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ECONOMICS

The Reserve Bank of India's 7-day Variable Rate Reverse Repo Auction

Understanding VRRR and Liquidity

- VRRR is a crucial monetary policy tool used by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) to manage the economy's surplus liquidity.
- This operation occurs through auctions where banks take part in competitive bidding at variable interest rates. In exchange, they place their short-term deposits with the RBI.
- Contrastingly, the Reverse Repo Rate is a fixed percentage decided upon by the RBI. Banks park surplus funds at this rate without having to participate in bidding, making VRRR a more flexible and market-driven process.
- Liquidity, in financial terms, refers to the ease with which money or cash-equivalents are accessible for various transactions or investment purposes, showcasing the availability and flow of funds in the economy.

The Role of VRRR Auction in Monetary Policy

- The initiation of the VRRR Auction is to bring overnight rates on the Tri Party Repo Dealing System (TREPS) nearer to the lower bound of the Liquidity Adjustment Facility (LAF) corridor, currently fluctuating between 5.25% and 5.75%.
- TREPS, an electronic trading platform in India, enables collateralised short-term borrowings and lending amongst banks, mutual funds, NBFCs, and other financial institutions under personal observation by the RBI and management by the Clearing Corporation of India (CCIL).
- Meanwhile, LAF operates as a monetary tool employed by RBI to regulate short-term liquidity and keep the interest rate fluctuations in the banking system under check.
- While Overnight Repo/Reverse Repo use fixed interest rates set by RBI to regulate liquidity, the nuanced approach involving VRRR and Variable Rate Repo helps manoeuvre dynamic liquidity management.

Reasons for Surplus Liquidity and VRRR Auction

- The surplus liquidity in the economy has elevated due to a combination of liquidity injections through open market operations such as purchases of government securities (G-sec), term Variable Rate Repo (VRR) auctions, and buy-sell swaps of dollar/rupee.
- Repo Rate serves as the rate at which banks borrow from the central bank to address short-term liquidity requirements, with securities as collateral.
- Conversely, the Reverse Repo Rate is the rate at which RBI borrows from banks using government securities as collateral. This mechanism helps in absorbing surplus funds and controlling inflation.

Key Points to Remember about Repo, Reverse Repo, and VRRR

- Variable Rate Repo (VRR) operates similarly to VRRR but allows RBI to inject or absorb liquidity from the banking system, with market forces determining the cost of funds.
- Repo Rate enables commercial banks to borrow from RBI, where they agree to pledge securities and repurchase them at a pre-determined higher price.
- Reverse Repo Rate is the rate at which the RBI borrows from the banks, aiding in controlling inflation and soaking up excess liquidity by encouraging banks to park surplus funds.

OECD-FAO Agricultural Outlook 2025-2034 Analysis and Implications

Introduction and Context

- The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) released the Agricultural Outlook 2025-2034 report recently.
- This report offers a 10-year outlook on global agricultural and fish markets, aimed to aid evidence-based policymaking.

Global Market Trends Overall

- Global cereal production is projected to grow at 1.1% annually, majorly driven by yield increases (0.9% per year).
- By 2034, 40% of cereal production will be consumed directly by humans, while 33% will be used for animal feed and 27% will be allocated to biofuels and industrial uses.
- India and Southeast Asia are expected to drive 39% of global cereal consumption growth, dropping China's share to 13% from 32%.
- Biofuel demand is expected to grow yearly at 0.9%, largely due to surge in countries like Brazil, India and, Indonesia.
- Global agricultural and fish production is expected to increase by 14% through 2034, mostly propelled by productivity gains in middle-income nations. Yet, it will also lead to a 6% escalation in agricultural greenhouse gas emissions.

Rise in Animal Product Consumption

- The global per capita calorie intake from livestock and fish products is anticipated to rise by 6% over the next decade. This rise is driven by growth in lower middle-income countries where intake is expected to rise by 24% - almost four times the global average.

Impact of Rising Demand for Biofuels on Global Food Security

- The global rise in demand for biofuels can reduce land available for food production, cause resource strain, lead to food price inflation and environmental trade-offs.
- India, to meet the E20 target, would need around 7.1 million hectares (approximately 3% of its total cropped area), a fact that raises serious concerns about land use and food security.

Suggestions for Sustainable Biofuel and Food Security Policies

The OECD-FAO report suggests actionable strategies for ensuring sustainable biofuel and food security policies. This includes feedstock diversification, zoning and land use planning, crop diversification incentives, and improving productivity and sustainability.

About OECD

This International organisation was established in 1961 to promote economic growth and global trade. It releases several noteworthy reports and indices, fostering development and trade among its 38 high-income, high-HDI member countries.

About FAO

The FAO, the oldest specialised agency of the UN was established in 1945 to fight hunger, enhance nutrition and encourage sustainable agriculture. This world-renowned organisation provides extensive information and support to its 194 member states and the EU, on diverse aspects of agriculture, forestry, fisheries and resource management.

RBI's Financial Inclusion Index 2025

Introduction and About

- The Reserve Bank of India's Financial Inclusion Index (FI-Index) measures financial engagement across various sectors such as banking, insurance, pensions, post and investments.
- It is a comprehensive metric that is devised with contributions from government and regulatory bodies, and is published annually in July.

Scoring and Evaluation

- The FI-Index scores range from 0, indicating complete financial exclusion, to 100, suggesting full financial inclusion.
- The index is designed to reflect cumulative progress over time, hence, it is not tied to any base year.
- This index is segmented into three parameters: Access (35%), Usage (45%), and Quality (20%).

Unique Features

The Quality aspect of the FI-Index is distinctive as it incorporates facets like financial literacy, consumer protection, and service fairness.

Progress Over Time

- The FI-Index has shown a positive progression over time, increasing from 43.4 in March 2017 to 53.9 in March 2021, and then escalating to 67 in March 2025.
- This growth is attributed to the concentrated efforts in boosting digital accessibility and sustained enhancement in financial literacy.

Current News

- In March 2025, the FI-Index witnessed a significant increase as it rose from 64.2 in March 2024 to 67.
- This rise underscores the profundity of financial engagement and improved financial literacy in the nation.

Importance and General Knowledge

- By providing a detailed measure of inclusion across various sectors, the FI-Index not only offers vital insights into the state of financial inclusion but also serves as a benchmark for policy-making aimed at enhancing financial engagement.
- This consistent increase in the FI-Index score is indicative of India's shifting towards meaningful and inclusive financial empowerment, which is a crucial ingredient for the overall socioeconomic development of the country.

8 Years of Goods and Services Tax (GST) in India: Achievements, Challenges, and Possible Reforms

Introduction to Goods and Services Tax (GST) in India

- The 101st Amendment Act of 2016 introduced GST, a unified indirect tax system across India, by incorporating multiple central and state taxes into a single tax system.
- GST is a value-added tax imposed on the supply of all goods and services, replacing multiple central and state taxes. It operates as a destination-based consumption tax and features a dual framework where both the Centre (CGST) and the States (SGST) tax the same transaction value.
- Products are taxed at five different rates (0%, 5%, 12%, 18%, and 28%) as guided by the GST Council.
- This tax also governs imports of goods and services, treating them as inter-state supplies, subject to Integrated GST (IGST) in addition to applicable customs duties.

The Key Achievements of GST over the Past 8 Years

- The eight years of GST have seen consistent revenue growth, culminating in a record-breaking gross collection in FY 2024-25.
- This tax regime has successively expanded the taxpayer base. As of April 2025, India has over 1.51 crore active GST registrations, a major increase from 65 lakhs in 2017.
- One of the key successes of GST has been the ease of doing business. Inter-state tax barriers have been removed, logistics costs have been lowered, and supply chain efficiency has been enhanced.
- The move from manual filings to an automated process imbued with digital transformation and compliance efficiency has helped in reducing errors and fraud.

Current Challenges in the GST Framework

- However, the current GST framework also faces some inherent challenges. Some important items like petroleum products and alcohol for human consumption have been excluded from GST system, leading to cascading tax effects.
- Delay in the implementation of the GST Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT) has resulted in extended adjudication timeframes and uncertainty for taxpayers.
- Complex rate structure with multiple slabs often leads to classification disputes, frequent litigation and working capital issues in inverted duty structure sectors.
- Procedural challenges and complexities hamper GST despite advances in digitalisation and

automated systems.
- Interpretational ambiguities in the tax application framework causes gray areas in compliance and increases litigation risks for businesses.

Suggested Reforms for the Current GST Framework

- Experts suggest a phased approach for petroleum inclusion, starting with natural gas and Aviation Turbine Fuel (ATF), using a revenue-neutral rate and temporary compensation for states.
- They also advocate for a rationalisation of GST rate slabs to address the inverted duty structure and standardise rulings to prevent contradictory interpretations.
- To resolve the issue of ambiguities, the proposal is to implement more binding circulars and to fast-track tribunal appointments.
- Integration of the GSTN with ICEGATE, DGFT, RBI, and Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) for real-time data sharing and auto-filled returns is viewed as a must for enhancing digital integration.
- Expanding the tax base to encompass new sectors such as crypto-assets, carbon credits, and digital goods/services represents the next frontier in GST reform.

Conclusion

- Despite the challenges, GST's implementation in India has transformed the country's tax landscape, resulting in boosted revenue and increased economic formalization.
- To make GST a true "One Nation, One Tax" system and bolster India's goal of a USD 5 trillion economy, further reforms—including phased inclusion of excluded sectors, rate rationalization, dispute resolution expediency, and further digital integration—are needed.

Sluggish Corporate Investment in India

Overview of Current Investment Scenario

- India is currently experiencing a period of sluggish corporate investment, with growth highlighted by the Index of Industrial Production falling to a low of 1.2% in June 2025, the lowest in nine months.
- This weaker industrial activity has sparked concerns over India's growth and employment prospects.

Reasons for Low Corporate Investment

- One major factor contributing to this sluggish investment is weak demand. Despite a reduction in corporate tax from 30% to 22% in 2019, increasing profits, low consumer demand is discouraging expansion.
- Lack of borrowing indicates that low demand affects business confidence, even with eased liquidity and reduced rates from the Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee.
- Additionally, capacity underutilization deters further investment as firms prefer to optimise existing assets.
- The corporate investment to GDP ratio has also declined, signalling a lack of confidence in long-term growth forecasts. High public spending has not sparked significant private investment due to long project timelines and low job creation.
- Delays in loan disbursements, particularly for large infrastructure projects, are also hindering investment.
- Global trade restrictions, such as protectionist policies and tariff regimes, have reduced export-led investment opportunities.

Economic Theories Explaining Investment and Profits

- The relationship between investment and profits is essential for understanding the investment cycle.
- Tugan Baranovsky's view is that as long as investment in consumption and capital goods remains balanced, the economy can grow without robust consumer demand.
- Luxemburg argued that although investment leads to profits, it does not guarantee that firms will invest, particularly during a slowdown.
- Economist Kalecki contended that investment drives profits and not vice versa, but firms only invest if they anticipate demand.

India's Measures to Encourage Investment

- India has introduced several schemes, including Make in India, Startup India, PM GatiShakti, and the National Industrial Corridor Programme (NICDP), to boost manufacturing and innovation.
- Further initiatives to incentivise investment include the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) Schemes, the National Single Window System (NSWS), and the India Industrial Land Bank.
- Foreign Direct Investment has also been streamlined, with over 90% of inflows being through the automatic route.

Policy Approaches to Revive Corporate Investment

- Policies that could help to stimulate corporate investment include boosting aggregate demand, reforming factor markets, de-risking private investment, supporting the green and digital transition, creating a mission-based investment strategy, and enhancing corporate confidence.
- These measures would include initiatives such as increased social spending, reliable funding and risk-sharing models, expansion of credit guarantee schemes, more transparent land policies, and ecological investment incentives.
- Sticking to the fiscal glide path and maintaining inflation within the limits of the Reserve Bank of India's comfort zone could enhance corporate confidence.
- There should also be efforts to hasten clearances for infrastructure projects to minimise delays and pull in long-term investment.

Overview of India's Trade Performances in Q3 FY25

Key Indicators and Performance Highlights

- India's merchandise exports experienced a growth of 3%, totalling USD 108.7 billion in Q3 FY25.
- Correspondingly, India's merchandise imports rose by 6.5%, reaching a total of USD 187.5 billion.
- High-tech products, including aircraft, spacecraft, and parts, observed a remarkable 200% growth year-on-year, thus diversifying India's export composition significantly.

Surplus and the Growth of the Services Sector

- India's services surplus amounted to a striking USD 52.3 billion, revealing a strong performance in the services sector.
- The robust surge in the services sector was driven by a 17% increase in services exports on the global stage, affirming India's growing strength in this area.

Fast-Growing Exports and Digital Services

- Exports like electrical machinery and arms/ammunition recorded a robust growth, expanding at a 10.6% compound annual growth rate (CAGR) since 2014.
- India achieved a respectable 5th global rank with USD 269 billion in Digitally Delivered Services (DDS) exports in 2024.

US Trade Policy and its Impact on India

- The Q3 report highlights noticeable shifts in the trade policies of the US.
- These changes introduce both risks and opportunities for India.
- India holds a tariff advantage over its key competitors in US markets, which presents growth possibilities in sectors like pharmaceuticals, textiles, and electrical machinery.

Historical and Geographic Considerations

- The marked rise in India's exports from a historical perspective, tallying a strong CAGR since 2014, illustrates a steady and positive trend in the country's trade growth.
- India's commanding performance in the Digitally Delivered Services domain also highlights the country's tech-driven, strategic positioning and competitive advantage in a burgeoning global digital economy.
- Moreover, geographically, India's key strengths in sectors like pharmaceuticals, textiles, and electrical machinery are strategically positioned to potentially benefit from altered US trade policies.

GEOGRAPHY AND ECONOMICS

Hornbill Conservation Centre in Tamil Nadu, India

Introduction and Overview

- The state government in Tamil Nadu, India, recently unveiled plans to establish the country's first specialised Centre for Hornbill Conservation.
- This centre will be located within the premises of the Anamalai Tiger Reserve (ATR).

Core Focus and Geographic Expansion

- The centre will specifically direct its conservation efforts towards four species of Hornbill that are indigenous to the Western Ghats; the Great Hornbill, the Malabar Grey Hornbill, the Malabar Pied Hornbill, and the Indian Grey Hornbill.
- In addition to the Anamalai Tiger Reserve, the operations of the centre will also extend to the Kalakkad Mundanthurai Tiger Reserve, the Sathyamangalam Tiger Reserve, plus sections of Kanyakumari.

Broader Conservation Strategy in Tamil Nadu

- The unveiling of the Hornbill Conservation Centre represents the latest stride in Tamil Nadu's broader conservation efforts.
- These initiatives have seen previous establishments such as the Dugong Conservation Reserve, Slender Loris Conservation Centre, and other AI-assisted elephant conservation projects.

Hornbills and Their Place in Ecology

- Hornbills refer to a range of large, fruit-eating birds that predominantly reside in tropical forests with tall trees.
- They have large curved beaks and distinctive wing beats, and are renowned for their unique breeding pattern wherein the female seals herself inside a tree cavity, with the male providing food through a slim slit.
- In India, there are a total of 9 species of Hornbill, 4 of which are found in the Western Ghats.
- The Great Hornbill, for instance, is a common birdsong in this region, and the Narcondam Hornbill is endemic to Narcondam Island only.
- Hornbills are immensely crucial to ecology because they serve as key seed dispersers and are referred to as the "farmers of the forest", thus, affirming their status as keystone species.

50 Years of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)

Introduction and About CITES

- CITES marked its 50th anniversary on 1st July 2025. The United Nations recognises this significant event, tying it with the UN World Wildlife Day on 3rd March.
- Also known as the Washington Convention, CITES came into existence on 3rd March 1973 and became operative on 1st July 1975 after it was proposed in 1963 by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).
- The convention consists of 185 parties, counting India (since 1976) and the European Union among its members.
- Based in Geneva, under the management of the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), CITES monitors global trade involving over 40,000 wildlife species, including live specimens and products derived from wildlife.

Objectives and Working Procedure of CITES

- Its primary goal is to facilitate sustainable, lawful, and traceable trade of wild flora and fauna, backing biodiversity, local livelihoods, and national economies, aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- The convention controls international wildlife trade by issuing permits for export, import, re-export, and sea introduction. Each member country assigns management and scientific authorities to supervise licensing and conservation matters.
- CITES categorises species into three Appendices:

Appendix I (species threatened with extinction), Appendix II (species not endangered but requires controlled trade), and Appendix III (species protected by at least one country that requests help to control trade).

Importance of CITES and its Achievements

- Wildlife trade is an international multi-billion-dollar industry. Unregulated trading coupled with environmental damage perpetuates the risk of extinction for numerous species.
- CITES is globally acknowledged as one of the most influential environmental treaties. It provides tools such as the CITES Trade Database and guidelines for enforcement and lawful acquisition.
- Thanks to CITES, several critically endangered species like African elephants, pangolins, and crocodiles have seen an improvement in their populations. Anti-poaching programmes like MIKE (Monitoring the Illegal Killing of Elephants) have been successful in Asia and Africa.

The Role of CITES in India and its Relation with the UN

- Reflecting improved cooperation with CITES, India has included all species listed in the CITES Appendices in Schedule IV of the Wild Life (Protection) Amendment Act, 2022.
- CITES supplements the efforts of other UN bodies such as the Food and Agriculture Organization's work to enhance fisheries management, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific's capacity building and technical cooperation, and initiatives focusing on the youth with the UN Development Programme.

Discovery of Garcinia Kusumae in Assam

Introduction and About Garcinia Kusumae

- Garcinia Kusumae is a newly discovered species in the genus Garcinia, found in the rich biodiversity of Assam.
- The tree is local to Assam and is colloquially termed as 'thoikora' by Assamese residents.
- It's considered an evergreen tree that grows up to 18 meters, showcasing beautiful flowers from February to April, followed by fruiting from May to June.
- - It sets itself apart by flowering and fruit structure and the unique characteristics of the fruit's resin, making it different from its relatives like G. assamica, G. cowa, and G. succifolia.

The Garcinia Genus

- The Garcinia genus falls under the Clusiaceae family, comprising globally around 414 species.
- In India, we see about 33 species and 7 varieties of Garcinia.
- Assam uniquely hosts 12 species and 3 distinct varieties of this genus, including the recently discovered Garcinia Kusumae.

Ethnobotanical Significance of Garcinia Kusumae

- Beyond its botanical interest, Garcinia Kusumae holds cultural and medicinal relevance.
- The pulp of the fruit is utilised widely in Assam for both culinary and traditional medicinal purposes.
- It's used in different ways like in a sherbet to counteract heatstroke, as an addition to curries, or consumed raw with condiments.
- It's viewed as a traditional remedy for multiple ailments, notably diabetes and dysentery.

Why Garcinia Kusumae is in News?

- The discovery of Garcinia Kusumae is a significant breakthrough in Botanical Science, enriching Assam's floral biodiversity.
- The finding has put Assam's unique biodiversity in the spotlight, encouraging further exploration and conservation efforts.
- The potential medicinal properties of the fruit add considerable value to this discovery, foreseeing its usage in traditional medicinal practices.
- This new discovery broadens the Garcinia genus, contributing further to the global botanical catalog.

Bonn Climate Change Conference 2025

Introduction and Background

- The Bonn Climate Change Conference is a mid-year summit orchestrated under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). It is officially known as the Sessions of the Subsidiary Bodies (SBs).
- Key players include the Subsidiary Body for Implementation (SBI) of UNFCCC and the Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice (SBSTA) of UNFCCC.
- The conference plays a pivotal role in the review of climate change implementation, hosting of technical discussions, and setting the agenda for the upcoming Conference of the Parties (COP) summit.

Key Takeaways from Bonn Conference 2025

- The conference saw progress on defining indicators for the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA), but consensus was delayed due to financial disagreements.
- The Just Transition Work Programme (JTWP) witnessed significant progress, with negotiators agreeing to launch the Belém Action Mechanism for sharing transition strategies.
- However, most countries missed the February 2025 deadline to submit updated Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), slowing down efforts to bring down global warming to 1.5°C.
- In addition, the discussions on climate finance were heated, with developing countries (including India) pressing for the fulfillment of financial pledges.
- The Loss and Damage Fund remains underfunded, far from the $1 trillion needed.

Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)

- NDCs are country-specific climate action plans to cut emissions and adapt to climate change, updated every five years. The current submissions target the period of 2035, revealing a commitment towards combatting climate change.
- India has been particularly proactive in submitting its NDCs, achieving its prior targets ahead of their scheduled time.

