive Development

- **24.82 crore people out of multidimensional poverty (2013–2023).**
- Success via **basic services delivery** (bank accounts, Ujjwala, Ayushman Bharat, Jal Jeevan) + **direct transfers.**
- India's **democratic, federal, digital model** → marathon, not sprint.

Energy Security & Growth

- **3rd-largest energy consumer, 4th-largest refiner & LNG importer.**

- Refining capacity: **5.2 million barrels/day**, expanding to 400 MTPA by 2030.
- Energy demand to **double by 2047**, contributing 25% to global demand.
- **Exploration acreage doubled**, 'No-Go' areas reduced by 99%.
- **Gas pricing reforms** & Open Acreage Licensing Policy (OALP) → boost investment.

Energy Transition

- **Ethanol blending:** 1.5% (2014) → **20% today.**
- Saved **₹1.25 lakh crore forex**, paid **₹1 lakh crore to farmers.**
- **300+ Compressed Biogas plants**, 5% blending target by 2028.
- **Green hydrogen push** led by PSUs.

Russian Crude Debate

- Russian oil not sanctioned → under **price cap system.**
- India complied with rules, used legal channels.
- India = **4th-largest petroleum exporter** long before Ukraine war.
- Europe itself bought Indian refined products.
- **No profiteering**, refining margins stable.

Protecting Citizens

- Oil PSUs absorbed **₹10/litre losses** during price spikes.
- Govt cut central & state taxes.
- Export rules → ensured domestic supply.
- Outcome: **No fuel shortages, stable retail prices.**

Industrial & Digital Transformation

- **PLI schemes** powering semiconductors, electronics, defence, renewables.

- **India Semiconductor Mission:** 4 new projects approved.
- PM's Japan visit → **trusted tech supply chains.**
- **UPI leadership & startup ecosystem** → driving exports & productivity.
- **Digital rails + hard infrastructure** → formalisation & investment cycle.

Future Trajectory

- By **2038:** India = **2nd-largest economy in PPP**, GDP > \$34 trillion (EY estimate).
- Path depends on **steady reforms, human capital, clean energy.**
- India's past revolutions (Green, IT, digital) show capacity for renewal.
- **"Scoreboard is the answer"** → growth is **rapid, democratic, inclusive.**
- **Viksit Bharat = deliverable,** not aspiration.

GST Revamp Highlights

- **Effective from: September 22, 2025** (for most goods).
- **Rates:**
 - **5%** – Essential/common-use goods & labour-intensive sectors.
 - **18%** – Standard goods & services.
 - **40% (Special Rate)** – Sin & super-luxury goods (tobacco, luxury cars, yachts, helicopters).

Items Moved to Lower Rates

0% Slab

- **Food & daily staples:** All Indian breads (roti, chapati, paratha), paneer, ultra-high temperature milk.
- **Health & welfare:**

- Individual life insurance & health insurance policies (from 18%).
- 33 life-saving drugs & medicines (from 12%).
- Spectacles for vision correction (from 28%).

5% Slab

- **Daily-use goods:** Hair oil, soap, shampoo, toothbrush, toothpaste, bicycle, tableware, kitchenware.
- **Food & FMCG:** Namkeens, sauces, pasta, noodles, chocolates, coffee, butter.
- **Labour-intensive sectors:** Handicrafts, marble/granite blocks, intermediate leather goods.
- **Industrial/agriculture:** 12 bio-pesticides, bio-menthol.
- **Cement:** Cut from 28% to 18%.
- **Textiles:** Manmade fibre (18% → 5%), manmade yarn (12% → 5%).
- **Fertilizers inputs:** Sulphuric acid, nitric acid, ammonia (18% → 5%).
- **Electric vehicles:** Retained at 5%.

Special 40% Slab (Sin & Luxury Goods)

- Tobacco products (pan masala, gutka, bidi, cigarettes, zarda, chewable & unmanufactured tobacco).
- Aerated water, caffeinated beverages.
- Luxury & personal-use vehicles (large cars, >350cc motorcycles, helicopters, private jets, yachts).

⚠ Note: For now, **tobacco items remain at 28% + cess** until Centre clears compensation loans (expected within 2025). After that, they will move to 40%.

Fiscal & Economic Impact

- Estimated **revenue loss (rate cuts): ₹48,000 crore** (based on 2023–24 consumption).
- Govt. expects **buoyancy + better compliance** to balance it.
- **Focus on common man:** Cheaper household items, medicines, insurance, cement.
- **Labour & farm support:** Textile, handicrafts, fertilizers, agriculture inputs.

GST Rate Rationalisation – Before vs. After

Category Item	/ Old Rate	New Rate	Remarks / Impact
Daily-use FMCG			
Hair oil, soap, shampoo, toothpaste, toothbrush	12% / 18%	5%	Common household goods cheaper
Tableware, kitchenware, bicycles	12% / 18%	5%	Middle-class relief
Food Items			
All Indian breads (roti, chapati, paratha), paneer, UHT milk	5%	0%	Essential food made tax-free
Namkeens, sauces, pasta, instant noodles,	12% / 18%	5%	Lower cost of processed food
Health & Insurance			
chocolates, coffee, butter			
Life & health insurance policies (individual)	18%	0%	Major relief for middle-class, health sector
Life-saving drugs (33)	12%	0%	Cheaper treatment
Spectacles (vision correction)	28%	5%	Affordable healthcare support
Construction & Industry			
Cement	28%	18%	Boost to infra & housing
Handicrafts, marble/granite blocks, leather goods	12%	5%	Support to labour-intensive industries
Bio-pesticides, bio-menthol	12%	5%	Agriculture-friendly
Manmade fibre	18%	5%	Duty inversion corrected
Manmade yarn	12%	5%	Boost to textile sector

Category / Old New Remarks / Item Rate Rate Impact

Fertilizer inputs (sulphuric acid, 18% nitric acid, ammonia) **5%** Support for farmers

Automobile & Energy

Electric vehicles **5%** **5%** Retained

Motorcycles >350cc, large cars, private + helicopters/jet cess s, yachts **28%** **40% (Special)** Luxury & sin tax

Tobacco Products

Pan masala, gutka, cigarettes, bidi, chewable & unmanufactured tobacco **28%** **40% (Special)** Strong sin-tax move

Beverages

Aerated water, caffeinated beverages **28%** **40% (Special)** To discourage consumption

Quick Takeaways

- **Simplification:** From multiple slabs → mostly 5% & 18%.
- **Special 40% rate:** Reserved for sin goods & luxury items.
- **Relief focus:** Food, health, insurance, agriculture, construction.
- **Revenue impact:** ₹48,000 crore, but govt. expects compliance gains

GST Revamp – Mixed Sectoral Impact

Beneficiaries (Cheerful Sectors)

1. Auto Sector

- **What changed?** Removal of GST Compensation Cess + Tax reduction.

Likes & dislikes

The new GST rates were largely welcomed by most sectors, but there were also some discontents



POSITIVE	MIXED	UPSET
Auto manufacturers: Lower tax will boost demand	Insurance sector: Good for consumers, but could eat into profits of insurers	Airlines: 18% rate on non-economy tickets makes premium travel more expensive, potentially making some routes unviable
Pharma: Will make medicines more affordable	Apparel makers: Higher GST on expensive clothes a negative	Vegetable oil makers: Inverted duty structure should be removed for vegetable oils
Consumer appliance firms: Will lower prices ahead of the festive season	Automobile dealers: Though lower taxes are welcome, there are concerns about potential delays in purchases	Micro and cottage entrepreneurs: Increase in rate on labour charges will increase costs for MSMEs



Poor, neo middle-class, middle-class women, students, farmers, youth... everyone will benefit

NARENDRA MODI
Prime Minister

- **Impact:**
 - Entry & mid-segment cars (\leq ₹14 lakh): tax cut up to **13 percentage points**.
 - High-end cars (>1200 cc engines): cut of **8–10 points**.
- **Concerns:** Dealers fear buyers may delay purchases until new rates kick in (Sept 22).

2. Pharmaceuticals – Expect boost in demand with rationalised rates.

3. Consumer Appliances – Rate cuts to spur festive season demand.

4. Renewable Energy

- GST on renewable components cut **12% \rightarrow 5%**.
- **Impact:** lowers cost of solar & other green technologies \rightarrow supports clean energy transition.

5. Insurance, Fertiliser, Man-made Textiles – Relief from inverted duty structure.

Hit Sectors (Upset/Disappointed)

1. Airlines

- **What changed?** Higher GST on **non-economy seats**.
- **Impact:** Increases travel cost, airlines oppose.

2. Small Entrepreneurs

- **What changed?** Labour charges GST raised **12% \rightarrow 18%**.
- **Impact:** Higher service cost; SMEs feel burdened.

3. Textile Industry

- **Positive:** Welcomed correction in cotton & man-made fibres.
- **Negative:** 18% GST on garments **above ₹2,500**.
 - Affects woollens, wedding wear, traditional & handloom clothes.
 - Seen as burden on "common man luxury".

4. Vegetable Oil Industry

- Issue of **inverted duty structure** unresolved \rightarrow higher tax on raw materials vs. finished oil.

Market Reaction

- Stock market initially rose on positive sentiment.
- Closed **flat (Sensex up just 0.2%)**, showing mixed investor response.

Pulses Production – NITI Aayog's Plan for Self-Sufficiency

Why in News?

- **NITI Aayog** has released the report "*Strategies and Pathways for Accelerating Growth in Pulses towards the Goal of Atmanirbharta*".
- Goal: Achieve **self-sufficiency in pulses by 2047**, reducing dependence on imports and ensuring **nutritional security**.

Introduction

- **Pulses = "Protein crops" of India** \rightarrow vital for **nutritional security**, especially in vegetarian diets.
- Also contribute to **sustainable agriculture**:

- Nitrogen fixation → improves soil fertility.
- Low water requirement → climate-friendly.
- India = world's **largest producer, consumer, and importer** of pulses → self-reliance is a **strategic necessity**.

Pulses Production in India

- **12 major pulse crops** grown across **kharif, rabi, summer seasons**.
- **Top states:** Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Rajasthan → contribute **55%+ of production**.
- **Top 10 states = 91% output**.

Historical Trends

- 2015–16: Production dipped to **16.35 MT**, imports = **6 MT** (29% dependency).
- Interventions: **National Food Security Mission (NFSM)**, MSP hikes, better procurement.
- 2022–23: Production = **26.06 MT** (↑59.4%), Productivity ↑ **38%**, Imports down to **10.4%**.

Challenges

- 80% cultivation = **rain-fed** → vulnerable to climate shocks.
- Productivity gaps remain (India vs. global average).
- **5 crore farmers** depend on pulses → critical for livelihoods.

NITI Aayog's Roadmap & Recommendations

1. Area Retention & Diversification

- Promote **region-specific clusters** for optimal crop choice (e.g., pigeonpea in Deccan, lentils in Indo-Gangetic plains).

2. Technology Adoption

- Encourage **mechanisation & ICT tools**.
- Customised solutions for **agro-ecological sub-regions**.

3. Seed Quality & Distribution

- Focus on **high-quality seeds & treatment kits**.
- Prioritise **111 high-potential districts** (75% of national output).

4. Cluster-Based Hubs

- *One Block–One Seed Village Model*.
- Strengthen **FPOs** as productivity hubs.

5. Mission for Atmanirbharta in Pulses (6 years)

- Focus crops: **pigeonpea, black gram, lentil**.
- Public–private participation for R&D, extension, and processing.

6. Projected Targets

- **2030:** 30.59 MT
- **2047:** 45.79 MT → Near complete import substitution.

Nutritional & Environmental Importance

- **Nutrition:** Rich in protein, iron, zinc, folate → helps tackle **malnutrition & anaemia**.
- **Environment:**
 - Nitrogen fixation → reduces chemical fertiliser use.
 - Low water demand → more climate-resilient than cereals.
 - Lower carbon footprint → supports India's **sustainable agriculture goals**.

Conclusion

- India has achieved **remarkable progress** in pulses production (26 MT in 2023 vs. 16 MT in 2016).
- Yet, self-sufficiency demands:
 - **Region-specific interventions.**
 - **Seed revolution + technology infusion.**
 - **Cluster-based FPO models.**
- By 2047, India can **not only meet its domestic demand** but also emerge as a **global leader in pulses markets**, contributing to **nutrition security + Atmanirbhar Bharat**

The Long March Ahead to Technological Independence

Context

- India celebrated its **79th Independence Day (2025)**, but true independence today extends beyond politics to **technological sovereignty**.
- Modern wars, economies, and governance are increasingly driven by **cybersecurity, AI, cloud, and semiconductor ecosystems**.

Key Issues

1. Technological Dependence

- India lacks its own **operating system, databases, foundational software**.
- Reliance on a few global corporations (mostly from one country) poses a **strategic vulnerability**.
- Example: recent stoppage of cloud services affecting Indian companies.

2. Software Sovereignty

- **Open-source model** offers a path: India can build secure versions of **Linux, Android, databases, cloud servers**.
- Challenge: **long-term maintenance, support, and large user base**.
- Requires **collective effort of India's IT community** beyond government dependence.

3. Hardware Sovereignty

- Bigger challenge: **semiconductor fabs, chip design, assembly, supply chain**.
- Demands **large-scale, long-term investment**.
- Strategy: start with **specific hardware components + international partnerships**.

4. Need for a Social-Tech Movement

- Open-source movement has weakened globally, but revival is essential.
- Requires a **business model** (self-supporting, not purely government-funded).
- Involves **industry-academia collaboration, strong development teams, and sustained updates**.

Way Forward

- Establish a **national mission for technological independence**:
 - Focus on **development and execution**, not just R&D.
 - Build **client-side (email, databases, calendar)** and **server-side (web/cloud servers)** components.
 - Encourage **self-sustaining economic model** with user-supported open-source software.
- Government role: **enabler, regulator, funder** — but autonomy must be **community-driven**

Clearing the fog: need for revised strategies against Aedes mosquitoes

India needs a **revised strategy to combat Aedes mosquitoes**—the carriers of dengue, Zika, and chikungunya—since traditional methods like fogging are ineffective.

Key points:

- **Ineffectiveness of fumigation:** Aedes mosquitoes bite indoors during the day/night, making outdoor fumigation, vaporizers, and bed nets largely useless.
- **Top-down strategies:** Wolbachia mosquitoes and dengue vaccine trials show promise but face challenges like high costs and limited scope (don't cover Zika/chikungunya).
- **Best current defences:** Personal protection and **community mobilisation** to eliminate larval breeding sites.
- **Repellents:**
 - **Highly effective & recommended:** DEET (20%), picaridin, IR3535, 2-undecanone, PMD (except for kids <3 yrs).
 - **Ineffective:** citronella and other “natural” oils (short-lived, cause skin irritation).
- **Community action:** Studies (e.g., Camino Verde in Latin America, Chennai RCT) show significant reduction in dengue cases when communities remove stagnant water from pots, containers, plastics, tyres, etc.
- **Challenges:** Resistance to larvicides like temephos, plastic pollution creating breeding grounds, poor awareness of safe repellents.
- **Successful models:**

- Delhi's “10 Weeks, 10 AM, 10 Minutes” campaign for larval source reduction.
- Peru's use of **transfluthrin-coated spatial emanators** that reduced ABVD risk by 34%.

• Way forward:

- Use fogging only in outbreaks.
- Scale up personal protection, community awareness, and larval control.
- Introduce safe repellents (DEET, picaridin, PMD) in Indian markets.
- Adopt innovative top-down strategies like Wolbachia, delayed-release repellents.
- Combine **top-down innovation** with **bottom-up community action** for maximum impact.

Note on Aedes-borne Viral Diseases (ABVD) in India

- **Major diseases:** Dengue, chikungunya, Zika.
- **Public health impact:** Seasonal outbreaks lead to huge loss in productivity, burden on healthcare, and rising urban vulnerability.
- **Breeding habits:** Aedes aegypti thrives in urban settings, especially stagnant water in containers, discarded plastics, and coolers.
- **Current challenges:**
 - Over-reliance on fogging and larvicides.
 - Low public awareness of effective repellents.
 - Weak waste management and urban planning.
- **Effective strategies:**
 - **Community mobilisation:** Regular water container cleaning, covering water storage, waste removal.

- **Personal protection:** Long clothing, WHO-approved repellents (DEET, picaridin, PMD, IR3535).
- **Policy action:** Nationwide campaigns (like Delhi's 10-10-10 model), ASHA worker mobilisation, better urban waste/plastic management.
- **Innovation adoption:** Wolbachia mosquito releases, spatial emanators, cost-effective repellents, improved vaccines.

A project of strategic and national importance

The article defends and explains the **Great Nicobar Island Project**, calling it a development of **strategic, defence, and national importance**. The project includes:

- **International Container Transshipment Terminal (ICTT)** (14.2 million TEU capacity)
- **Greenfield International Airport**
- **450 MVA gas & solar-based power plant**
- **Township development over 16,610 hectares**

Strategic and Developmental Importance

- The project aims to make Great Nicobar a **maritime and air connectivity hub** in the Indian Ocean Region.
- It is expected to **boost defence preparedness, economic growth, and employment generation**.

Environmental Safeguards

- Comprehensive **Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)** and **Environmental Management Plans (EMP)** were conducted.
- ₹81.55 crore has already been released for **wildlife conservation studies** before construction began.
- Out of 130.75 sq. km of forest land required, **65.99 sq. km will remain green** without tree felling.
- Compensatory afforestation is planned in **Haryana** (97.30 sq. km) due to lack of non-forest land in the islands.
- **Wildlife corridors** and viaducts are planned for safe passage of animals.

Tribal Safeguards

- **No displacement** of Shompen or Nicobarese tribes is planned.
- **Consultations** with Anthropological Survey of India, Ministry of Tribal Affairs, and AAJVS (Andaman Adim Janjati Vikas Samiti) have been conducted.
- Out of 84.10 sq. km tribal reserve affected, **73.07 sq. km will be de-notified** but **76.98 sq. km re-notified**, leading to a **net increase of 3.912 sq. km** in tribal reserve.
- Provisions comply with **Jarawa Policy (2004)** and **Shompen Policy (2015)**.
- A monitoring committee has been set up for **tribal welfare during and after project execution**.

Scale and Phasing

- Total area: **166.10 sq. km** (35.35 sq. km revenue land + 130.75 sq. km forest land).
- Phased development:
 - Phase I (2025–35): 72.12 sq. km
 - Phase II (2036–41): 45.27 sq. km
 - Phase III (2042–47): 48.71 sq. km

Balancing Ecology and Economy

- Institutions like ZSI, BSI, SACON, and WII have been involved in ecological studies.
- The project is portrayed as “**economy and ecology complementing each other**”, ensuring environmental safeguards alongside development.
- Only ~2% of A&N Islands’ total area and ~1.82% of its forest cover will be diverted.

“A ‘health check’ for the new GST health-care reforms”

India’s new **GST reforms** mark a turning point in making health care more **affordable, preventive, and accessible**, directly supporting the goal of **Universal Health Coverage**.

Key Sectoral Changes

- **Insurance Relief:**
 - **GST removed** on individual health and life insurance premiums (earlier 18%).
 - A family paying ₹50,000/year on insurance saves ₹9,000.
 - Includes all life (term, ULIP, endowment) and health plans (family floater, senior citizen, reinsurance).
 - Aim: Increase insurance penetration (India: 3.7% of GDP vs global 6.8%).
 - Concern: Monitoring needed to ensure insurers pass benefits to consumers.
- **Hospital Charges:**
 - **Rooms <₹5,000/day exempt** from GST.
 - **Non-ICU rooms >₹5,000/day** → 5% GST without ITC (rule since 2022 continues).

- **ICU/CCU/ICCU/NICU** → Fully GST-exempt.
- Core medical services (doctors, paramedics, hospitals) remain **GST-free**.

Business & Supply Chain Impact

- **Medicines:**
 - Most medicines taxed at 5%.
 - Life-saving drugs → **0% GST**.
- **Medical Devices & Diagnostics:**
 - Uniform **5% GST**.
 - Example: CT scan machines reduced from 18% → 5%, lowering hospital capital costs.
 - Diagnostic kits (earlier 12%) → now 5%, making tests like X-ray, MRI, blood tests cheaper if savings are passed on.
- **Labs, Pharmacies, Small Clinics:**
 - Gain from **simpler structures** and better price competitiveness.
 - Can negotiate improved terms with insurers and corporate clients.

Preventive & Lifestyle Services

- **Wellness services** (gyms, yoga studios, salons, barbers, fitness centres): 18% → **5% GST**.
- **Personal care items** (toothpaste, shampoo, hair oil, soaps, shaving creams, talcum, etc.): 12–18% → **5%**.
 - Example: Shampoo costing ₹112–118 earlier → now ₹105.
- **Sin Goods:**
 - Cigarettes: remain heavily taxed (**52%–88% effective**).
 - Sugary drinks: moved to **new 40% slab** (earlier 28%+cess), discouraging consumption and boosting health revenue.

Broader Perspective

- Part of India's **Viksit Bharat 2047** vision.
- Reforms strengthen **entire health-care chain**:
 - **Insurance affordability**
 - **Lower treatment costs** (medicines, diagnostics, equipment)
 - **Promotion of preventive health & lifestyle services**
 - **Discouragement of unhealthy consumption**

- **Effective monitoring of insurer pass-through** of GST relief.
- Whether hospitals and labs **reduce patient costs**.
- Expansion of **preventive health adoption**.
- Stronger **consumer trust** in healthcare affordability.
- Reduction in misuse of antibiotics and Schedule H drugs.
- Ultimately: **Lives saved and treatments accessed**

Govt Exploring Isobutanol Blending with Diesel

Why in the News?

- The government is exploring **isobutanol blending with diesel** after **ethanol-diesel blending trials failed**.
- The **Automotive Research Association of India (ARAI)** is conducting tests to ensure fuel compatibility and farmer income support.