India's Commitment to Climate Change Mitigation

- India met its targets for the first NDC in 2015 ahead

of schedule, including a 33-35% reduction in the emission intensity of GDP and 40% in non-fossil fuel-based power capacity by 2030.
- In the most recent update in 2022, India raised its emission intensity target to a 45% reduction and aimed for a 50% non-fossil fuel power capacity by 2030.
- By December 2024, India's emission intensity reduced by 36%, non-fossil fuel capacity reached 47.10%, and a carbon sink of 2.29 billion tonnes was created.

Impact and Consequences

- The current NDCs remain incomplete and insufficient towards maintaining global warming within the 1.5°C target aspiration.
- The underfunding of the Loss and Damage Fund illustrates a lack of commitment by key players towards climate change mitigation.
- Despite India's promising strides, global climate finance must significantly increase (to around USD 9 trillion annually by 2030) to keep global temperature increases within the targets set by the Paris Agreement.

DEFENCE AND MILITARY

Joint Training at Chennai Port: Japanese Coast Guard Ship's Visit

Introduction and About

- The 'Jaa Mata' visit pertains to the scheduled arrival of the Japanese Coast Guard Ship JCGS Itsukushima at Chennai Port.
- The visit was part of the Global Ocean Voyage Training which took place on July 7, 2025.
- The six-day visit consisted of a series of activities including joint training, official meetings and a unique sea exercise termed as 'Jaa Mata'.
- The visit saw the participation of senior officers such as Captain Naoki Mizoguchi, Vice Admiral Hiroaki Kaosue, and Director General Paramesh Sivamani.

Importance and Current News

- The current relevance of the visit lies in the strengthening of the maritime partnership between India and Japan.
- Such visits and exercises project support for regional goals such as the SAGAR Initiative and the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative.
- The visit affirms the role Chennai Port has to play in international maritime activities, having been a chosen location for the global training exercise.

Background (GK: History and Geography)

- Chennai Port, formerly known as Madras Port, is strategically located on the Coromandel Coast of Indian peninsula.
- Being the second-largest container port in India and third oldest port among the 13 major ports in India, it holds great importance in maritime history.
- The India-Japan maritime partnership has a long-standing history, with bilateral cooperation extending into several sectors - maritime security being one amongst them.
- Giving an edge to this cooperation is the strategic geography of both nations sharing significant interests in the Indian and Pacific Oceans.

Significance of the 'Jaa Mata' Exercise

- 'Jaa Mata' sea exercise presents an opportunity for both the nations to work collaborativey on maritime security issues.
- The visit provides an ideal platform for officials from both sides to engage in crucial dialogues and exchange of ideas.
- It further helps strengthen the military diplomacy between two nations, showcasing their joint commitment to maintaining regional security.

Prachand Shakti

Introduction and Overview

- Prachand Shakti is a high-impact technology demonstration held by the Indian Army's Ram Division.
- The event took place at the Kharga Corps Field Training Area in Meerut, Uttar Pradesh.
- The purpose of this demonstration was to showcase the use of advanced technologies, including Artificial Intelligence (AI)-enabled systems, Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), autonomous platforms, and loitering munitions, in Strike Corps operations.
- This event is an extension of the Army's 'Year of Tech Absorption' initiative, which prioritises the adoption and use of Indian-made technology in defence.

Why in News and Current Importance

- Prachand Shakti has drawn attention due to the cutting-edge technology it showcases, particularly the use of AI and autonomous systems.
- The demonstration is a key initiative highlighting the Indian Army's commitment to adopting more locally-produced technology for defence purposes.
- The event emphasises on how this technology could enhance the speed, power, and safety of soldiers in intricate missions, thus making the Army more future-ready and self-reliant.

General Knowledge Context (History, Geography, Importance)

- Prachand Shakti demonstration was held in Meerut, Uttar Pradesh, a city known for its significant contribution to the Indian Army's history.
- The event was held at the Kharga Corps Field Training Area, a major training centre for the Indian Army.
- The 'Year of Tech Absorption' initiative of the Indian Army is a critical step towards boosting the domestic defence industry.
- By focusing on Indian-made technology, the initiative also supports India's broader goal of self-reliance in various sectors, including defence.

Conclusion

➢ The Prachand Shakti event is a significant step in

the Indian Army's approach to modernise its operations through the use of advanced, locally-produced technology.

- By highlighting the role and potential of technologies such as AI, UAVs, and autonomous platforms in the defence sector, the demonstration underscores the Indian Army's commitment to become more technologically advanced and self-reliant.
- The 'Year of Tech Absorption' initiative thus provides a pathway for integrating high-end technology into defence operations, thereby enhancing the strength and capabilities of the Indian Army.

Indian Naval Ship Participation in SIMBEX-25

Introduction and Overview

- The Indian Naval Ship Satpura has journeyed to Singapore to participate in the 32nd edition of the Singapore-India Maritime Bilateral Exercise commonly known as SIMBEX-25.
- Involving the Destroyer Delhi, Frigate Satpura, Corvette Kiltan, and support ship Shakti, the Indian Navy's fleet intends to make stopovers in the Philippines and Vietnam before heading back to Visakhapatnam.

Exercise Phases and Participation

- The Harbour Phase of the Exercise comprises Subject Matter Expert Exchanges (SMEEs), professional interactions, and operational discussions, in addition to deck familiarisation visits aboard the engaging ships - RSN Vigilant and RSN Supreme.
- In contrast, the Exercise's Sea Phase will involve advanced naval operations that include air defence exercises, cross-deck helicopter operations, precise targeting, complex manoeuvring drills, and VBSS operations.

Background of SIMBEX

- Before its current name, SIMBEX, which began in 1994, was earlier known as Exercise Lion King.
- It is an annual maritime exercise conducted by the Indian Navy and the Republic of Singapore Navy (RSN) becoming India's longest uninterrupted maritime exercise.
- The exercise coincides with India's Vision MAHASAGAR and the Act East Policy that advocates strategic engagements with the country's neighbours.

Significance of SIMBEX-25

- SIMBEX-25 emphasises the robust cooperation between India and Singapore, marking 60 years of their bilateral relations.
- The exercise further cements their commitment towards maritime security and regional stability in the Indo-Pacific region, reinforcing the strategic importance of this exercise.

Bharat NCX 2025 - India's Premier National Cybersecurity Exercise

Introduction and Overview

- Bharat NCX 2025 refers to a key event in the cybersecurity industry within India, slated to run from 21st July to 1st August in 2025.
- This national cybersecurity exercise is organised under the theme 'Enhancing the Operational Preparedness of Indian Cyberspace'.
- The event is executed by two prominent entities – the National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS) and Rashtriya Raksha University (RRU).

Objective of the Exercise

- The primary aim of the exercise is to bolster cyber resilience through the enactment of real-world attack simulations.
- These simulations are perceived to include scenarios such as critical infrastructure breaches, the use of deepfakes, and AI-driven malware.

Special Initiatives Undertaken

- As part of Bharat NCX 2025's comprehensive plan, several special initiatives have been introduced to enrich the programme.
- Notably, the Strategic Decision-Making Exercise (STRATEX) is set up to sharpen the response of senior leadership during national cyber crises.
- The Chief Information Security Officers Conclave is designed to attract top-class security professionals for discussions on upcoming trends and frameworks in the cyber-space.
- Lastly, the Cybersecurity Startup Exhibition plays a vital role in demonstrating indigenous innovations driving digital self-reliance.

Why Bharat NCX 2025 is in the News

- Bharat NCX 2025 is currently attracting media attention due to its central role in strengthening India's cybersecurity infrastructure.
- The exercise's major objective of testing and improving the nation's preparedness against varied cyber threats through simulated attacks is perceived as highly crucial in the current digital era.
- Additionally, the focus on strategic decision-making at senior levels, discourse on future trends and homegrown innovative solutions are seen as breakthrough approaches to addressing the cybersecurity challenge.

Historical and Geographical Significance

- Bharat NCX 2025 is instrumental in the historical timeline of India's cybersecurity efforts, providing a national platform to discuss and test cyber resilience.
- Its geographical importance lies in its nation-wide impact, influencing strategic decisions and practices in cybersecurity across India.

Importance of Bharat NCX 2025

- Bharat NCX 2025 plays a key role in fortifying India's cybersecurity framework.
- It allows for a mix of practical experiences through simulations and theoretical insights into tackling cyber threats.
- The initiatives provide platforms for dialogue, training, and indigenous innovation, fostering a culture of cyber resilience and self-reliance in Indian cyberspace.

Introduction and Technical Details of INS Nistar

About INS Nistar

- INS Nistar is the Indian Navy's first indigenously built Diving Support Vessel (DSV).
- This vessel has been delivered by Hindustan Shipyard Limited (HSL), Visakhapatnam.
- As a DSV, INS Nistar is equipped for a range of underwater tasks including diver deployment, rescue missions, and submarine crew recovery.

Technical Specifications of INS Nistar

- The vessel is approximately 120 metres long and has a displacement around 10,000 tonnes.
- It has an endurance of over 60 days at sea and supports helicopter operations.
- The vessel comes equipped with a 15-tonne subsea crane that aids in deep-sea recovery missions.

Operational Capabilities and Command Induction of INS Nistar

Capabilities of INS Nistar

- INS Nistar serves as the Mother Ship for Deep Submergence Rescue Vessels (DSRV) for submarine rescue.
- It features a Dynamic Positioning System (DPS) for precise station-keeping.
- The vessel has a Side-Scan SONAR for seabed mapping and supports search, recovery, diving, and salvage operations.

INS Nistar and the Naval Command Structure

- Upon commissioning, INS Nistar will be inducted into the Eastern Naval Command.
- This will enhance the Indian Navy's capabilities in deep-sea diving and submarine rescue operations.
- The Indian Navy operates under three major commands: Western, Eastern, and Southern Naval Commands.

Legacy and Significance of INS Nistar

Legacy of INS Nistar

INS Nistar serves as the successor to the original vessel acquired from the USSR in 1969, which was decommissioned in 1989.

Significance of INS Nistar

- The launch of the vessel significantly enhances India's submarine rescue capability and strengthens its strategic maritime autonomy.
- INS Nistar plays a crucial role in reinforcing India's position as a net security provider in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).
- The vessel works in line with India's SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) initiative, underlining its importance in regional security and development.

Astra Missile and the Indigenous Mounted Gun System (MGS)

Astra Missile: An Overview

- The Astra missile has been successfully test-fired by DRDO and Indian Air Force(IAF) for its BVRAAM capability.
- This missile was launched from a Su-30 Mk-I fighter aircraft off Odisha's coast.
- The Astra missile is the first of its kind in India, designed specifically targeting enemy aircraft beyond the line-of-sight.

Key Features of Astra Missile

- With an impressive range beyond 100 km at altitudes up to 20 km, the Astra missile excels in tackling supersonic manoeuvrable targets.
- The missile runs on inertial navigation, complemented by mid-course data link updates and active radar homing.
- Additionally, it is unique for its smokeless solid-fuel engine, enhancing stealth capacity.
- The DRDO-developed, active RF seeker equips the Astra missile with fire-and-forget and buddy launch modes.

Indigenous Mounted Gun System (MGS)

- Developed entirely by DRDO's Vehicle Research and Development Establishment (VRDE), the 155mm/52 calibre MGS is an exemplar of Indian military innovation.
- This artillery weapon system can be readily deployed within 80 seconds, a notable feature.
- It is a large-calibre mobile gun, specifically a 155mm howitzer, set on a mobile platform, either wheeled or tracked.

Su-30MKI Fighter Aircraft

- The Su-30MKI is a product of Russia's Sukhoi company and built by the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) exclusively for the IAF.
- This twin-engine multirole fighter aircraft was introduced into the IAF's fleet in 2002.
- It is known for its versatility in handling different types of operation: air superiority, ground attack, electronic warfare, and maritime strike.
- Its inclusion has greatly enhanced the strength of India's combat fleet.

Exercise Talisman Sabre 2025

Introduction and About

- Exercise Talisman Sabre is a significant multinational military exercise that began in 2005.
- Initially, it was a bilateral military exercise between Australia and the US but has later evolved into a major multinational warfighting exercise with several other nations participating.
- The exercise is held biennially and is organised across various Defence and non-Defence training locations in Australia, including offshore locations.

India's Participation in Exercise Talisman Sabre 2025

- In the 11th edition of this exercise, India is participating for the first time.
- This addition represents a step towards further enhancing military cooperation and interoperability between India and other participating nations.

Geographical Reach and Scale of Exercise Talisman Sabre 2025

- This edition marks the first time that the exercise has been extended to Papua New Guinea showing a broadening regional engagement.
- The exercise touches upon Queensland, Northern Territory, Western Australia, New South Wales, and

even Christmas Island.
- With over 35,000 military personnel from as many as 19 nations including Australia, India, US, Japan, France, UK among others engaged, it is the largest-held exercise in history.

Purpose of the Exercise

The purpose of this exercise is to reinforce the regional security architecture among allied nations, promote a free, open, and inclusive Indo-Pacific, and enhance military readiness, interoperability, and joint operational capability.

Nature of Military Activities

- The key military activities performed during this exercise include live-fire drills, field training, amphibious landings, ground force manoeuvres, air combat, maritime operations and force preparation activities.
- These activities collectively aim towards enhancing joint warfighting capabilities of the participating nations.

Key India-Australia and India-US Military Exercises

- Apart from Exercise Talisman Sabre, there are other significant military exercises that India participates in, these include Ausindex (naval), Pitch Black (air), Austrahind (India-Australia military exercises) along with Yudh Abhyas, Tiger Triumph, Cope India and Vajra Prahar (India-US military exercises).
- These exercises are important from the perspective of strengthening India's bilateral relations with these nations.

India's Progress in Ballistic and Air Defence Systems

Introduction and Overview

- India has made significant advancements in the development and testing of indigenous ballistic missiles and air defence systems.
- Recently, India test-fired two indigenous ballistic missiles, Prithvi-II and Agni-I, from the Integrated Test Range in Chandipur, Odisha.
- This development followed successful trials by the Indian Army of the indigenously developed Air Defence System "Akash Prime" in Ladakh.

Details about Prithvi-II

- Prithvi-II is a short-range, surface-to-surface ballistic missile developed by the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) under the Integrated Guided Missile Development Programme.
- With a range of 250–350 km, Prithvi-II is capable of carrying both conventional and nuclear warheads.
- The missile utilises a liquid propulsion system with inertial navigation for precise targeting.

Specifics of Agni-I

- Agni-I, another brainchild of the DRDO, is a nuclear capable, short-to-medium range ballistic missile with a range of 700–900 km.
- This missile can carry a 1,000 kg payload and is road and rail mobile, bridging the gap between the Prithvi series and longer-range Agni missiles in India's credible minimum deterrence strategy.

Noteworthy Information about Akash Prime

- The Akash Prime is an upgraded version of the Akash missile system, now featuring an indigenous active Radio Frequency (RF) seeker for improved accuracy across terrains and weather conditions.
- First deployed in Operation Sindoor, it has become a critical component to neutralise Pakistani aerial threats.
- This medium-range, surface-to-air system can operate at altitudes up to 4,500 m and engage targets 25–30 km away, meaning it is designed to secure both mobile and static assets.

Understanding Ballistic Missiles

- Ballistic missiles are rocket-propelled weapons that follow a ballistic trajectory to deliver one or more warheads to a predetermined target.
- These missile can carry conventional or nuclear warheads and can be launched from multiple platforms including land, sea, or air.
- Ballistic missiles are categorised as short (< 1,000 km), medium (1,000–3,000 km), intermediate (3,000–5,500 km) or long-range or Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs)(> 5,500 km) based on their range. Agni-V is India's longest-range missile, an ICBM boasting a range of over 5,000 km.

POLITY

Disability Rights in Indian Prisons: A Spotlight on Inaccessibility and Neglect

Introduction and Current News

- The Indian Supreme Court (SC) has ruled in the L Muruganantham vs. State of Tamil Nadu Case (2025) that denying basic care to disabled prisoners infringes upon their fundamental rights.
- The SC also brought up the necessity for reforms in line with the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016 (RPwD Act), which ensures dignity and adequate care for disabled inmates in Indian prisons.

Challenges and Negligence Surrounding Disabled Inmates

- Prisons in India are structurally inaccessible for inmates with mobility, sensory, or cognitive impairments, leading to massive institutional inaccessibility.
- Disabled prisoners are denied daily care due to the lack of trained caregivers, causing severe suffering and exacerbating their marginalisation.
- The Social exclusion intensifies in prison due to bureaucratic apathy and lack of institutional sensitivity.
- Trials proceedings exclude those with disabilities due to the absence of interpreters, sign language

facilitators, and accessible formats, leading to procedural discrimination.
- The absence of dedicated therapeutic facilities and poor data collection contribute to the violation of the RPwD Act, 2016.

Constitutional and Legal Rights of Disabled Inmates

- The SC reaffirmed that denying basic care to disabled prisoners directly violates their fundamental rights, including their right to life and personal liberty, as well as equality before the law.
- The RPwD Act, 2016 outlines protections and facilities that must be provided in custodial settings such as accessible infrastructure and necessary accommodations.

About the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016

- Enacted to implement the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which India ratified in 2007.
- It expanded the definition of disability, increased the rights and entitlements of persons with disabilities, and mandated accessibility standards across all sectors.

Supreme Court's Directives for Disabled-friendly Prisons

- The SC has given several key directives to ensure the dignified treatment of disabled prisoners, including identification of prisoners with disabilities, ensuring universal accessibility, provision of therapeutic facilities, conducting state-level access audits, and sensitising of prison officials.
- This ruling is an important milestone in the recognition and protection of the constitutional and legal rights of persons with disabilities, particularly those within the Indian penal system.

Legality of Phone Tapping in India

Introduction and Overview

- Phone tapping refers to the monitoring or recording of telephone conversations by a third party, typically without the consent of the persons involved.
- It is often conducted by government agencies for security, intelligence, or law enforcement purposes.

Key Laws Governing Phone Tapping

- Section 5(2) of the Indian Telegraph Act, 1885 permits the central or state governments to intercept phone calls during public emergencies or safety concerns.
- The Information Technology Act, 2000 oversees the surveillance of digital communications.
- The Indian Post Office Act, 1898 applies to postal communications.

Safeguards and Legal Provisions Against Phone Tapping

- Rule 419A of Indian Telegraph Rules, 1951 provides procedures for phone tapping and includes a Review Committee to prevent its misuse.
- Surveillance must be in line with constitutional safeguards, particularly Article 19(1)(a) and Article 21.

Recent Rulings Regarding Phone Tapping

- The Delhi High Court in the Aakash Deep Chouhan v. CBI Case, 2020, justified phone tapping under certain instances such as preventing incitement to an offence.
- This ruling argues that corruption in public projects can pose a threat to economic security, thereby validating it as a public safety concern.
- Contrastingly, the Madras High Court in the P. Kishore v. Secretary to Government Case, 2018, overruled a 2011 interception order issued by the Ministry of Home Affairs on grounds of lack of proof of a public emergency or paramount threat to public safety.
- This ruling deemed the phone tapping as unlawful as it failed to meet the procedural standards set by the Supreme Court in People's Union for Civil Liberties v. Union of India Case, 1997.

Supreme Court Guidelines on Phone Tapping

- A Supreme Court ruling in 1997 determined that phone tapping can only be authorised by the Home Secretary of the Centre or State. The delegation of this power below the rank of a Joint Secretary is prohibited.
- Every phone-tap order must be reviewed within two months by a committee comprising: the Cabinet Secretary, Law Secretary, and Telecom Secretary at the Centre; or the Chief Secretary, Law Secretary, and one other member at the State.

Admissibility of Evidence Collected Through Phone Tapping

If a phone-tap order is circumvented, the information gathered cannot be used as admissible evidence in court, in order to uphold privacy and free speech rights.

Understanding RECLAIM Framework for Mine Closures

Introduction and About RECLAIM Framework

- RECLAIM Framework is a distinctive Indian-specific policy tool devised by the Coal Controller Organisation alongside the Heartfulness Institute.
- The initiative aims to provide thorough guidance for inclusive and sustainable mine closures.
- Its main goal is to ensure a fair and locally relevant transition for communities impacted by mining activities.

Key Features of The RECLAIM Framework

- The Framework prioritises community-centric planning by encouraging local participation.
- It emphasises gender equality, support for vulnerable groups, and introduces livelihood diversification.
- It insists on institutional convergence by aligning with Panchayati Raj Institutions and local governance structures.
- Provision of practical and field-tested tools and methodologies specifically tailored to Indian mining regions is also an essential component.

Implementation Phases of RECLAIM Framework

- The implementation is divided into three phases:

pre-closure, closure, and post-closure phases.
- The pre-closure phase deals with needs assessment and capacity building.
- The closure phase involves participatory plan execution.
- The post-closure phase focuses on monitoring, livelihood support, and asset repurposing.