Ethanol Blending – Background

- **Policy Cornerstone**: Part of India's biofuel roadmap to reduce oil imports & enhance farmer incomes.
- **Success in Petrol**: India achieved **20% ethanol-petrol blending** ahead of schedule.
- **Challenge in Diesel**:
 - Ethanol is **corrosive**.
 - **Engine compatibility issues** prevented scaling up ethanol-diesel blending.
- **Farmer Impact**:
 - ₹42,000+ crore earned by farmers.
 - Corn prices doubled (₹1,200 → ₹2,600–₹2,800 per quintal).
 - Strengthened **rural incomes**.

Why Isobutanol?

- **What is it?** Alcoholic compound ($C_4H_{10}O$), used in paints, coatings, food additives.
- **Advantages over Ethanol**:
 - Higher **heating value** (more energy).
 - Less **corrosive & less hygroscopic**.
 - Better **engine compatibility** with diesel.
 - Can be blended at **10% with diesel**.
- **Future Uses**: Potential as **standalone biofuel** or in combination with **CNG** for tractors & agricultural machinery.

Policy Push – Farmers & Sugar Industry

- Govt cleared **96% sugarcane payments**, reducing cane dues to record lows.
- Encouragement to:
 - Expand **ethanol distilleries**.
 - Adopt **2G & 3G ethanol tech** (bamboo, agri-residues).
 - Diversify production for **domestic + export markets**.

Industry Concerns

- **Sugarcane FRP (Fair & Remunerative Price)**: Needs revision due to rising input costs.

- **MSP (Minimum Support Price):** Unchanged since 2019 – industry demands upward revision.
- **Export Quotas:** Call to increase permissible sugar exports by **2 million tonnes** (2025-26 season).

Sector Growth

- **Sugarcane output:** ↑ 40% in last decade.
- **Sugar production:** ↑ 58% in last decade.
- **ISMA Estimates:** Gross sugar output at **34.9 million tonnes (2025 season)**, up 20% YoY.
- Highlights the potential of **bioenergy integration** with India's energy policies.

Vultures and Public Health: Preventing Future Pandemics

Why in News?

- As the **National Action Plan for Vulture Conservation (2016–25)** nears its end, attention is turning to how vultures can be integrated into **pandemic preparedness strategies**.
- Vultures, South Asia's **most efficient waste managers**, play a crucial role in preventing zoonotic disease outbreaks.

Vultures and Pandemic Prevention

- **Carcass Disposal:** Vultures consume animal carcasses rapidly, preventing pathogens (anthrax, botulinum, rabies) from spreading.
- **First Line of Defence:** By limiting exposure of stray dogs, rats, and humans to decaying carcasses, vultures reduce **zoonotic spillover risk**.
- **Cost-Effective:** Conservation requires far less investment than the cost of responding to pandemics.

- **Community Role:** Local communities near carcass dumps can be vital partners in surveillance and awareness.

India's Vanishing Vultures & Public Health Risks

- **Population Decline:** India once had **40 million vultures** in the 1980s. Since 1990s, numbers fell by **95%+** due to **diclofenac (toxic veterinary drug)**.
- **Ecological Collapse:** Absence of vultures → carcass piles → rise in stray dogs and feral animals → higher rabies transmission.
- **Biodiversity–Health Nexus:** Declining vulture numbers = **weakened natural disease buffer** → increased pandemic risks.

Central Asian Flyway (CAF) & Regional Linkages

- CAF: Migratory route spanning **30+ countries**, used by vultures, raptors, and millions of birds.
- Links ecosystems and **transboundary disease risks**.
- Poorly managed dumps or landfills on CAF → potential **pathogen hotspots**.
- Hence, CAF is both a **biodiversity corridor** and a **public health corridor**, requiring regional cooperation.

Conservation Challenges

- Vultures still absent in many regions despite partial recovery.
- **Threats:**
 - Veterinary drugs
 - **Electrocution/collision** with power lines.
 - **Fragmented funding** and lack of integration with **One Health strategies**.

- Policy & health security efforts remain siloed.

Post-2025 Vulture Strategy – India’s Roadmap

Five proposed pillars:

1. **Nationwide Satellite Telemetry:** Track habitats, migratory routes, and hotspots.
2. **Decision Support System (DSS):** Integrate **wildlife, livestock, and human health data**.
3. **One Health Approach:** Cross-sectoral coordination (health, environment, livestock).
4. **Transboundary Cooperation:** Use CAF + align with WHO’s regional health security roadmap.

India’s Global Opportunity

- India hosts key species: **Himalayan griffon, Cinereous vulture, Eurasian griffon**.
- Can showcase a “**conservation = health security**” model by:
 - Scaling telemetry & DSS.
 - Embedding vultures in One Health.
 - Building **pandemic resilience at modest cost** compared to outbreak losses.
- Could inspire **regional & global adoption** of biodiversity-linked health security frameworks

India’s procurement rules often slowed down innovation.

- **Reform (June 2025):** Changes in General Financial Rules (GFR) → exemptions from mandatory use of GeM portal, higher direct purchase limits, decentralisation of tender approvals.

Key Features of Reforms

- **Bypassing GeM** for specialised equipment.
- **Direct purchase limit raised:** ₹1 lakh → ₹2 lakh.
- **Tender approval delegation:** VCs/directors can approve global tenders up to ₹200 crore.
- **Safeguards retained:** Departmental committees still needed for high-value procurement.

Implications

- **Positive:**
 - Reduces bureaucratic delay.
 - Recognises bespoke needs of R&D.
 - Aligns with “catalytic procurement” (procurement as a driver of innovation).
- **Limitations:**
 - ₹2 lakh direct limit still small for advanced fields (quantum, biotech).
 - Global tendering may sideline Indian suppliers unless domestic R&D is strengthened.
 - Risk of misuse due to discretion → requires monitoring.

Unlocking Innovation with India’s Procurement Reforms

Context

- **Procurement & R&D tension:** Designed for transparency and cost-efficiency,

Global Lessons

- **Germany:** High-Tech Strategy, KOINNO agency, mission-oriented procurement.
- **U.S.:** Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) program → 3% federal R&D funds for startups.

- **South Korea:** Pre-commercial procurement paying premium for prototypes.
- **EU:** Joint Procurement Agreement for pooling demand.

Historical Evolution of Procurement

- Ancient → record keeping (Egyptian scribes).
- Industrial Revolution → cost-centric.
- World Wars → strategic role in scarce resources.
- Post-1945 → NASA contracts, EU green procurement.
- Today → “cognitive procurement” with AI (Pfizer vaccine example).

Future Directions Suggested

1. **Outcome-weighted tenders** (like Finland): Evaluate bids on innovation potential, scalability, R&D input.
2. **Sandbox exemptions:** IITs, TIFR exempted from GFR up to a threshold.
3. **AI-augmented sourcing:** Use INDIAai for supplier scanning, customs predictions.
4. **Co-procurement alliances:** Labs pool demand for expensive items (cryogenic coolers).
5. **Hybrid governance models:** Example — U.S. Sandia Labs’ private management but govt. mission control.

Broader Takeaways

- Procurement should shift from “**compliance vs. fraud prevention**” → “**innovation catalyst**”.
- Privatisation alone not enough; hybrid models and accountability matter.
- India’s reforms are a **start, not a full paradigm shift**.

India’s economic ambitions need better gender data

Context

- **Women’s contribution to GDP:** Only **18%**, though women are half the population.
- **FLFPR:** 41.7%, but only 18% of employed women are in the *formal* sector.
- **Challenge:** India’s \$30 trillion aspiration (by 2047) is impossible without integrating women into the workforce.
- **Core Issue:** Women remain *invisible in data*, making gaps hard to address.

Uttar Pradesh’s WEE Index – A Model

- **India’s first district-level Women’s Economic Empowerment (WEE) Index.**
- Tracks across 5 levers:
 1. Employment
 2. Education & Skilling
 3. Entrepreneurship
 4. Livelihood & Mobility
 5. Safety & Inclusive Infrastructure
- **Impact:**
 - Transport sector reform → new recruitment strategies, women’s restrooms in bus terminals.
 - Highlights structural drop-offs (e.g., women high in skilling enrolment but low in entrepreneurship/credit access).
 - Moves focus from participation rates → to **structural barriers**.

Systemic Needs

- **Gender-disaggregated data across all departments:** MSME, transport, housing, etc.

- **Beyond counts:** Track retention, leadership, re-entry, quality of employment.
- **Gender budgeting rethink:** Must apply to all expenditure, not just women's schemes.
 - *Principle: "You cannot budget for what you don't measure."*
- Firms struggle to cover R&D and operational expenses → leading to **losses, bankruptcies, or forced exits.**
 - **Impact:** Like Clifford Geertz's rice farming analogy, more effort (competition, innovation, subsidies) is being poured in, but margins and profitability shrink.

Way Forward

- States (AP, Maharashtra, Odisha, Telangana) with trillion-dollar ambitions must leverage the gender dividend.
- Scale-up WEE Index → convert into **district-wise gender action plans.**
- Use data to guide **budgets, infrastructure, and reforms.**
- **Paradigm shift needed:** From seeing gender data as peripheral → to making it central in governance

What is 'involution' in the Chinese EV sector?

Definition: Involution (nèijuǎn, 内卷) describes a situation where firms in a crowded market compete so intensely (mainly through price cuts) that everyone works harder but achieves diminishing or even negative returns.

In EVs:

- 120–130 Chinese EV makers are locked in a **cut-throat price war.**
- Prices have been slashed so much that vehicles are sold **below production cost.**

Why has involution worsened in EVs?

1. **Overcapacity in China** – Massive state support + industrial policy led to oversupply.
2. **Trade barriers abroad:**
 - U.S. → 100% tariffs (effectively a ban on Chinese EVs).
 - EU → Countervailing duties (17%–35% on top of 10% import duty).
 - Türkiye (40%) and Mexico (50%) followed suit.
 - These moves restricted China's export outlets, forcing **intensified competition at home.**
3. **Consumer slowdown** – Domestic demand is growing but not fast enough to absorb all supply.

How is China tackling involution and EV price wars?

1. Policy Interventions

- **MIIT (May 2025):** Pledged to rein in price wars.
- **Politburo (June 2025):** Framed Xi's stance as a **"war on price wars"**.
- **Draft Pricing Law (July 2025):** Prohibits:
 - **Below-cost selling.**
 - **Algorithmic pricing abuses** by platforms.
- **Xi Jinping (Sept 2025, Qiushi article):**
 - Curb **"disorderly competition"**.
 - Push for an **"orderly exit" of outdated capacity.**
 - Prioritize **quality over quantity.**

2. Industry Restructuring

- Encouraging **consolidation** → smaller, weaker EV makers to exit or merge.
- **SOEs and top players** (BYD, Geely, SAIC) expected to survive and dominate.

3. Global Diversification

- Chinese OEMs investing in **local production abroad** (e.g., BYD in Hungary, Türkiye).
- Targeting **emerging markets** (Africa, SE Asia, Latin America) → where tariffs are lower and EV penetration is still growing.

Broader Implications

- **For China:** Short-term pain (bankruptcies, layoffs), but medium-term industry **stabilisation** with fewer, stronger players.
- **For Europe & U.S.:** Tariffs may only delay, not prevent, Chinese EV dominance—especially as Chinese firms localise production.
- **For Emerging Markets:** China remains the biggest EV supplier, shaping the global clean mobility transition

Unseen labour, exploitation: the hidden human cost of Artificial Intelligence”

Context

Artificial Intelligence (AI) appears highly automated and efficient, but its accuracy relies heavily on the **invisible labour** of poorly paid workers in developing countries. From **data annotation** to **content moderation**, these workers — often called “ghost workers” — face exploitation, poor

working conditions, and health risks, while their contribution remains unrecognised.

Invisible Human Backbone of AI

- AI and ML systems cannot interpret raw data without human input.
- **Data annotators** label text, images, audio, and video to train models.
- Example:
 - LLMs like ChatGPT/Gemini rely on annotators for supervised learning & reinforcement learning.
 - Self-driving cars depend on labelled video data to distinguish objects.
- The **higher the quality of data**, the more human labour is required.

Outsourcing to the Global South

- Major tech firms outsource annotation to workers in **Kenya, India, Pakistan, China, Philippines**.
- Workers face:
 - **Low wages**
 - **Long hours and strict deadlines**.
 - **No recognition** of their contribution.
- Often hired through **intermediary gig platforms**, making labour fragmented, insecure, and opaque.

Types of Data Labelling

- **Basic tasks:** no expertise needed.
- **Technical/niche tasks:** require subject expertise.
- Issue: Non-experts are often forced to label medical or technical data → leads to **errors in AI outputs**.

Human Cost of ‘Automation’

- **Content moderation:** Workers manually review graphic, violent, pornographic

material → leads to **PTSD, anxiety, depression.**

- **AI-generated audio/video:** Voice actors, performers (including children) supply the base data.
- Workers face **surveillance, job insecurity,** and union suppression when raising concerns.

- **Fair pay and recognition** for workers.
- **Stronger labour rights protections** in the digital gig economy.

SC vs Centre on Stubble Burning: Criminalization / Collaboration?

Exploitation and Worker Testimonies

- 2024: Kenyan workers wrote to U.S. President Joe Biden describing AI labour as **“modern-day slavery.”**
- Complaints included exposure to extreme content, violations of labour laws, dismantling of unions, and systemic exploitation.
- Lack of transparency: workers often don't even know which tech company they are serving.

Context

The **Supreme Court (SC)** and the **Union government** clashed over handling of **stubble burning**, a major contributor to winter air pollution in North India. While the SC suggested **reviving criminal prosecution** against errant farmers, the Centre argued it was **not feasible**, emphasizing a collaborative policy approach.

Key Points from the Hearing

Systemic Issues

- **Fragmented gig economy** → pay per microtask, no long-term contracts.
- **Excessive surveillance** and constant threat of dismissal.
- AI's rapid progress is built on **exploited, invisible labour chains.**

• Supreme Court's Stand

- Suggested **criminal prosecution** and even a separate law to deter stubble burning.
- CJI B.R. Gavai: “Give them the carrot first, but then the stick.”
- Farmers must also share responsibility for protecting the environment.

Conclusion & Way Forward

- Advancement of AI is powered by “ghost workers.”
- Their invisibilisation benefits tech companies while perpetuating exploitation.
- **Policy Recommendations:**
 - Stricter global and national regulations on **AI labour supply chains.**
 - **Transparency** on outsourcing and subcontracting.

• Centre's Stand

- Through ASG Aishwarya Bhati: criminalization is **not feasible.**
- Farmers were **exempted** from prosecution under the **Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM) Act.**
- Policy is to **“take farmers along”**, not punish them.

• Amicus Curiae's Concern

- Despite **massive funds and repeated SC directions**, situation remains the same every winter.

- Severe pollution continues in **Punjab, Haryana, UP**, contributing to toxic haze in Delhi-NCR.
- **CJI's Response**
 - Suggested penalization "as a sample" to **send a strong message**.
 - Warned against being swayed by electoral compulsions.
 - Directed Centre to evolve a **uniform national policy** with states.

Larger Context

- **Why stubble burning?**
 - Short window (10–15 days) between paddy harvest and wheat sowing.
 - Lack of affordable alternatives to dispose of crop residue.
 - High cost of machines like **Happy Seeder** despite subsidies.
- **Impacts**
 - Major contributor to **Delhi-NCR's air pollution crisis**.
 - Severe health risks: respiratory, cardiovascular diseases.
 - Climate impact: release of GHGs (CO₂, CH₄, N₂O).

Significance

- **Judicial vs Executive Approaches**
 - **Judiciary:** deterrence through law and punishment.
 - **Executive:** persuasion, subsidies, technological alternatives.
- **Policy Dilemma**
 - Punishing farmers risks social unrest and alienation.
 - Incentives alone have not solved the crisis.
 - Calls for a **balanced "carrot + stick" approach**.
- **Way Forward**
 - **Technology Push:** Promote in-situ machines (Happy Seeder, Super Straw

Management System), bio-decomposers.

- **Market Incentives:** Crop residue-based bioenergy, packaging, fodder.
- **Crop Diversification:** Shift away from water-guzzling paddy in Punjab-Haryana.
- **Legal Framework:** Graded penalties + strict enforcement for repeat offenders.
- **Centre-State Coordination:** Uniform national strategy under CAQM

Bima Sugam: India's One-Stop Digital Insurance Marketplace

Context

- **Bima Sugam**, envisaged as the **world's largest digital insurance marketplace**, was officially launched by the **Bima Sugam India Federation (BSIF)** at the **IRDAI headquarters in Hyderabad**.
- The platform will roll out **in phases**, beginning as an **information and guidance hub**, followed by full-fledged **transactions** as insurers and partners integrate.
- It is part of India's broader **Bima Trinity initiative** to enhance insurance penetration through **availability, affordability, and accessibility**.

Bima Trinity: India's Three-Pronged Insurance Strategy

1. **Bima Sugam:** Unified digital portal integrating **insurers, distributors, and intermediaries** on a single platform.
2. **Bima Vistaar:** Comprehensive, affordable, all-in-one insurance product.

3. **Bima Vahak:** Women-led **field distribution network** to expand reach to underserved regions.

Key Features of Bima Sugam

- **Unified Marketplace:** Life, health, motor, travel, property, and agricultural insurance on a **single digital platform**.
- **End-to-End Services:** Buying, selling, renewal, policy management, and **claim settlement** integrated seamlessly.
- **Transparency:** Minimal fees, **centralized policy documents**, and uniform access for all insurers.
- **Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI):** Functions like **UPI for insurance**, ensuring nationwide accessibility and interoperability via **India Stack APIs**.
- **Support for Insurers & Agents:** Real-time validated data access, reduced paperwork, and streamlined operations.
- **Innovation-Friendly:** Supports new and **sandbox insurance products**, promoting sectoral innovation.

Wide-Ranging Insurance Offerings

- **Life Insurance:** Term plans, savings, annuities, pensions, ULIPs.
- **Health Insurance:** Medical, wellness, and comprehensive coverage.
- **Motor Insurance:** Third-party liability and own-damage cover.
- **Travel & Personal Accident:** Individual and family coverage.
- **Commercial & Agricultural Insurance:** Property, marine, industry-specific, and farm insurance products.

Significance

1. **Insurance Penetration:** Helps achieve **“Insurance for All by 2047”**, expanding financial inclusion.

2. **Consumer Empowerment:** Enables **easy comparison, transparency, and informed decision-making**.
3. **Digital Infrastructure:** A foundational step in building India’s **Digital Public Infrastructure for insurance**.
4. **Inclusive Growth:** Supports **insurers, intermediaries, and policyholders**, democratizing access to insurance products.
5. **Global Benchmark:** Sets India apart as a leader in **tech-driven insurance ecosystems**, providing a model for other countries.

New Policy to Boost Geothermal Energy in India

Context

- The Government of India has unveiled a **National Geothermal Energy Policy** to test the commercial viability of geothermal power.
- International firms from the **US, Iceland, and Norway** are partnering on **R&D and pilot projects** in the **Gulf of Cambay, Arunachal Pradesh, and Uttarakhand**.
- The policy comes at a time when India is seeking to **diversify its renewable energy mix** to meet its **Net Zero 2070 targets**.

About Geothermal Energy

- **Definition:** Harnesses heat stored beneath the Earth’s surface to produce electricity and thermal energy.
- **Applications:** Electricity generation, heating/cooling, greenhouse farming, aquaculture.
- **Process:**

1. **Extraction** – Drilling wells into hot water/steam reservoirs.
 2. **Conversion** – Steam spins turbines (dry steam/flash steam plants).
 3. **Electricity Generation** – Turbine → generator → electricity.
 4. **Reinjection** – Cooled water re-injected to sustain the reservoir.
3. **Repurposing Oil Wells:** Thousands of **abandoned wells** can be converted.
 - IIT Madras project: **450 kWh in Barmer, Rajasthan** (with Vedanta-Cairn).
 - **Reliance Industries:** Exploring geothermal via O&G division.

India's Geothermal Potential

- Estimated potential: **10.6 GW**.
- **Major Zones:**
 - **Himalayan Geothermal Province** – Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Ladakh, J&K, Arunachal Pradesh.
 - **Cambay Graben (Gujarat).**
 - **Andaman & Nicobar Islands.**
- **Puga & Chumathang fields (Ladakh):** Identified as most promising (US International Trade Administration).
- **Cambay & Gandhar abandoned oil wells (ONGC):** Being studied for repurposing.

Global Geothermal Landscape

- **Global installed capacity:** <17 GW.
- **Leaders:** US, Indonesia, Philippines (capacity), Iceland & Norway (innovation/tech).
- **Future potential:** IEA projects **India, US, and China** will account for **75% of next-gen geothermal growth**.
- India's potential: **4.2 GW by 2035**, nearly **100 GW by 2045**.

India's Geothermal Push under New Policy

1. **Pilot Projects:** Firms from Norway, Iceland, and US working on **Cambay, Uttarakhand, Arunachal Pradesh**.
2. **Remote Area Benefits:**
 - **Andaman & Nicobar:** Cut costs from ₹30–32/unit to ₹10–11/unit.
 - **Ladakh:** Heating + electricity during harsh winters.

Policy Support & Challenges

Challenges:

- High upfront costs (**₹36 crore per MW**).
- Exploration risks, uncertain resource mapping.
- Need for skilled workforce and R&D.

Policy Support:

- **National Policy on Geothermal Energy (MNRE):**
 - Supports **R&D and pilot projects**.
 - Promotes **inter-ministerial coordination** (MNRE + Petroleum Ministry + States).
 - Plans **Viability Gap Funding (VGF)** scheme to reduce investor risks.
 - Task Force on Geothermal Energy (set up Aug 2024).

Ongoing Initiatives:

- MNRE sanctioned **5 projects** already (including Vedanta-backed).
- More projects expected under the new framework.

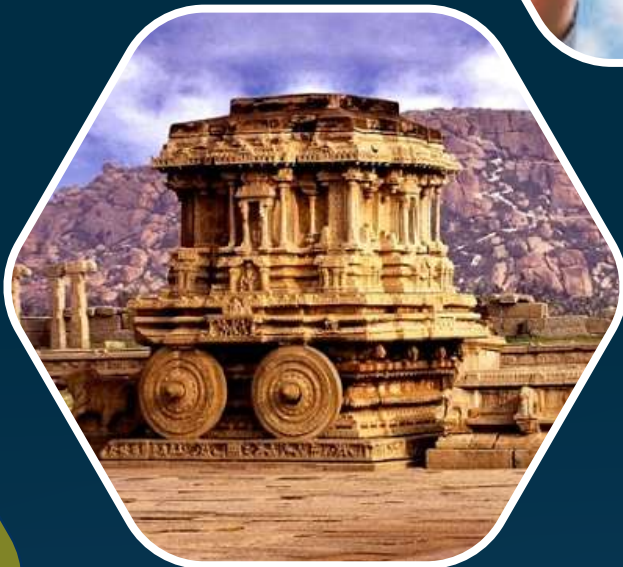
Significance for India

- **Energy Diversification** : Complements solar, wind, hydro → strengthens **renewable energy mix**.

- **Energy Security:** Reliable **base-load renewable power** (unlike intermittent solar/wind).
- **Climate Goals:** Helps meet **Net Zero 2070** and **Paris Agreement commitments**.
- **Remote Area Development:** Reduces energy costs in difficult terrains (A&N, Ladakh).
- **Industrial Growth:** Supports **green hydrogen, cold storage, and agro-industries**.
- **Geopolitical Leverage:** Positions India alongside **global innovators (Iceland, Norway)** in clean energy technology



PRELIMS POINTERS



What is a Schengen Visa?

- ❖ **Definition:** A **short-term visa** allowing non-EU nationals to **visit or transit through** the Schengen Area (29 European countries).
- ❖ **Validity:** Up to **90 days in any 180-day period**.
- ❖ **Purpose:** Tourism, business, family visits, medical treatment, cultural or sports events.
- ❖ **Restrictions:** Does **not permit employment**.

Schengen Area Coverage (2025)



- ❖ Includes **29 countries**.
- ✓ **25 EU States** (except **Ireland** and **Cyprus**).
- ✓ **4 EFTA Members:** **Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland**.
- ❖ **Key Feature:** **No internal borders** among member states; unified external border control.

New: Cascade Visa Scheme (2025)

- ❖ Introduced by the **European Commission** for **trusted Indian travellers**.
- ❖ Rewards travellers with a **positive visa history**.

Tiered Visa Validity

1. **1-year visa:** If 3 Schengen visas used in last 2 years.
2. **2-year visa:** If a 1-year multi-entry visa was used in last 2 years.
3. **5-year visa:** If a 2-year multi-entry visa was used in last 3 years.

Key Benefits

- ❖ **Multiple entries** allowed within the visa period.
- ❖ **Travel rights similar to visa-free nationals**.
- ❖ Still restricted to **90 days per 180-day period**.
- ❖ **No work rights** granted

Did You Know 🧠?

According to the **Henley Passport Index 2025**, **Singapore and Japan** often top the list of most powerful passports, while **Afghanistan and Syria** remain at the bottom.

Mount Cilo and Its Glaciers : A Climate Concern



Location & Geography

- ❖ **Region:** Southeast Anatolia, Turkey, near the **Iraqi border**.
- ❖ **Mountain Range:** Easternmost extension of the **Taurus Mountains**.
- ❖ **Altitude:** **4,135 meters**, second highest in Turkey after **Mount Ararat (5,137 m)**.
- ❖ **Tectonic Context:** Part of the **Alpine-Himalayan Fold System**, formed by convergence of **Arabian, Anatolian, and Eurasian plates**.

Physical Features

- ❖ Rugged terrain: **steep limestone cliffs, deep gorges, glacial valleys**.
- ❖ Major Peaks: **Uludoruk, Suppa Durek, Kosedireği, Kisara, and Maunseli Sivrisi**.

Impact of Climate Change

- ❖ **Glacial Retreat:** Nearly **50% of Mount Cilo's ice cover lost in the last 40 years**.

- ❖ **Temperature Spike:** Turkey recorded **50.5°C**, worsening heatwaves and droughts.
- ❖ **Consequences:** Accelerated glacier melt, threatening **water security, biodiversity, and regional microclimates**

Doctrine of Merger

What is it?

- ❖ A **common law principle** that maintains **judicial hierarchy and propriety**.
- ❖ It means that **when a superior court passes an order on appeal/revision**, the **original order by the lower court merges** into it.
- ❖ Result: Only the **appellate court's order** stands enforceable.

Key Features

- ❖ **Not statutory**, but a **doctrine of judicial discipline and propriety**.
- ❖ Prevents **multiplicity of orders** on the same matter.
- ❖ Applies to **judicial, quasi-judicial, and administrative** authorities.

When Does It Apply?

- ❖ When:
 - ✓ A **subordinate authority's decision** is appealed/reviced;
 - ✓ A **superior authority** affirms, modifies, or reverses that decision.

- ❖ Consequence: **Only the superior authority's order remains operative**; the lower order ceases to exist **independently**.

Limitations

- ❖ **Not a universal doctrine.**
- ❖ Depends on:
 - ✓ The **nature of jurisdiction** (e.g., statutory vs. discretionary).
 - ✓ The **scope of the appeal/revision**.
 - ✓ The **subject matter** under challenge.
- ❖ **Supreme Court in 2025** reiterated: *It must not be used mechanically to deny genuine legal remedies.*

Grant-in-Aid to National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) Scheme

Launched by: **Union Cabinet (2025)**

Type: Central Sector Scheme

Period: FY 2025–26 to FY 2028–29

Total Outlay: **₹2,000 crore (₹500 crore/year)**

Objectives

- ❖ To **strengthen cooperative-based economic development**.

- ❖ To provide **financial assistance** for setting up/expanding cooperative projects.
- ❖ To help cooperatives **meet working capital requirements** and improve productivity.

Implementation Strategy

- ❖ **Executing Agency: NCDC (National Cooperative Development Corporation).**
- ❖ NCDC will raise **₹20,000 crore from the open market** using ₹2,000 crore GoI grant as support.
- ❖ Loans will be provided:
 - ✓ **Directly to cooperatives** that meet criteria (against security or state guarantee).
 - ✓ **Via state governments** under NCDC guidelines.
- ❖ Areas supported: **Technology upgradation, modernisation, expansion, and working capital.**

Beneficiaries

- ❖ Around **9 crore members of 13,288 cooperatives** across India.
- ❖ Sectors: **Dairy, Livestock, Fisheries, Textile, Sugar, Food Processing, Storage, Women-led and Labour cooperatives**

UN Women – 15th Anniversary (2025)

UN Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women

Established: **July 2010**

By: United Nations General Assembly

Headquarters: New York

Parent Body: United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

Key Mandates

- ❖ **Support Inter-governmental Bodies**
 - ✓ Especially the **Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)**, in setting **global standards and norms**.
- ❖ **Technical and Financial Assistance**
 - ✓ Helps **member states** implement gender equality frameworks.
 - ✓ Works in **partnership with civil society** and governments.
- ❖ **Coordination within UN System**
 - ✓ Leads UN efforts on **gender equality** and monitors **system-wide progress**.

Core Areas of Work

- ❖ Women's **political participation**
- ❖ **Economic empowerment**
- ❖ **Ending violence against women**
- ❖ Gender-responsive **planning and budgeting**

- ❖ Advocating for **SDG-5: Gender Equality**

Grant-making Funds

- ❖ **Fund for Gender Equality**
- ❖ **UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women**

These fund **innovative, high-impact programmes** by NGOs and government bodies.

Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)

- ❖ A **functional commission of ECOSOC**
- ❖ Global **policy-making body** for gender equality
- ❖ Hosts annual sessions to review progress on commitments like the **Beijing Platform for Action**.

Data Work

- ❖ Maintains the **UN Secretary-General's global database on violence against women**.
- ❖ Tracks country-wise measures to combat gender-based violence

What is Market Coupling?

Market Coupling is an **economic model** used in **energy markets** to discover a **uniform Market Clearing Price (MCP)** for electricity by **aggregating buy and sell bids** from all **power exchanges**.

Context respect to India

❖ India has **three power exchanges**:

1. **Indian Energy Exchange (IEX)**
2. **Power Exchange India Ltd. (PXIL)**
3. **Hindustan Power Exchange Ltd. (HPX)**

❖ Currently, each exchange operates **independently**, resulting in **slightly different MCPs**.

❖ The **Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC)** has proposed **market coupling** for the **Day Ahead Market (DAM)** segment.

How Market Coupling Works

- ❖ All **buy and sell bids** from the three exchanges will be **pooled** together.
- ❖ A **single clearing algorithm** will determine **one uniform MCP**.
- ❖ Power exchanges will serve **only as bid collection platforms**; **discovery of price and dispatch** will be **centralized**.

Advantages of Market Coupling

1. **Efficiency**: Better utilization of electricity across regions, reduced **transmission loss**.
2. **Uniform Pricing**: Promotes **fair competition** and **price transparency**.
3. **Market Liquidity**: Increases **participant numbers** and **trading volumes**.
4. **Cross-Border Trade**: Facilitates **integration of regional electricity markets** (useful for SAARC grid or One Sun One World One Grid initiatives).

Why It Matters

- ❖ Can be a key **structural reform** in India's power sector.
- ❖ Supports **energy security, efficient grid management, and consumer affordability**.

Krasheninnikov Volcano Eruption (2025)



- ❖ **Location**: *Eastern Kamchatka Peninsula, Russia*
- ❖ **Volcanic Arc**: Part of the **Pacific Ring of Fire**
- ❖ **Eruption Date**: **August 2, 2025**, after a **magnitude 8.8 earthquake** nearby
- ❖ **Ash plume**: Reached **20,000 ft altitude**
- ❖ **First recorded eruption** in modern times; previous eruption: **~400–600 years ago**

Volcano Characteristics

- ❖ **Type: Stratovolcano** (also called a **composite volcano**)
- ❖ **Height: 1,886 meters**
- ❖ **Structure:**
- ✓ Lies inside a **9 km wide collapsed caldera**
- ✓ Composed of **two eruptive cones**
- ✓ **Southern cone:** Contains an **800 m wide, 140 m deep crater**

- ❖ One of the most **volcanically active regions** in the world

Matri Van Initiative

- ❖ **Launched by:** Union Ministry of **Environment, Forest and Climate Change & Housing and Urban Affairs**
- ❖ **Part of:** 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam' Programme
- ❖ **Location:** **Aravalli Hills**, covering **750 acres** near **Gurugram-Faridabad Road**

What is a Stratovolcano?

- ❖ **Shape:** Tall, steep-sided, **cone-shaped**
- ❖ **Formation:** Built by alternating layers of **lava, ash, and pyroclastic material**
- ❖ **Eruption Style:** Often **explosive** due to **viscous lava** (andesite, dacite) that traps gases
- ❖ **Location:** Commonly found over **subduction zones**
- ❖ **Global Presence:** ~**60%** of all volcanoes are stratovolcanoes
- ❖ **Examples:** *Mount Fuji (Japan), Mount Vesuvius (Italy), Mount St. Helens (USA)*

Vision & Purpose

- ❖ Create a **theme-based urban forest** dedicated to:
- ✓ **Ecological restoration**
- ✓ **Cultural connection with nature**
- ✓ **Sustainable urban living**
- ❖ Promote **intergenerational environmental stewardship** through **mother-nature-inspired efforts**

Kamchatka Peninsula – A Volcanic Hotspot

- ❖ Hosts **114 Holocene volcanoes**
- ❖ Lies on the **convergent boundary** of the Pacific Plate

Collaborative Approach

Involves **multi-stakeholder partnerships:**

- ❖ **CSR partners**
- ❖ **Resident Welfare Associations (RWAs)**
- ❖ **NGOs**
- ❖ **MNCs**
- ❖ **School children**

- ❖ Government agencies

Key Components

1. Ecological Restoration:

- ❖ Removal of **invasive species** like *Kabuli Kikar* (*Prosopis juliflora*)
- ❖ Plantation of **native species** like *Dhak* and *Amaltash*
- ❖ Creation of **theme-based plantation groves**

2. Eco-Friendly Infrastructure:

- ❖ **Nature trails, cycling tracks, yoga zones, sitting gazebos**
- ❖ **Waterbodies** to conserve water and manage **urban flooding**
- ❖ **Treated water irrigation, misting/sprinkling systems**

3. Public Amenities:

- ❖ **Parking zones** at four corners
- ❖ **Public utilities** for visitors and community engagement

El Salvador: Presidential Term Change & Indefinite Re-Election

El Salvador's ruling party has passed a bill allowing:

- ❖ **Indefinite presidential re-election**
- ❖ **Extension of presidential terms** from 5 to 6 years

Implications

- ❖ Raises **concerns over erosion of democratic norms** and checks & balances.
- ❖ Seen as consolidation of power by President **Nayib Bukele**, who has already sought re-election despite constitutional restrictions.

About El Salvador

Category	Details
Region	Central America
Borders	Honduras (NE), Guatemala (NW), Pacific Ocean (S)
Caribbean Access	<i>Only</i> Central American country without Caribbean coast
Capital	San Salvador
Topography	Mountainous with volcanic chains (San Salvador, Ilopango, San Vicente)
Highest Point	Cerro El Pital – 2,730 m (on Honduras border)
Major River	Lempa River – vital for irrigation, hydroelectricity
Lakes	Lake Ilopango , Lake Coatepeque , Lake Güija
Climate	Tropical, tempered by altitude in interior regions

ICRISAT's AI-based Agromet Advisory Service

Why in News?

Launched by **ICRISAT** and **ICAR**, the AI-based advisory aims to enhance **climate-resilient agriculture** and support **smallholder farmers** with real-time, location-specific decisions.

Key Features

- ❖ **Powered by AI/ML** to deliver **hyper-local, personalised climate advisories**
- ❖ Covers **sowing, irrigation, pest management**, etc.
- ❖ Delivered via **AI-based WhatsApp bot** and other digital channels
- ❖ **First phase in Maharashtra**, via ICAR's **Agro-Meteorological Field Units (AMFUs)**
- ❖ Supported under **Monsoon Mission III**

iSAT – Intelligent Systems Advisory Tool

- ❖ Originally piloted during **Monsoon Mission II**
- ❖ Now being **upgraded into a full AI platform**
- ❖ Transforms complex weather and agri-data into **personalised, science-backed recommendations**

Collaborating Institutions

Institution	Role / Contribution
ICRISAT	Lead agency; tool development
ICAR – CRIDA	Dryland agriculture expertise
IMD & IITM	Climate and weather data
ILRI	Livestock-agriculture integration

Future Plans

- ❖ National rollout based on learnings from Maharashtra
- ❖ Could be **replicated in Global South nations** under South-South cooperation framework

RS-28 Sarmat ("Satan-2") : Russia's Deadliest ICBM



Overview

- ❖ **Type:** Intercontinental Ballistic Missile (ICBM)
- ❖ **Country:** Russia

- ❖ **NATO Codename:** Satan-2
- ❖ **Named After:** Ancient Sarmatian warrior tribe

Key Features

Parameter	Details
Range	Up to 18,000 km
Launch Weight	>208 tonnes
Length	35.3 m
Diameter	3 m
Speed	25,500 km/h (approx. Mach 20)
Payload Capacity	10 tonnes
Warhead Capacity	Up to 16 independently targetable nuclear warheads
Technology	Inertial, GLONASS, and Astro-inertial guidance
Special Capability	Fractional Orbital Bombardment System (FOBS) – can launch into low Earth orbit and strike from unexpected angles
Hypersonic Payloads	Can carry Avangard hypersonic glide vehicles

- ❖ **Global Reach:** Can strike any location on Earth, bypassing conventional missile defense systems.
- ❖ **Deterrence Tool:** Forms part of Russia's nuclear triad and strategic doctrine.
- ❖ **Escalation of Arms Race:** Viewed as a response to NATO's missile defense systems and U.S. ICBM modernization.
- ❖ **Modern Warfare Shift:** Introduction of **hypersonic glide vehicles** makes it difficult to intercept.
- ❖ **Fractional Orbital Capability:** Raises concerns of **space weaponization** and arms treaties violations

Sahel Region – Strategic & Climatic Hotspot in West Africa



Geographical Overview

- ❖ **Type:** Semi-arid transitional region in **West and Central Africa**
- ❖ **Extent:** ~5,000 km from **Atlantic Ocean (Senegal)** to **Red Sea (Eritrea)**

Strategic Significance

- ❖ **Transitional Belt:** Between **Sahara Desert (North)** and **humid savannas (South)**

Regional Instability	Coups in Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger – rising anti-West sentiment
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Countries Spanned

- ❖ **West to East:** Senegal, Mauritania, Mali, Burkina Faso, Niger, Nigeria, Chad, Sudan, Eritrea

Vegetation & Climate

- ❖ **Type:** Semiarid steppe (dry grassland)
- ❖ **Flora:** Sparse grasses, thorny shrubs, acacia, baobab
- ❖ **Climate Threats:** High desertification, low rainfall, vulnerable to climate change

Challenges

- ❖ Weak institutions, food insecurity, poverty
- ❖ Climate-induced desertification
- ❖ Cross-border terrorism and arms smuggling
- ❖ External power competition (France, Russia, USA, China)

Strategic & Security Dimensions

Issue	Details
Russia's Influence	Signed nuclear cooperation deal with Niger , tightening geopolitical grip
Extremism	Rise of violent groups (e.g., Boko Haram, ISIS affiliates) due to weak governance
Migration Route	Major transit point for African migrants heading to Europe
French Withdrawal	France scaled down military presence; Russia, Wagner Group filling vacuum

Lalit Kala Akademi

- ❖ **Established:** 5th August 1954, inaugurated by Maulana Abul Kalam Azad.
- ❖ **Status:** Autonomous body under the **Ministry of Culture**, statutory authority since 1957.
- ❖ **Objective:** Promote Indian **visual arts**—modern, folk, tribal—domestically and internationally.
- ❖ **Headquarters:** New Delhi, with regional centres in Chennai, Lucknow, Kolkata, Bhubaneswar, and Garhi.
- ❖ **Functions:** Holds exhibitions, cultural exchanges, art documentation, and preservation.
- ❖ **Event Highlight:** **64th National Exhibition of Art** inaugurated recently in

Delhi—India's most prestigious visual art event, started in 1955

PAHAL Scheme

- ❖ **Launched by:** Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas
- ❖ **Full Form:** *Pratyaksh Hanstantrit Labh* (PAHAL) – Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) for LPG
- ❖ **Coverage:** Over **17 crore LPG users**; world's **largest cash transfer program**
- ❖ **Key Feature:** Consumers pay full LPG price; subsidy is **credited directly** to their **bank account**

Objectives

- ❖ Ensure **transparency** and **prevent diversion**
- ❖ Eliminate **fake/duplicate connections**
- ❖ Improve **cylinder availability** to genuine users
- ❖ Offer **voluntary subsidy opt-out**

Eligibility

- ❖ Must be a **registered LPG consumer**
- ❖ Annual **taxable income** ≤ ₹10 lakh (self + spouse)

Working Mechanism

- ❖ **Booking:** Consumer books at full price
- ✓ **Subsidy Transfer:** After delivery, amount is credited via:

- ✓ **Aadhaar-based** DBT (preferred)
- ✓ **Non-Aadhaar** (bank-LPG linkage directly)

Recent Update

- ❖ Over **4 crore fake/inactive connections** deactivated under the scheme.

Indri Lemur

Joint research has, for the first time, ascertained the composition of the intestinal microbiome of the Indri, a critically endangered lemur only found in the north-east of Madagascar.



About Indri Lemur

- ❖ Indri, or **babakoto** in the local language, is the **largest of the surviving lemur species**.
- ❖ Scientific Name: *Indri indri*
- ❖ **Distribution**
- ✓ Found **only in remote parts of northeastern Madagascar**.
- ✓ Resides in **coastal and montane rainforest** from sea level to 1,800 m.
- ❖ **Features:**

- ❖ It is 60–70 cm (24–28 inches) **long**, with a **rudimentary tail** and **large hands and feet**.
- ✓ The **round head** has a **pointed face** and **round, furry ears**.
- ✓ Indris have **smooth, silky fur** covering their whole bodies.
- ✓ Its **fur is black**, with **white on the head, throat, forearms**, and buttocks; the relative proportions of white and black vary geographically.
- ✓ In the wild, indris **live between 15 and 18 years**.
- ✓ **Active during the day** and **thoroughly arboreal**, the indri **clings to trees and climbs in an upright position** as it **feeds on leaves, fruit, flowers**, and other vegetation.

- ❖ **Conservation Status:**
- ✓ IUCN Red List: **Critically Endangered**.

Inter State Transmission System (ISTS)

Definition

- ❖ A high-voltage power transmission network enabling seamless electricity transfer across state borders in India.
- ❖ Connects **power-surplus regions** with **power-deficit areas** to ensure a **balanced and efficient distribution** of electricity.

Managed by

- ❖ **Central Transmission Utility of India Limited (CTUIL)** — 100% subsidiary of **Power Grid Corporation of India Ltd. (POWERGRID)** under the **Ministry of Power**.

Key Features

- ❖ Operates at **132 kV and above**.
- ❖ Minimises **transmission losses** and improves **grid stability**.
- ❖ Removes **state-wise transmission restrictions**, creating a **unified national electricity market**.
- ❖ Critical for **large-scale renewable energy evacuation** (solar & wind).

Working Mechanism

1. **Generation:** Power from solar parks, wind farms, hydropower, thermal plants.
2. **Grid Integration:** Voltage stepped up at ISTS substations (managed by CTU) to reduce loss.
3. **High-Voltage Transfer:** Long-distance transmission via 132 kV+ lines across states.
4. **Load Management:** Monitored by **RLDCs** (Regional Load Dispatch Centres) & **NLDC** to balance supply-demand.
5. **Distribution:** Voltage stepped down at **STU** level before final supply to consumers.

Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY)



The Ministry of Women and Child Development has extended the special registration drive under PMMVY till **15 August 2025**.

About the Scheme

- ❖ **Type:** Centrally Sponsored Scheme under *Mission Shakti* → Sub-scheme *Samarthya*
- ❖ **Launched by:** Ministry of Women and Child Development
- ❖ **Mode:** Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) via PMMVYSoft

Objective

- ❖ Provide maternity benefits to women from socially & economically disadvantaged sections.
- ❖ Improve **health-seeking behaviour** during pregnancy & lactation.
- ❖ Reduce maternal and infant mortality by incentivising institutional deliveries.

Key Benefits

- 1. First Child:**
 - ✓ ₹5,000 in **two instalments** via DBT.
 - ✓ Plus additional JSY incentive after institutional delivery → Total ~₹6,000.
- 2. Second Child:**
 - ✓ ₹6,000 incentive **only if the second child is a girl**.
- 3. Special Provisions:**
 - ✓ Miscarriage/Stillbirth → Eligible again in next pregnancy.
 - ✓ Digital Aadhaar authentication via UIDAI + NPCI verification for direct transfer.

Eligibility (Disadvantaged Sections)

- ❖ SC/ST women.
- ❖ Women with ≥40% disability.
- ❖ Holders of **BPL card, E-Shram card, MGNREGA Job Card, PMJAY beneficiary card, or PM-Kisan Samman Nidhi** beneficiaries.
- ❖ Women farmers under PM-Kisan.
- ❖ Family income < ₹8 lakh p.a.
- ❖ Pregnant & lactating AWWs/AWHs/ASHAs.
- ❖ Any category notified by the Centre.

Exclusions

- ❖ Women in regular employment with Centre/State/PSUs receiving similar benefits.

Implementation

- ❖ Managed by **State/UT field functionaries**.
- ❖ Since March 2023 → **PMMVYSoft** launched for:
 - ✓ Digital Aadhaar authentication.
 - ✓ DBT into Aadhaar-seeded bank/post office accounts

District Flood Severity Index (DFSI)

By: IIT Delhi & IIT Gandhinagar

Objective

- ❖ District-level **data-based flood severity assessment** to aid planning & disaster management.
- ❖ Focus on **human impact + flood magnitude** (unlike earlier measures).

Data Base

- ❖ Long-term IMD flood data since **1967**.
- ❖ 40-year curated historical flood dataset (IIT Delhi).

Parameters

1. Mean flood duration (days).
2. % of district area historically flooded.
3. Deaths & injuries due to floods.
4. Population (per capita impact).

Key Insights

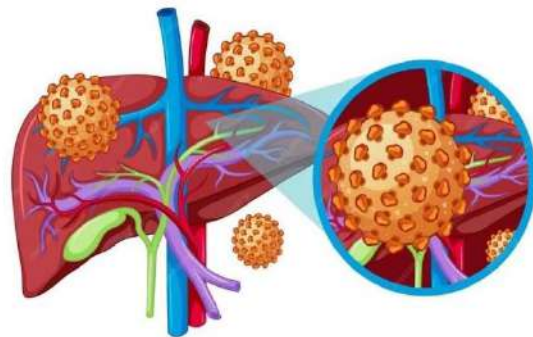
- ❖ **Thiruvananthapuram**: Highest flood events (231) but not top 30 in severity (low per capita impact).
- ❖ **Patna**: #1 in severity due to high population impact & flood spread.
- ❖ **Assam districts** (Dhemaji, Kamrup, Nagaon): High frequency (178+ events), severity varies by combined indicators.

Significance

- ❖ First comprehensive **national flood severity index** at district scale.
- ❖ Useful for **policy prioritisation**, relief allocation, and long-term mitigation planning.

Hepatitis D (HDV)

WHO update: Recently reclassified as **cancer-causing**, highlighting its severe public health risk.



Hepatitis is an inflammation of the liver, often caused by a virus. It can lead to fibro-sis (scarring), cirrhosis, or liver cancer.



About

- ❖ Liver infection caused by **Hepatitis D virus**.
- ❖ *Defective virus* → requires **Hepatitis B virus (HBV)** to replicate.
- ❖ Only affects people already infected with HBV (simultaneously or later).

Health Impact

- ❖ HBV+HDV co-infection → more severe, faster progression to **cirrhosis & liver cancer**.
- ❖ HDV increases liver cancer risk **2–6×** compared to HBV alone.
- ❖ HBV can cause cancer even without cirrhosis (integrates into cell DNA).

Transmission

- ❖ Same as HBV/HCV: blood transfusions, unsafe injections, mother-to-child, sexual contact.

Prevention

- ❖ **Universal Hepatitis B vaccination** prevents HDV.
- ❖ **Schedules**
 - ✓ Birth, 1 & 6 months OR Birth, 6 & 14 weeks OR 6, 10 & 14 weeks OR Birth, 6, 10 & 14 weeks.
 - ✓ Adults (high-risk): 0, 1, 6 months

Notary Portal

By: Ministry of Law & Justice, Govt. of India

Purpose

- ❖ Dedicated online platform for services under **Notaries Act, 1952 & Notaries Rules, 1956**.
- ❖ Enables **faceless, paperless, transparent, efficient** interaction between *Central Govt.-appointed Notaries* and the government.

Functions

- ❖ Apply for appointment as Notary.
- ❖ Verify eligibility for appointment.
- ❖ Issue **digitally signed Certificate of Practice**.
- ❖ Renew Certificate, change practice area, submit annual returns.

Current Status

- ❖ Live module: verification of documents & eligibility, issuance of digitally signed certificates to new Notaries.
- ❖ Developed with **NIC**; multiple modules to be rolled out in phases.

Significance

- ❖ Streamlines notary regulation, reduces paperwork, and improves service delivery

National Organ & Tissue Transplant Organization (NOTTO)

Recent Update

- ❖ Issued a **10-point advisory** giving **priority to women patients and relatives of deceased donors** awaiting organ transplants.

About NOTTO

- ❖ Apex national-level body under the **Directorate General of Health Services**, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, New Delhi.
- ❖ Established under the **Transplantation of Human Organs and Tissues (Amendment) Act, 2011**.
- ❖ Coordinates and networks for:
 - ✓ Procurement & distribution of organs and tissues.
 - ✓ Registry of organ and tissue donation & transplantation.

Structure

- ❖ **National Human Organ and Tissue Removal & Storage Network** – manages organ allocation & storage.
- ❖ **National Biomaterial Centre** – stores and distributes biomaterials for research and treatment.

Key Functions

- ❖ Formulates **policy guidelines and protocols** for organ transplantation.

- ❖ Creates a **national registry** compiling state and regional data.
- ❖ Promotes **awareness** on deceased organ donation.
- ❖ Coordinates organ allocation **across regions**.
- ❖ Maintains a **data bank** on transplant activities.
- ❖ Provides **consultancy** on legal & non-legal aspects of transplantation.
- ❖ Assists states in **data management, surveillance & registry** maintenance.
- ❖ Organizes **training programs** for medical professionals and coordinators

MANAS Helpline – Combating Drug Menace

Overview

- ❖ **Full form:** *Madak-Padarth Nished Asoochna Kendra*.
- ❖ Launched: **18th July 2024** by Government of India.
- ❖ A secure, bilingual, citizen-centric platform for anonymous reporting and rehabilitation support.

Objectives

- ❖ Empower citizens to report drug trafficking, illicit cultivation, and related offences.

- ❖ Provide counselling and rehabilitation support.
- ❖ Strengthen public participation in the *Drug-Free Bharat* campaign.

Key Features

- ❖ Anonymous reporting of drug-related offences.
- ❖ Unified, secure, bilingual (Hindi & English) interface.
- ❖ Seamless multi-channel access (phone, web portal, MyGov).
- ❖ Integration with **MoSJE Helpline 14446** for rehabilitation guidance.
- ❖ Access to awareness materials (posters, videos, brochures).

Citizen Engagement

- ❖ Awareness drives via **quizzes, poster-making, reel-making contests** on MyGov.
- ❖ Public outreach resources to promote anti-drug awareness.
- ❖ Encourages active community involvement in prevention efforts.

Significance

- ❖ Combines law enforcement, public awareness, and rehabilitation in a single platform.
- ❖ Aims to create a more proactive citizen network to counter the drug menace

Dengue – Overview & Recent Immunity Study

Dengue fever

One of the world's most common mosquito-borne disease

- Estimated global infections: **390 million per year**
- Clinically detected: **100 million per year**
- Global deaths: **Around 25,000 annually**

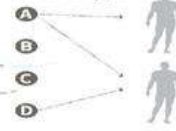
The virus

- Severe flu-like illness that affects infants, young children and adults
- Early detection and access to medical care can lower fatality rates

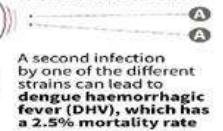
Mostly transmitted through bites of the female *Aedes aegypti* mosquito



Four distinct but related viruses cause dengue



Recovery from one gives lifelong immunity to that particular strain



Transmission zones

Found in tropical and sub-tropical areas worldwide, predominantly in urban and semi-urban areas



About Dengue

- ❖ **Vector-borne viral disease** caused by *Dengue virus* (Flavivirus, 4 serotypes: DENV-1 to DENV-4).
- ❖ Transmitted by ***Aedes aegypti*** and ***Aedes albopictus*** mosquitoes.
- ❖ **Symptoms:** High fever, severe headache, retro-orbital pain, myalgia, rash.
- ❖ **Severe Dengue:** Dengue haemorrhagic fever (DHF) and Dengue shock syndrome (DSS).
- ❖ **Epidemiology in India:** Endemic with seasonal outbreaks; peak post-monsoon. NVBDCP is the nodal programme.
- ❖ **Challenge:** Immunity to one serotype increases risk of severe disease upon infection with another serotype due to **Antibody-Dependent Enhancement (ADE)**.

Recent Study – Significance

- ❖ **Location:** Cebu, Philippines (2017–2022), ~3,000 children.
- ❖ Identified **EDE-like antibodies** (*Envelope Dimer Epitope* antibodies) as key in protecting against *severe* dengue, especially in **secondary infections**.
- ❖ Found in **82–90%** of people with prior dengue (secondary immunity) vs. 4–12% in dengue-naïve (primary immunity).
- ❖ These antibodies target *conserved viral regions*, enabling **broad neutralisation** across all serotypes.
- ❖ Both natural infection and vaccination boosted these antibodies

India's Dengue Data

Year	Reported Cases	Deaths	Key States
2024	2 lakh	300	UP, Bihar, WB, Kerala, Delhi
2023	1.9 lakh	280	Maharashtra, Karnataka, Rajasthan

- ❖ **Transmission vector:** *Aedes aegypti*, *Aedes albopictus*.
- ❖ **Seasonality:** Post-monsoon peak.

❖ Current Vaccines

*QDENG*A (Takeda) – tetravalent, approved in some countries.

Dengvaxia (Sanofi) – limited use; risk of ADE in dengue-naïve individuals.

National Centre for Disease Control (NCDC)

Why in News?

NCDC has issued **guidelines** to combat illnesses caused by **water contamination**, in view of rising outbreaks during the monsoon.

About NCDC

- ❖ **Nodal institute** under **Directorate General of Health Services**, Ministry of Health & Family Welfare.
- ❖ Acts as a **national centre of excellence** for the **prevention and control of communicable & emerging diseases**.
- ❖ **Director:** Officer from the Public Health sub-cadre of **Central Health Service**.
- ❖ **HQ:** New Delhi; **8 Branches** – *Alwar, Bengaluru, Kozhikode, Coonoor, Jagdalpur, Patna, Rajahmundry, Varanasi*.

Functions

- ❖ **Disease Surveillance & Outbreak Response** – Coordinates with States/UTs; **rapid response teams** for containment.

- ❖ **Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) Monitoring** – Key role in national AMR strategy.
- ❖ **Diagnostic Referral & Research** – Provides **referral diagnostics** for complex disease cases.
- ❖ **Capacity Building** – Trains health manpower in epidemiology and outbreak investigation.
- ❖ **Policy Support** – Advises on national health programmes

2. **Advanced Tracking Technologies** – Space-based radars & sensors for **real-time missile monitoring**.
3. **Laser Weapons** – Mid-flight destruction using directed energy.
4. **Integration with Existing Assets**
 - ❖ **Patriot Missile Batteries**
 - ❖ **THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defence)**
 - ❖ **Aegis Ballistic Missile Defence**
 - ❖ **Ground-based Midcourse Defence (GMD)**

Golden Dome Missile Defence Shield – US

Context

The US President has announced a **\$175 billion Golden Dome missile defence shield** to protect the country from advanced missile threats.

About Golden Dome

- ❖ **Nature:** Ground + space-based integrated missile defence system.
- ❖ **Aim:** Protect US from **long-range missiles**, including those launched from **space or intercontinental sources**.
- ❖ **Design:** Network of **hundreds of satellites** for detection, tracking, and interception.

Key Features

1. **Space-Based Interceptors** – Neutralize missiles at multiple trajectory stages.

Strategic Significance

Enhances **US homeland security** against hypersonic & nuclear threats.



- ❖ Marks a shift towards **space weaponization**, raising debates on **militarization of space**.
- ❖ Could trigger a **new arms race** in missile defence technologies.
- ❖ Strengthens **US deterrence posture** vis-à-vis Russia, China, and North Korea

Sarvottam Yudh Seva Medal (SYSM)

Context

On the eve of the **79th Independence Day (2025)**, the **President of India** conferred **seven SYSMs** on leaders of **Operation Sindoor**.

About the Medal

- ❖ **Instituted:** 26 June 1980
- ❖ **Purpose:** Awarded for **distinguished service of the most exceptional order** during **war/conflict/hostilities**.
- ❖ **Hierarchy:** Highest wartime distinguished service decoration (comparable to peacetime “Param Vishisht Seva Medal”).

Features

- 1. Medal Design:**
 - ✓ Circular, **35 mm diameter**, gold gilt.
 - ✓ **Obverse:** State Emblem + inscription “**SARVOTTAM YUDH SEVA MEDAL**”.
 - ✓ **Reverse:** Five-pointed star.
- 2. Ribbon:**
 - ✓ Golden colour with **one red vertical stripe** at the centre.
- 3. Bar for Multiple Awards:**
 - ✓ Subsequent awards recognised by **Bar on riband**.
 - ✓ Miniature insignia added when riband is worn alone.

Eligibility

- ❖ All ranks of **Army, Navy, Air Force**.

- ❖ Includes **Territorial Army, Auxiliary & Reserve Forces, lawfully constituted Armed Forces**.
- ❖ Nursing officers & members of **Armed Forces Nursing Services**.
- ❖ **Posthumous awards allowed**.

‘La Feria de Beziers

“La Feria de Béziers” (Béziers Fair) is a **traditional summer festival** held in **Béziers, southern France**, every **August**.



Key Features

- ❖ **Origins:** Inspired by Spanish *ferias*, blending French and Spanish culture.
- ❖ **Events**
 - ✓ Bullfights (*corridas*), which are controversial but central to the feria’s tradition.
 - ✓ Parades, concerts, dancing, and fireworks.
 - ✓ Street celebrations with food, wine, and local produce.

- ❖ **Duration:** Usually runs for **5 days in mid-August**.
- ❖ **Cultural Significance:** Attracts hundreds of thousands of visitors; highlights the Occitan and Spanish influences in southern France.

Henry Louis Vivian Derozio (1809–1831)



Context

- ❖ An Anglo-Indian poet, thinker, and teacher at **Hindu College, Calcutta**.
- ❖ Considered the **first nationalist poet of modern India** and founder of the **Young Bengal Movement**.
- ❖ Dismissed from his post in 1831 for propagating radical ideas of rationalism, freedom, and atheism.

Contributions

1. Young Bengal Movement (1820s–1830s):

- ❖ His students, known as *Derozians*, formed the **Academic Association**, where debates on liberty, equality, women’s rights, and social reform took place.
- ❖ They questioned orthodoxy in religion, caste, and social practices (like sati, child marriage).

2. Spread of Rationalism and Free Thought:

- ❖ Encouraged students to apply *reason over tradition*.
- ❖ Promoted scientific temper, secular outlook, and equality.
- ❖ First group in India to openly discuss atheism and women’s emancipation.

3. Political Awakening:

- ❖ Inspired formation of the **Bengal British India Society (1843)** — India’s first political association demanding welfare and just rights for all classes.
- ❖ Marked the **beginnings of political consciousness** in colonial India, preceding the Indian National Congress (1885).

4. Literary Nationalism:

- ❖ His poems like *The Fakeer of Jungheera* and patriotic verses portrayed India as enslaved but capable of rebirth.
- ❖ Called India a “chained eagle” — an early nationalist metaphor for colonial subjugation.

Sahariya Tribe



A **genetic study** revealed a link associated with the **unusually high prevalence of tuberculosis (TB)** in the Sahariya tribe of Central India.

Identity & Distribution

- ❖ **Category:** Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG).
- ❖ **Population:** ~6 lakh (Census 2011).
- ❖ **Location:** Madhya Pradesh (esp. Shivpuri, Guna, Ashoknagar), Rajasthan (Baran, Kota), Uttar Pradesh, and scattered in a few other states.
- ❖ **Other Names:** Seher, Sair, Savar, Saonar, Sahra.

Settlement & Housing

- ❖ Reside in separate village clusters called **“Seharana.”**
- ❖ Houses built with **stone boulders and slabs (Patore)**; mud houses also common.
- ❖ **Joint family system**; strong caste-based proximity in villages.

Language & Culture

- ❖ Lost original language; now speak **local dialects** (Hindi, Bundeli, etc.).
- ❖ **Religion:** Traditional ethnic faiths with Hindu influences.
- ❖ **Folk Dance: Saharia Swang** (during Holi) → male in female attire dances with beats of **dhol, nagari, matki**.

Livelihood & Economy

- ❖ **Forest-based tribe:** Depend on **minor forest produce** + small agriculture.
- ❖ Known for making **catechu (kattha)** from **khair trees**.
- ❖ Work as **landless labourers**; seasonal migration common.

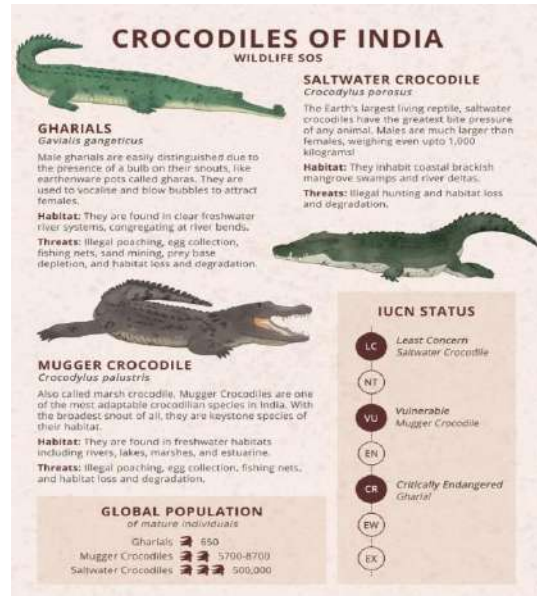
Vulnerabilities

- ❖ **High TB prevalence** (genetic + socio-economic reasons).
- ❖ Malnutrition, poverty, and marginalisation.
- ❖ Lack of healthcare access in remote forested settlements

Saltwater Crocodile



Recent **population survey (2025)** by West Bengal Forest Department: **Population of saltwater crocodiles has increased** in the **Sundarban Biosphere Reserve (SBR)**.



About the Species

- ❖ **Largest living reptile** in the world.
- ❖ **Scientific name:** *Crocodylus porosus*.
- ❖ **Also called:** Estuarine crocodile, Indo-Pacific crocodile, sea crocodile, or "saltie".
- ❖ **Apex predator** (hypercarnivorous, opportunistic feeder).

Distribution

- ❖ Native to **saltwater habitats & brackish wetlands**.
- ❖ **Range:** **India's east coast** → Southeast Asia → Northern Australia → Micronesia.

- ❖ In India: Mainly **Sundarbans, Odisha (Bhitarkanika), Andaman & Nicobar Islands**.

Features

- ❖ **Size:**
 - ✓ Male: ~5 m length, ~500 kg.
 - ✓ Female: <3 m length, <100 kg.
- ❖ **Coloration:** Dark greenish-brown with lighter underbelly → camouflage.
- ❖ **Skin:** Thick, armored scales.
- ❖ **Behaviour:** Solitary, territorial (esp. adult males control long stretches of rivers/estuaries).

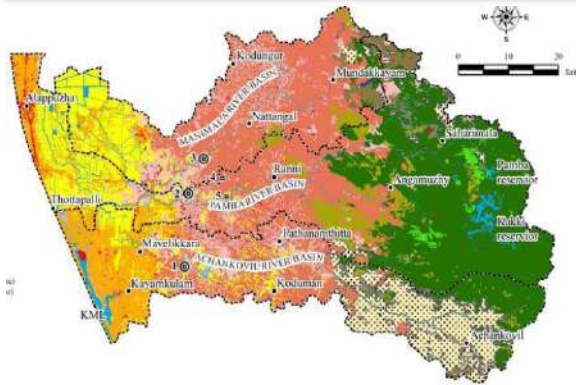
Conservation

- ❖ **IUCN Red List:** *Least Concern*.
- ❖ **India:** Listed under **Schedule I of Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972** → highest protection.
- ❖ **Threats:** Habitat loss (shrinking mangroves, estuaries), human–crocodile conflict, illegal hunting for skin.

Conservation Sites in India

- ❖ **Bhitarkanika National Park (Odisha)** – world's largest nesting site.
- ❖ **Sundarbans (WB)** – key population hotspot.
- ❖ **Andaman & Nicobar Islands**.

Pamba (Pampa) River



Centre initiated steps to include the **Pamba River under the National River Conservation Plan (NRCP)** to control pollution and conserve river ecology.