Challenges in Coal Mine Closure

Notable challenges include a significant gap between policy and practice, lack of proper rehabilitation, absence of a land return framework, and technological and economic hurdles.

Significance of The RECLAIM Framework

- The RECLAIM Framework mitigates socio-economic and environmental impacts caused by mine closures.
- It supports Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and promotes transparency, accountability, and trust
- It can be replicated as a model for other resource-dependent sectors and states.

About Coal

- Coal, often called 'Black Gold' for its high economic value, is a fossil fuel formed from the remains of ancient vegetation.
- Predominantly used as a domestic fuel and thermal power generation, coal also plays a critical role in industrial sectors like iron and steel and railway steam engines.
- China, India, Indonesia, United States and Russia are amongst the world's top contributors to coal production.

Coal Distribution in India

- The Gondwana Coal Fields, contributing to the majority of India's coal reserves and production, and Tertiary Coal Fields are significant coal supplies in India.
- Classification varies based on carbon content from Anthracite, Bituminous, Lignite, to Peat.

Potential Impact

- The RECLAIM Framework is a progressive approach that could significantly improve the mine closure procedures in India.
- Aligning with existing institutions and focusing on community-driven strategies increase its potential for success.
- However, substantial challenges need to be addressed for it to be effective and beneficial in a holistic sense.

Supreme Court Upholds State Legislative Authority: Nandini Sundar vs. State of Chhattisgarh Case, 2011

The Case Overview

- Nandini Sundar vs. State of Chhattisgarh was a significant Supreme Court ruling in 2011.
- The court directed the Chhattisgarh government to discontinue the use of Special Police Officers (SPOs) in anti-Maoist activities due to their lack of appropriate training and violations of the Constitution's Articles 14 and 21.
- The state responded by enacting the Chhattisgarh Auxiliary Armed Police Forces Act, which created an auxiliary force similar to the previous Salwa Judum and Koya Commandos.
- Petitioners accused the new law of contravening the spirit of the 2011 Supreme Court judgement, prompting a contempt plea.

Supreme Court Ruling

- The Supreme Court dismissed the contempt plea, noting that Chhattisgarh fulfilled its 2011 requirements and provided the necessary reports.
- The court held that state legislatures have the power to enact laws as long as they are not unconstitutionally or ultra vires.
- The judgement underscored the doctrine of separation of powers and clarified that legislative actions can only be disputed on grounds of constitutional validity or legislative competence.
- The court emphasized that legislatures have the constitutional right to create new laws, eliminate the basis of a judgement, or validate laws that have been struck down.

Related Judicial Declarations

- Comparable judicial pronouncement was observed in the case of Indian Aluminium Co. vs. State of Kerala (1996). The Supreme Court upheld the legislature's authority to modify laws or enact retrospective legislation to eliminate the basis of a judgement, without directly overruling it.

Salwa Judum & Koya Commandos

- Salwa Judum was a state-endorsed anti-Maoist movement initiated in Chhattisgarh in 2005. It initiated the mobilisation of tribal youth to counter Maoist insurgents.
- Koya Commandos were tribal youths, especially from the Koya tribe, who were recruited as Special Police Officers (SPOs) under the Salwa Judum movement to assist in anti-Naxalite operations.

Nomination of Four Members to the Rajya Sabha

About the Nominees

- Harsh Vardhan Shringla: An experienced diplomat and Foreign Secretary, known for his contributions to strategic affairs, foreign policy, and multilateral diplomacy.
- Ujjwal Nikam: Notably served as Special Public Prosecutor in key cases including the 26/11 Mumbai attacks and the 1993 Bombay blasts. Known for his solid courtroom performance and dedication to justice.
- Meenakshi Jain: A scholarly figure with extensive contributions to Indian civilisation, religious identity, and historiography. Decorated with Padma Shri in 2020 for her service in the field of education and academic research.
- C. Sadanandan Master: Former teacher, columnist and political figure from Kerala, known for his resilience and dedication to public service, having survived a severe political assault in 1994.

Introduction to Rajya Sabha and Its Constituency

- Rajya Sabha is the upper house of the Indian Parliament, instituted under Article 80 of the

Constitution. Its first assembly took place in 1952.
- It is a continuous body and does not dissolve but the rotation of members happens every two years.
- Constituency of the Rajya Sabha consists of a maximum of 250 members, wherein 238 are elected by state and union territory legislative bodies and 12 are nominated by the President under Article 80(1)(a).
- Those nominated members should have exceptional expertise or practical experience in the fields of literature, science, art, or social service.

Indirect Election in Rajya Sabha

- The STV system is employed for the indirect election in the Rajya Sabha, wherein the members are elected by state MLAs.
- State representation in the Rajya Sabha is determined by population, with larger states like Uttar Pradesh having more representation than smaller ones, such as Goa.
- The Representation of the People Act, 1951 has introduced certain safeguards to prevent cross-voting, such as an open ballot system and prohibition on disclosure of vote by Independent MLAs.

Special Powers of Rajya Sabha

- The Rajya Sabha possesses unique powers under the Constitution, which are not offered to the Lok Sabha.
- These powers include authorisation to legislate on state list subjects if deemed necessary in the national interest and the initiation of new All-India Services common to both the Centre and the States.

Impeachment of Judges in India

Introduction and Recent Development

- Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister recently announced the initiation of an impeachment motion against Justice Yashwant Varma, backed by over 100 Members of Parliament (MPs).
- This motion became necessary after Justice Varma's indictment by a judicial panel, following the discovery of burnt currency in his residence from a fire in March 2025.
- Despite Chief Justice Sanjeev Khanna's recommendation for his removal, Justice Varma refused to resign, instead choosing to challenge the findings in the Supreme Court of India.

Understanding Judicial Impeachment in India

- It's important to note that the term "impeachment" is not directly used in the Constitution of India for judges, but is commonly used to refer to the formal process of removing a judge for proved misbehaviour or incapacity.
- This process aims to uphold judicial integrity, while preventing political interference.
- Judicial impeachment is guided by Article 124(4) of the Constitution of India and the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968 for Supreme Court judges, with Article 218 extending these provisions to High Court judges.
- Here, reasons for removal can include Proved Misbehaviour (serious ethical or professional misconduct) or Incapacity (inability to discharge duties due to physical/mental reasons).

The Impeachment Process

- An impeachment motion can be initiated in either the Lok Sabha or the Rajya Sabha, requiring the support of at least 100 or 50 MPs respectively.
- Upon acceptance by the Speaker or the Chairman, a three-member inquiry committee is established to investigate the charges.
- The committee submits its findings to the originating House. If guilt is confirmed, the matter is debated in both Houses where a special majority is required for removal.
- A judge can only be removed by an order of the President, following the successful passing of an impeachment motion in both Houses of Parliament.

Drawbacks of the Impeachment Process

- The process can be disrupted by the resignation of the judge during proceedings, muddying the waters of full accountability.
- No judge in India has been successfully impeached since independence, due to strict voting thresholds and the challenges of political negotiations and shifting alliances.

Notable Impeachment Attempts

- Justice V. Ramaswami (1993) was the first Supreme Court judge to face impeachment but the motion failed in Lok Sabha due to abstentions.
- In 2011, Justice Soumitra Sen faced impeachment for misappropriating funds. While the Rajya Sabha passed the motion, it did not reach the Lok Sabha because he resigned.

Mid-Term Resignation and Role of the Vice-President of India

Resignation of Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar

- The Vice-President of India, Jagdeep Dhankhar, has resigned from his post before the completion of his term.
- He submitted his resignation to President, Droupadi Murmu, under Article 67(a) of the Constitution, making him the third Vice-President to resign mid-term, after V.V. Giri and R. Venkataraman.

Constitutional Provisions for Mid-Term Resignation

- The Vice-President can resign by writing to the President as per Article 67(a) of the Constitution and the resignation takes immediate effect.
- The Vice-President's resignation, who is also the ex-officio Chairman of the Rajya Sabha, creates a temporary gap in parliamentary leadership.
- The Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha presides over its proceedings in the Vice-President's absence, as the Constitution doesn't provide for an acting Vice-President.
- In case of a mid-term resignation, there's no fixed timeframe for electing a new Vice-President, but the election should be held "as soon as possible."

Election and Tenure of the New Vice-President

- The Election Commission of India conducts the election under the Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections Act, 1952.
- The Secretary General of either House of

Parliament is traditionally appointed as the Returning Officer.
- The newly elected Vice-President gets a full five-year term, irrespective of the remaining tenure of the predecessor.

Overview of the Vice-Presidency

- Article 63 of the Indian Constitution provides for a Vice President, the second-highest constitutional authority after the President.
- The Vice President is elected by MPs from both Houses of Parliament but state legislators don't participate (Article 66).
- They must be an Indian citizen, above 35 years old, qualified for Rajya Sabha membership, and they mustn't hold an office of profit or be a parliamentary or state legislative member.
- Duties of the Vice- Presidency include acting as the ex- officio Chairman of the Rajya Sabha (Council of States), not voting except in case of a tie, and acting as the President during Presidential absences.
- They can also be removed by a resolution in the Rajya Sabha and approved by Lok Sabha.

Vice-President's Role as the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha

- The Chairman presides over Rajya Sabha sessions, maintains order, interprets and decides on procedural issues, and ensures discipline.
- The Chairman does not enter the debate or vote in the first instance but they can cast a deciding vote in case of a tie (Article 100).
- As an administrative function, the Chairman refers bills, motions, and resolutions to parliamentary committees for further discussion.
- As a non-member the Chairman should remain impartial, ensuring equal participation and respect for parliamentary norms.
- During the Vice-President's Presidential duties, the Deputy Chairman assumes the Chair's duties.

RANK REPORTS AWARDS

Global Peace Index 2025: An Analysis of Global Peacefulness and Rising Tensions

Introduction and Overview

- Global Peace Index (GPI) 2025 is the 19th edition of the series, widely regarded as the primary tool for assessing peace in countries worldwide.
- Developed by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP), the GPI offers insightful understanding on the peacefulness status of 163 countries, covering almost the entire global population.
- The GPI serves as a significant measure for global trends related to conflict, safety, and militarisation, especially critical amidst an increasing geopolitical instability.

What is the Global Peace Index?

- The Global Peace Index is a yearly systematic analysis that measures peace based on 23 indicators across three main domains: societal safety and security, ongoing domestic and international conflict, and degree of militarisation.
- This index is published by the Institute for Economics & Peace, an independent, non-partisan think tank based in Sydney.
- Over years the GPI has gained significant respect and serves as a benchmark for governments, researchers, and organisations working towards sustainable peace and security reforms.

Most Peaceful and Least Peaceful Countries in 2025

- Despite prevalent global unrest, Countries such as Iceland, Ireland, New Zealand, Austria, and Switzerland rank top five in the most peaceful nations.
- Iceland maintains its lead as the world's most peaceful country, which is attributed to low crime rates, stable politics, and absence of military forces. On the rank's lower end, Russia, followed by Ukraine, is found to be the least peaceful nations due to ongoing crises, war, sanctions, and internal political repression.

Detailed Analysis: India's Performance

- In the Global Peace Index 2025, India ranking 115th out of 163 nations, indicating an improvement in its GPI score reflecting a 0.58% improvement YoY.
- Indian performance displays a gradual betterment over recent years, despite dealing with internal unrest, cross-border tensions, and militarisation.
- Areas of noteworthy improvement for India include crime perception, political stability, and terrorist impact indicators.

Comparison: India vs. South Asia

- While South Asia emerges as the least peaceful region, India's performance outshines several regional neighbours such as Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Afghanistan.
- Based on the index, India ranks better than Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Afghanistan, reflecting that the country's peace status is significantly better inside the region.

Kerala Sahitya Akademi 2024 Literary Award Winners

Introduction and Overview

- In 2024, Kerala Sahitya Akademi, the leading literary institution of Kerala, revealed its literary award winners.
- These awards celebrate both emerging talents and veteran Malayalam literature writers.
- The range of awards cover various genres, including novels, poetry, drama, biography, and translation.
- The Akademi's objective is to promote the literary culture in Kerala through these awards.

Recent Developments

- The winners of the 2024 awards were formally declared on 26 June 2025 in Thrissur.
- These awards not only recognise various outstanding contributions to Malayalam literature but hold considerable cultural significance.
- They are recognised as one of the most esteemed recognitions in the Malayalam literary circle.

Key Awardees and Categories

- The Best Novel award was given to G R Indugopan for Aano.
- Anitha Thampi was recognised for her work in Poetry, Muringa Vazha Kariveppu.
- The Short Story award went to V Shinilal for Garisappa Aruvi Athava Oru Jalayathra.
- M Swaraj won the Sibi Kumar Endowment Award for best essay for Pookkalude Pusthakam.
- Additional awards were given across genres such as Drama, Literary Criticism, Scientific Literature, Biography/Autobiography, Travel Writing, Translation, Children's Literature, and Humour.

Akademi Fellowship & Lifetime Contribution Awards

- The Akademi Fellowship was bestowed upon K V Ramakrishnan.
- Ezhacheri Ramachandran was recognised for his Lifetime Contribution.
- Six authors, namely, P K N Panicker, Payyannur Kunhiraman, M M Narayanan, T K Gangadharan, K E N, and Mallika Yunis, were also honoured with Lifetime Contribution Awards.

Awards Details

- Regular Awards include a ₹25,000 cash prize, a plaque, and a certificate.
- The Fellowship & Major Lifetime Awards comprise ₹50,000, a two-sovereign gold medal, shawl, citation, and a plaque.
- Other Lifetime Awards offer ₹30,000, a plaque, shawl, and certificate.
- Interestingly, there was no finalist selected for the Vilasini Award in the year 2024.

State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2025: Global Hunger Trends and India's Nutrition Paradox

Current Global Hunger and Food Insecurity: SOFI 2025 Summary

- SOFI 2025: 8.2% of the world population, or 673 million people, experienced hunger.
- Hunger remains above pre- Covid-19 levels, signaling incomplete recovery.
- By 2030, approximately 512 million people could remain chronically undernourished, almost 60% of which reside in Africa.
- 2.3 billion people globally remain moderately or severely food insecure.
- The pandemic and the Ukraine war contributed to global food price inflation.

Regional Hunger Statistics

- Asia accounted for the highest number of undernourished people at 323 million, followed by Africa (307 million) and Latin America and the Caribbean (34 million).

India's Nutritional Challenges

- About 12% of India's population is undernourished (172 million people).
- India still faces a high rate of malnutrition: Over 53.7% of women aged 15–49 in India suffer from anaemia.
- India has the world's highest child wasting rate (18.7%) with over 21 million children being affected.

Causes of India's Nutrition Paradox

- Persistent poverty and inequality lead to malnutrition and food insecurity among socio-economically marginalized communities.
- Lack of access to nutrient-rich food results in hidden hunger (micronutrient deficiency).

India's Plans to Tackle Food and Nutrition Security

- India's Public Distribution System (PDS) covers over 80 crore people, ensuring transparent food grain delivery.
- Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY) offers 5 kg of free food grains per month to over 81.35 crore people.
- POSHAN Abhiyaan targets malnutrition in women, children, and adolescents with over 10 crore beneficiaries by 2024.

Strategies for Tackling India's Nutritional Paradox

- Support farmer producer organisations and strengthen agricultural market information systems.
- Encourage kitchen gardens and promote region-specific crops to improve dietary diversity.
- Enhance strategies to combat anaemia among women.
- Improve dietary diversity and protein access.
- Monitor obesity levels and promote healthy lifestyles.

Henley Passport Index 2025 Q2 - India's Rising Rank

Introduction and Basics of Henley Passport Index

- The Henley Passport Index is an authoritative record that ranks 199 passports based on the extent of visa-free access to 227 destinations worldwide.
- This ranking is derived from up-to-date information provided by the International Air Transport Association (IATA), corroborated, and released quarterly.
- It primarily reflects the global mobility and ease of travel for the citizens of the listed nations.
- The ranking is premised on the number of destinations passport holders can access without advance visa arrangements.

Indian Passport's Spot in the Index

- Indian passport feeds into the news due to its considerable leap in the Henley Passport Index 2025 Q2.
- India is ranked 77th, pushing its position up from the previous 85th spot in the Q1 of the same year.
- It indicates a noteworthy yet conservative enhancement in global mobility for the Indian citizens.
- The actualization of this change is traced back to the addition of two more nations - the Philippines and Sri Lanka - to the list of places Indian passport holders could access without prior visa requirements.
- This boost sees Indian passport holders now enjoy visa-free or visa-on-arrival access to a grand total of 59 worldwide destinations.

Comparative Position and Leading Nations

- Singapore spearheads the chart with its citizens having the privilege to visit 193 countries without any pre-visa requirements.
- The second and third holders sharing the top slots are Japan and South Korea with effortless access to 190 countries.
- This arrangement of classification underlines the comparative global mobility of nations in terms of their reachable worldwide destinations.

About International Air Transport Association (IATA)

- IATA's importance is underlined as the data provider for the Henley Passport Index.
- IATA, with its headquarters in Montreal, Canada, is an anchor trade body associated with 300 airlines encompassing an impressive 83% of global air traffic.
- The data taken from IATA for the Henley Passport Index is extensive and reliable, providing comprehensive insights into the global aviation industry.

Conclusion and Broader Implications

- The Henley Passport Index serves as an insightful measure to understand international travel dynamics from a geo-political viewpoint.
- The rise in India's rank reflects the strengthening of its global relations, manifesting in increased acceptance and ease of movement for its citizens.
- Conversely, countries retaining top spots exemplify the ongoing strength of their global standing and diplomacy.

Unified Payments Interface - Revamping India's Digital Payments

Introduction and Overview of UPI

- UPI is a real-time mobile payment system developed by National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).
- It permits users to merge multiple bank accounts into a single application, making peer-to-peer and merchant transactions seamless.
- The technology integrates the Immediate Payment Service (IMPS) and Aadhaar Enabled Payment System (AePS).
- UPI also has a Unique Virtual Payment Address (VPA) that offers two-factor authentication, eliminating the need to enter bank details repeatedly.

UPI's Impact on India's Digital Payment Ecosystem and Adoption

- The UPI had processed Rs 24.03 lakh crore through 18.39 billion transactions as of June 2025.
- The platform services 491 million users and 65 million merchants, connecting over 675 banks.
- UPI has merged digital payments into daily life in India, offering instant 24/7 transactions and easy management of bank accounts via a single application.
- It holds the title for the world's top real-time payment system, processing over 640 million daily transactions.

Interoperability and Financial Inclusion Promoted by UPI

- Due to UPI, platform-agnostic payments have become possible, overcoming closed-loop system limitations.
- UPI has made digital payments easier and more flexible, allowing transactions across various apps and banks.
- The real-time transfers at zero-cost have allowed small vendors and first-time users to access digital payments.
- The system has helped empower small stores and micro-businesses.

UPI's Global Reach and Diplomacy

- UPI has extended its operations to 7 countries, including UAE, Singapore, Bhutan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, France, and Mauritius.
- India is also pushing for UPI to be adopted across BRICS nations, boosting remittances and simplifying payments for Indians abroad.

The Digital Foundation Behind UPI's Success

- UPI's success is a result of rigorous investment in digital infrastructure, including the JAM trinity (Jan Dhan Yojana, Aadhaar, and Mobile connectivity) along with affordable internet.
- The Jan Dhan Yojana initiative opened over 55.9 crore bank accounts as of mid-July 2025, facilitating direct benefit transfers.
- Aadhaar, with over 142 crore numbers generated by June 2025, facilitated secure authentication and underpinned services like UPI.
- Rapid improvement in connectivity has aided in making UPI the world's top real-time payment system and a global model for digital finance.

Reserve Bank of India's Proposed Financial Conditions Index

Introduction and Context

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has proposed to implement a Financial Conditions Index (FCI) monitored on a daily basis.
- This initiative is central to evaluating the health and wellbeing of India's financial market, offering crucial insights to policymakers and analysts.

FCI Objective and Definition

- The ultimate aim of the FCI is to act as a centralised measure of financial conditions, reflecting variations from the norm since 2012, ranging from tight to easy.
- Values produced by the FCI can be interpreted in standardised terms: positive numbers indicate tight financial conditions whilst negative numbers suggest easier conditions.

FCI Components

- The efficacy of the FCI is underpinned by its comprehensive approach, tracking a total of 20 financial market indicators.
- The nature of these indicators is broad, covering elements of money markets, government securities (commonly referred to as G-Secs), corporate bonds, equities, and foreign exchange (Forex) markets.