About the River

- ❖ **Length:** 176 km (3rd longest river in Kerala, after Periyar & Bharathapuzha).
- ❖ **Basin area:** 2,235 sq. km (entirely within Kerala).
- ❖ **Origin:** Pulachimalai Hill, Peerumedu plateau, Western Ghats (1,650 m altitude).
- ❖ **Termination:** Flows westwards, joins **Arabian Sea**, branching into multiple channels.

Religious & Cultural Significance

- ❖ Known as **Dakshina Bhageerathi / Ganga of Kerala**.
- ❖ Strongly associated with **Sabarimala Temple** – pilgrims take a holy dip in the river before climbing.

- ❖ **Thriveni Sangam:** Confluence of **Pamba, Achankovil & Manimala** rivers.

Tributaries

- ❖ **Major tributaries:** Kakki Ar, Azhuta Ar, Kakkad Ar, Kallar, Manimala, Achenkovil.

Ecological & Economic Importance

- ❖ Supports **paddy cultivation, fisheries, and drinking water** needs in central Kerala.
- ❖ Provides **hydropower** (Kakki, Pamba projects).
- ❖ Rich **biodiversity** due to Western Ghats ecosystem.

Issues & Threats

- ❖ **Pollution:** Waste from Sabarimala pilgrimage (plastic, sewage, rituals).
- ❖ **Sand mining, deforestation, encroachments** in catchment area.
- ❖ **Floods:** Pamba basin is prone to heavy floods (2018 Kerala floods)

INS Aridhaman : Nuclear-Powered Ballistic Missile Submarine (SSBN)



- ❖ India is set to induct its **third nuclear-powered ballistic missile submarine (SSBN)** – *INS Aridhaman*.
- ❖ Strengthens India's **second-strike nuclear capability** under its *Credible Minimum Deterrence* policy.

About INS Aridhaman

- ❖ **Class & Project:** Second Arihant-class SSBN; developed under **Advanced Technology Vessel (ATV) Project** at the **Ship Building Centre, Visakhapatnam**.
- ❖ **Displacement & Size:** ~7,000 tonnes; ~125 metres long, 15 m beam, 10 m draft.
- ❖ **Crew:** ~95 (officers + sailors).
- ❖ **Armament:**

- ✓ Capable of carrying **K-4 submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBMs)** (range ~3,500 km).

- ✓ Higher payload capacity than *INS Arihant*.

- ❖ **Technology:**

- 1. Sonar Systems**

- ✓ **USHUS** → advanced sonar for detection and surveillance.
- ✓ **Panchendriya** → unified sonar & tactical control (passive, active, surveillance, intercept).

- 2. Twin flank arrays for enhanced detection.**

- ✓ Underwater communication system for secure operations.

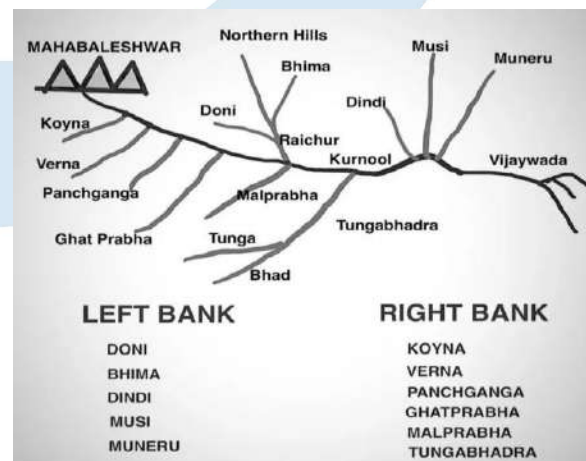
Strategic Importance

- ❖ **Completes Nuclear Triad:** Along with **land-based missiles** (Agni series) & **air-based delivery** (fighter aircrafts), SSBNs ensure survivable second-strike.
- ❖ **Survivability:** Nuclear submarines can remain submerged for months → difficult to detect, strengthening deterrence.
- ❖ **Regional Security:** Counters China's SSBN fleet (*Jin-class*) and Pakistan's ambitions (Babur-3 SLCM).
- ❖ **Strategic Autonomy:** Indigenous capability underlines India's self-reliance in defence.

Krishna River

Heavy rainfall has triggered a **flood-like situation** across the Krishna River basin.

About Krishna River



- ❖ **Type:** East-flowing, peninsular river of **South-Central India**.
- ❖ **Length:** ~1,290 km (800 miles).
- ❖ **Origin:** Near *Mahabaleshwar* (Western Ghats, Maharashtra).
- ❖ **Course:** Flows through **Maharashtra** → **Karnataka** → **Telangana** → **Andhra Pradesh**, drains into **Bay of Bengal** at *Hamsaladevi* (Andhra Pradesh).
- ❖ **Basin Area:** ~2,58,948 sq. km (~8% of India's geographical area).

Boundaries of Basin

- ❖ **North** → Balaghat range.
- ❖ **South & East** → Eastern Ghats.
- ❖ **West** → Western Ghats.

Major Tributaries

- ❖ **Left Bank:** *Bhima, Musi*.
- ❖ **Right Bank:** *Ghataprabha, Malaprabha, Tungabhadra*

Importance

- ❖ **Irrigation & Hydropower:** Lifeline for agriculture in Maharashtra, Karnataka, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh.
- ❖ **Dams:** Major projects include **Nagarjuna Sagar, Srisailem, Almatti, Tungabhadra dam**.
- ❖ **Inter-State Water Disputes:** Krishna Water Disputes Tribunal (KWDT-I, KWDT-II) resolved sharing between riparian states.

- ❖ **Cultural Significance:** Sacred river; associated with pilgrim sites like *Pandharpur, Vijayawada*

Exercise Maitree 2025



Key Facts

- ❖ **Type:** Bilateral military exercise between **India & Thailand**.
- ❖ **Edition:** 14th.
- ❖ **Venue:** Umroi, Meghalaya (Sept 1–14, 2025).
- ❖ **Focus:**
 - ✓ Joint **counter-terrorism operations** in semi-urban terrain.
 - ✓ Exchange of **tactics, techniques & procedures (TTPs)**.
 - ✓ **Company-level operations** for better interoperability.

Significance

- ❖ Returns to **India after 5 years** (last in Tak Province, Thailand, 2019).

- ❖ Strengthens **India–Thailand defence cooperation** under India’s **Act East Policy**.
- ❖ Enhances **people-to-people ties** and **regional security architecture**.
- ❖ Builds **interoperability** between Indian Army & Royal Thai Army.

Participation

- ❖ Previous edition (Thailand, 2019):
- ✓ **76 soldiers each.**
- ✓ India: *Ladakh Scouts.*
- ✓ Thailand: *1st Battalion, 14th Infantry Regiment.*
- ❖ This edition: Similar **company-level participation** expected.

Strategic Context

- ❖ Thailand = key partner in **ASEAN & Indo-Pacific security**.
- ❖ India’s exercises with ASEAN nations (e.g., **Garuda Shakti with Indonesia, Maitree with Thailand, Shakti with France**) expand strategic depth.
- ❖ Helps counter **terrorism, transnational crime, and regional instability**.

Vithalbhai Patel (1873–1933)

Delhi Assembly’s 2025 conference on him highlights his **underappreciated influence in shaping legislative institutions**

Who was he?

- ❖ Born **27 Sept 1873**, elder brother of **Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel**.
- ❖ A **lawyer, legislator, nationalist leader, and co-founder of the Swaraj Party**.
- ❖ Among the **earliest Indians to shape legislative politics** under colonial rule.

Political Journey

- ❖ Entered politics **before Sardar Patel**, winning a seat in the **Bombay Legislative Council**.
- ❖ Initially in Congress, but **ideological differences with Gandhi** (esp. after Chauri Chaura, 1922) made him leave.
- ❖ **1923**: Co-founded **Swaraj Party** with C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru.
- ✓ Strategy: Contest elections, enter legislatures, **block and expose colonial governance from within**.

Legislative Achievements

- ❖ **1923**: Elected to the **Central Legislative Assembly**.
- ❖ **1925**: Became the **first Indian President (Speaker) of the Assembly**.
- ✓ Ensured neutrality, discipline, and effective debates — setting precedents for today’s **Lok Sabha Speaker’s role**.
- ❖ Known for his **wit, sharp arguments, and oratory**.

- ❖ Symbolised the transition from **mass movements to parliamentary obstructionism** as a tool of resistance.

Global Engagement

- ❖ Travelled abroad to **mobilise international opinion** for Indian freedom.
- ❖ Died in **Geneva, Switzerland (22 Oct 1933)**, where he was in touch with revolutionary networks.

Legacy & Significance

- ❖ Remembered as a **pioneer of India's parliamentary democracy**.
- ❖ His role anticipated the **constitutional framework of free India** — making legislatures more representative and assertive.

Mudumalai Tiger Reserve

- ❖ A **12-year-old tigress** died recently in **Singara range** of MTR after prolonged sickness.
- ❖ Highlights the challenges of **wildlife health monitoring** at the forest–human boundary

Location & Geography



- ❖ **District:** Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu.
- ❖ **Area:** 321 sq. km.
- ❖ **Tri-junction of Tamil Nadu–Karnataka–Kerala.**
- ❖ Part of the **Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve** (India's first Biosphere Reserve, 1986).
- ❖ **Boundaries:**
 - ✓ West → Wayanad WLS (Kerala)
 - ✓ North → Bandipur TR (Karnataka)
 - ✓ South & East → Nilgiris North Division
 - ✓ South-West → Gudalur Forest Division
- ❖ **Elevation:** 960–1266 m, **undulating terrain**.
- ❖ **River:** Moyar River (tributary of Bhavani) flows through.
- ❖ **Etymology:** *Mudumalai = ancient hill range*, dating back **~65 million years** (formation of Western Ghats).

Habitat & Flora

- ❖ **Varied ecosystems:** tropical evergreen, moist deciduous, moist & dry teak forests, secondary grasslands, swamps (*vayals*).
- ❖ **Vegetation highlights:**
 - ✓ *Elephant Grass* (tall grasses)
 - ✓ Bamboo (giant variety)
 - ✓ Valuable timber: Teak, Rosewood
 - ✓ Wild relatives of crops: wild rice, ginger, turmeric, cinnamon

Fauna

- ❖ **Herbivores:** Elephant, gaur, sambar, four-horned antelope, spotted deer, barking deer, blackbuck, wild pig, mouse deer.
- ❖ **Predators:** Tiger, leopard, wild dogs (dhole).
- ❖ **Avifauna:** ~8% of India's bird species present here.

Conservation & Significance

- ❖ **Declared TR:** 2007, under **Project Tiger**.
- ❖ Forms a critical part of the **Nilgiri Elephant Corridor** (largest in Asia).
- ❖ Linked with Bandipur–Nagarhole–Wayanad forest landscape = crucial for tiger and elephant movement.
- ❖ Home to **Theppakadu Elephant Camp** (famous from the **Oscar-winning documentary *The Elephant Whisperers***).

Export Promotion Mission

Announced in **Union Budget 2025-26**.

- ❖ Seeks to boost India's exports, particularly MSMEs, at a time when **global demand is slowing** and **tariff/non-tariff barriers** are rising (e.g., U.S. tariff hike).
- ❖ Government has earmarked **₹25,000 crore (FY 2025–31)** for implementation.

Objectives

1. **Broad-based export growth** – reduce concentration on a few commodities and markets.
2. **Inclusive participation** – integrate MSMEs, handicrafts, and smaller exporters into global value chains.
3. **Sustainability** – promote compliance with international quality, labour, and environmental standards.
4. **Resilience** – address bottlenecks in export financing, logistics, and branding.

Institutional Framework

- ❖ **Lead Ministry:** Department of Commerce.
- ❖ **Jointly Driven By:**
 - ✓ Ministry of Commerce & Industry,
 - ✓ Ministry of MSME,
 - ✓ Ministry of Finance.

Two Sub-Schemes

1. **Niryat Protsahan (₹10,000+ crore)**
 - ❖ Focus: **Financial support** for exporters.
 - ❖ **Components:**
 - ✓ **Interest Equalisation Support** – ~₹5,000 crore over FY 2025–31.
 - ✓ **Alternative Trade Finance** – factoring, forfaiting, cross-border credit.
 - ✓ **Credit Card for E-commerce Exporters** – easy access to working capital.

- ✓ Financing mechanisms to address **liquidity crunch**.

2. Niryat Disha (₹14,500+ crore)

- ❖ Focus: **Market Access & Competitiveness**.
- ❖ **Components:**
- ✓ Export **quality compliance** (~₹4,000 crore).
- ✓ **Overseas market development** (~₹4,000 crore).
- ✓ **Branding & promotion** of Indian products globally.
- ✓ **Export warehousing & logistics hubs** abroad.
- ✓ **Capacity building** – skill training & tech adoption for MSMEs.

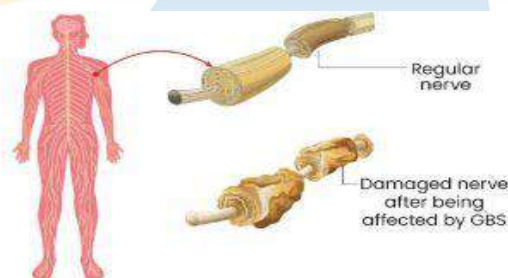
Expected Benefits

- ❖ Eases **export financing constraints**, especially for MSMEs.
- ❖ Helps India tackle **non-tariff barriers** (NTBs) in global markets.
- ❖ Improves India's participation in **global value chains (GVCs)**.
- ❖ Supports **job creation** in labour-intensive sectors like textiles, gems & jewellery, handicrafts.
- ❖ Strengthens India's **long-term export resilience** amid global protectionism.

Criticism / Challenges

- ❖ Need for **timely fund disbursal**; past export incentive schemes (like MEIS) suffered from delays.
- ❖ WTO-compliance concerns – subsidies and interest equalisation may face global scrutiny.
- ❖ Effectiveness depends on **coordination between ministries** and alignment with FTAs.
- ❖ Risk of **overemphasis on subsidies** instead of structural reforms (logistics costs, regulatory simplification).

Guillain-Barré Syndrome



- GBS, an autoimmune condition is quite rare.
- In this neurological disorder, the immune system starts attacking its own nerves.
- This leads to a sudden weakness in the hands and legs, making it difficult to even stand or sit.
- GBS can generally be treated through a medical course. The patient starts walking without support in 2-3 weeks.
- In most cases of GBS, the patient recovers fully but in some instances weakness in the body persists.
- There are approximately 1 lakh cases of GBS across the world annually. Patients are mostly male.

- ❖ A **rare autoimmune disorder** where the body's **immune system mistakenly attacks the peripheral nervous system** (nerves outside the brain & spinal cord).
- ❖ Also called **Acute Inflammatory Demyelinating Polyradiculoneuropathy (AIDP)**.

- ❖ Results in muscle weakness, sensory changes, and in severe cases, **full-body paralysis**.

Causes & Triggers

- ❖ **Exact cause unknown.**
- ❖ Often follows:
 - ✓ Viral or bacterial infection (e.g., Campylobacter, Zika, Influenza).
 - ✓ Vaccination.
 - ✓ Major surgery or trauma.
- ❖ The immune system becomes **hyperactive**, damaging nerve myelin sheaths and impairing signal transmission.

Symptoms

- ❖ Starts with **fever, tingling, or weakness in legs**, progressing upwards (ascending paralysis).
- ❖ **Loss of reflexes**, numbness, difficulty walking.
- ❖ Severe cases → paralysis of respiratory muscles → **need for ventilator support**.
- ❖ Symptoms may peak within **hours to weeks**.

Treatment

- ❖ **No definitive cure**, but therapies can improve recovery:
 - ✓ **Plasma exchange (plasmapheresis)** – removes harmful antibodies.

- ✓ **Intravenous Immunoglobulin (IVIG)** – blocks damaging antibodies.

- ✓ **Supportive care** – physiotherapy, ventilatory support, pain management.

❖ Prognosis:

- ✓ Most recover within **6 months to a few years**.
- ✓ Mortality: 5–7%.
- ✓ Some may have residual weakness or fatigue.

Aadi Vaani App

- ❖ **App:** *Aadi Vaani* — an AI-based translation model for Adivasi languages.
- ❖ **Launch:** Beta version to be released on **Monday** by the **Ministry of Tribal Affairs**.
- ❖ **Part of:** **Adi Karmayogi initiative** → capacity building in tribal districts.

Languages Covered (Phase 1)

- ❖ **Bhili (Bhilodi)** → 1.04 crore speakers (Rajasthan, MP, Maharashtra, Gujarat).
- ❖ **Santali** → 73.68 lakh (Jharkhand, Odisha, WB, Bihar, Assam).
- ❖ **Gondi** → 29.84 lakh (Chhattisgarh, MP, AP, Maharashtra).
- ❖ **Mundari** → 11.28 lakh (Jharkhand, Odisha).
- ❖ **Kui** → 9.41 lakh (Odisha).

- ❖ **Garo** → 11.45 lakh (Meghalaya, Assam).

How it works

- ❖ Translates **speech and text** between Hindi/English and these six languages.
- ❖ Database: **1 lakh+ sentences per language**, built with help of **school teachers, professors, researchers, community leaders**.
- ❖ Developed with support from **IIT Delhi, BITS Pilani, IIIT Hyderabad, IIIT Naya Raipur, and Tribal Research Institutes**.
- ❖ Training data included **Adivasi folklore, songs, and even PM Modi's speeches**.

Analysis

- ❖ **Cultural Preservation:** Helps protect endangered tribal languages while making them **digitally accessible**.
- ❖ **Governance Impact:** Enables better communication between government officials and tribal communities.
- ❖ **AI & Inclusivity:** Example of **AI for social good**—bridging language gaps in governance and education.
- ❖ **Challenges:**
 - ✓ Finding enough **linguistic experts** is time-consuming.
 - ✓ Expanding beyond 6 languages to India's **750+ tribal dialects** will be resource-intensive.
- ❖ **Way Forward:** Wider usage will improve accuracy of the large language model

(LLM). Could eventually support **education, healthcare, and welfare delivery** in tribal areas

Gangotri Glacier System



- ❖ **Constituent Glaciers:** Meru (7 km²), Raktavaran (30 km²), Chaturangi (75 km²), Gangotri (140 km²).
- ❖ **Area:** 549 km² (48% glacierised).
- ❖ **Elevation:** 3,767 – 7,072 m.
- ❖ **Precipitation sources:**
 - ✓ **Winter:** Western Disturbances.
 - ✓ **Summer:** Indian Monsoon.

Summary of Findings

- ❖ **Peak Discharge Shift:**
 - ✓ Before 1990 → Peak discharge in **August**.
 - ✓ After 1990 → Peak shifted to **July**, due to reduced winter precipitation + early summer melting.
- ❖ **Discharge Composition (1980–2020):**

- ✓ Snowmelt → **64%**
- ✓ Glacier melt → **21%**
- ✓ Rainfall-runoff → **11%**
- ✓ Base flow → **4%**

❖ Trends Observed

- ✓ **Snow cover declining**, leading to reduced snowmelt contribution.
- ✓ **Rainfall-runoff and base flow rising** due to warming + intense monsoon rains.
- ✓ **Mean annual temperature rising**, but no significant change in overall precipitation.
- ✓ Maximum discharge in July (129 m³/s).
- ❖ **Control Factors:** Summer precipitation and winter temperature are key drivers of GGS hydrology.

Climate Change and the Water Cycle (Gangotri System)

- ❖ **Earlier snowmelt:** Warmer summers → faster melting, earlier peak discharge.
- ❖ **Reduced winter snow:** Declining winter precipitation from western disturbances → thinner snow cover.
- ❖ **Increased rainfall impact:** Stronger monsoons add to rainfall-runoff, intensifying floods downstream.
- ❖ **Changing hydrological balance:** Shift from **snowmelt dominance** → **rainfall-runoff dominance**, making water flow less predictable.

- ❖ **Risk of extreme events:** Erratic floods, mislabelled as “cloudbursts,” stem from warming-induced heavy rainfall events

Implications

- ❖ **For water security:** Earlier snowmelt → risk of reduced late-summer flows in the Bhagirathi-Ganga system.
- ❖ **For agriculture & energy:** Uncertain water availability for irrigation + hydropower.
- ❖ **For disaster risk:** Rising rainfall-runoff increases **flash flood** vulnerability in Uttarakhand.
- ❖ **For policy:** Need for **better monitoring of glacier-fed rivers**, early warning systems, and adaptation strategies in Himalayan states

Did You Know 🧠?

The **Ganga River**, which originates from the **Gangotri Glacier at Gomukh**, travels over **2,525 km** before reaching the Bay of Bengal, supporting **more than 400 million people** along its basin — making it one of the **most densely populated river basins in the world**.

Educate Girls Wins Ramon Magsaysay Award 2025

About Educate Girls

- **Organisation:** Foundation to Educate Girls Globally (Educate Girls).
- **Founder:** *Safeena Husain* (2007).
- **Current CEO:** *Gayatri Nair Lobo*.
- **Work:**
 - Focus on **girls' education in rural and remote areas**, starting from Rajasthan.
 - Identifies **out-of-school and unschooled girls**.
 - Ensures their **enrolment, retention, and transition** to higher education and employment.
 - Uses community volunteers (*Team Balika, Preraks*) to mobilise families and challenge social barriers.

Significance of Award

- **First Indian non-profit** to win the Ramon Magsaysay Award.
- Recognition of a **people-powered movement** that challenged gender norms, uplifted families, and reshaped communities.
- Reflects India's growing global visibility in **grassroots social change models**.

Ramon Magsaysay Award

- **Established:** 1958.
- **Named after:** *Ramon Magsaysay*, former President of the Philippines (1953–1957), celebrated for integrity and service.

- **Administered by:** Ramon Magsaysay Award Foundation, Manila.
- **Often called:** "*Asia's Nobel Prize*".
- **Objective:** To honor "*greatness of spirit and transformative leadership in Asia*".
- **Fields recognized:** Government service, public service, community leadership, journalism, peace and international understanding, and emergent leadership.
- **Indian Winners in the Past** (select):
 - Vinoba Bhave (1958), Jayaprakash Narayan (1965), Verghese Kurien (1963), Kiran Bedi (1994), Aruna Roy (2000), Arvind Kejriwal (2006)

Did You Know ?

Ramon Magsaysay Award recognizes greatness of spirit and transformative leadership in areas like **public service, journalism, literature, peace, and community leadership**.

Diatoms – The Microscopic Powerhouses

What are Diatoms?

- Single-celled, photosynthetic organisms
- Belong to phytoplankton, the base of the aquatic food chain.
- Unique feature: Cell walls made of silica (frustules) with intricate, species-specific patterns.

Habitat

- Found in all aquatic environments – oceans, rivers, lakes, ponds, sediments, and on submerged.
- Can live free-floating (planktonic) or attached (benthic).

Ecological Importance

- Oxygen production: Contribute ~50% of global oxygen supply through photosynthesis.
- Carbon sink: Sequester CO₂ → regulate Earth's carbon cycle.
- Food chain base: Feed zooplankton, molluscs, fish, and higher aquatic organisms.
- Water quality indicator: Extremely sensitive to changes in water chemistry → used in bio-monitoring.
- Nutrient cycling: Play a key role in marine and freshwater nutrient dynamics

Current Affairs Link (2025)

- New species discovered: *Climaconeis heteropolaris*.
- Collaboration between Indian and international researchers.
- Expands knowledge of biodiversity, taxonomy, and aquatic ecology

Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI)

Current Context (August 2025)

- India's Manufacturing PMI → 59.3, a 17-year high.

- Driven by strong domestic demand, production growth, and hiring.
- Challenges: U.S. tariffs at 50% on Indian goods slowed export order growth.
- Implication: Signals robust domestic-led growth momentum, but external trade risks remain

What is PMI?

- The Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) is an economic indicator derived from monthly surveys of private sector companies.
- It reflects the prevailing direction of economic trends in manufacturing and services.
- PMI is published separately for:
 - Manufacturing PMI
 - Services PMI
- In India, PMI data is released by HSBC and compiled by S&P Global.

How is it Measured?

- PMI is based on five major indicators:
 1. New orders
 2. Output (production)
 3. Employment
 4. Suppliers' delivery times
 5. Stock of purchases
- Index Scale:
 - Above 50 → Expansion in activity
 - Below 50 → Contraction
 - Exactly 50 → No change

Importance of PMI

1. Economic Health Barometer – Provides early insight into the health of the economy, even before official GDP data is released.
2. Policy Making – RBI tracks PMI trends for monetary policy decisions.
3. Investor Confidence – Guides investment sentiment in stock and bond markets.
4. Business Planning – Helps firms plan output, pricing, and hiring.

Limitations

- PMI covers only private sector firms, excluding public sector enterprises.
- It is a survey-based indicator, reflecting perception, not actual output data.
- Short-term fluctuations can sometimes mask long-term trends.

Katchatheevu Dispute

Recent Developments (2024–25)

- Sri Lankan President Dissanayake's Surprise Visit (Sept 2025):
 - Asserted sovereignty over Katchatheevu and surrounding seas.
 - Message: No external influence will be tolerated.
- Trigger: Actor Vijay (political entrant) in Madurai rally demanded "retrieval" of Katchatheevu.

What is Katchatheevu?

- Small uninhabited island (285 acres) in the Palk Strait.

- Location:
 - 16 km northeast of Rameswaram
 - 14.5 km south of Delft Island
- Known for: Annual St. Anthony's church festival, attended by Indian and Sri Lankan fishermen.

Historical Background

- 1974 Indo-Sri Lankan Maritime Boundary Agreement – India recognized Katchatheevu as Sri Lankan territory (under Indira Gandhi–Sirimavo Bandaranaike deal).
- 1976 Agreement – Both countries agreed that their fishermen would not fish in each other's waters.
- Political controversy: Many Tamil Nadu leaders allege India "ceded" territory without Parliament approval.

Core Issue: Fishermen's Conflict

1. Tamil Nadu fishermen
 - Use bottom trawlers, which are destructive and encroach into Sri Lankan waters.
 - Often arrested by the Sri Lankan Navy.
2. Sri Lankan fishermen
 - Still recovering from decades of civil war.
 - Complain that Indian trawlers deplete marine resources near their coast.
3. Impact –
 - Humanitarian (arrests, imprisonment).

- Economic (loss of livelihood).
- Diplomatic (recurring India–Sri Lanka tension).

PM Modi Receives First Made-in-India Vikram 32-bit Chip

Context

- At **Semicon India 2025**, Union IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw presented PM Modi a memento containing the **'Made in India' Vikram 32-bit Processor (Launch Vehicle Grade chip)**.
- Marks a milestone in **India's semiconductor and space technology self-reliance**.

About the Vikram 32-bit Chip

- **Designed & developed by:**
 - *Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (ISRO)*
 - *Semiconductor Laboratory (SCL), Chandigarh*
- **Use:** Avionics systems of ISRO's launch vehicles.
- **Upgrade:**
 - Based on earlier *VIKRAM1601 (16-bit)* microprocessor (used since 2009).
 - Now a **refurbished, advanced 32-bit version** → more computing power, reliability, and mission safety.

Other Highlights from Semicon India 2025

- Memento also showcased **31 prototype chips** developed by academic institutions (IIT Jammu, IIT Roorkee, IIT Dhanbad, NIT Durgapur, NIT Calicut, IIT Ropar, etc.).
- **Semiconductor ecosystem progress:**
 - *5 semiconductor units* under construction.
 - *Pilot line* of one unit already completed.
 - *2 units* expected to start production in coming months.

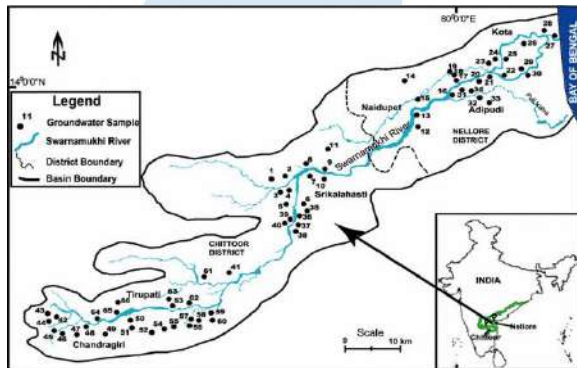
Significance

1. **Strategic Autonomy in Space Tech**
 - Reduces dependence on imported chips for launch vehicle avionics.
 - Ensures **supply chain security** in sensitive sectors like defence & space.
2. **Boost to Semiconductor Mission**
 - India launched **Semicon India programme (2021)** with ₹76,000 crore outlay.
 - Aim: Position India as a global hub for **semiconductor design & manufacturing**.
3. **Academia-Industry Collaboration**
 - Involvement of IITs and NITs in chip prototyping nurtures **talent pool** and strengthens R&D ecosystem.
4. **Global Relevance**
 - In a world facing **semiconductor supply chain disruptions**, India positions itself as a **trusted**

manufacturing hub with *stable policies & incentives*.

Swarnamukhi River & Operation SWARNA

Tirupati Urban Development Authority (TUDA) has launched **Operation SWARNA** → aim is to **rescue Swarnamukhi River from land encroachments, revive its flow, and rejuvenate the ecosystem**.



About Swarnamukhi River

- **Location:** Andhra Pradesh (east-flowing river).
- **Catchment area:** ~3,225 sq. km (small basin).
- **Length:** ~130 km.
- **Origin:** Eastern Ghats, near *Pakala village*, Chittoor district (300 m elevation).
- **Course:**
 - Flows NE through Tirupati hills.
 - Passes through *Tirumala* and *Srikalahasti* (famous for Srikalahasteeswara Temple).
 - Empties into Bay of Bengal.

Hydrology:

- Independent river → not part of major river systems.
- Rain-fed; rainfall ranges **1270 mm (east)** → **762 mm (west)**.

Tributary: Kalyani River.

- *Kalyani Dam* (constructed 1977) across it → major water source for Tirupati.

Cultural & Religious Significance

- Considered a **sacred river** in the temple towns of Tirumala & Srikalahasti.
- Important for pilgrims visiting Tirupati Balaji temple & Srikalahasteeswara temple

Challenges

- Rampant **land encroachments** and illegal constructions.
- Heavy **dependence on monsoon rainfall** → vulnerable to drought.
- Declining water quality due to **urbanisation & waste dumping**.

Operation SWARNA (TUDA Initiative)

- **Objective:** Clear encroachments, restore natural flow, rejuvenate riverbanks, ensure sustainable water management.
- Part of broader **urban river revival efforts** in India.
- Aligns with **National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)-style rejuvenation models** for smaller rivers

Air Quality Life Index (AQLI) 2025 Report

What is AQLI?

- A research-based **index measuring the impact of air pollution (PM2.5) on life expectancy**.
- **Developed by:** Michael Greenstone & Energy Policy Institute (EPIC), University of Chicago.
- **Method:** Combines data on long-term pollution exposure + particulate matter levels (PM2.5).
- **Purpose:** Shows *real health cost of air pollution* in terms of lost years of life expectancy.

Highlights – India (2025 Report)

- **India's Most Severe Health Threat:**
 - **Life expectancy reduced by 3.5 years** (national average).
- **Comparison with Other Risks:**
 - 2× greater impact than malnutrition.
 - 5× greater impact than unsafe water/sanitation.
- **Pollution Spread:**
 - All **1.4 billion Indians** live in areas exceeding WHO's PM2.5 safe limit ($5 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$).
- **Regional Impact:**
 - **Northern Belt = World's Most Polluted Zone.**

- **Delhi-NCR:** Life expectancy loss of **8.2 years** (WHO standard).
- **Bihar:** –5.6 years | **Haryana:** –5.3 years | **UP:** –5 years.

- **Even by India's weaker standard ($40 \mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$):** Delhi-NCR residents lose **4.74 years**.
- **46% of Indians** live in areas exceeding even India's PM2.5 limit.
- **Potential Gains:**
 - Meeting India's standards → +1.5 years.
 - Meeting WHO's stricter limit → +9.4 months (even in cleaner regions).

South Asia Context

- **Most polluted region globally.**
- PM2.5 concentration **rose 2.8% in 2023** after a brief dip in 2022.
- Air pollution cuts **3 years off average life expectancy** across South Asia.
- In most affected zones → **life reduced by 8+ years**

Aircraft Leasing: Wet vs. Dry vs. Damp

Wet Lease

- **Includes:** Aircraft + Crew (pilots, cabin crew) + Maintenance + Insurance.
- **Responsibility split:**
 - *Lessor* → handles operational aspects.
 - *Lessee* → decides commercial ops (routes, schedules).

- **Use case:** Short-term needs (seasonal spikes, route trials, aircraft shortages).
- **Limitation:** DGCA discourages wet leases in India → crew may not meet Indian approval standards.

Dry Lease

- **Includes:** Only the aircraft (no crew, maintenance, or insurance).
- **Responsibility:** Lessee arranges crew, maintenance (per DGCA norms), and insurance.
- **Use case:** Long-term fleet expansion/modernization.
- **Advantage:** Greater control + cost efficiency over long term.

Damp Lease (Partial Wet Lease)

- **Includes:** Aircraft + Flight crew + Maintenance.
- **Excludes:** Cabin crew (provided by lessee).
- **Use case:** A middle ground between wet & dry lease; often used when cultural/linguistic familiarity of cabin crew is important.

Indian Context

- **Governed by:** DGCA under Civil Aviation regulations.
- **Relevance:** Post-pandemic, airlines face delivery delays due to global supply chain disruptions → leasing helps maintain fleet strength.
- **Challenge:** DGCA restricts wet leases to safeguard safety + regulatory compliance

Foreigners Tribunal (FT)

What is a Foreigners Tribunal?

- **Quasi-judicial bodies** created under the **Foreigners (Tribunals) Order, 1964** (issued under Section 3 of the **Foreigners Act, 1946**).
- **Mandate:** Decide whether a person is a **foreigner (illegal immigrant)** or an Indian citizen.
- **Unique role in Assam** (due to illegal migration concerns from Bangladesh).

Composition

- Headed by **members drawn from retired judges, advocates, or civil servants** with judicial experience.
- Enjoy powers of a **civil court** under CPC, 1908, and now also of a **judicial magistrate (first class)**.

Powers (Pre-2025 Order)

- Summon and examine people on oath.
- Call for documents.
- Decide citizenship status within **60 days**.
- If declared a foreigner → person could be sent to **detention centres (transit camps)** for deportation.

Are FTs unique to Assam?

- **Order of 1964 applies nationwide**, but FTs operate mainly in **Assam**.
- In other States → suspected foreigners are produced before **local courts** under Foreigners Act, 1946.
- **2019 Amendment** → States also empowered to set up FTs (earlier only Centre could).

2025 Update: Immigration & Foreigners Act, 2025

- Replaces **Foreigners (Tribunal) Order, 1964** with **Immigration and Foreigners Order, 2025**.
- **Key changes:**
 - FTs can **issue arrest warrants** against suspected foreigners who fail to appear.
 - Power to **detain individuals** pending verification.
 - Powers of:
 - **Civil Court** (CPC, 1908) – summon witnesses, call for documents, issue commissions.
 - **Judicial Magistrate First Class** (BNSS, 2023) – issue warrants, enforce attendance, direct personal appearance.
- Makes FTs much stronger → judicial + quasi-criminal powers.

Significance

- Seen as part of India's tighter **immigration & citizenship enforcement regime**.
- Crucial for handling **illegal immigration cases** (esp. in Assam, border States).
- Raises debates on **due process, human rights, and detention policies**

Land Subsidence

Definition

- Land subsidence = **gradual settling or sudden sinking** of the Earth's surface.

- Occurs when the ground **loses strength or support capacity**, causing downward displacement.

Causes

Natural Factors

- Volcanic activity
- Earthquakes & tectonic shifts
- Collapse of underground cavities
- Compaction of fine-grained sediments

Anthropogenic Factors

- **Excessive groundwater extraction** (most common → leads to compaction of aquifers)
 - Mining activities
 - Subsurface energy extraction (oil, gas, geothermal)
- **Rapid urbanisation** → load on fragile geology

Impacts

- **Infrastructure damage** – cracks in roads, buildings, railways, pipelines.
- **Water risk** – higher flood vulnerability, altered stream gradients, aquifer storage loss.
- **Agricultural distress** – reduced soil productivity.
- **Saltwater intrusion** – especially in coastal regions.
- **High economic costs** – recurring repair & disaster management.

Global Extent

- ~**12 million sq. km.** of Earth's surface susceptible.

- Major hotspots: **USA, China, Iran, Indonesia, Taiwan, Vietnam, Egypt, Japan, Mexico, Italy.**

India & Uttarakhand Context

- Traditionally linked to **deltaic/coastal regions** (e.g., Indo-Gangetic basin, Punjab, Haryana).
- Now appearing in **mountainous zones** like **Chamoli (Nanda Nagar, Uttarakhand)** → worsened by:
 - Unregulated groundwater withdrawal
 - Fragile Himalayan geology
 - Climate-induced extreme events (cloudbursts, floods, landslides)
 - Infrastructure pressure (hydropower projects, road widening, tunnelling)

Global Peace Index (GPI) 2025

About GPI

- Released by: **Institute for Economics & Peace (IEP).**
- Coverage: **163 independent states & territories** → **99.7% of world population.**
- Indicators: **23 qualitative & quantitative**, across 3 domains:
 1. **Societal Safety & Security**
 2. **Ongoing Domestic & International Conflict**
 3. **Degree of Militarisation**

Key Highlights (2025 Edition – 19th)

- **Global Peace continues to decline:** deterioration by **0.36%** from 2024.

- **59 active state-based conflicts** → highest since **WWII.**

- **Conflict resolution declining:**

- Decisive victory dropped from **49% (1970s) → 9% (2010s).**
- Peace agreements dropped from **23% → 4%.**

- **17 countries** recorded **>1,000 conflict deaths** last year.

Top & Bottom Rankings

- **Most Peaceful:** Iceland (since 2008), followed by **Ireland, Austria, New Zealand, Switzerland.**
- **Least Peaceful:** Russia (for first time) → Ukraine, Sudan, DR Congo, Yemen.

Regional Trends

- **Most Peaceful Region:** Western & Central Europe (8 of top 10), but peace declining in past 4 years.
- **Least Peaceful Region:** Middle East & North Africa (MENA).
- **South Asia:** 2nd least peaceful; largest regional decline.
- **Only Region with Improvement:** South America.

India's Position

- **Rank 115** (↑ one place from 116 in 2024).
- Regional peers (Asia-Pacific best performers):
 - Singapore (6), Japan (12), Malaysia (13), Bhutan (21), Mongolia (37).

- India's challenges: internal conflicts, border tensions, communal violence, militarisation

- **High Court Judge** with at least **7 years' service**.

Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT)

Judicial Member eligibility:

- Judge of High Court with at least **5 years' service**.

Why in News?

- **Jane Street Group (US-based trading firm)** has filed an appeal in the **Securities Appellate Tribunal (SAT)** against SEBI in an alleged **market manipulation case**.

Technical Member eligibility:

- Secretary/Additional Secretary in GoI/State Govt, OR
- Expert with **15+ years' professional experience** in financial sector (securities, pensions, insurance, derivatives).

About SAT

- **Statutory body** under the **SEBI Act, 1992**.
- **Quasi-judicial body** → hears and disposes of appeals against orders of:
 - SEBI,
 - Adjudicating Officers under SEBI Act,
 - IRDAI (insurance cases),
 - PFRDA (pension-related cases).
- **Jurisdiction:** Entire India.
- **Location:** Mumbai.

Appointment:

- By **Central Government**, in consultation with **Chief Justice of India (CJI)** or nominee.

Tenure

- **5 years**, reappointment allowed for **one more term (max 5 years)**.
- **Age limit:** 70 years.

Powers

- Same as a **Civil Court**:
 - Summon & enforce attendance of witnesses.
 - Examine witnesses under oath.
 - Discovery & production of documents.
 - Receive evidence.

Composition

- **Presiding Officer** + judicial & technical members (as notified by Centre).

Presiding Officer eligibility:

- Retired/sitting **Supreme Court judge**, or
- **Chief Justice of a High Court**, or

Appeals Mechanism

- **Who can appeal?** Any person aggrieved by SEBI/IRDAI/PFRDA order (investors, companies, intermediaries, market participants).

- **Against SAT orders:** Appeal lies to the **Supreme Court**, but only on **questions of law**.

- **6 years** → FY 2025–26 to FY 2030–31.
- **Outlay:** ₹1,500 crore.

Significance

- Provides **specialised judicial oversight** in financial markets.
- Prevents **arbitrary use of SEBI powers**.
- Ensures **investor confidence, accountability, and fairness** in India's financial system

Incentive Scheme to Promote Critical Mineral Recycling

Why in News?

- The **Union Cabinet** has approved a **₹1,500 crore scheme** to promote **critical mineral recycling** in India.
- Aim: Develop recycling capacity for separation & production of critical minerals from **secondary sources** like e-waste and lithium-ion battery (LIB) scrap.
- Part of **National Critical Mineral Mission (NCMM)**.

About the Scheme

Objectives

- Build **domestic capacity** & reduce import dependence.
- Strengthen **supply chain resilience** in critical minerals.
- Encourage **circular economy** practices.

Duration

Key Features

1. Eligible Feedstock

- **E-waste**
- **Lithium-ion battery (LIB) scrap**
- Other industrial scraps

2. Beneficiaries

- Large established recyclers
- Small/new recyclers & start-ups → **1/3rd outlay earmarked** for them

3. Scope

- Investments in **new units, expansion, modernization, and diversification** of existing units.

4. Value Chain Coverage

- Incentives apply to **actual mineral extraction** from recycling → **not just black mass production**.

Incentive Structure

• Capital Subsidy:

- **20% subsidy** on plant & machinery for projects starting production on time.

• Operational Subsidy:

- Linked to incremental sales.
- **40% in 2nd year + 60% in 5th year** (if sales targets met).

• Incentive Caps:

- Large entities → ₹50 crore (ops subsidy capped at ₹10 crore).

- Small entities → ₹25 crore (ops subsidy capped at ₹5 crore).

Expected Outcomes

- **Recycling capacity:** 270 kilotons/year.
- **Critical mineral output:** ~40 kilotons/year.
- **Investment generation:** ₹8,000 crore.
- **Jobs creation:** ~70,000 (direct & indirect).

Significance

- Supports **energy transition** (EV batteries, renewable energy storage).
- Reduces reliance on imports of **rare earths, lithium, cobalt, nickel**.
- Promotes **circular economy & sustainability**.
- Boosts India's role in **global supply chains for critical minerals**

Bhupen Hazarika: Voice of the Brahmaputra, Bard of the Northeast

- Members of the All Assam Students' Union pay tribute to Bhupen Hazarika on his birth anniversary in Guwahati on Monday.
- PM, Home Minister pay rich tribute to the legendary singer-composer;



Hazarika carried Assam to the world through his soulful melodies and made humanity his tune & love his anthem, says CM

Birth & Early Life

- Born: **September 8, 1926** at Sadiya, Assam.
- Childhood spent partly in **Arunachal Pradesh (Bolung village, Lower Dibang Valley)**.
- Studied at **Banaras Hindu University (M.A. in Political Science, 1946)** and later earned a **PhD in Mass Communication (1952)** from Columbia University, USA.

Musical Career & Contribution

- Known as *Sudhakantha* ("nectar-voiced") and the *Bard of Brahmaputra*.
- His music drew deeply from **folk traditions of Assam** while blending universal themes of **humanism, empathy, and unity**.
- Famous compositions include:
 - *Dil Hoom Hoom Kare* (popularized in Bollywood).
 - Assamese classics like *Manuhe Manuhor Babe* (Humans for Humanity).
 - *Jilikabo Luitore Paar* (Gauhati University's anthem).
- He composed for Assamese, Bengali, and Hindi films, creating bridges between **regional and national cultural spheres**.