Historical Trends and Significant Episodes

- The RBI sample period depicted variability in financial conditions, from the tightest conditions in July 2013 (FCI value: 2.826) to the easiest conditions in June 2021 (FCI value: -2.197).
- The notable spike in July 2013 was the result of a 'taper tantrum', an economic event characterised by sudden interest rate increases driven by investors fearing a reduction in the central bank's bond-buying scheme, also known as quantitative easing.
- Conversely, the comfortable financial conditions experienced in June 2021 were largely driven by the infusion of liquidity measures by the RBI in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic.

Significance of the FCI Initiative

- The implementation of the FCI stands testament to India's dedication to fostering indigenous research within the macro-financial sector.
- More importantly, it contributes significantly to real-time policy planning, facilitating a more effective response to future financial phenomena.

Global Wetland Outlook 2025

Introduction and About

- The Global Wetland Outlook (GWO) 2025, released by the Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention (1971), locates Africa's wetlands as among the world's most degraded.
- The Ramsar Convention Secretariat, located in Gland, Switzerland, receives administrative services from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) to assist its member countries.

Key Takeaways from Global Wetland Outlook 2025

- Global Wetland Coverage: Wetlands cover over 1,800 million hectares globally, including various ecosystems. Nevertheless, uncertainty persists due to inconsistent methods and gaps in historical data.
- Wetland Loss and Degradation: The world has experienced approximately 22% global decline in wetlands since 1970, mainly impacting Africa, Latin America, Caribbean sector and LDCs.
- Value of Wetlands: They provide essential ecosystem services, contributing to disaster protection, carbon storage, water filtration, and cultural value. Over 60% of GDP in some African countries comes from nature-based sectors.
- Wetland Funding Gap: Currently, biodiversity funding is extremely low to meet the needs.
- Recommendations: Urgent calls for action to restore degraded ecosystems and conserve land, waters, and seas to a substantial extent. Additional resources and investments are needed for this.

Wetlands Information

- Wetlands are defined as areas of marsh, peatland, water natural or artificial, that may be fresh, brackish, or salty, including shallow marine areas. Human-made wetlands, Lakes and Ponds, River Floodplains, Oxbow Lakes, Marshes, Estuaries and Swamps are major types of wetlands.
- The ecosystem services of wetlands include water purification, storm and flood control, erosion control, wildlife habitat, high productivity and education.

Status and Conservation Efforts of Wetlands in India

- As of August 2024, India has the highest wetland coverage in South Asia with 1,307 identified wetlands covering over 1.35 million hectares.
- India ratified the Ramsar Convention in 1982, and now has 91 Ramsar Sites, reflecting its ongoing commitment to wetland conservation.
- The Wetlands of India Portal was launched in 2021, offering public access to data on wetland conservation.
- Other initiatives include the National Wetland Decadal Change Atlas, the Amrit Dharohar Scheme, and the integration of conservation efforts with the Namami Gange project.
- To commemorate the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands adoption, World Wetlands Day is observed on 2nd February each year.

India as Fourth 'Most Equal' Country Globally

Introduction and Current Status

- India, the fourth-largest economy worldwide, is now recognised as the fourth most equal society, as per the World Bank's Gini Index, with a rank of 25.5.
- This rank places India in the 'moderately low inequality' category and above countries such as the US and China, known for their higher inequality scores.

Understanding the Gini Index

- The Gini Index, or the Gini Coefficient, developed in 1912 by Italian statistician Corrado Gini, measures income inequality in a society.
- The values on this index vary between 0 and 1 (or 0 and 100 when shown as percentages), where 0 indicates perfect equality, and 1 or 100 signals maximum inequality.
- The Lorenz curve influences this index, which involves plotting the cumulative percentage of total income against the percentage of recipients, starting from the poorest.

India's Journey with the Gini Index

- Since 2011, India's Gini Index score dropped from 28.8 to 25.5 in 2022, indicating a steady improvement in social equity.
- India now ranks more equal than all countries included in the G7 and G20, defying many conventional perceptions of India as a highly unequal society.
- This improvement exemplifies the broad-based income growth in the country, especially among lower-income brackets.

Driving Forces Behind India's Equity Success – Poverty Reduction and Welfare Schemes

- Since 2011, extreme poverty in India dropped significantly, with about 171 million people lifted above the global extreme poverty threshold, revised to USD 3/day, considering inflation.
- India's advancements in social equity have been propelled by several welfare schemes, such as the

PM Jan Dhan Yojana, Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), Ayushman Bharat, Stand-Up India, Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana (PMGKAY), and PM Vishwakarma Yojana.
- These schemes address various aspects such as financial inclusion, health coverage, welfare payments, aimed at the disadvantaged communities, ensuring welfare reaches the right person at the right time through reliable authentication.

Challenges and Structural Concerns

- Despite the low inequality index, over 300 million people in India continue to live in poverty, raising questions about the longevity of improvements in equality.
- Disparities in wages and income persist, revealing deep income and wealth inequality not accurately reflected in the Gini Index.
- The country's outdated poverty line, based on the Rangarajan Committee's estimation in 2014, might not reflect the current cost-of-living realities.
- Inequalities continue to exist in areas such as education, healthcare, digital access, and employment, especially for rural populations, women, SCs/STs, and informal workers, limiting resultant equality despite improvements in consumption.
- 2nd Edition of the North Eastern Region District Sustainable Development Goals Index

Introduction and About

- The North Eastern Region (NER) District Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Index is a comprehensive tool that tracks district-level advancement on chosen SDG indicators. It was collaboratively developed by NITI Aayog, the Ministry of Development of North Eastern Region (MoDoNER), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).
- It monitors the progress of 121 out of 131 districts across the eight Northeastern states, which accounts for 92% of the districts.
- The districts are placed into four categories: Achiever, Front Runner, Performer, and Aspirant, according to their composite scores.

Findings of the 2023-24 Edition

- The second edition of the NER District SDG Index for 2023-24 shows that 85% of the NER districts fall under the Front Runner category, a substantial increase from 62% in the previous edition.
- All districts in Mizoram, Sikkim, and Tripura have achieved Front Runner status with no districts in the Aspirant or Achiever categories.
- The highest-scoring district in the entire NER is Hnahthial in Mizoram with a score of 81.43 while the lowest-scoring district in the region is Longding in Arunachal Pradesh with a score of 58.71.
- Sikkim displays the most consistent performance across its districts with a point range of only 5.5.

Importance of the NER District SDG Index

- The NER District SDG Index assists in evidence-based planning and resource allocation, identifying development gaps, guiding targeted interventions, ensuring efficient resource deployment, and supporting the localisation of SDGs through a cooperative federalism approach.
- It aligns national development programmes with local needs to achieve more focused and effective outcomes.
- The initiative collaborates with states, NITI Aayog, and MoDoNER to foster sustainable and inclusive development in the region, aligning with India's broader Viksit Bharat @2047 vision.

NITI Aayog's National SDG Index

- The National SDG Index tracks states' and Union Territories' progress on 16 Sustainable Development Goals using 113 indicators aligned with the National Indicator Framework. SDG Goal 14, Life Below Water, is not included in the calculation of the Composite Score for the Index as it applies only to the nine coastal states.
- The Index categories states and UTs into Aspirants, Performers, Front-Runners, and Achievers, with scores reflecting progress toward India's 2030 SDG targets and the vision of Viksit Bharat @2047.

SDG India Index for 2023-24

- India's SDG score climb up to 71, a substantial increase from 66 in 2020-21 and 57 in 2018, driven by gains in poverty reduction, economic growth, and climate action.
- Kerala and Uttarakhand emerged as top performers with scores of 79 while Bihar (57) and Jharkhand (62) were the lowest performers.
- Goal 13 (Climate Action) score increased from 54 to 67, and Goal 1 (No Poverty) improved from 60 to 72, with Goals 1, 8, and 13 now falling under the Front Runner category.

Swachh Survekshan 2024-25 Awards

Introduction and Purpose of Swachh Survekshan

- These awards are an annual event hosted by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) in New Delhi.
- The President of India conferred the 9th edition of these Awards.
- The Swachh Survekshan is the world's largest urban sanitation and cleanliness survey, conducted since 2016 under Swachh Bharat Mission–Urban (SBM-U).
- The objective of this mission is to foster citizen participation, generate awareness on sanitation, and promote competitive federalism through performance benchmarking.

Key Updates of Swachh Survekshan 2024-25 Awards

- A new category, Super Swachh League (SSL) Cities, is introduced to acknowledge cities like Indore, which has been ranked No. 1 for seven consecutive years.
- This year saw the introduction of city classification based on population for a fair comparison and targeted improvement across Urban Local Bodies (ULBs).
- There has been a restructuring of award categories based on the city sizes, divided into Very Small Cities, Small Cities, Medium Cities, Big Cities and

Million Plus Cities.
- The launch of school-level assessments is also notable, aiming to instil cleanliness values among the youth.
- A new theme was introduced for the year 2025: "Reduce, Reuse, Recycle (3R)", in alignment with the Jaipur Declaration.

Special Recognitions and Initiatives

- Special Initiative of Swachh Mahakumbh 2025: Prayagraj was recognized for its waste management approach during the Mahakumbh 2025.
- Cleanest Ganga Town was awarded to Prayagraj.
- The cities of Visakhapatnam, Jabalpur, and Gorakhpur were recognized with Safaimitra Surakshit Shehar Awards for ensuring the safety and dignity of sanitation workers.
- Secunderabad Cantonment was declared the Cleanest Cantonment Board.
- 35 cities across 33 States/UTs were recognized as "Promising Swachh Shehar" for their notable progress in urban sanitation.

About Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM)

- Launched in October 2014, the SBM is a nationwide cleanliness drive, divided into SBM-Gramin and SBM-Urban.
- The mission's initial goal was to make India Open Defecation Free (ODF) by 2nd October 2019.
- The Phase-II (SBM-Gramin) launched in 2020–21 aimed to achieve ODF Plus status by 2024–25 through solid and liquid waste management in rural areas.
- SBM-Urban 2.0, introduced in 2021, focuses on garbage-free cities, faecal sludge and plastic waste management, greywater treatment, and capacity building to sustain urban sanitation outcomes.

United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Index 2025

Introduction and About

- The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Index is a global ranking that aims to provide a measure of the countries' progress towards the 17 Sustainable Development Goals outlined by the United Nations.
- The index represents a key tool in evaluating a country's commitment towards ensuring quality education, maintaining gender equality, taking climate action, and upholding peace and justice.

UN SDG Index 2025 Top 10 countries

- European countries, particularly the Nordic nations, continue to pave the way for sustainable development globally.
- The top 3 countries in the SDG index 2025 are Finland, Sweden, and Denmark with scores of 87.0, 85.7, and 85.3 respectively.
- Other countries making it to the top rankings are Germany, France, Austria, Norway, Croatia, Poland, and Czechia.

UN SDG Index 2025 Bottom 10 countries

- Countries that are plagued by conflict, political instability, and economic challenges find themselves at the lower end of the SDG index 2025.
- The countries with the lowest rankings are South Sudan, Central African Republic, Chad, Somalia, Yemen, Congo, Sudan, Afghanistan, Niger, and Madagascar.

India's Historic Leap in the UN SDG Index Rankings

- India's remarkable improvement lands the country into the top 100 of the SDG index for the first time with a score of 67 in 2025.
- The steady climb in rankings is a testament to India's growing focus on sustainable development, particularly driving initiatives in clean energy, digital public infrastructure, and financial inclusion.
- The country's rank has significantly improved from 120th in 2021, 121st in 2022, 112th in 2023 to 109th in 2024, and finally breaking into top 100 in 2025.

India in Regional Comparison

- Despite entering the top 100 globally, India lags behind a few South Asian countries like Maldives, Bhutan, and Nepal.
- Other regional peers include Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Pakistan who are ranked at various positions on the index.
- This juxtaposition showcases the steady progress made by India but also highlights the challenges that lie ahead in terms of sustainable development.

SCHEMES AND INITIATIVE

Indian Railways Launches New Accident Compensation Scheme

Introduction and Overview

- The Indian Railways, the lifeline of Indian transportation, has launched a new welfare initiative for its employees.
- The initiative provides ₹1 crore accident compensation to the employees, without the need for any insurance premium payments.
- This aims to promote financial security among the employees of Indian Railways.

Implementation Details

- To benefit from this insurance-free assistance, employees must have a Salary Package Account with a partnered bank, an example of which is the State Bank of India (SBI).
- Once this condition is met, employees are eligible to claim compensation, if ever an unfortunate accident occurs.

In News and Current Development

- This policy came into publicity when the family of a loco pilot named Sushil Lal received the first benefit under this scheme.
- In an effort to ensure absolute coverage, Indian Railways is working diligently to promote the scheme through all railway unions and awareness campaigns.

Importance and Potential Impact

- The scheme seeks to provide a safety net for the

families of Indian Railways employees.
- It is poised to be a life-saving programme, offering significant financial protection to the railway employees.
- This move is expected to increase the morale of Indian Railways employees knowing that they and their families have a back-up plan in case of any unfortunate events.

Historical perspective and General Knowledge

- Indian Railways is one of the largest rail networks in the world, with a massive employee base.
- Over the years, the Indian Railways has come up with numerous welfare initiatives aiming at the health, safety, and financial security of its employees.
- However, this scheme, covering accident compensation of ₹1 crore without insurance premium, is a first-of-its-kind initiative launched by the Indian Railways.
- Upon successful implementation, it could set a precedent for other public sector organisations in India to follow.

SIGHT Scheme: The Green Ammunition for India's Fertilizer Sector

Introduction to the SIGHT Scheme

- The Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI) has recently launched a groundbreaking green ammonia tender under the rubric of the SIGHT Scheme.
- The Scheme aims to produce 724,000 tonnes/year of green ammonia, marking a step towards the decarbonisation of India's significant fertilizer industry— traditionally a major consumer of fossil-based hydrogen.
- Funded by ₹1,533.4 crore incentives, the initiative provides long-term contracts and a Payment Security Mechanism. This ensures market confidence while offering environmental benefits.

SIGHT Scheme: Contributing to a Greener Future

- The SIGHT Scheme is transforming India's fertilizer sector by replacing conventional ammonia, derived from fossil fuels, with ammonia derived from green hydrogen.
- Green ammonia is produced from water and air using renewable energy sources such as solar or wind power, thereby drastically reducing carbon emissions.
- The implementation of this green project addresses key environmental objectives, such as reduced carbon footprint and decreased dependence on fossil fuels.

Importance of the SIGHT Scheme for India

- The SIGHT Scheme not only pushes India closer to achieving its climate goals but also reduces the country's dependency on imports.
- By preferring green hydrogen over conventional sources, the project amplifies India's drive towards industrial sustainability.
- This initiative by SECI, one of the significant steps taken towards clean energy in India, sets an example for other energy-intensive industries to follow.

Conclusion: Impact of the SIGHT Scheme on India's Fertilizer Sector

- The SIGHT Scheme marks an important milestone in India's transition towards a clean energy ecosystem.
- The large-scale production of green ammonia could be a game-changer for the fertilizer industry, bringing about a significant decrease in greenhouse gas emissions.
- This project paves the way for future sustainable initiatives, pushing the fertilizer sector, and consequently, all of India, towards a greener and more sustainable future.

Top National Players Stipend Scheme (TNPSS)

Introduction and Description

- The Top National Players Stipend Scheme (TNPSS) is a support programme launched by the All India Chess Federation (AICF) on 25th June 2025.
- This initiative contributes significantly to the development of grassroots chess in India.
- It provides direct financial assistance varying between ₹60,000 to ₹1.5 lakh on a quarterly basis to 78 top-performing young participants from Under-7 to Under-19 categories.
- The primary aim is to encourage involvement at a national level, acknowledge potential, and eliminate financial constraints in the development of players.

Current Significance and Objective

- TNPSS has made headlines for its unique approach and potential impact on Indian chess growth.
- It not only represents India's escalating aspiration to emerge as a prominent force in international chess but also supports gender equality.
- It also signifies a sustained investment towards youth sports in India, thereby leveraging India's young demographic.

Geographical Reach and Importance

- This scheme is being implemented nationwide, encompassing players from diverse regions of India, hence breaking geographical barriers.
- Its importance lies in the fact that it has the potential to change the landscape of Indian chess by influencing the growth of young players at the grassroots level.
- By providing financial aid, it directly impacts socio-economically disadvantaged players who can now concentrate more on the game rather than their financial constraints.
- This approach also plays a crucial role in promoting sportsmanship among players, as they get more opportunities to play against strong opponents, thus improving their game.

Historical Perspective and Long-term Impact

- TNPSS is an unprecedented move by AICF, reflective of India's shifting perspective towards sports and sports infrastructure.
- While the scheme represents a breakthrough today, its success will be measured in terms of the

champions it produces, the increased player-base at a grassroots level, and the upliftment of chess as a sport in India over the longer term.
- It is anticipated to make India stand at par with other countries that have extensive support systems for their chess players.
- The scheme's extended impact could be seen in a larger representation of Indian players in international chess tournaments and likely instigation of similar initiatives in other sports.

SPMEPCI (EV Manufacturing Scheme)

Introduction and About

- The Scheme for Promoting Electric Vehicle Manufacturing using Clean Intervention (SPMEPCI) is an initiative launched with the key goal of promoting the domestic electric vehicle (EV) industry and clean mobility.
- This scheme imposes a 15% customs duty on EV Complete Built-up Units (CBUs) valued at $35,000 or more on a Cost, Insurance, and Freight (CIF) basis.
- SPMEPCI is not a short-term plan, instead it's introduced with validity for the next five years.
- It also sets an import quota of 8000 EVs per annum which includes a rollover provision.
- Both greenfield and brownfield investments are eligible under the scheme.
- The current minister overseeing this programme is H.D. Kumaraswamy.

Current News

- High-profile electric car manufacturer, Tesla, has expressed interest in the programme.
- However, Tesla has shown its interest towards establishing showrooms across the country but has not yet shown an interest in setting up manufacturing units.

GK and Importance

- The SPMEPCI scheme, being a governmental initiative, plays a vital role in driving the EV industry in a sustainable direction.
- It reduces the country's reliance on imported fossil fuels, lowers pollution, and drives technological innovation within the domestic industry.
- It also encourages foreign direct investment (FDI), which helps stimulate job creation and technology transfer.
- The scheme also contributes to the global movement towards clean and sustainable mobility solutions, reflecting the growing trend of electric vehicle adoption around the world.
- With manufacturers like Tesla showing interest, the scheme brings global brands to local markets, providing consumers with higher-quality, cleaner mobility solutions.

Conclusion

➢ With the introduction of the SPMEPCI scheme, the government is taking an active role in shaping a more sustainable future for transportation. Though some global players like Tesla have shown interest mainly in sales rather than manufacturing, the scheme is encouraging cleaner mobility solutions in the domestic market.

Agricultural and Digital Developments in India: Krishi Nivesh Portal and PM-WANI Tariff Reform

Introduction to Krishi Nivesh Portal and PM-WANI Tariff Reform

- Krishi Nivesh Portal is a centralised platform for the integration of agricultural schemes across 14 central and 9 state departments, covering 17 major schemes.
- PM-WANI Tariff Reform is a new initiative by TRAI to cap tariffs for Public Data Offices (PDOs) under the PM-WANI programme, which had previously been two times costlier than Fibre to the Home (FTTH).

Overview and Purpose of Krishi Nivesh Portal

- The portal incorporates schemes such as Agricultural Infrastructure Fund (AIF), Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund (AHIDF), and Pradhan Mantri-Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthan Mahabhiyan (PM-KUSUM).
- The platform serves as a tracking, application and information system for these various schemes.
- The primary aim of the portal is to boost private agricultural investment, improve infrastructure and develop value chains in the sector.
- It firmly emphasises on Public-Private Partnerships, credit-linked programmes, Venture Capitals, and startups.
- The portal's budget allocation for FY25 stands at ₹1.31 lakh crore.

Understanding PM-WANI Tariff Reform

- The new PM-WANI Tariff Reform sets a price cap on tariffs for Public Data Offices.
- Initially, PM-WANI plans were double the cost of FTTH. For instance, a 100 Mbps connection for PM-WANI was ₹1,532.82 compared to just ₹706.82 for FTTH.
- The 70th Amendment Draft Order in August 2024 paved the way for this reform, followed by a Department of Telecommunications (DoT) Amendment in September 2024, eliminating the requirement for commercial contracts with Internet Service Providers (ISPs).
- The goal of this reform is to make public Wi-Fi more affordable and inclusive, expanding its reach to a broader range of the population.

India's SPMEPCI Scheme for Electric Vehicle Industry Growth

Introduction to the SPMEPCI Scheme:

- The Government of India has initiated a new scheme entitled 'SPMEPCI' (Scheme for Promotion of Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles and Components).
- The primary objective of this scheme is to speed up the growth of the domestic electric vehicle (EV) sector.
- This policy is designed to boost the local manufacturing process by offering import duty concessions to industry players.