Awards & Recognitions

- **Bharat Ratna (2019)** – India’s highest civilian honour.
- **Padma Shri (1977), Padma Bhushan (2001).**
- **Sangeet Natak Akademi Award (1987).**
- **Dadasaheb Phalke Award (1992)** for lifetime contribution to cinema.

Notifiable Disease

- **Parliamentary Standing Committee (2025)** recommended declaring **Cancer as a Notifiable Disease** in India.
- Rationale:
 - Enables **robust cancer registry**,
 - Ensures **uniform data collection**,
 - Helps in **policy, screening & treatment planning**.

Definition

- A **notifiable disease** is any disease that, by law, must be **reported to government authorities**.
- Objective: **surveillance, early warning of outbreaks, prevention, and control**.

Why Important?

- Enables **timely monitoring** of public health threats.
- Helps in **early intervention** and **resource allocation**.
- Supports **national and international disease control programs**.

Criteria for Declaring a Disease as Notifiable

1. **National/international concern** (e.g., covered by WHO regulations).
2. **High incidence** at national, State, or district level.
3. **Severity & mortality potential**.
4. **High communicability/outbreak potential**.
5. **Risk of international spread**.
6. **High socio-economic costs**.
7. **Changing epidemiological patterns**.

Responsibility of Reporting

- **Medical practitioners & diagnostic labs** must notify local health departments.
- **State governments** decide which diseases are notifiable → report to medical officers.
- **Central & State lists** may differ → also vary across **urban & rural areas**.

Examples of Notifiable Diseases in India

- **Cholera, Tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, Dengue, Hepatitis, Leprosy, Meningitis, Plague, Measles.**

International Dimension

- **WHO’s International Health Regulations (1969 & updated 2005):**
 - Countries must report **certain infectious diseases** for **global surveillance**.
 - Ensures coordination against **pandemics** and **cross-border threats**.

Himalayan Brown Bear (*Ursus arctos isabellinus*)

Current Issues

- **Rising Human–Bear Conflict** due to:
 - **Climate change** altering alpine ecosystems.
 - **Habituation to human food sources** (garbage, crops, livestock depredation).
 - **Habitat fragmentation** and shrinking prey base.
- Increased conflict observed in **Kashmir & Himachal villages**

Basic Facts

- Also called **Himalayan Red Bear, Isabelline Bear, Dzu-Teh**.
- A **subspecies of the Brown Bear**.

Distribution & Habitat

- Found in **NW & Central Himalayas**: Pakistan, India, Nepal, Tibet (China), Bhutan.
- **Altitude**: 3,000–5,500 m (above timberline, alpine & subalpine habitats).
- In **India**: fragmented populations in **J&K, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand**.

Physical & Behavioural Features

- **Males larger than females**.
- **Diet**: Omnivorous → plants (grasses, roots, bulbs) + insects + small mammals (marmots, pikas, voles).
- **Hibernate** in winter dens.
- **Solitary** except during mating/fighting.

- **Lifespan**: 20–30 years in wild.

Conservation Status

- **IUCN Red List**: *Critically Endangered*.
- **CITES**: Appendix I.
- **Indian Wildlife Protection Act, 1972**: *Schedule I*.



Biodiversity Heritage Sites (BHS)

In News

The Karnataka government recently declared **8.6 acres of green cover at Cantonment Railway Colony, Bengaluru**, as a **Biodiversity Heritage Site (BHS)** — the **second in the city** after Gandhi Krishi Vigyan Kendra (GKVK).

About BHS

- **Definition**: Areas that are **unique, ecologically fragile ecosystems** rich in biodiversity and cultural value, notified under **Section 37 of the Biological Diversity Act, 2002**.
- **Key Features**:

- High **species richness** (wild & domesticated).
- **Endemism** & presence of **rare, threatened, keystone, or evolutionarily significant species**.
- Wild ancestors of cultivated species.
- Fossil beds or cultural/ethical/aesthetic significance.
- Found across **terrestrial, aquatic, coastal, and marine ecosystems**.
- **Legal Framework:**
 - **State Governments**, in consultation with local bodies, notify BHS.
 - No compulsory restriction on community practices — unless **voluntarily** decided.
 - State may **compensate or rehabilitate** people economically affected by such declaration.
 - Objective: **Conservation + improving quality of life of local communities**.

Important Facts

First BHS in India (2007): *Nallur Tamarind Grove*, Bengaluru, Karnataka.

BHS in Bengaluru:

1. Gandhi Krishi Vigyan Kendra (GKVK)
2. Cantonment Railway Colony (2025)

strengthening its capital base for financing **green energy projects**.

About Perpetual Bonds

- **Definition:** Fixed-income securities with **no maturity date** — they pay interest indefinitely.
- **Other Names:** *Perps* or *Consol Bonds*.
- **Issuer's Obligation:**
 - No mandatory redemption of principal.
 - Principal is repaid **only if issuer exercises the call option**.
- **Call Option:** Allows issuer to redeem bonds after a set period (5–10 years).

Features

- **Hybrid Nature:** Debt instrument with equity-like traits.
- **Priority in Bankruptcy:**
 - Paid **after secured creditors** but **before shareholders**.
- **Interest Rate:** Higher than normal bonds to compensate for **indefinite tenure & risk**.
- **Interest Rate Sensitivity:** Market price fluctuates heavily with interest rate changes.
- **Accounting Treatment:** Often treated as **equity**, helping issuers raise funds without diluting ownership.

Perpetual Bonds

The Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency Ltd (IREDA) raised **₹453 crore at 7.70% per annum** through its second issue of **Perpetual Bonds**,

In India

- Mainly issued by **banks & financial institutions** to meet **capital adequacy norms**.
- Example: IREDA (2025) issuance to fund **renewable energy financing**.

Why Important?

- Strengthens **capital structure** without equity dilution.
- Provides **long-term stable income** for investors.
- Useful in **green financing & infrastructure funding**.

National Forest Martyrs Day 2025

Why in News?

Tributes were paid to Forest Department personnel who lost their lives while safeguarding forests and wildlife, on **National Forest Martyrs Day**, observed on **September 11th, 2025**.

About National Forest Martyrs Day

- Observed **every year on September 11** in India.
- Pays tribute to forest officials, staff, and community members who sacrificed their lives for **forest conservation and wildlife protection**.
- Recognises the risks faced by protectors of natural resources.

Historical Background

- Linked to the **Khejarli Massacre (1730, Marwar Kingdom, Rajasthan)**.
- **Maharaja Abhai Singh** ordered **Khejri trees** to be cut for palace construction.
- **Amrita Devi Bishnoi** and her community resisted by hugging

trees (precursor to *Chipko Movement*).

- **363 Bishnois were killed** protecting trees.
- Inspired later environmental movements, especially **Chipko Movement (1970s)**.
- In **2013**, MoEFCC declared **September 11** as National Forest Martyrs Day.

Significance

- Tribute to all defenders of forests — from **illegal logging to poaching**.
- Reinforces the idea that **forests = lifelines**:
 - Regulate climate
 - Purify air & water
 - Maintain biodiversity
- Observed through **memorial services, plantation drives, awareness campaigns, and educational events**.
- Promotes **eco-conscious living** & connects environmental protection with cultural ethos.

Current Affairs Image Suggestion

An illustration showing:

- Silhouettes of **Bishnoi villagers hugging Khejri trees**,
- A **flame memorial** dedicated to forest martyrs,
- Forest guards saluting,
- Green forests in the background with the words: **“National Forest Martyrs Day – September 11”**.

Hellfire Missile (AGM-114)

In the News

- A video recently surfaced showing a US Hellfire missile apparently bouncing off a UFO near Yemen, leaving Washington in disbelief.
- Brings attention to the Hellfire's capabilities and limitations, despite being one of the most widely used precision strike weapons.

About the Missile

- Type: Air-to-ground, laser-guided, subsonic tactical missile.
- Developer: US Army program (1972) → operational use from 1980s.
- Users: US military + 30 allies worldwide.

Role:

- Primarily anti-tank.
- Also used against structures, bunkers, helicopters, slow aircraft.
- Missile of choice for UAVs: MQ-1B Predator, MQ-9 Reaper, MQ-1C Grey Eagle.

Key Features

- Length: 1.63 – 1.75 m
- Diameter: 0.178 m
- Weight: 45 – 48.5 kg
- Range: 7 – 11 km
- Payload: 8 – 11 kg
- Speed: Subsonic, up to Mach 1.3 (450 m/s)
- Propulsion: Single-stage solid-fuel rocket motor
- Guidance: Semi-active laser (aircraft-based or external designator)

Variants

Hellfire II (AGM-114R "Romeo")

- Multipurpose: integrates all previous versions.
- Semi-active laser guidance + blast fragmentation warhead.
- Launch platforms: helicopters, fixed-wing aircraft, UAVs, ships, ground vehicles.
- Can defeat any modern tank.

Strategic Relevance

- Widely used in counter-terrorism, drone strikes, and modern warfare.
- Symbol of precision strike capability.
- The Yemen incident raises fresh debates about:
- UFO/UAP encounters and defense preparedness.
- Possible limitations of existing missile tech against unknown aerial threats

International Electrotechnical Commission (IEC)

- **Established:** 1906 | **HQ:** Geneva, Switzerland | **Nature:** Non-profit, standard-setting body.
- **Mandate:** Prepares and publishes **international standards** for electrical, electronic, and related technologies.
- **Reach:** Standards used in **150+ countries**; helps global harmonisation.
- **Governance:** Standardization Management Board (SMB) handles technical policy.
- **Network:** ~30,000 experts worldwide.

- **Collaboration:** Works with **ISO & ITU**.

India & IEC 2025

- **Event:** 89th General Meeting (GM) of IEC.
- **Dates:** 15–19 September 2025.
- **Venue:** Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi.
- **Significance:** India hosting **for the 4th time** (earlier 1960, 1997, 2013).
- **Importance for India:**
 - Enhances global role in **tech standardisation**.
 - Boosts India's **electrical/electronics exports** by aligning with global norms.
 - Symbolic of India's growing presence in **global standard-setting diplomacy**

Ho Tribe

- **West Singhbhum (Jharkhand):** Ho Tribe **protested** against district administration interference in their **traditional Manki–Munda governance system**.
- Reflects **tribal assertion of autonomy** and **resistance to state intrusion** into customary governance

– Key Facts

- **Ethnic Group:** Austroasiatic **Munda** tribe.
- **Self-identity:** Ho, Hodoko, Horo → meaning “*human*”.

- **Distribution:** Mainly in **Kolhan region (Jharkhand)**, also Odisha, West Bengal & Bihar.
- **Religion:** 90% follow **Sarnaism** (nature worship).
 - **Deuri:** village priest.
 - **Deowa:** spirit doctor → sacrifices in **sacred groves**.
- **Language:** **Ho language** (Austroasiatic, related to Mundari).
- **Occupation:** Predominantly **agriculture**; some in **mining**.
- **Society:**
 - Women enjoy **relatively higher status**.
 - Villages have **akhra** (dancing ground) under a big tree.
- **Culture:** Music with **dama, dholak, dumeng (mandar), rutu (flute)**.

Manki–Munda Self-Governance System

- **Munda (village head):** hereditary post → resolves **socio-political disputes** at village level.
- **Manki (cluster head):** supervises a *pidh* (8–15 villages).
- **Dispute Resolution:**
 - Case unresolved at **Munda level** → escalated to **Manki**.
- **Scope: Internal self-rule only.**
 - No role in **land, revenue, taxation**.
 - Purely a **community-based governance system**.

Raj Gond Tribe & Gussadi Dance

Context

- **Event:** 78th Hyderabad Liberation Day celebrations (2025).
- **Location:** Adilabad district,



Telangana.

- **Highlight:** Raj Gond tribe members rehearsing the **Gussadi dance**.

Raj Gond Tribe

- **Community:** Gonds are one of the largest tribal groups in India, spread across Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh.
- **Language:** Gondi (Dravidian family).
- **Telangana:** Concentrated in Adilabad district.

Gussadi Dance

- **Traditional tribal dance** of Raj Gonds.
- **Performed during:** Dussehra festival (Dasara), especially after hunting expeditions.
- **Features:**

- Men wear **headgear decorated with peacock feathers**.
- Bodies adorned with ornaments, bells, and colorful attire.
- Performed in groups, with energetic drumming and traditional wind instruments.

- **Cultural significance:** Represents valor, celebration of harvest, and community identity.
- **Recognition:** Famous in northern Telangana; preserved as part of **tribal cultural heritage**.

Hyderabad Liberation Day

- **Date:** 17 September (since 1948).
- Marks the **integration of Hyderabad State into India** after **Operation Polo** (police action against the Nizam's forces).
- Celebrated in Telangana, Maharashtra, Karnataka

Chhath Festival & UNESCO Nomination

Current Context

- **India's Proposal:** Culture Ministry seeks UNESCO recognition for *Chhath* on the **Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity**.
- **Multinational Nomination:** Collaboration with **UAE, Suriname, Netherlands** (countries with large Indian diaspora that celebrate Chhath).

- **Meeting Chaired By:** Vivek Aggarwal, Secretary, Ministry of Culture.



About Chhath

- **Type:** Ancient Vedic Hindu festival dedicated to the **Sun God (Surya)** and **Chhathi Maiya (Usha, dawn goddess)**.
- **Practiced in:** Bihar, Jharkhand, Uttar Pradesh, Nepal; also celebrated by diaspora communities.
- **Rituals:**
 - 4-day observance (Nahai-Khai, Kharna, Sandhya Arghya, Usha Arghya).
 - Devotees offer *arghya* (water and prayers) to the setting and rising sun.
 - Emphasis on purity, fasting, and environmental reverence (worship at riverbanks, ponds).
- **Cultural significance:**
 - Promotes ecological balance & river conservation.
 - Strengthens community ties and women-led ritual traditions.
 - Represents continuity of ancient sun worship traditions.

UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage List

- **Representative List:** Showcases cultural practices that reflect diversity and raise awareness.
- **India's Previous Inscriptions:**
 - Yoga (2016), Kumbh Mela (2017), Durga Puja (2021), Garba of Gujarat (2023).
- **Importance of Nomination:**
 - Protects and promotes cultural heritage.
 - Boosts global recognition of Indian festivals.
 - Strengthens **India's cultural diplomacy** through diaspora participation.

Labuh Sawah Ritual – Indonesia

- **What it is:** A traditional **Javanese ceremony** marking the beginning of the rice planting season.



- **Where:** Seyegan, Yogyakarta, Indonesia.
- **Ritual elements:** Farmers pray and make offerings to express gratitude and seek blessings for a good harvest.
- **Cultural significance:**

- Reflects **agrarian traditions** of Java.
- Reinforces **community bonding** and the **spiritual connection to land and nature**.
- Part of wider **Southeast Asian rice culture**, where agriculture is tied to rituals and festivals.
- **Contemporary relevance:** Such rituals showcase **intangible cultural heritage** and the continuing role of traditional practices in sustainable agriculture

Almatti Dam

Context:

- The **Karnataka Cabinet** recently approved the acquisition of **1,33,867 acres** of land to facilitate the **increase in Almatti Dam's height** from **519.16 m to 524.256 m**.
- This move is aimed at enabling the **implementation of the languishing Upper Krishna Project (UKP) Phase III**, which has been pending for decades.

Location and Structure:

- Almatti Dam is built on the **Krishna River in North Karnataka**.
- Completed in **July 2005**, it is a **hydroelectric and multipurpose irrigation project**.
- Height: **52.5 meters**, Length: **3.5 kilometers**.
- Gross storage capacity: **123.08 TMC at 519 m MSL**.

Hydroelectric & Irrigation Features

- **Power Generation:** 290 MW total, via **vertical Kaplan turbines** – five 55 MW generators and one 15 MW generator.
- **Powerhouses:** Almatti I and Almatti II, separated by distance but collectively supplying electricity.
- **Annual Output:** 713 million KW.
- **Irrigation:** After power generation, water is released into the **Narayanpur reservoir** to meet downstream irrigation needs.

Significance of Height Increase

1. **Enhanced Water Storage:** Raising the height allows **more water storage**, ensuring better irrigation and drinking water availability.
2. **Completion of UKP Phase III:** Will support **water distribution to drought-prone areas** of North Karnataka and Maharashtra.
3. **Flood Control:** Helps in **managing Krishna River floods** in the downstream regions.
4. **Energy Generation:** More stored water ensures **consistent hydropower production**, supporting Karnataka's energy grid.

Recreational & Environmental Aspects

- **Gardens & Tourism:** 77 acres around the dam developed into **Japanese Garden, Rock Garden, Mughal Garden, Gopal Krishna Garden, and Lavakush Garden**.

- Supports **local tourism**, biodiversity, and provides a **recreational space for residents and visitors**.

International Labour Organisation (ILO)

Context:

- Recently, the **Union Minister of Labour & Employment** signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** between India and the **International Labour Organisation (ILO)**.
- The collaboration aims to develop the '**International Reference Classification of Occupations (ISCO)**', standardizing occupational data and improving labour policy planning.

About ILO

- **Type:** Specialized agency of the **United Nations (UN)**.
- **Purpose:** Dedicated to improving **labour conditions, employment opportunities, and living standards globally**.
- **Tripartite Structure:** Unique among UN agencies, bringing together **governments, employers, and workers' representatives** of **187 member states**.
- **Headquarters:** Geneva, Switzerland.
- **History:**
 - **1919:** Founded as part of the **Treaty of Versailles** after World War I.

- **1946:** Became a **specialized UN agency**.
- Member of the **United Nations Development Group (UNDP)**, contributing to **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.

- **Recognition:** Awarded the **Nobel Peace Prize in 1969** for its contributions to labour peace and rights.

Functions of ILO

1. **Policy Formulation:**
 - Develops international policies to **promote human rights, enhance employment**, and improve working conditions.
2. **Labour Standards:**
 - Creates **international labour standards** and supervises their implementation across member states.
3. **Technical Cooperation:**
 - Provides **support and guidance** to member countries for effective policy execution.
4. **Training, Education & Research:**
 - Conducts programmes to **build capacity**, educate stakeholders, and advance labour-related research.

Significance for India

- **Standardization of Occupations:** With ISCO, India can **streamline workforce data** for better planning and skill development.
- **Labour Reforms Support:** Aligns with initiatives like **Labour Codes**,

helping India modernize labour regulations.

- **Global Benchmarking:** Ensures Indian labour policies are **comparable to international standards**, facilitating foreign investment and industrial growth.
- **Skill Development:** Assists in **mapping skills and jobs** to future workforce requirements.
- **Tripartite Cooperation:** Enhances dialogue among **government, employers, and workers**, improving industrial relations

- **Advanced:** College students to showcase career readiness.
- **Professional:** Working professionals to benchmark skills.
- Goes beyond exams by offering **mentorship, projects, and national recognition.**

Significance and Vision

- Moves AI from a niche subject to a **foundational skill.**
- Creates a **continuum of AI readiness** from classrooms to workplaces.
- Aligns with **national education and AI policies**, bridging aspiration with progress.

National AI Olympiad (NAIO)

The **National AI Olympiad**, launched by TalentSprint (part of Accenture), is India's first nationwide initiative to benchmark **AI readiness** across school students, college learners, and professionals.

AI Readiness Gaps in India

- **NEP 2020** and the **National AI Mission** emphasize AI literacy, coding, and reskilling.
- Yet, bottlenecks remain:
 - Teachers lack expertise to teach AI effectively.
 - Higher education has limited integration of structured AI courses.
 - Industry faces a severe **AI talent shortage**—over 1 million projected gap by 2027.

Structure of the Olympiad

- **Foundation:** School students (Grades 6–12) for AI basics.

Agni-Prime

What Happened

India **successfully test-fired the Agni-Prime (Agni-P) intermediate-range ballistic missile** from a **rail-based mobile launcher** under full operational conditions. The canisterised system can move across India's 70,000-km rail network, deploy discreetly, and launch with minimal preparation.



About Agni-Prime

- **Range:** 1,000–2,000 km
- **Weight:** ~11 tonnes, two-stage solid fuel missile

- **Warheads:** Capable of carrying conventional or nuclear payloads
- **Upgrades:** Integrates advanced navigation, propulsion, and accuracy technologies from Agni-IV and Agni-V
- **Mobility:** Road- and now rail-deployable, making it more survivable and unpredictable

Strategic Significance

- **Second-Strike Credibility:** Enhances survivability of India's deterrent under its *No First Use* doctrine.
- **Mobility & Concealment:** Rail tunnels and nationwide tracks offer stealth against satellite surveillance.
- **Cost-Effective:** Cheaper and easier to scale than submarine or silo systems.
- **Diversified Arsenal:** Complements road-mobile and other Agni missiles, forcing adversaries to account for multiple launch platforms.
- **Global Signal:** Positions India alongside the US, Russia, China, and North Korea as nations with rail-based missile capability.

K Visa: China's New Talent-Oriented Entry Scheme

Latest Development

- China has introduced a new **K Visa**, effective **October 1, 2025**.
- Aim: **Attract global science and technology talent**, particularly **youth and professionals** in STEM fields.

About the K Visa

- **Created through revision** of the *Regulations on the Administration of the Entry and Exit of Foreigners*.

- **Target group:**

- Graduates (Bachelor's degree or higher) from **renowned universities/research institutions**.
- Professionals engaged in **STEM teaching, research, and innovation**.

- **Key Features:**

- **Greater flexibility** in entry frequency and duration.
- Broader scope of activities — includes **education, research, technology, culture, entrepreneurship, and business**.
- Unlike many other visa categories, **no local enterprise sponsorship required**.

Significance

- **Talent attraction strategy:**

- China is competing globally for **skilled manpower**, especially in AI, robotics, biotech, and green tech.
- Builds on policies to counter **talent drain** and accelerate **domestic innovation**.