Strategic Points of the Scheme:

- Under the SPMEPCI scheme's guidelines, brownfield investments are allowed and imports are kept at a capped level with provisions for rollovers.
- The ultimate aim of the policy is to draw major global players to invest in India's burgeoning EV market.
- This move aligns with India's clean mobility agenda, looking to reduce reliance on fossil fuels and shift towards sustainable transportation solutions.

Challenges in Attracting Foreign Investments:

- Despite the incentives outlined in the scheme, securing foreign investments remains a challenge for India's EV industry.
- Union Minister H. D. Kumaraswamy revealed that the internationally renowned electric vehicle company, Tesla, has no plans to manufacture its cars in India.
- This highlight the difficulty for India in attracting major overseas industries to invest in India's EV manufacturing space, despite favourable government policies.

Importance and Potential Impact:

- The SPMEPCI scheme's active promotion of electric vehicles and components manufacturing is a significant step toward realising India's sustainable development goals.
- Should it be successful in luring global players into its EV industry, this could stimulate economic growth by creating jobs and fostering technological advancement.
- However, the inability to entice Tesla indicates that further measures may be needed to ensure the EV sector is attractive to both local and global investors.

Inauguration of Bharatiya Bhasha Anubhag (BBA)

Introduction and About

- The Bharatiya Bhasha Anubhag (BBA) is a platform aimed at integrating Indian languages into administrative and governance processes.
- The intent behind this platform is to minimise the dominance of English and to boost local languages, particularly in Region C states.
- The honourable Amit Shah inaugurated the BBA on the 6th of June, 2025.
- A significant funding of ₹56 crore has been allocated to this venture, with further support provided by Centre for Development of Advanced Computing (C-DAC).
- This platform is a technical marvel, allowing for real-time translation and communication in mother tongues.

Current News

- The latest news about the BBA is associated with its launch, which is a laudable initiative taken by Amit Shah.
- The launch of the BBA is seen as a significant support for non-English speakers and is meant to make administrative proceedings more inclusive.
- A lot of buzz is around this platform because it is backed by a hefty funding of ₹56 crore, also supported by C-DAC, known for its advanced computing services.

Historical and Geographical Context

- The inception of BBA can be considered an initiative to acknowledge and lift India's diverse linguistic landscape.
- History has seen precedence over the dominance of English in administrative and governmental sectors; this initiative marks a shift from that precedent.
- Geographically, the BBA will have a more significant effect on Region C States where the mother tongue is widely prevalent over English.

Importance and Significance

- The BBA resonates with the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 vision, making the administrative processes more linguistically inclusive.
- This innovative platform is expected to help foster better relationships between the citizens and the government as it facilitates communication in their mother tongue.
- It strengthens national unity by promoting multi-lingual capacity and fostering mutual respect among different language speakers.
- The introduction of BBA is an important step in cultural preservation and communication democratisation in India.

Launch of 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam 2.0' Campaign and Introduction of Electric Buses on 2025 World Environment Day

Overview of the Initiative

- On World Environment Day, held on June 5, 2025, Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam 2.0' campaign in Delhi.
- The launch event was significant as it marks another noteworthy step taken by the Indian government towards sustainable development and green mobility.
- The purpose of this initiative aims at promoting environmental consciousness among the Indian population, combined with reinforcing cultural values.

Objective of 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam 2.0'

- The 'Ek Ped Maa Ke Naam 2.0' campaign's ultimate goal is to encourage every individual across the country to plant a tree, symbolically in their mother's name.
- The initiative plans to plant 10 crore trees across India by the end of September, demonstrating a strong commitment towards environmental care and preservation on a national scale.

Introduction of Electric Buses

- Besides launching the tree plantation campaign, Prime Minister Narendra Modi also flagged off 200 electric buses within the capital on the same day.
- This move is intended to promote cleaner urban transportation solutions, directly addressing the issue of air pollution.

- The introduction of these electric buses underscores India's commitment to promoting greener alternatives for urban transport and mitigating the impact of climate change.

India's Commitment to Sustainable Development

- Both the launch of the tree-planting initiative and the introduction of electric buses reflect India's steadfast devotion to achieving sustainable development.
- These actions are in line with India's ambition to become a nation attuned to environmental considerations and effectively tackling climate change.
- By interweaving cultural values with environmental consciousness, the government of India hopes to foster a strong sense of responsibility and care towards the environment among its citizens.
- Also, the initiatives form a part of India's strategies to fulfil its commitments under the Paris Agreement, underlining the country's proactive role in participating in global climate action.

Introduction and Overview of the Ayush Nivesh Saarthi Portal

What is the Ayush Nivesh Saarthi Portal?

- The Ayush Nivesh Saarthi Portal is a digital platform launched by the Government of India.
- This portal has been developed by the Ministry of Ayush and Invest India with an intent to draw and facilitate both domestic and international investors in the Ayush sector.
- The Ayush sector encompasses Ayurveda, Yoga, Unani, Siddha, and Homeopathy practices and treatments.

Purpose and Advantages of the Ayush Nivesh Saarthi Portal

- The portal serves as a comprehensive guide offering insight into investment policies and project listings in the Ayush sector.
- Apart from providing real-time support, the portal also details potential benefits for investors in this sector.
- The overarching objective of the platform is to bolster Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), foster the growth of startups, and maximise returns from the sector's commendable annual growth.

Current Impact and Future Potential of the Ayush Sector

- The Ayush sector has demonstrated sustained growth, with an annual increase of 17% between 2014 and 2020.
- The launch of the portal and the potential increase in FDI and support for startups are expected to further drive this growth.
- Given the rejuvenated global interest in natural and traditional treatments in recent years, the Ayush sector holds promising potential for future growth.

Other Relevant Insights

- Alongside promoting economic growth, the Government of India's commitment to the Ayush sector also aligns with several key national policies and initiatives (such as the 'Make in India' programme) targeted at promoting holistic health and wellbeing.
- This portal is not only significant from an economic perspective but also from a socio-cultural one as it can help to preserve, promote, and mainstream these indigenous knowledge systems and practices.

Revised Regulations for Consultancy Firms on National Highway Projects by NHAI

Introduction and About

- The National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) is a statutory body responsible for management of a network of over 50,000 km of national highways in India. It operates under the supervision of Ministry of Road Transport and Highways, striving to ensure the development, maintenance and management of India's national highway network.
- It interacts and collaborates with engineers and consultancy firms for administration and supervision of highway construction and maintenance projects.

Recent Changes and Impact

- NHAI has recently introduced a limit of 10 projects per Engineer for consultancy firms working on national highway construction and maintenance.
- These changes will apply to all contracts effective after a 60-day period from the announcement of this decision.
- It is mandatory under the new rule for monthly site visits and progress reports be filled by the engineers involved, thereby offering more accurate and frequent analysis of project progress.
- This step has been taken with the intention to prevent overburdening of engineers, enforce compliance better and improve the quality of supervision on various contracts under project modes like HAM (Hybrid Annuity Model) and EPC (Engineering Procurement Construction).

Potential Benefits and Importance

- The direct impact of this ruling will be on the improvement in quality and safety of India's highway infrastructure.
- Placing a cap on the number of projects one engineer can supervise ensures more dedicated attention and better quality checks for each project.
- This will also avoid spreading resources too thin, allowing each engineer to invest their expertise more effectively.
- By mandating monthly site visits, an additional level of accountability is introduced, which is likely to result in timely completion of projects and efficient use of resources.
- The goal to ensure the compliance of contracts is further strengthened by this move, favouring better management of highway projects.

General Knowledge and Additional Information

- NHAI was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1988, and is headquartered in Dwarka, New Delhi.
- As the manager of one of the largest highway networks globally, NHAI plays a crucial role in connecting different parts of India, aiding in the

seamless movement of goods and people.
- The role of consultancy firms and engineers is vital in implementing NHAI's tasks, and this recent change further highlights the critical nature of their job and the responsibility associated with it.

DhartiAaba Janbhagidari Abhiyan: India's Largest Tribal Empowerment Campaign

Introduction to DhartiAaba Janbhagidari Abhiyan

- DhartiAaba Janbhagidari Abhiyan is an empowerment campaign launched by India's Ministry of Tribal Affairs.
- It is recognised as India's biggest tribal empowerment initiative, with its reach spanning across a vast majority of the tribal provinces.
- Campaign targets to reach over 549 tribal districts, 2,900+ blocks, and 1 lakh villages.
- It intends to bring about comprehensive social and economic inclusion of tribal population in India.

Objective and Services offered:

- The primary goal of this programme is to ensure benefit saturation, i.e., delivery of key governmental services to the doorsteps of tribal households.
- Services include various important facets such as Aadhaar enrolment, issuance of Ayushman Bharat cards, and PM-Kisan registration.
- It also includes facilitating of Jan Dhan accounts, provision of pensions and training schemes for skill development.
- This initiative is aimed at inclusive governance and last-mile delivery to further the empowerment of India's tribal communities.

Recent Developments and Support

- The DhartiAaba Janbhagidari Abhiyan is being implemented as a part of Janjatiya Gaurav Varsh celebrations.
- It is supported by other significant programmes such as the PM-JANMAN and DAJGUA.
- These auxiliary programmes contribute to accomplishing the objectives of the DhartiAaba Abhiyan by supplementing it with necessary resources and infrastructure.
- Through such comprehensive coverage and support, this campaign signifies a major leap in acknowledging and fostering the progress and development of India's tribal communities.

Significance and Contribution towards Tribal Empowerment

- This campaign is significant in bridging the gap between the tribal populace and government's welfare programmes.
- By delivering necessary services to their doorsteps, it ensures the all-inclusive and easy accessibility of governmental schemes to the tribal communities.
- By promoting skill development and financial inclusion, it aims to contribute significantly in their socio-economic upliftment and empowerment.
- Lastly, by achieving benefit saturation, it seeks to ensure that every member of the tribal communities can avail the benefits of governance, thereby enabling inclusive growth and development.

Maruti Suzuki's Largest Green Automobile In-Plant Railway Siding Inauguration

Introduction and About

- Maruti Suzuki India has opened the country's largest in-plant railway siding located at its Manesar unit.
- This railway siding is a major milestone in green logistics, reinforcing India's drive towards environmentally friendly industrial operations.
- Having cost ₹452 crore to complete, the facility is integrated into the 126 km Haryana Orbital Rail Corridor.

Connection with PM Gati Shakti Master Plan

- The new facility's inauguration aligns with the Central government's PM Gati Shakti Master Plan.
- The plan is a government initiative aiming to enhance India's freight and passenger transportation systems via massive infrastructural development efforts.

Environmental and Functional Benefits

- The new railway siding will dispatch 4.5 lakh vehicles on an annual basis.
- It is anticipated to reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 1.75 lakh tonnes each year and save 60 million litres of fuel annually.
- This increase in rail-based dispatches will significantly mitigate the environmental impact of vehicle transportation.

Future Goals and Contributions towards India's Net-Zero Emission Vision

- Maruti Suzuki India Ltd (MSIL) plans to amplify rail-based dispatches to account for 35% by the fiscal year 2030-31.
- Through this significant increase in rail usage for the dispatch of vehicles, MSIL aligns itself with India's ambitious vision of a net-zero emission economy by 2070.
- This indicates MSIL's commitment to environmental conservation, setting an example for other major industries in the nation.

Introduction of ₹3,000 FASTag Annual Pass in India

Overview

- The Government of India has implemented a new initiative in the form of a ₹3,000 FASTag Annual Pass.
- This pass is applicable for private vehicles: including cars, jeeps, and vans, starting from August 15, 2025.
- The pass is valid for a duration of one year or 200 trips, whichever comes first.

Objective and Features

- The main objective of this initiative is to ease toll-related disputes frequently occurring where the toll plazas are closely spaced.
- Additionally, it encourages a digital-first tolling system, facilitating a transition towards a digital India.
- The pass can be activated through the Rajmarg Yatra App or official NHAI/MoRTH platforms.
- The provision of the pass strives to offer an affordable and hassle-free travel experience across National Highways.

Benefits and Importance

- The annual pass represents a cost-effective option for regular commuters on the National Highways.
- Users can avoid the inconvenience and time loss often associated with paying each toll fee individually.
- The initiative is a step towards digitising all aspects of road travel, in line with the broader vision of Digital India.

Conclusion and Outlook

- The ₹3,000 FASTag Annual Pass is a significant initiative by the Government of India, aiming to enhance the road travel experience for millions of commuters across the country.
- By reducing toll-related issues and promoting a digital-first approach, this pass, available via the Rajmarg Yatra App or official NHAI/MoRTH platforms, serves the broader goals of the Government's drive towards a digitally enabled India.
- With its introduction, the pass is expected to impart greater efficiency, affordability, and convenience to the prevalent tolling system.

AIIMS Mangalagiri Organises Awareness Rally on World Sickle Cell Day

Introduction and About

- The All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) Mangalagiri organised an awareness rally to mark World Sickle Cell Day on June 19, 2025.
- This initiative is in conjunction with the Department of Health and Tribal Welfare.
- The aim of the rally was to raise awareness about sickle cell disease.

Participants and Purpose

- Various individuals, including students, tribal members and medical professionals, actively participated in the event.
- It served as a platform for boosting knowledge and understanding of sickle cell disease, a hereditary blood disorder.
- The condition is known to disproportionately affect the tribal populations in India, which was a significant focus of the event.

Awareness in News and Current Affairs

- The event garnered considerable attention given its timing and importance, aligning with the observance of World Sickle Cell Day.
- World Sickle Cell Day occurs annually on June 19 and is a globally recognised day to raise awareness about the disease and its treatments.
- The involvement of AIIMS Mangalagiri and the Department of Health and Tribal Welfare underlines the importance of joint efforts in healthcare awareness, particularly in relation to hereditary and tribal-based diseases.

General Knowledge Aspects

- Sickle cell disease is a genetic blood disorder that changes the shape of red blood cells, causing an array of health issues including anaemia and intense pain.
- The disease is particularly prevalent amongst tribal groups in India.
- AIIMS Mangalagiri, being a premier healthcare institute, holds a significant role in conducting such awareness programmes.
- Such initiatives reflect the joint efforts of different agencies to battle health issues at the grassroot levels amongst vulnerable populations.

Importance and Relevance

- Throughout the rally, public attention is drawn to the challenges faced by patients living with sickle cell disease, and their health needs.
- Increased understanding can lead to improved treatment options, better support for patients and their families and improved funding for research into the disease.
- The initiative signifies the importance of health education and preventative measures particularly in vulnerable communities or groups.
- The event also underscores the role of public participation in spreading awareness about genetic diseases and informing potential policy-making decisions.

Overview of the "Pratibha Setu" Platform Launched by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC)

Introduction and About Pratibha Setu

- Pratibha Setu is a renewed online platform developed and launched by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC).
- This platform permits recruiters, specifically those from the private sector, to access details about non-recommended candidates encompassing those who cleared all stages of UPSC examinations but were not part of the final merit list.
- The launch of Pratibha Setu illustrates an innovative employment initiative taken by the UPSC, moving towards more holistic talent utilisation.

The Relevance and Recent Developments in Pratibha Setu

- The creation of the Pratibha Setu platform represents a significant shift in the traditional recruitment approach, taking into account not only those in the final merit list but also non-recommended candidates who possess potential and all the required qualifications.
- The incorporation of secure login access for confirmed and verified recruiters ensures the proper, targeted, and safe use of the platform.

Benefits and Potential Impact of Pratibha Setu

- This novel initiative by the UPSC provides alternate career paths for top-tier aspirants who may have successfully cleared all stages of the UPSC examinations but fell short of making it onto the final merit list.
- Pratibha Setu likewise strengthens the connection between government-selected talent and private sector demand, aiming to bridge the gap between these two sectors and leveraging the substantial potential and proficiency of non-recommended

candidates.
- It also instigates a more dynamic and comprehensive hiring framework, promoting greater diversity and competence in the recruitment process.

Role of Pratibha Setu in Society

- Pratibha Setu by the UPSC aligns private sector hiring with a broader range of competent candidates, fostering more diverse and inclusive employment opportunities.
- This initiative also empowers candidates by creating additional channels for them to showcase their skills, knowledge and potential, fostering a more competitive job market across sectors.
- In the long term, this approach could potentially shift the focus of employment in India from a fixed, rigid system to a more flexible platform that appreciates and leverages a wider pool of talents.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bhubaneswar Visit and Development Projects in Odisha

Introduction and Synopsis

- On 20th June 2025, Prime Minister Narendra Modi marked his visit to Bhubaneswar, the capital of the Indian state of Odisha, by launching several new developmental initiatives.
- A massive ₹18,600 crore worth of development projects were inaugurated by the Prime Minister.
- The event highlighted the central government's commitment towards inclusive and holistic development of Odisha.

Inauguration of Development Projects and Key Highlights

- Prime Minister Modi flagged off new rail and bus services, signifying an increase in connectivity and expansion of public transport in Odisha.
- As part of his trip, he also launched the ambitious Odisha Vision Document which sets the goal for Odisha to become a $1.5 trillion economy by the year 2047.
- The Prime Minister also paid much-needed attention towards preserving Odisha's rich cultural heritage with the introduction of the Baraputra Aitihya Gram Yojana.
- Furthermore, as a step towards women empowerment, Lakhpati Didis were felicitated under the Self-Help Group (SHG) initiative.

Significance of the Initiatives

- The launched development projects play a crucial role in fostering the state's economy and creating employment opportunities.
- The flag-off of new rail and bus services is expected to facilitate easy, accessible and affordable commute for the citizens, especially those in remote areas.
- The Odisha Vision Document will act as a roadmap for the state's economic progress and advancement towards its ambitious goal by the year 2047.
- The Baraputra Aitihya Gram Yojana aims at revitalising and keeping alive Odisha's cultural roots by promoting traditional crafts, arts and rural tourism.
- Recognising and appreciating the efforts of Lakhpati Didis under the SHG initiative is a robust step to encourage women empowerment, marking their contributions to society and the economy.
- In conclusion, Prime Minister Modi's visit to Bhubaneswar is a significant development, signaling a brighter and prosperous future for the state. The government's resolve towards holistic development including infrastructural growth, cultural revival, and women empowerment gives a strong impetus for an inclusive progress in Odisha.

IIT-Delhi Introduces Special PhD Admission Drive for SC and ST Candidates

Introduction and About

- The Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi, in an exemplary move, has launched a special PhD admission drive.
- This initiative specifically targets Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) candidates, in an effort to promote educational equity.
- The special admission drive is ongoing and will run till June 30, 2025, providing an extensive window for course registrations.

The Drive to Address Shortfall in Reserved Seat Intake

- This breakthrough initiative comes in the wake of information revealed to a parliamentary committee, highlighting a persistent shortfall in the intake for reserved seats at the doctoral level.
- Despite having relaxed eligibility norms, the institution had been receiving a deficient number of applications from SC and ST candidates.
- The present drive is a direct response to this shortfall, encouraging department-wide changes to foster a surge in supernumerary admissions.

Significance of the Initiative

- This special PhD admission drive showcases IIT-Delhi's commitment towards ensuring equal educational opportunities for all, by aiming to close the gap in reserved seat uptake.
- Educational equity helps create better societal structures by promoting diversity in academia and complex problem-solving capacities from varied perspectives.
- It encourages more SC and ST candidates to pursue higher education, thereby addressing social inequities to an extent.
- The move can inspire a systemic change across India's educational institutes, thus setting a paradigm for embracing diversity in educational fields.

Importance in Current Context

- As per the Indian Constitution, specific provisions are made for the upliftment of SC and ST communities through special reservations in education and employment.
- Despite these provisions, their underrepresentation, especially in higher education, is a matter of concern.
- The new drive by IIT-Delhi propels the spirit of

these provisions further by promoting their representation at one of the highest levels of academia.

Historical and Geographical Relevance

- Historically, SCs and STs have been disadvantaged socially and economically; this initiative aims to counterbalance those historical disadvantages.
- Geographically, IIT-Delhi is one of India's premier institutions. This move can inspire other institutes across the nation to follow suit and work towards equity in education.

Dharti Aaba Janbhagidari Abhiyan - India's Largest Tribal Empowerment Initiative

Introduction and Overview

- Launched by the Government of India on June 15, 2025, Dharti Aaba Janbhagidari Abhiyan (DAJA) symbolises the country's biggest tribal empowerment drive.
- This campaign focuses on engaging the tribal population across 31 states and Union Territories with a target to reach more than 5.5 crore tribal citizens.
- DHJA is named in honour of Birsa Munda, a tribal freedom fighter, and aims to acknowledge tribal heritage.

Purpose and Achievements

- Backed by Prime Minister Modi's inclusionary approach towards governance, DAJA goes beyond merely acknowledging tribal heritage and rights.
- Within a brief span of 9 days since its launch, DAJA has been instrumental in facilitating as many as 1.68 lakh Ayushman cards, aiding health insurance coverage for the disadvantaged.
- Furthermore, it has overseen 1.38 lakh Aadhaar enrolments, providing an identity to numerous tribal citizens, and ensuring their access to diverse services and benefits.
- The initiative has also provided more than 22,000 Ujjwala Yojana connections, facilitating access to clean cooking gas for tribal households.

Significance and Impact

- Through attempts such as the issuance of Ayushman cards and Aadhaar enrolments, DAJA ensures that the tribal population is included in the mainstream demographic and can avail the benefits of various government schemes.
- By facilitating Ujjwala Yojana connections, the initiative is playing a pivotal role in promoting health and hygiene among tribal communities.
- The campaign serves as a tribute to the tribal freedom fighter, Birsa Munda, drawing attention to India's rich and diversified tribal history and culture.
- Hence, the DAJA is a critical step in empowering the tribal population, contributing towards their social, economic, and cultural upliftment.

Geographical Reach and Expanse

- DAJA transcends geographical boundaries aiming to reach tribal citizens across 31 states and Union Territories.
- This outreach is a testament to the Government's commitment to inclusive development and welfare, regardless of geographical limitations or disparities.

Standing in Current News

- The remarkable achievements of DAJA within just nine days of its launch have kept it popular in the news.
- It underpins the government's commitment to tribal welfare, aiding their integration into mainstream society, hence being a subject of significant conversations and discussions.

DHRUVA (Digital Hub for Reference and Unique Virtual Address) Policy

Introduction and About

- DHRUVA policy has been introduced by the Department of Posts.
- It serves as a geo-coded digital address system aimed to bring a substantial change in governance, logistics, and service delivery throughout India.
- The system is regarded as a pioneering Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) initiative proposing to have significant effects on the structure and management of addresses countrywide.
- The policy will assign a unique digital address to every home.
- This innovative system is an example of Address-as-a-Service (AaaS). It offers secure and consent-based sharing of geo-coded address data through an effortless digital platform.
- The development and implementation of this system have been carried out entirely within India, fostering domestic innovation and technology.

Objective

- The primary objective of the DHRUVA policy is to decrease delivery costs for e-commerce, postal, and logistics services.
- Additionally, the system will enhance resource planning in broadband, telecom, and urban governance sectors.

Key Features

- The DHRUVA policy system comprises two pivotal layers: the Digital Postal Index Number (DIGIPIN) and the Digital Address Layer.
- DIGIPIN is a ten-digit alphanumeric code representing precise geographic coordinates created using 4x4 meter grids universally across India.
- It provides every location a unique identity with the use of geospatial data.
- The Digital Address Layer is a user-friendly, consent-based system developed on DIGIPIN. It allows users to create custom labels and descriptive addresses (such as house numbers, street names and so on) that are linked to their DIGIPIN.

Importance/Impact

- The DHRUVA policy promises to revolutionise various sectors through its practical and efficient features.
- The introduction of DIGIPIN will ensure precision in location identification, which will not only save resources but also will ensure greater efficiency in

service delivery.
- The Digital Address Layer will give citizens more control over their digital address, thereby enhancing user privacy and consent.
- Overall, the DHRUVA policy is expected to have a positive impact on sectors such as e-commerce, logistics, urban governance, telecom, and broadband in India.

Aadi KARMAYOGI and TALASH: Strengthening Local Governance and Supporting Tribal Students

Introduction to Aadi KARMAYOGI and TALASH

- The Ministry of Tribal Affairs launched the first regional training under the Aadi KARMAYOGI initiative to strengthen local governance.
- Concurrently, the National Education Society for Tribal Students (NESTS) unveiled the TALASH initiative to aid in advancing tribal students' growth.

What is Aadi KARMAYOGI and its Objectives

- Aadi KARMAYOGI is a national mission aimed at creating a 20 lakh strong cadre of local tribal functionaries and change leaders to facilitate inclusive development and enhance service delivery in tribal areas.
- The mission aligns with PM JANMAN and DAJGUA, focusing on convergence, community involvement, and enhancing capabilities.
- Aadi KARMAYOGI aims to build local leadership, strengthen last-mile delivery, and promote community-centric governance.
- The first training session under this mission, with trainers from five southern states, is being conducted at the Regional Process Lab (RPL) in Bengaluru.

Implementation of Aadi KARMAYOGI

- Through Aadi KARMAYOGI, trained State Master Trainers (SMTs) will lead State Process Labs (SPLs), which will then train District Master Trainers (DMTs).
- Collaboration with civil society organisations is encouraged to promote learning tailored to local contexts.
- The mission aims for responsive governance through local-level planning, grievance addressing, and combined implementation, uniting several departments such as Tribal Affairs, Rural Development, Women and Child Development, Jal Shakti, Education, and Forests.

What is TALASH and its features

- TALASH, launched by NESTS in partnership with UNICEF India, is a platform aimed at holistic development of tribal students across Eklavya Model Residential Schools (EMRSs) in India.
- The platform trains students in navigating the challenges of a competitive world through crucial life skills and career clarity.
- TALASH is planned to be implemented in phases, with the goal of covering all EMRSs by 2025.

Key Features of TALASH

- TALASH incorporates psychometric assessments, career counselling, life skills modules, and e-learning tools for teachers.
- The psychometric assessments, based on the NCERT 'Tamanna' framework, aid students in identifying their strengths and receiving personalised career guidance.
- Note: Tamanna (Try And Measure Aptitude And Natural Abilities) is an aptitude test crafted by NCERT and the Central Board of Secondary Education, intended to help students recognise their strengths across various domains. This voluntary test is designed as a guide rather than an obligatory exam.

ADEETIE Scheme: A Step towards Industrial Energy Efficiency

Introduction to ADEETIE Scheme

- The Assistance in Deploying Energy Efficient Technologies in Industries & Establishments (ADEETIE) scheme is a recent initiative by the Union Ministry of Power and the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE).
- The primary objective of this scheme is to quicken the adoption of advanced energy-efficient technologies, specifically in India's Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector.
- The ADEETIE scheme is projected to provide a significant boost in the enhancement of energy efficiency across various industries, thus contributing towards the expansion of green energy corridors in India.

Briefing the Objectives and Implementation of the ADEETIE Scheme

- The ADEETIE scheme has been designed to provide assistance to MSMEs, enabling them to reduce energy consumption by 30-50%, thereby improving energy efficiency.
- The scheme is bound to be implemented for a duration of three years (Financial Year 2025-26 to 2027-28) and will encapsulate 14 energy-intensive sectors including chemicals, food processing, textiles, and steel re-rolling.
- The introduction of the ADEETIE portal, which was launched to simplify the financing process for the beneficiaries, is a significant aspect of this scheme.

Notable Features of the ADEETIE Scheme

- Key features of the ADEETIE scheme include the provision of 5% interest subvention for Micro & Small Enterprises and 3% for Medium Enterprises on loans procured for adopting energy-efficient technologies.
- The scheme intends to provide comprehensive assistance with subvention on loans, Investment Grade Energy Audits (IGEA), Detailed Project Reports (DPRs), and post-implementation Monitoring and Verification (M&V).
- The comprehensive structure of this scheme serves to provide end-to-end support to MSMEs in their journey towards achieving energy efficiency.

Insight into the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE)

- The Bureau of Energy Efficiency was instituted in March 2002 under the provisions of the Energy

Conservation Act, 2001.

- BEE's mission centres around establishing policies and strategies that are founded on self-regulation and market principles, with the primary aim being to decrease the energy intensity of the Indian economy.
- Collaboration of BEE with the Union Ministry of Power for the ADEETIE scheme represents their commitment to advancing energy conservation measures in the country.

Sanchar Mitra Scheme - An Initiative by the Department of Telecommunications

Introduction to Sanchar Mitra Scheme

- The Sanchar Mitra Scheme has been initiated by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT).
- This nationwide scheme aims to promote digital literacy, cyber hygiene, and telecom awareness among citizens.
- It is a comprehensive programme to educate and bring an understanding of advanced telecom and digital subjects.

About the Sanchar Mitra Scheme and Its Key Features

This is a volunteer-based digital outreach programme.

- University students, designated as Sanchar Mitras, are involved in raising awareness about various subjects such as telecom safety, cyber fraud prevention, responsible mobile usage and concerns related to electromagnetic field (EMF) radiation.
- The nominee students are generally from relevant technical backgrounds like telecom, electronics, computer science and cybersecurity, and are chosen in partnership with local DoT units.
- NCA-T (National Communications Academy–Technology) and DoT's Media Wing deliver structured training in emerging areas like 5G, 6G, AI, EMF safety, cybersecurity and more.
- Exceptionally performing volunteers might have the opportunity to intern, participate in national telecom projects, India Mobile Congress, and even international forums like International Telecommunication Union (ITU).

Importance and Impact of Sanchar Mitra Scheme

- The scheme is significant as it not only promotes digital literacy and cyber hygiene among citizens but also gives a platform for student volunteers to acquire knowledge and training in the latest technology advancements.
- This will help bridge the digital divide and educate more people about safe and responsible digital practices.
- The scheme also has a long-term impact on the volunteers involved, as it opens up potential opportunities in the telecom sector, both nationally and internationally.
- The Sanchar Mitra Scheme, therefore, is not only contributing to the digital literacy cause but also nurturing future tech-savvy minds that could contribute to the nation's digital growth.

Decade-long Journey of the Skill India Mission

Introduction and Historical Background

- Skill India Mission, a major initiative launched on 15th July 2015, marked its 10-year anniversary in 2025.
- This initiative was timed to commemorate World Youth Skills Day, a global event initiated by UNGA in 2014 to emphasise the importance of youth skills development.
- The 2025 theme prioritised empowering youth through AI and digital proficiency.

The Skill India Mission Framework

- The Skill India Mission was structured to skill, reskill, and upskill India's youth, providing them with industry-relevant training.
- Over 60 million individuals have been trained under this scheme, including in areas such as AI, robotics, and green energy.
- The restructured Skill India Mission (2022–26) merged essential programmes like PMKVY 4.0, PM-NAPS, and JSS Scheme.

Key Schemes under the Skill India Mission

- The Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) strived to enhance youth employability, training over 163 million candidates across various sectors.
- Jan Shikshan Sansthan (JSS) Scheme, a community-based vocational training programme, trained over 2.6 million individuals between 2018–24.
- Pradhan Mantri National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme (PM-NAPS) supported apprenticeship training for individuals aged 14–35 years.

Other Significant Skill Development Schemes in India

- Rural Self Employment and Training Institutes (RSETIs) provide entrepreneurship development to rural youth, training over 5.67 million candidates as of June 2025.
- Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) tackles rural youth unemployment through demand-driven, placement-linked skill training.
- PM Vishwakarma Yojana supports traditional artisans and craftspeople by providing toolkits, digital incentives, and more.

Technological Developments and Advances in the Mission

- Skill India Digital Hub (SIDH) is a technologically advanced platform enabling Aadhaar-based verification and real-time monitoring of skill outcomes.
- Two Centres of Excellence were launched at NSTIs in 2025 which focus on training and skilling in AI, robotics, and green technologies.

PM Virasat Ka Samvardhan (VIKAS) Scheme

Introduction and About

- The PM VIKAS scheme is an effort by the Ministry of Minority Affairs (MoMA) to offer skill training and promote women entrepreneurship.
- Under this project, 150 youth candidates will receive training in IoT, and 300 women will undergo entrepreneurship training.

- The scheme aims to meet the skilling, entrepreneurship, and leadership training needs of minority and artisan communities in India.
- The PM VIKAS scheme will function in tandem with the Skill India Mission and through integration with the Skill India Portal.
- This scheme supports the socio-economic development of six minority communities: Muslims, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, Jains, and Zoroastrians (Parsis).
- A major objective is also to facilitate credit linkages by introducing beneficiaries to loan programmes offered by the National Minorities Development & Finance Corporation (NMDFC).

Implementation of the Scheme

- To implement the scheme, the Ministry plans to choose art & craft clusters in Minority Concentrated Areas (MCAs).
- Convergence with other Ministries such as Ministry of Tourism, Ministry of Women & Child Development, Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship is part of the agenda.

Components of the Scheme

- The skilling and training component includes traditional training and non-traditional skilling. The former focuses on training minority artisan communities in traditional arts and crafts, while the latter imparts skill training in job roles related to arts and crafts.
- The leadership and entrepreneurship component provides leadership development and basic entrepreneurship support to minority communities and artisan families.
- The education component provides an education bridge programme to school dropouts from minority and artisan communities for pursuing open schooling in class 8th- 12th.

Correlation with Other Schemes for Minority Upliftment and Skill Development

- Several schemes for minority upliftment and skill development can work in harmony with the PM VIKAS scheme. These include the Pre-Matric Scholarship Scheme, Post-Matric Scholarship Scheme, National Means Cum-Merit Scholarship Scheme (NMMSS), Pradhan Mantri Jan Vikas Karyakram (PMJVK), Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana, Skill India Programme, SANKALP Scheme, SHREYAS, TEJAS Skilling Project and Model Skill Loan Scheme.

Veer Parivar Sahayata Yojana 2025: A Legal Aid Scheme for Soldiers and Veterans

Introduction and About

- The Veer Parivar Sahayata Yojana 2025 is a nationwide legal aid scheme recently introduced by the National Legal Services Authority (NALSA).
- This noteworthy initiative is dedicated to providing free legal support to soldiers, veterans, and their dependents, taking into account their individual service-related requirements.
- The Yojana will institute the facility for online application filing, video consultations, and resolution of disputes via e-Lok Adalats and online mediation.

Objective and Scope

- The core objective of this scheme is to offer free legal aid, advice, and support to army and paramilitary personnel and their families.
- This robust scheme aims to outreach all Indian states, thereby endorsing inclusive national coverage.

Constitutional Basis and Infrastructure

- The inception of the scheme is rooted in Article 39A of the Indian Constitution, which guarantees equal justice and free legal aid, thereby reinforcing the idea of justice for all.
- As part of the scheme, NALSA plans to establish legal aid clinics at various levels including the district, state, and national levels.

About NALSA

- NALSA, established in 1995 under the Legal Services Authorities Act, 1987, is a statutory body.
- Its primary role is to monitor and evaluate legal aid programmes, thus warranting that legal services reach eligible groups such as Women, Children, SC, ST, EWS, Industrial Workers, Persons with Disabilities, and Transgender Individuals.
- NALSA operates on a tiered structure with Legal Services Institutions in place at all levels, from Taluk Courts to the Apex Court, enhancing accessibility and effectiveness of legal aid.

SCIENCE AND TECH

NISAR Satellite: A Step Forward in Indo-US Space Collaboration

Introduction and About the NISAR Satellite

- NISAR satellite is an earth observation mission, a joint venture by NASA and ISRO.
- It was launched from the region of Sriharikota by ISRO.
- The basis of collaboration marks a significant step, reflecting the global scientific partnership between India, referred to as 'Vishwa Bandhu', and the United States.

Key Facts and Technical Features of NISAR Satellite

- NISAR is the first of its kind to use dual-frequency radar, L-band and S-band, from a single platform.
- The advanced technical feature enables advanced microwave imaging, providing polarimetric and interferometric data.
- The dual-band Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) differentiates with L-band SAR penetrating through forest canopy, useful for biomass and deformation studies, and S-band SAR catering to monitor the surface level features like crops and wetlands.
- It was launched using Geosynchronous Satellite Launch Vehicle Mark II, specifically GSLV-F16 variant, India's largest rocket, placing a satellite in

sun-synchronous polar orbit for the first time.
- The mission life is expected to last for 5 years, covering phases including launch, deployment, commissioning, and science operations.

Key Objectives and Significance of NISAR Satellite

- The mission aims to provide high-resolution data every 12 days to monitor land changes across Earth.
- It helps in tracking ground deformations caused by earthquakes, landslides, and volcanic activities.
- It aids in forest management by observing woody vegetation for measuring forest biomass and carbon stock.
- Agricultural monitoring such as crop growth cycles and changes in wetlands driven by climatic variations are part of its applications.
- It also studies glacier and sea ice melts in polar regions.
- This satellite supports significant areas like disaster management, agriculture, and climate monitoring.

Understanding the Radar Band

- Radio frequencies (RF) are electromagnetic radiation with frequencies among 10 kHz and 100 GHz.
- They are divided into groups or bands like "S-band", "L-band", etc., that exhibit similar properties.
- Bands with lower frequency, for instance, ones like L, S can penetrate through rain, clouds, and vegetation thereby used in mapping and earth observation.
- Conversely, the higher frequency bands like X, Q, V, W provide sharper images and better resolution but can be affected by weather and atmospheric conditions.

Looking Ahead and India's Role

- The collaboration reflects the depth of the space exploration partnership between India and the United States.
- India is now a part of the Artemis Accords and collaborates with NASA on human spaceflight.

BHARAT Study: A Comprehensive Look into Ageing Biomarkers in India

An Overview of the BHARAT Study

- Launched by the Indian Institute of Science under the Longevity India Programme, the BHARAT (Biomarkers of Healthy Aging, Resilience, Adversity, and Transitions) study aims to map and understand ageing biomarkers specific to the Indian population.
- The study's primary goals are to build a reliable "Bharat Baseline" - a reference that defines normal health markers specifically for Indians - and to use AI and machine learning to predict health outcomes and design effective interventions.

The Complexity of Ageing

- Ageing is a multifaceted process influenced by numerous factors such as molecular changes, cellular adaptations, environmental impacts, lifestyle choices, and socioeconomic conditions.
- Due to this complexity, chronological age might not accurately represent a person's true biological age.

Need for India-Specific Data

- Current biomarkers and diagnostic standards, typically based on Western norms, might not be accurate or applicable to Indians, thereby risking misdiagnosis and ineffective treatment methods.
- Despite India's increasing life expectancy (now at 67.3 years), there is a forecasted increase in age-related diseases like Parkinson's (expected 168% increase by 2050) and a 200% rise in dementia cases. This highlights the need for early detection and preventive measures specifically tailored for the Indian population.

Role and Significance of Biomarkers in the Study

- Biomarkers play a crucial part in the BHARAT study, which covers a broad spectrum of indicators, including genomic biomarkers, proteomic and metabolic markers, and environmental and lifestyle factors.
- These indicators would help define the "Bharat Baseline", thus ensuring more accurate diagnoses and effective treatment schemes for the Indian population.

Using AI and Machine Learning in Health Predictions

- The BHARAT study also aims to use artificial intelligence and machine learning in analyzing complex multi-dimensional health datasets.
- Such technology would aid in predicting health outcomes and designing effective intervention strategies.

DengiAll – India's First Indigenous Dengue Vaccine

Introduction about DengiAll

- DengiAll is the first indigenous tetravalent dengue vaccine in India.
- The development of DengiAll represents a significant advancement in India's attempts to develop a safe and effective dengue vaccine.
- As of the last update, DengiAll has achieved 50% enrollment in Phase 3 clinical trials.

Developer and Progress

- Developed by Panacea Biotec under a licensing agreement with the US National Institutes of Health (NIH), DengiAll targets all four dengue virus subtypes.
- The vaccine has demonstrated a balanced and robust immune response during Phase I and II trials.
- No serious safety concerns have been reported amid these trials.

Significance of DengiAll

- The development of DengiAll is crucial as there is currently no specific treatment available for dengue.
- Severe cases of dengue can lead to serious complications such as internal bleeding and shock.
- With DengiAll, the hope is to contain this mosquito-transmitted viral disease effectively.

Dengue and Its Impact

- Dengue is a viral disease transmitted by the Aedes aegypti mosquito and is caused by the dengue virus (genus Flavivirus).
- Symptoms include high fever, severe headache, eye pain, muscle and joint pain, rash, and fatigue.

Diagnosis is done through a blood test, and there is no specific antiviral treatment available currently; care is largely supportive.
- The female Aedes aegypti mosquito also spreads diseases like chikungunya, yellow fever, and Zika.

Dengue Burden in India

- India faces a heavy burden of dengue, with over 2.3 lakh cases and 297 deaths reported in 2024.
- This underscores the importance of vaccine development to tackle this public health issue.
- Dengvaxia, the first dengue vaccine, was approved by the US FDA in 2019, available for individuals aged 9–16 with a previous infection in endemic regions.