- **Geopolitical angle:**

- Comes amid **US–China tech rivalry**. While the U.S. tightens visa regimes for Chinese students and researchers, Beijing is easing entry for foreign STEM talent.

- **Economic implications:**

- Expected to strengthen **China's innovation ecosystem**, universities, and **high-tech industries**.
- Supports initiatives like **Made in China 2025** and **dual circulation strategy**.

Varkala Cliff

Latest News

- **UNESCO** has placed **Varkala Cliff** on its tentative list of **World Heritage Sites (2025)**.

Location

- Situated in **Varkala**, a coastal town in **Thiruvananthapuram district, Kerala**.
- Locally known as **Sivagiri Thuruthu**.



Geological & Scientific Importance

- Part of the **Warkalli Formation** of the **Mio-Pliocene age** (~2.5 crore to 13 lakh years ago).
- Contains **laterite and sedimentary layers** with **fossils** and evidence of **ancient climates**.
- Declared the **27th National Geological Monument of India**, and the **second in Kerala** (after **Angadipuram Laterite**).

Natural & Cultural Features

- **Striking erosional landforms** and **natural springs**.
- **Papanasam Beach** (at the base):
 - Famous for sacred natural springs.
 - Believed to have **therapeutic properties**.
- Functions as a **crucial aquifer & natural water harvesting system** for coastal communities.
- Supports **unique biodiversity** and **underwater reefs**, vital for local **fishing livelihoods**.

Significance

- **Touristic value:** A major attraction blending **geology, culture, and spirituality**.
- **Scientific value:** Offers insights into **Earth's history, climate change, and coastal evolution**.
- **Conservation need:** Recognition by **UNESCO** boosts prospects for **sustainable tourism** and **protection of fragile ecosystems**.

World Bank to Fund Tamil Nadu Village Councils for Mangrove Plantation

TN-SHORE: Coastal Restoration Mission

- **Tamil Nadu Coastal Restoration Mission (TN-SHORE)** was approved in **September 2025**.
- Project cost: **₹1,675 crore**, of which **₹1,000 crore** will be funded by the

World Bank and the rest by the **State government**.

- Objective: Strengthen Tamil Nadu's **coastal resilience and economy**.

Key Goals of TN-SHORE

- **Restore 30,000 hectares** of seascapes.
- **Safeguard endangered species** like turtles and dugongs.
- Promote **sustainable practices** such as eco-tourism and plastic waste management.
- Enhance **bioshields** (natural barriers) through **mangrove plantation and restoration**.

Community-Led Mangrove Plantation

- World Bank funds will flow **directly to village mangrove councils**.
- **Structure of councils:**
 - Local community member as **President**.
 - **Forest Range Officer** as member-secretary.
- A **community procurement plan** has been submitted, allowing allocations of up to **₹8 lakh** without quotations/tenders.
- Target: **1,000 hectares of mangroves restored**, including:
 - **300 hectares of new plantations**.
 - **700 hectares of degraded mangrove areas restored**.
- Initial corpus: **₹38 crore** earmarked for this activity.

Tamil Nadu's Mangrove Cover

- Current mangrove cover: **41.9 sq. km**.
 - **1.19 sq. km** – very dense mangroves.
 - **25.07 sq. km** – moderately dense.
 - **15.65 sq. km** – open mangroves.

Rare Benign Tumour in Rock Python Treated Successfully in Bengaluru

First Case in Karnataka

- A captive rock python at **Aadumalleshwara Zoo, Chitradurga**, underwent successful surgery for a **benign tumour**.



- This is the **first reported case in Karnataka**, with no prior documentation of such tumours in rock pythons in the State.
- Rock pythons are listed as '**Near Threatened**' on the **IUCN Red List**.

Previous Instances

- Similar rare cases have been recorded elsewhere, including **Mumbai in 2024**, where a python was successfully treated for a benign tumour.

Surgical Intervention

- The snake, unable to eat due to the tumour in its **lower jaw**, was shifted to **People for Animals (PFA) hospital, Bengaluru, on July 3**.
- Veterinarians used a **CO₂ laser** to remove the tumour-affected tissue.
- Assisted feeding was provided until recovery.
- The tumour's location was critical: without treatment, the python would have starved.

Recovery and Rehabilitation

- The python regained its **hunting ability** after surgery.
- After **two months of intensive care**, it was returned to the zoo.
- Aadumalleshwara Zoo confirmed that the snake has **fully recovered** and is now living normally.

Conservation Significance

- The successful treatment highlights:
 - The **growing role of veterinary science** in wildlife conservation.
 - Importance of **specialised care for threatened species**.
 - Potential for **replicating advanced treatment protocols** for rare wildlife health conditions.

President Lauds Women-Centric Films at National Film Awards

Recognition of Women-Centric Cinema

- President **Droupadi Murmu**, at the **71st National Film Awards**, highlighted the increasing recognition of films that portray women's struggles and resilience.
- She praised stories of:
 - **Mothers shaping children's values.**
 - **Women uniting against social norms.**
 - **Courageous women challenging patriarchy.**
- She called for **greater representation of women on jury panels** at both central and regional levels.
- Emphasised that cinema should **spread social awareness**, especially among youth, beyond just entertainment.

Dadasaheb Phalke Award

- **Mohanlal**, legendary actor, received the **Dadasaheb Phalke Award 2023**, India's highest honour in cinema.
- He expressed: *"Cinema is the heartbeat of my soul. Jai Hind."*
- President Murmu lauded Mohanlal's versatile artistry in portraying emotions from gentleness to intensity.

Major Award Winners

- **Best Feature Film:** *12th Fail* (Hindi).
- **Best Male Actor:** Shah Rukh Khan (*Jawan*) & Vikrant Massey (*12th Fail*).

- **Best Female Actor:** Rani Mukerji (*Mrs. Chatterjee vs Norway*).
- **Best Direction:** Sudipto Sen (*The Kerala Story*), which also won **Best Cinematography**.
- **Best Debut Film:** Ashish Bende (*Aatmapamphlet*, Marathi).
- **Best Popular Film (Wholesome Entertainment):** *Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani* (Hindi).
- **Best Children's Film:** *Naal 2* (Marathi).
- **Best Animation/VFX/Gaming Film:** *Hanu-Man* (Telugu).

Music and Performance Awards

- **Best Male Singer:** P.V.N.S. Rohit (*Premisthunna, Baby* – Telugu).
- **Best Female Singer:** Shilpa Rao (*Premisthunna, Baby* – Telugu).
- **Best Screenplay:** *Baby* (Telugu), *Parking* (Tamil), *Chaleya in Jawan* (Hindi).
- **Best Music Direction:** G.V. Prakash Kumar (*Vaathi* – Tamil) & Harshavardhan Rameshwar (*Animal* – Hindi).
- **Best Lyrics:** Karsarla Shyam (*Ooru Palleturu, Balagam* – Telugu).
- **Best Dialogue Writer:** Deepak Kingrani (*Sirf Ek Banda Kaafi Hai* – Hindi).

Supporting and Child Actor Awards

- **Best Supporting Actor (Male):** Vijayaraghavan (*Pookkaalam*, Malayalam) & M.S. Bhaskar (*Parking*, Tamil).
- **Best Supporting Actor (Female):** Urvashi (*Ullozhukku*, Malayalam) & Janki Bodiwala (*Vash*, Gujarati).

- **Best Child Artistes:** Sukriti Veni Bandreddi (*Gandhi Tatha Chettu*, Telugu), Kabir Khandare (*Gypsy*, Marathi), and Treasha Thosar, Shrinivas Pokale & Bhargav Jagtap (*Naal 2*).

Regional Language Film Awards

- **Assamese:** *Rongatapu 1982*.
- **Bengali:** *Deep Fridge*.
- **Tamil:** *Parking*.
- **Kannada:** *Kandeelu*.
- **Marathi:** *Shamchi Aai*.
- **Odia:** *Puskara*.
- **Punjabi:** *Godday Godday Chaa*.
- **Telugu:** *Bhagavanth Kesari*.

Adi Yuva Fellowship & Adi Karmayogi Volunteers Programme

Overview

- Both initiatives are part of the **Adi Karmayogi Abhiyan**, launched by the **Ministry of Tribal Affairs** in partnership with **United Nations agencies in India**.
- Aim: **Empower tribal youth**, enhance skill development, strengthen last-mile service delivery, and promote grassroots change.

1. Adi Yuva Fellowship

Purpose

- A **first-of-its-kind programme** to empower tribal youth through **structured learning, mentorship, and career development**.

Key Features

- **Duration:** 12-month **paid Fellowship**.
- **Learning & Experience:** Combines **knowledge-building, on-the-job experience, and reflective practice**.
- **Support & Benefits:**
 - Monthly allowances.
 - Comprehensive **health and life insurance**.
 - Access to high-quality **UN and commercial learning platforms**.
- **Linkages:** Connects Fellows with national skilling and employability schemes:
 - **PMKVY 4.0**
 - **NAPS**
 - **PM Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana**

Selection & Placement

- Competitive selection process.
- Fellows placed with **UN agencies** at **national, state, and district levels**.

2. Adi Karmayogi Volunteers Programme

Purpose

- Designed to **equip tribal youth as catalysts for grassroots change**.
- Strengthens **last-mile service delivery** in tribal regions.

Key Features

- Supported by **UNFPA**.
- **Deployment:** 82 UN Community Volunteers across **82 blocks in 13**

districts of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan.

- **Engagement:** Two-month intensive grassroots programme.
- **Roles:**
 - Support **Village Vision 2030 planning**.
 - Conduct **awareness drives**.
 - Facilitate **outreach and improved access** to government schemes and services.

Significance

- Promotes **tribal youth empowerment, skill enhancement, and employment opportunities**.
- Strengthens **participation in governance** at local levels.
- Enhances **effectiveness of national schemes** in tribal regions.

AstroSat: A Decade of Discoveries

Background

- **Launch Date:** September 28, 2015, by PSLV-C30 (XL) from Sriharikota.
- **Designed Life:** 5 years → Still operational after **10 years**.
- **Significance:** India's **first dedicated multi-wavelength space astronomy observatory**.

Key Achievements

- Enabled studies **across the electromagnetic spectrum:** UV, Visible, Low & High-energy X-rays.

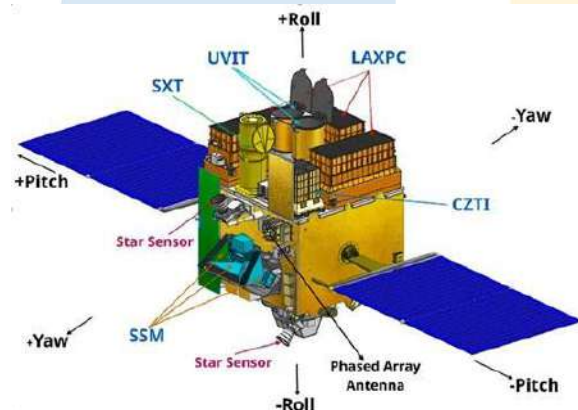
- Discoveries range from:
 - **Black holes & neutron stars**
 - **Observations of Proxima Centauri (nearest star)**
 - **First-time detection of FUV photons** from galaxies **9.3 billion light years away**
- Partner institutions from **Canada & the UK**

Why It Matters?

- Showcases **India's capability** in space-based astronomy.
- Provides **simultaneous multi-wavelength observations** — rare even globally.
- Strengthens India's role in **global astrophysics research**.

Payloads (5 Major Instruments)

1. **UVIT** – Ultra Violet Imaging Telescope
2. **LAXPC** – Large Area X-ray Proportional Counter
3. **CZTI** – Cadmium–Zinc–Telluride Imager
4. **SXT** – Soft X-ray Telescope
5. **SSM** – Scanning Sky Monitor



Asia Cup 2025 Final

Match Summary (Final: India vs Pakistan, Sept 28, 2025, Dubai)

Pakistan Innings

- 146 all out (19 overs)
- Farhan – 57 (38)
- Kuldeep Yadav – 4/26

India Innings

- 147/5 (19.4 overs)
- Tilak Varma – 69* (53)
- Shivam Dube – 33(22)
- India won by **5 wickets**

Player of the Match: Tilak Varma

India's Asia Cup Titles

India has won the Asia Cup **10 times** (most successful team):

Year	Format	Host	Winner	Runner-up
1984	ODI	UAE	India	Sri Lanka

Collaborative Effort

- Led by **ISRO**, with contributions from:
 - Inter-University Centre for Astronomy & Astrophysics (IUCAA)
 - Tata Institute of Fundamental Research (TIFR)
 - Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA)
 - Raman Research Institute (RRI)

Year	Format	Host	Winner	Runner-up
1988	ODI	Bangladesh	India	Sri Lanka
1990/91	ODI	India	India	Sri Lanka
1995	ODI	UAE	India	Sri Lanka
2010	ODI	Sri Lanka	India	Sri Lanka
2016	T20	Bangladesh	India	Bangladesh
2018	ODI	UAE	India	Bangladesh
2023	T20	Sri Lanka	India	Sri Lanka
2024	T20	Pakistan	India	Pakistan
2025	T20	UAE	India	Pakistan

- Format Adaptability** – Held in **ODI** or **T20** format depending on the ICC tournament cycle (World Cup or T20 WC preparation).
- Cultural Connect** – Reinforces cricket’s role as a shared sporting identity across Asia.



Who Organises the Asia Cup?

- The **Asian Cricket Council (ACC)**, headquartered in Colombo, Sri Lanka, is responsible for organising the Asia Cup.
- The ACC was founded in 1983 with the aim of promoting and developing cricket across Asia.

Significance of the Asia Cup

- Regional Cricket Supremacy** – Only continental championship in cricket, showcasing dominance among Asian nations (India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, etc.).
- Diplomatic Soft Power** – Especially important for India–Pakistan matches, as bilateral series are rare.
- Platform for Emerging Players** – Young talents like Tilak Varma, Rinku Singh, and others have used it to announce themselves.

PRELIMS PRACTICE QUESTIONS

Q.1 Consider the following statements regarding the Governor's role under Article 200:

1. A Governor may reserve a Bill for the consideration of the President.
 2. There is a constitutionally prescribed time limit for assent.
 3. The Supreme Court recently ruled that Governors cannot hold Bills indefinitely.
- Which of the statements given above is/are correct?
- (a) 1 only
(b) 2 and 3 only
(c) 1 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.2 The Suspension of Operations (SoO) agreement recently signed in Manipur deals primarily with:

- (a) Ceasefire between Meitei and Naga groups
(b) Ceasefire between Kuki-Zo insurgent groups and security forces
(c) Power-sharing agreement between valley and hill districts
(d) Relocation of Meitei refugees to designated camps

Q.3 The District Flood Severity Index (DFSI) developed by IIT Delhi and IIT Gandhinagar primarily measures:

- (a) Population displacement due to floods
(b) Frequency, intensity and duration of floods
(c) River flow data alone
(d) Socio-economic losses due to flash floods

Q.4 Which of the following best describes a Cloudburst?

- a) Rainfall exceeding 5 cm/hour over 100 sq. km
b) Rainfall exceeding 10 cm/hour over 20–30 sq. km
c) Rainfall exceeding 10 cm/hour over 200 sq. km
d) Rainfall caused by a cyclonic depression

Q.5 The Noise Pollution (Regulation & Control) Rules, 2000 are enforced by:

- a) Central Pollution Control Board alone
b) State Pollution Control Boards and local authorities
c) Ministry of Home Affairs
d) National Green Tribunal

Q.6 With reference to the National Ambient Noise Monitoring Network (NANMN), consider the following:

1. It provides real-time noise data for enforcement.
2. It is operated by CPCB.
3. It covers all districts in India.

Which of the above statements is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2 only
(b) 2 only
(c) 2 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.7 Which of the following factors contribute to increasing mini-cloudburst events in India?

1. Orographic uplift
2. Western disturbances meeting monsoon systems
3. Global warming increasing moisture capacity

Select the correct answer:

- (a) 1 only
(b) 1 and 2 only
(c) 2 and 3 only
(d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.8 The 2025 Afghanistan Earthquake occurred due to:

- a) Movement along the Indian–Eurasian plate boundary
- b) Volcanic eruption along the Hindu Kush
- c) Subduction of the Burma Plate
- d) Rift valley faulting near the Caspian Sea

Q.9 Under the *Supreme Court judgment on Governors (2025)*, Bills not acted upon within the time frame will be:

- a) Automatically rejected
- b) Automatically deemed assented
- c) Sent back to the legislature
- d) Reserved for the President

Q.10 “Judicial experimentalism versus right to justice” discussed in the magazine refers to:

- a) Balance between PIL activism and procedural fairness
- b) Role of High Courts in reviewing laws
- c) Governor’s discretion in assenting to Bills
- d) Role of Lok Adalats in fast justice delivery

Q.11 The *Welfare Board for Nomadic and Denotified Tribes* seeks stronger mandate to:

- a) Review Forest Rights Act implementation
- b) Provide constitutional status to the Board
- c) Identify beneficiaries and ensure targeted welfare schemes
- d) Abolish existing caste-based reservation

Q.12 The *NIRF Rankings 2025* introduced which new feature?

- a) International faculty weightage
- b) Peer perception parameter
- c) Diversity index
- d) Innovation incubation ranking

Q.13 Which of the following statements regarding *Women Judges in the Supreme Court* is correct?

- a) India has achieved 33% representation.
- b) The Collegium process formally includes gender as a criterion.
- c) Only one woman from a minority religion has served as an SC judge.
- d) No woman has ever been elevated from the Bar.

Q.14 The *Facial Recognition in Anganwadis* project highlighted in the report was criticized for:

- a) Misuse of biometric data
- b) Improving transparency
- c) Increasing digital literacy
- d) Expanding nutrition coverage

Q.15 The *Unique Disability ID (UDID)* project aims to:

- a) Replace Aadhaar for PwDs
- b) Create a national database of PwDs
- c) Provide monthly pensions directly
- d) Identify senior citizens above 80 years

Q.16 The *Rohini Commission* recommended:

- a) Sub-categorisation of OBCs for equitable benefit distribution
- b) Extension of EWS quota to SCs
- c) Abolition of creamy layer concept
- d) Uniform reservation for all minorities

Q.17 The *Peace Pact with Kuki-Zo groups* includes which of the following?

1. Upholding Manipur’s territorial integrity
2. Relocation of insurgent camps
3. Negotiated political settlement within the Constitution

Select the correct answer:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.18 Under the NIRF 2025 Rankings, which of the following pairs is correctly matched?

1. Institution — Category Winner
2. IIT Madras — Overall
3. IISc Bengaluru — Research Institutions
4. IIM Ahmedabad — Management

Select the correct answer:

- (a) 1 and 2 only
- (b) 2 and 3 only
- (c) 1 and 3 only
- (d) 1, 2 and 3

Q.19 The SCO Development Bank is primarily pushed by which country?

- a) India
- b) Russia
- c) China
- d) Iran

Q.20 India opposed which initiative during the SCO Tianjin Summit 2025?

- a) SCO Development Strategy 2025–2035
- b) Belt and Road Initiative
- c) Global Governance Initiative
- d) Anti-Drug Centre creation

inclusive decision-making. Discuss in the context of community-led development.

5. “Tribal autonomy must evolve without isolating communities from mainstream governance.” Comment with reference to the ongoing demands for inclusion of *Ladakh under the Sixth Schedule*.
6. Evaluate the impact of globalization and digital culture on India’s traditional arts, with special reference to *Lalit Kala Akademi* and new-age digital platforms.
7. “Governors are constitutional heads, not political veto players.” Examine in the light of the Supreme Court’s 2025 ruling on delay in Bill assent.
8. Discuss the challenges in balancing the *right to privacy* with the adoption of *facial recognition technology* in welfare delivery systems such as Anganwadis.
9. “Administrative federalism demands cooperation, not confrontation.” Analyze with reference to recent Centre–State tensions over the *role of Governors and Bills pending assent*.
10. Critically assess the effectiveness of *PM Matru Vandana Yojana 2.0* in addressing maternal health and gender equity goals.
11. Evaluate the significance of the *Rohini Commission’s* recommendations for equitable distribution of reservation benefits among OBCs.
12. “India’s engagement with the Global South reflects a shift from aid dependence to partnership-based diplomacy.” Discuss with reference to the *India–Iran cooperation and SCO engagements (2025)*.
13. Analyze the implications of India’s consistent opposition to the *Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)* within the SCO framework for its regional strategy.
14. Assess the significance of *IREDA’s perpetual bonds* and *green finance instruments* in promoting India’s renewable energy targets.

MAINS PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the impact of social media-driven narratives on cultural harmony and national integration in India.
2. “Domestic labor continues to be undervalued in India’s socio-economic discourse.” Examine in the light of the *Time Use Survey 2024* findings.
3. The persistence of patriarchal norms hinders the realization of constitutional gender equality. Critically analyze recent policy measures addressing domestic violence and workplace discrimination.
4. The *Poumai Naga tribe* and their traditional governance model offer lessons for

15. “Disaster management must evolve from post-event response to anticipatory resilience.” Discuss in the context of the *District Flood Severity Index (DFSI)* and increasing mini-cloudburst incidents.
16. Examine the economic and environmental implications of India’s *Isobutanol blending policy* in the transport fuel mix.
17. Discuss the challenges in implementing the *Geothermal Energy Policy 2025* and its potential role in ensuring India’s base-load clean power supply.
18. Evaluate the role of the *India Semiconductor Mission* in building technological self-reliance under the *Atmanirbhar Bharat* initiative.
19. “Noise pollution has emerged as the new urban health emergency.” Examine the reasons and suggest policy measures to mitigate the issue.
20. Analyze the economic implications of the *U.S. H-1B visa fee hike (2025)* on India’s technology exports and labor mobility.

1.C	2.B	3.B	4.B	5.B	6.A	7.D	8.A	9.B	10.A
11.C	12.B	13.C	14.A	15.B	16.A	17.D	18.D	19.C	20.B