DengiAll hopes and concluding thoughts

- DengiAll, as an indigenous solution, brings hope for providing a solution to the dengue problem prevalent across India.
- While it has made promising progress in clinical trials, it is crucial to watch how it fares in the next phases.
- Alongside, continued efforts in vector control and public health measures are also critical to combating dengue.

Blocking of AI Web Crawlers and Impact on Content Rights

Introduction and Context

- Major US and UK publishers have started blocking Artificial Intelligence (AI) web crawlers to limit unauthorised usage of their online content.
- This signals a significant step towards potential reform in AI governance, sparking discussions on consent, copyright, and fair revenue sharing schemes in a digital landscape.
- This move has triggered renewed calls in India for improvements to digital governance, copyright enforcement, and the ethical usage of AI.

Understanding AI Web Crawlers

- AI web crawlers are automated software systems that mine and collect content from the internet.
- They are specifically designed to assist in AI model training exercises, such as Large Language Models, and real-time information retrieval for AI assistants.
- Model Training Crawlers (like GPTBot from OpenAI, Amazonbot from Amazon and GoogleOther from Google) extract data from various websites to train generative AI models.
- Live Retrieval Crawlers (used by AI platforms like Bing and ChatGPT) pull real-time data from websites to ensure up-to-date and relevant responses in AI search tools.

Issuing Concerns in India in AI Governance

- India presently lacks a comprehensive regulatory framework to supervise the methods of data acquisition and use by AI firms.
- This has resulted in a situation where larger tech firms can freely exploit Indian content without obtaining consent or jurisdiction, thereby disadvantaging smaller publishers.
- AI companies often use blogs, news articles, and educational content to train their LLMs without explicit permission or compensation.
- India's Copyright Act 1957 isn't designed to handle AI-specific cases, such as derivative AI outputs or rights pertaining to training data.
- The country lacks clear definitions and understanding of terms like "fair use" and "unlicensed training" in an AI context.
- India is currently without a data protection law focusing on non-personal data, which is primarily employed in AI training.

Ethical AI Use and India's Path Forward

- The data sources utilised by AI developers are typically undisclosed, thereby denying original creators any credit or financial benefits.
- Training AI on unverified or outdated material can also introduce errors and biases, which can diminish public trust in AI systems.
- This highlights the need for India to craft a consent-based, rights-respecting digital environment.
- Drawing from the EU's AI Act 2024 and US's approach to data rights, India needs to form a uniquely Indian model for AI governance that strikes a balance between innovation and creators' rights.
- The Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY) and the Ministry of Information & Broadcasting (I&B) should jointly legislate against "unauthorised data scraping".
- A consent-oriented AI licensing framework should be introduced to protect creators' rights.
- Provisions for technical safety measures should be made, offering AI bot-blocking tools to Indian publishers via platforms such as Cloudflare to secure digital content.

Ham Radio Communication & Life on the International Space Station with Indian Astronaut

Introduction about Ham Radio

- Ham radio, also known as amateur radio, is a non-commercial radio communication service used for purposes such as education, experimentation and emergency communication.
- It involves the use of radio waves, transceivers and antennas to establish contact locally, globally and even from space.

Ham Radio Communication in Space

- In a unique occurrence of space-to-Earth communication, Indian astronaut Shubhanshu Shukla communicated with Earth using ham radio communication from aboard the ISS in the Axiom-4 mission.
- This method of communication was first used in space in 1983 by astronauts, and the ISS features the ARISS (Amateur Radio on the ISS) system supported by countries such as the US, Russia, Canada, Japan and Europe.

Ham Radio In India

- In India, ham radio licenses can be obtained by individuals above 12 years of age from the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.

- Ham radio has been instrumental in facilitating emergency communications during disasters such as the Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004, the Uttarakhand floods in 2013, and various others.

About Radio Waves

- Discovered by Heinrich Hertz, radio waves are a type of long-wavelength electromagnetic waves utilised in communication systems.
- They can propagate through different media, such as line-of-sight, ionospheric reflection or satellite relay, allowing for long-distance transmission and are vital to wireless communication technology.

Life on the International Space Station (ISS)

- In the microgravity environment of the ISS, astronauts consume dehydrated and packaged food that is rehydrated with hot water to avoid food crumbs from damaging equipment.
- Meals are kept secure using Velcro trays, and utensils are cleaned without water but with wipes.
- A diet rich in calcium, low in sodium and with Vitamin D intake is recommended for astronauts to maintain bone health during long space missions.

Low-Cost Sensor for Toxic Sulfur Dioxide Detection

Introduction and Novelty

- A team of scientists at the Centre for Nano and Soft Matter Sciences (CeNS) in Bengaluru has successfully created a highly sensitive yet low-cost sensor primarily engineered to detect Sulfur dioxide (SO_2).
- The sensor has an outstanding capability of locating this toxic gas at astonishingly low concentrations, thus excelling over many commercial-grade sensors available in the market today.
- The device is beneficial for wide-scale public health use in densely populated urban areas or industrial regions where the harmful gases exposure remains a critical issue.

Innovations in the Sensor's Development

- This newly fabricated sensor is a combination of two vital components - Nickel Oxide (NiO) and Neodymium Nickelate ($NdNiO_3$).
- Nickel oxide works as the gas receptor, whereas Neodymium Nickelate performs the task of a transducer, sending out appropriate detection signals.
- The advanced sensor can detect Sulfur Dioxide (SO_2) levels as marginal as 320 parts per billion (ppb), outperforming many of its commercial counterparts.

Real-Time Detection and Threshold Alert System

- The innovative system incorporates real-time SO_2 detection feature.
- It is supplemented with an accessible and user-friendly threshold alert system signalling varying levels of danger through different colours (green for safe levels; yellow for warning), proving fit for public health use.

About Sulfur Dioxide

- Sulfur Dioxide (SO_2) is a largely colourless and water-soluble gas that is toxic to human health.
- It is mainly produced by vehicles and industrial activities which can adversely affect public health, especially in urban or industrial zones.
- Prolonged or even brief exposure to the gas can cause severe respiratory problems, such as triggering asthma attacks, and in the long term, can lead to lung damage.

Public Health and Industrial Importance

- The affordable cost of the sensor means it can be deployed widely across industrial and urban areas where SO_2 is a significant concern.
- The sensor will provide real-time warnings, allowing authorities to respond quickly to elevated SO_2 levels.
- It can potentially drive significant improvements in public health by assisting in the prevention and control of respiratory-related diseases and conditions perpetuated by the toxic gas.

High-Efficiency Material for Next-Gen Energy Storage

Introduction and Development:

- The Centre for Nano and Soft Matter Sciences (CeNS), based in Bengaluru, has recently partnered with Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) to make significant advancements in energy storage technology.
- Their research has resulted in the development of an energy storage material that is based on lanthanum-doped silver niobate, enhancing the performance of supercapacitors.

Lanthanum-Doped Silver Niobate Energy Storage Material:

- This advanced nanostructured compound is formed by infusing silver niobate, a lead-free and environmentally friendly perovskite material, with lanthanum, a rare-earth material.
- The introduction of lanthanum reduces the size of the nanoparticles, thereby increasing the surface area available for energy storage and improving electrical conductivity for faster charge-discharge cycles.
- Lanthanum-doped silver niobate's responsiveness is stellar, with excellent energy retention (118%) and zero energy loss during use (100% coulombic efficiency).
- This material is also eco-friendly, is devoid of any environmental complexity as it is lead-free, and can be used in green energy applications.

Applications:

- Its potential applications can be found in a vast array of devices and technologies, including portable electronics, electric vehicles (EVs), and renewable energy systems.
- The efficiency of the material was demonstrated when it successfully powered an LCD display via a prototype supercapacitor.

Insight on Supercapacitors:

- Supercapacitors, otherwise known as ultracapacitors, serve as energy storage systems that form a bridge between traditional capacitors and batteries.

- They are equipped with high power density, swift charge-discharge ability, and a durable life cycle that can withstand millions of cycles.
- Unlike batteries, supercapacitors store energy through electrostatic charge separation rather than through chemical reactions, improving their safety and longevity.
- Despite having lower energy density than batteries, this can be enhanced by material doping processes, such as the integration of lanthanum within silver niobate, as demonstrated by CeNS and AMU.

Smart Mosquito Surveillance System and Mosquito-Borne Diseases

Introduction to SMoSS

- The Smart Mosquito Surveillance System (SMoSS) is a recent public health initiative launched by Andhra Pradesh, aimed at monitoring and controlling the local mosquito population.
- This system utilises Artificial Intelligence (AI), drones, and Internet of Things (IoT) devices in an effort to precisely identify different mosquito species, their respective gender and population density, along with related weather conditions.
- Upon detection of mosquito levels exceeding safe thresholds, real-time alerts are triggered to enable targeted spraying and fogging, a more efficient alternative to unjustified blind spraying.
- Drones have been incorporated into this system to execute cost-effective larvicide spraying, while the implementation of a centralized dashboard ensures real-time monitoring and faster responses.
- The management of this system will be carried out by specialised agencies, with their accountability being tracked through mobile apps.

Common Mosquito-Borne Diseases

- Mosquitoes are known carriers of multiple harmful diseases. Some of the most prevalent include Zika Virus Disease, Dengue, Yellow Fever, and Chikungunya.
- Zika Virus Disease is primarily spread by the Aedes aegypti mosquito resulting in Microcephaly and other birth defects in babies born to infected pregnant women.
- Dengue is caused by the dengue virus, also spread by Aedes mosquitoes. India continues to bear a significant dengue burden with over 2.3 lakh cases and 297 deaths reported in 2024.
- Yellow Fever is a viral haemorrhagic disease, caused by the Aedes aegypti mosquito. It results in severe health conditions like jaundice, organ failure, or death in extreme cases. Annually, around 30,000 deaths are reported due to Yellow Fever.
- Chikungunya, spread by Aedes aegypti mosquitoes, exhibits symptoms of sudden fever and intense joint pain. Currently, specific treatments for Chikungunya are not available.
- Preventive measures, such as the 17D yellow fever vaccine, are regarded as safe and affordable by the World Health Organization (WHO). It is crucial to control mosquito populations in efforts to mitigate these diseases.

Enhanced Phosphate Uptake in Gene-Edited Japonica Rice by Indian Scientists

Introduction and About

- Indian scientists have successfully achieved an increase in phosphate uptake in japonica rice varieties using the revolutionary genome editing tool, CRISPR-Cas9.
- This potentially transformative move for rice cultivation could lead to superior yields and a significant reduction in phosphate fertiliser usage.

Role of CRISPR-Cas9 Technology

- CRISPR-Cas9 is a revolutionary tool that allows scientists to selectively modify the genome. It works by using the Cas9 enzyme as molecular scissors to accurately cut DNA and insert, delete, or repair genetic material.
- In rice cultivation, gene-editing using CRISPR-Cas9 increased the yield by 40% whilst using only 10% of the recommended phosphate fertilizer dose.

Mechanism of Gene-Editing

- The gene targeted for editing in japonica rice was OsPHO1;2, which is primarily responsible for phosphate transfer from the root to shoot.
- The editing approach did not aim to remove the repressor but the repressor's binding site, enhancing phosphate transfer and uptake.

Significance and Potential Impact

- This groundbreaking approach to rice cultivation holds significance for India, a country that imports over 4.5 million tonnes of phosphate fertilisers annually.
- The use of gene-editing in rice cultivation paves the way to increased agricultural sustainability and self-reliance in the country.

Nutrient Deficiency in Indian Soils

- A 2022 study by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE) revealed that approximately 85% of soil samples from India are deficient in organic carbon.
- Indian soils showed a steep deficiency in essential nutrients like nitrogen (97% deficient), phosphorus (83% deficient), and potassium (71% deficient), which are crucial for successful crop growth and development.
- Furthermore, Indian soils exhibited deficiencies in Boron (47%), Zinc (39%), Iron (37%), and Sulphur (36%), which impacts nutrition security as zinc-deficient grains can aggravate malnutrition.

MISCELLANEOUS

India's Strategic Autonomy at the SCO 2025

Introduction & Event Overview

- At the 2025 Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Summit, India's Defence Minister refused to

sign the joint statement because it lacked any mention of the Pahalgam terror attack.
- The omission of the terror attack was perceived by India as selective treatment of terror incidents.
- The firm stance signified India's unyielding dedication to battling terrorism and preserving its strategic autonomy.

Why in News?

- India's refusal to sign the SCO joint statement in June 2025 represents a significant diplomatic shift.
- Spotlighting India's consistent zero-tolerance posture on terrorism, this action underscores India's readiness to stand alone in multilateral frameworks when its core security concerns are neglected or overlooked.

About the SCO

- The Shanghai Cooperation Organisation was established in 2001, evolving from the Shanghai Five formed in 1996.
- The SCO membership as of 2025 includes India, China, Russia, Pakistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Iran, and Belarus.
- Its Secretariat is based in Beijing and the Regional Anti-Terrorist Structure (RATS) is located in Tashkent.
- Key focus areas of the SCO encompass counter-terrorism, regional security, and economic cooperation.

India's Strategic Calculations

- India's decision not to sign the joint statement conveys its zero-tolerance approach to the unequal treatment of terror incidents.
- This move following the first Indian ministerial visit to China post the 2020 LAC standoff implies a strong message that peace and terrorism cannot coexist.
- Despite diplomatic pressure, India maintained a principled stand.

Implications for Regional Security

- RATS has an effective record in coordination, prevention of attacks, and arrest of extremist elements.
- India's move could result in questions regarding the credibility of SCO's commitments towards countering terrorism.
- It highlights the potential rifts in multilateral cooperation when national interests are at odds.

China's Influence & India's Response

- With its position as SCO chair in 2025, China excluded the mention of the Pahalgam attack.
- Alongside this, most SCO members backed China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), which India opposes.
- India not only opposed the BRI endorsements but also BRICS currency basket in 2023, emphasizing its preference for issue-based engagement.

Strategic Autonomy in Action

- India operates on a principle of strategic autonomy, engaging in several platforms like SCO, BRICS, Quad, and G20 without being encumbered by any alliance.
- Primary strategy: Maximum engagement, minimum entanglement.

Lessons for Counter-Terrorism Cooperation

- Successful collaboration requires unified definitions of terrorism and honest acknowledgment of all terror acts.
- Bilateral rivalries often disrupt multilateral actions, as reflected in India-Pakistan relationships.
- The consensus model of the SCO could impede decisive action in critical areas.

Future Outlook

- India is expected to engage selectively within the SCO.
- Nations will likely continue its active participation in functional areas like RATS.
- Even amidst political challenges, SCO remains beneficial for India's regional interests.

Inauguration of Google's First Asia-Pacific Safety Engineering Centre in Hyderabad

Introduction and About

- Google unveiled its first Asia-Pacific Safety Engineering Centre (GSEC) in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, on June 18, 2025.
- The centre was inaugurated by Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy.
- The institution represents a significant step in solidifying India's position in the global cybersecurity landscape and its role in responsible Artificial Intelligence (AI) development.
- This newest venture is a testament to Google's firm commitment to the safety of its users, job creation, and skill development in India.

Why the Centre is in the News

- The GSEC in Hyderabad marks Google's first security centre of this kind in the Asia-Pacific region, a fact that has caused a surge in media interest.
- It symbolises a significant development in the company's long-standing operations in Hyderabad, which first began in 2007.
- The centre will perform a crucial role in combating online fraud, ensuring cybersecurity, and developing AI-driven security solutions like real-time scam alerts and SynthID watermarking.

Importance and Broader Impact

- The GSEC aligns with India's AI transformation strategy, and serves a crucial role in advancing the nation's tech infrastructure.
- From a geographical context, the new facility will position Hyderabad and the broader Andhra Pradesh region as a prominent hub for Internet safety and AI research within the Asia-Pacific region.
- It is expected to contribute significantly to the Telangana government's vision of growing the state into a $1 trillion economy by the year 2035.
- This not only creates new job opportunities and advancements in the tech sector, but also drives increased international investment in the region.

Horizontal Reservation for Agniveers in Uttar Pradesh Police Recruitment

Introduction and Overview

- Uttar Pradesh, one of the largest states in India, has taken an initiative to offer horizontal reservation in

police recruitment.
- This policy was recently approved by the Uttar Pradesh Cabinet, under the leadership of CM Yogi Adityanath.
- The approved horizontal reservation is 20% and exclusively available for former Agniveers.
- The arrangement will involve varying police recruitment posts such as Constables and Firemen, among other roles.

The Agneepath Scheme

- This policy aligns with the Agneepath scheme, which is a broader strategy focused on offering age relaxation and inclusive benefits across multiple categories.
- The scheme covers tribes and caste categories including but not limited to SC, ST, OBC, and General class citizens.
- The primary objective of the Agneepath scheme is to ensure continued employment for Agniveers and promote both security and youth welfare in Uttar Pradesh.

Implementation and Impact

- The implementation of the 20% horizontal reservation for Agniveers in police recruitment will commence in 2026.
- As a part of the larger Agneepath scheme, this move is seen as decisive and inclusive, ensuring recognition and employment for Agniveers.
- It is designed to promote both security and welfare of the youth, assisting in laying the foundation for a vibrant workforce in the region.
- The newfound recognition and employment for Agniveers is expected to invigorate the community and provide them with the much-needed socio-economic uplift.

Significance and Implications

- Employment generation and increased recognition for Agniveers reflects the state's commitment towards building a truly inclusive society.
- The move is expected to open up new opportunities for former Agniveers, helping them to reintegrate into civil society.
- The policy could also present a model for other states to emulate, promoting inclusivity and job creation in law enforcement agencies across the country.
- The scheme's impact could be transformative for the state, fostering social cohesion, enhancing security, and promoting welfare.

The Impact of Digital India—11 Years of Promoting Progress and Empowerment

Introduction and Background

- 2025 marks the 11th year of the transformative Digital India initiative.
- Launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2015, Digital India was aimed at converting the country into a digitally empowered society.
- The programme has become the backbone of many public welfare schemes, reaching the most remote areas of India to ensure widespread development.

Why Digital India is Trending News?

- The initiative has come to the forefront again with its 11th anniversary.
- On this occasion, PM Modi emphasised on the initiative's crucial impact, particularly on empowering the underprivileged and promoting transparency in governance and services.
- Digital India is now deeply incorporated into policy-making and public welfare delivery across diverse sectors.

Contributions and Success of Digital India

- Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) provides timely and transparent aid, with over ₹44 lakh crore transferred directly to the beneficiaries, and a tremendous increase of 90x in volume over the past decade.
- The provision of Aadhaar, the world's largest digital identity scheme, aids in DBT, digital signatures and banking KYC, with over 140 crore citizens now having their Aadhaar numbers.
- DigiLocker has eliminated much paperwork in governance, providing 52+ crore users secure access to essential documents.
- The initiative has also eased the lives of pensioners with the implementation of Jeevan Pramaan, with over 10 crore pensioners now registered.

Digital India—The Comprehensive Digital Gateway

- UMANG App offers diverse services under one platform with a user base of 8.21 crore.
- The programme has significantly impacted rural digital empowerment, with the Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyaan intending to digitalise 6 crores rural Indians.

Importance and Impact

- The success of Digital India lies in its role in reducing the digital divide and boosting digital awareness from the grassroots.
- The initiative has not just made important services accessible but has also driven transparency and ease with rapid digitalisation of various sectors.
- As the nation advances and technology evolves, Digital India will undoubtedly continue to play a pivotal role in shaping India's digital economy.

Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee - An Emblem of National Unity and Development

Introduction and Birth Anniversary

- Birth anniversary of Dr. Syama Prasad Mookerjee was on 6th July, highlighted by a tribute from Prime Minister Narendra Modi.
- The prime minister acknowledged his contributions in enhancing national unity, educational standards and industrial policy in India.

Early Life and Academic Brilliance

- Dr. Mookerjee was born in Calcutta (now Kolkata), the son of eminent educationist Sir Ashutosh Mookerjee.
- He showcased his academic prowess by being a representative of Calcutta University at the Conference of the Universities of the British Empire in England.
- Demonstrating a rise in leadership, he became the Vice-Chancellor of Calcutta University at a young

age of 33 in 1934.
- He launched "Bang Wani", A Bengali journal, in 1922 and later The Nationalist in the 1940s, showcasing his literary talents.

Political Career and Post-Independence Role

- Initially part of the Indian National Congress in the 1920s, he later joined the Hindu Mahasabha due to ideological differences.
- He played a significant role in the formation of the Progressive Coalition government in Bengal in 1937, serving as the Finance Minister.
- As the acting President of the Hindu Mahasabha in 1940, he strongly advocated for India's full independence.
- Dr. Mookerjee founded the All India Bharatiya Jan Sangh in 1951, which later evolved into the Bharatiya Janata Party, leaving his mark on Indian politics.
- Post independence, Dr. Mookerjee became the Minister for Industry and Supply in the Interim Government, contributing effectively to India's industrial sector.

Contributions to National Development

- Dr. Mookerjee was instrumental in establishing prime institutions like Chittaranjan Locomotive Factory, Sindri Fertilizer Corporation and Hindustan Fertilizer Corporation.

Ideological Stance

- Dr. Mookerjee championed nationalism, Hindu cultural identity and a united India.
- He opposed the implementation of Article 370, asserting that one nation cannot have two constitutions, heads or flags.
- Also, he was against the linguistic division of India, advocating instead for administrative efficiency, security and economic prosperity.

Legacy

- Dr. Mookerjee is better known as "The Lion of Parliament" due to his eloquent and sharp debates on national issues.
- His mysterious death during a protest against J&K's special status in 1953 till date evokes interest, but his contributions leave an indelible mark on national history.

India's First National Cooperative University: Tribhuvan Sahkari University

Introduction and Background

- Union Home and Cooperation Minister inaugurated Tribhuvan Sahkari University located in Anand, Gujarat. This is India's first national cooperative university.
- The establishment of this university aligns with the governmental vision 'Sahkar se Samriddhi' pushing for prosperity through cooperation and underscores the commitment to strengthen the cooperative sector through education.

About Tribhuvan Sahkari University (TSU)

- TSU is named in honour of Tribhuvandas Kishibhai Patel, a pivotal figure in India's cooperative history. Patel, alongside Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, played a significant role in transforming the cooperative movement in Gujarat starting in 1946.
- Tribhuvandas Kishibhai Patel notably founded Amul which is a significant player in India's dairy industry today.
- TSU will be registered under the Societies Registration Act, 1860.

Objectives and Aims of TSU

- The university strives to fortify the cooperative sector by offering degree, diploma, and PhD courses in cooperative management, accounting, finance, marketing, cooperative law, and rural development.
- TSU seeks to create a skilled workforce and plans to train over 20 lakh professionals in key areas such as dairy, fisheries, and agricultural credit cooperatives over the course of the next five years.
- TSU will also setup a dedicated Research and Development (R&D) Council to promote innovation, transparency, and best practices in rural cooperative institutions.

Overview of the Cooperative Sector in India

- India's cooperative sector includes member-owned organisations that collaborate to meet common social and economic needs. This sector primarily plays a prime role in promoting rural development and enhancing financial inclusion.
- The right to form cooperative societies was institutionally recognised as a Fundamental Right under Article 19(1)(c) by the 97th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2011.
- Governance in this sector is chiefly directed by the Cooperative Societies Act, 1912 and the Multi-State Cooperative Societies (MSCS) Act, 2002.
- The upcoming MSCS (Amendment) Act, 2023 aims to bolster governance, accountability, and transparency in multi-state cooperatives.

Maratha Military Landscapes: A New Addition to UNESCO World Heritage List

Introduction and Background Information

- The Maratha Military Landscapes, situated primarily in the Indian states of Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, has recently been added to the UNESCO World Heritage List.
- This announcement was made at the 47th Session of the World Heritage Committee (WHC) where it was included as India's official nomination for the 2024-25 cycle.
- With this inclusion, India now has 44 recognised World Heritage Sites, with the preceding inscription being that of the Moidams of Charaideo, Assam from 2024.

Details about the Maratha Military Landscapes

- Comprising 12 major forts spread mainly across Maharashtra and also including one in Tamil Nadu, the Maratha Military Landscapes are important representatives of Indian history.
- Built or expanded between the late 17th and early 19th centuries, these forts were strategically placed in coastal and hilly areas.
- They were crucial in supporting Maratha military

might, trade and territorial control.
- Ranging from hill forts like Salher and Shivneri, hill-forest fort like Pratapgad, to coastal and island forts like Vijaydurg and Khanderi, the landscapes offer diverse terrains.
- Eight of these forts are protected by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), while the remaining four are taken care of by the Directorate of Archaeology and Museums, Government of Maharashtra.

UNESCO Recognition and Its Significance

- The nomination of the Maratha Military Landscape to the World Heritage List was under UNESCO criteria (iv) and (vi), signifying its architectural, technological, and cultural value, as well as connections to historical events.
- The goal of these recognitions is to safeguard and promote heritage having Outstanding Universal Value (OUV) across 196 nations.
- As a backdrop, the World Heritage Convention of 1972, ratified by UNESCO, aids countries in recognizing and protecting their cultural and natural heritage sites.
- India joined this convention in 1977 and has significantly benefited, as it now ranks 6th globally and 2nd in the Asia-Pacific with the highest number of World Heritage Sites.
- Furthermore, India has 62 sites on its Tentative List for the World Heritage recognition, further emphasizing the nation's rich cultural and natural heritage.

Enumeration of Andaman and Nicobar Tribes in the 16th Census of India

Introduction and Objectives

- The 16th Census of India targeted for 2026–27 plans to document the six significant indigenous tribes of the Andaman and Nicobar (A & N) Islands.
- The tribes comprise the Great Andamanese, Onge, Jarawa, Sentinelese, Shompen, and Nicobarese.
- Except for the Nicobarese, all others are classified as Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs).

Tribal Overview

Tribes

1. The Great Andamanese

- Once known as the largest tribe of the Andaman Islands.
- Presently, the tribe has declined to a mere 43 members, as per the 2001 census.
- They primarily reside on Strait Island.
- The significant decrease in their population attributed to diseases like influenza following the establishment of the Penal Settlement.
- Known for resisting British intrusion during the Battle of Aberdeen in 1859.
- They now lead a settled life, even though occasional hunting and fishing activities continue.

2. The Onges

- Among one of India's earliest tribes that followed the hunter-gatherer lifestyle.
- They predominantly inhabit Little Andaman, specifically Dugong Creek and South Bay.
- As per 2001 Census, their population was 96.
- Traditionally, they were highly dependent on nature, but now accept state aid.
- They are recognised for their craft-making skills, particularly canoes.

3. The Jarawa

- They are a nomadic tribe that practices hunting and gathering, mainly settling along the western coastline of Middle and South Andaman.
- The 2011 census recorded their population at 380.

4. The Sentinelese

- Like the Jarawa tribe, the Sentinelese also practice hunting and gathering.
- They inhabit the secluded North Sentinel Island and have traditionally been hostile to outsiders.
- The 2001 Census recorded a population of 39.

5. The Shompens

- Unlike their Negroid-featured counter tribes, the Shompens exhibit Mongoloid attributes.
- They occupy Great Nicobar, segregated into Mawa Shompens (coastal dwellers) and hostile Shompens (forest dwellers).
- The tribe is semi-nomadic and does hunting-gathering.
- The 2011 Census estimated their population at 229.

6. The Nicobarese

- They are Mongoloid predominantly distributed across 19 Nicobar Islands.
- As per the records, they have a considerable population of over 27,000.
- Their society comprises six territorial groups under a patriarchal joint-family system called Tuhet, collectively owning land and resources.

India's Achievements in Non-Fossil Fuel Power Capacity

Introduction and Overview

- India has surpassed a significant milestone in its energy sector. The country's non-fossil fuel power capacity is put at 242.78 GW, 50% of the total installed capacity which stands at 484.82 GW.
- This achievement is notable as it occurs five years before the target set for the year 2030 under the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) of the Paris Agreement.

Understanding Non-Fossil Fuels

- Non-fossil fuels comprise energy sources not extracted from fossilised organic substances such as coal, oil, and natural gas.
- These include renewable energy sources like solar power, wind power, and hydropower. Non-renewable yet non-fossil sources like nuclear energy are also included in this category.

Breakdown of India's Non-Fossil Fuel Power Capacity

- As of June 2025, the complete installed electricity capacity of India was 484.82 GW. 50% of this power capacity, amounting to 242.78 GW, comes from non-fossil fuel sources.
- The following is the breakdown of this percentage:
- Renewable energy contributes to 184.62 GW,

equivalent to 38.08% of the total.
- Large hydropower contributes to 49.38 GW which is 10.19% of the total.
- Nuclear energy contributes to 8.78 GW. This is 1.81% of the total installed electricity capacity.

Key Government Initiatives Promoting Non-Fossil Fuel Power Capacity

- Several initiatives have led to the increase of non-fossil fuel power capacity in India. These government-led initiatives include:
- PM Surya Ghar Yojana initiative promoting rooftop solar installations.
- The National Wind-Solar Hybrid Policy providing for a blend of wind and solar power projects.
- PM-KUSUM providing solar-powered pumps for agricultural purposes.
- The PLI Scheme for Solar PV Modules promoting indigenous manufacture of solar modules with high efficiency.
- The Green Energy Corridor Scheme, aiming at improving infrastructure for transmission of renewable energy.
- National Green Hydrogen Mission promoting the production and use of green hydrogen as an alternative fuel.
- The National Bioenergy Programme advancing biogas, biomass, and waste-to-energy projects.

Reintroduction of Cheetahs in Gujarat's Banni Grasslands

Introduction to Banni Grasslands

- The Banni Grasslands in Gujarat, situated near the Great Rann of Kutch, is Asia's largest grassland.
- This ecologically significant area was formed from the sea due to tectonic activities.
- Despite the sparse and rainfall-dependent vegetation, it harbours low-growing plants, forbs, and graminoids, many of which are halophytic (salt-tolerant), amid scattered scrublands and trees.
- The Banni Grasslands boasts of a unique combination of wetlands and grasslands, coexisting side by side.

Notable Flora, Fauna and Cultural Significance

- Key species inhabiting the grasslands include Banni buffalo, Kankrej cattle, Indian wild ass, camel, and horse.
- The region also houses the Maldharis, a tribal herdsmen community, who rear sheep, goats, cows, buffaloes, and camels.
- This area is recognised for its 'Chir Batti' or ghost lights, a mysterious phenomenon that occurs at night.

The Compatibility of Banni with Cheetah Habitat

- The Banni Grasslands bear a striking resemblance to the cheetah's native habitat in Africa, making it an appropriate site for these big cats.
- Its expansive grasslands, savannahs and scrublands create a suitable environment for cheetahs.
- To support this, the Gujarat Forest Department has established a breeding centre and bolstered the prey population, including chital and sambar.

About Cheetahs

- Known as the world's fastest mammal, the cheetah is the only large carnivore that is extinct in India (1952).
- Unlike other big cats, cheetahs do not roar but use a range of sounds like chirps, barks, and stutter barks to signal their presence and establish territory.
- Cheetahs generally live solitary lives and mark their territories with urine sprays, cheek rubbing, and tree scratches.

Banni Grasslands – A Possible Resurgence for the Cheetah Population

- The Banni Grasslands has gained significant attention recently as it was selected as a reintroduction site under Project Cheetah.
- Now the grasslands are prepared for the reintroduction initiative, boasting a 600-hectare enclosure, increased herbivore populations, and essential infrastructure.
- This move indicates a promising future for the revival of the cheetah population in India.

Tribute to Freedom Fighter Chandra Shekhar Azad

Introduction and Prime Minister's Tribute

- The birth anniversary of revered freedom fighter Chandra Shekhar Azad fell on the 23rd of July, 2025.
- Indian Prime Minister paid his tribute to the memory of Azad, recognising and honouring his dedication to the nation's liberation struggle.
- The Prime Minister highlighted how Azad continues to serve as a source of inspiration for the country's younger generations.

Early Life and Involvement in Freedom Struggle

- Born in 1906 in the village of Bhabhra, Madhya Pradesh, which has since been renamed Chandrashekhar Azad Nagar, Azad demonstrated a revolutionary spirit from a young age.
- At the age of 15, he became a participant in the Non-Cooperation Movement spearheaded by Mahatma Gandhi.
- Azad was deeply disappointed when Gandhi decided to call off the Non-Cooperation Movement in 1922.

Transition from Satyagraha to Revolutionary Activities

- After the Non-Cooperation Movement was discontinued, Azad turned to more extreme forms of resistance.
- He joined the Hindustan Republican Army (HRA) and took part in the infamous Kakori train robbery in 1925 to fund armed resistance against British rule.
- In 1928, Azad, along with Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, Shiv Verma, and Vijay Kumar Sinha, restructured the HRA with the purpose of promoting socialism, renaming it the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA).

Major Actions and Contributions

- In the HSRA, while Bhagat Singh served as the political ideologue, Azad effectively handled and

managed its military wing by planning actions, training recruits, and organising weapons.
- He played a central role in the planning of the assassination of British officer, John Saunders, in Lahore in 1928, which was executed by Bhagat Singh and Rajguru.

Legacy

- Azad's life was tragically cut short when he died on 27th February 1931, at the age of 24 in Alfred Park, Allahabad.
- In honour of his memory and his sacrifice, Alfred Park was renamed Chandra Shekhar Azad Park. His legacy continues to inspire and motivate people in the fight for justice and equality.

Observance of Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak's Birth Anniversary

Introduction and About Bal Gangadhar Tilak

- Born on 23rd July 1856 in Ratnagiri, Maharashtra, Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak is honoured as the Father of Indian Unrest.
- Tilak was a principal leader in the Indian fight for self-rule (Swarajya).
- Alongside Lala Lajpat Rai and Bipin Chandra Pal, the celebrated Lal-Bal-Pal trio was established, distinctive for their radical nationalist ideology.

In the News - Anniversary Observance

- The birth anniversary of Lokmanya Bal Gangadhar Tilak was commemorated on 23rd July 2025.

Significant Events - Surat Split (1907)

- Lokmanya Tilak played a substantial role during the Surat Split of 1907 in the Indian National Congress (INC), a significant event that divided the Extremist and Moderate wings.
- The Extremists, chiefly from the Bombay Presidency, supported either Tilak or Rai for the position of the president. However, discrepancy began when Rasbehari Ghose was selected to serve as the President.

Contributions in Education

- Tilak, in association with Gopal Ganesh Agarkar and others, inaugurated the Deccan Education Society in 1884.
- This initiative ultimately led to the founding of Fergusson College in Pune in 1885, playing a significant role in advancing education in India.

Media and Publications

- Tilak launched two newspapers, namely Kesari (Marathi) and Mahratta (English), becoming a prominent voice in Indian media during the fight for independence.
- He authored several influential books like 'Gita Rahasya', 'The Orion', and 'Arctic Home of the Vedas', contributing to the literary and cultural expansion of the country.

Importance and Legacy of Bal Gangadhar Tilak

- Fondly known as 'Lokmanya', which means "accepted by the people (as their leader)", Tilak's ideology and dedication remain a source of inspiration for countless Indians.
- Remembered for his quote, "Swaraj is my birthright, and I shall have it!", Tilak's impact on India's freedom struggle is immeasurable.
- His contributions extended beyond the political arena, making significant strides in education and cultural growth.
- Every year, his birth anniversary is observed to remember and honour his unparalleled dedication towards the cause of Indian independence. His legacy continues to inspire many even today.

Sohrai, Pattachitra, and Patua Paintings Featured in Kala Utsav 2025

Introduction and Event Details

- The 2nd edition of Kala Utsav 2025 - 'Artists in Residence Programme' was held at Rashtrapati Bhavan.
- Numerous artists from Jharkhand, Odisha, and West Bengal participated in the event, exhibiting traditional Indian paintings such as Sohrai Khovar, Pattachitra, and Patua.
- The programme aimed to honour and celebrate India's living art traditions and provided a platform for artists from folk, tribal, and traditional backgrounds to showcase their work.

Key Facts About the Paintings

- Sohrai Painting: The traditional indigenous art form is practiced by women of tribal communities in the Hazaribagh region of Jharkhand, including the Kurmi, Santhal, Munda, Oraon, Agaria, and Ghatwal groups.
- Commonly known as harvest art, it is deeply linked to agriculture and cattle domestication.
- The Sohrai Khovar Painting was recognised with the Geographical Indication (GI) tag in 2020.
- Patta Chitra: This form of art originated in Odisha and is closely linked with the Jagannath Temple in Puri where it is typically used to decorate the shrine.
- Painted on cloth with chalk powder and tamarind seed glue, Pattachitra uses natural colours sourced from vegetables, the earth, and minerals. It represents religious, mythological, and folk stories, most notably Krishna Leela and Lord Jagannath.
- Patua Painting: This folk art tradition is practiced by the Patua or Chitrakar community in West Bengal, and examples of Patua artisans can also be found in Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, and parts of Bangladesh.

Cultural Significance of the Paintings

- The term 'Soh' or 'Soro' in Sohrai Painting means 'to drive away', while 'Rai' indicates a stick. As part of the ritual, mandalas or aripan are drawn with rice gruel to welcome cattle into homes.
- Characteristically, no pencils or charcoal are used in Pattachitra. Artists begin with the borders and sketch directly with light red and yellow brushes, finishing with lacquer coating for shine and water resistance.
- Patua Painting is painted on cloth scrolls, formulating narrative sequences that particularly feature in the narrations of Mangal Katha, especially by Hindu Patuas in Kalighat and Kumartuli.

International Tiger Day 2025

Introduction and Purpose

- International Tiger Day, also known as Global Tiger Day, is observed on July 29th.
- It aims to raise awareness about tiger conservation and particularly brings focus the Amur tiger, the world's largest wild cat.

Genesis of the Day

- The concept of International Tiger Day was established at the Saint Petersburg Tiger Summit in Russia in 2010.
- Thirteen tiger-range countries including India, Bhutan, Nepal, Malaysia, and Bangladesh, participated against the backdrop of a sharp decline in tiger populations.
- The summit launched the Tx2 initiative, aiming to double the wild tiger population by 2022.

India's Role in Tiger Conservation

- The need for conservation became apparent when India witnessed a sharp drop in tigers from roughly 1 lakh in the early 1900s to only 1,827 by 1972.
- To address this, India launched Project Tiger in 1973 to safeguard Bengal tigers and their habitats.

Details of Project Tiger

- Project Tiger is a centrally sponsored scheme. It offers 60% central assistance to most states for non-recurring expenses and 50% for recurring costs.
- It strives to maintain a viable population of Bengal tigers in their natural habitats.
- Key measures include the creation of tiger reserves with a core-buffer strategy for habitat protection and the regulation of sustainable human activities in buffer zones.
- The National Tiger Conservation Authority oversees its operations and carries out the national tiger census every four years, the last of which was in 2022.

Progress and Current Status

- Since its inception in 1973 with 9 reserves, Project Tiger now spans over 50 reserves in 18 states, encompassing around 2.2% of India's land area.
- Tiger numbers increased from 1,827 in 1973 to an average of 3,682 by 2022.
- Madhya Pradesh has the highest tiger population in India, followed by Karnataka, Uttarakhand, and Maharashtra.
- Corbett (Uttarakhand), Bandipur (Karnataka), Nagarhole (Karnataka), and Bandhavgarh (Madhya Pradesh) are among the reserves hosting the highest number of tigers.
- India now holds approximately 75% of the world's tiger population and has seen more than double growth over the past two decades.

Amur Tiger

- The Amur tiger, also known as the Siberian tiger, is the largest tiger subspecies and biggest wild cat globally.
- These tigers are indigenous to the Russian Far East and have adapted to harsh winters with thick fur and excess body fat.
- However, they are under threat due to poaching and habitat loss.
- Indigenous groups in the Russian Far East such as the Udeghe, Nanai, and Oroch, revere the Amur tiger as a forest guardian, reflecting tiger-related beliefs in South Asia.

Cultural Importance

- The Royal Bengal Tiger is India's national animal and a symbol of pride and mythology.
- Iconic figures include Machhli, the 'Queens Mother of Tigers' from Ranthambore, and Kailash Sankhala, the first director of Project Tiger, known as the 'Tiger Man of India.'

SPORTS

Divya Deshmukh's Historic Win at the FIDE Women's Chess World Cup 2025

Introduction and Background

- Divya Deshmukh clinched victory in the FIDE Women's Chess World Cup 2025 on July 28
- At merely 19 years old, she defeated seasoned player Koneru Humpy
- She achieved the distinction of being India's fourth female Chess Grandmaster
- The tournament took place in Batumi, Georgia

Upsetting the Chessboard: Divya's Match Against Humpy

- The final round of games were a showdown between experience versus young talent
- Koneru Humpy, a legendary chess player and India's first woman Grandmaster, competed fiercely
- It was a battle of ranks with World No. 5 Humpy against World No. 18 Divya
- Two initial games led to a draw, advancing the match to rapid tiebreaks
- The first game too was a draw, but in the second match, Divya capitalised on a critical endgame mistake to claim victory

Divya's Assent to Chess Acclaim

- Prior to this, Divya was crowned World Junior Champion in 2024
- She also played a crucial role in India's gold win in the Chess Olympiad in Budapest with an individual gold to her name
- With this victory, now she joins a select group of Indian Grandmasters: Koneru Humpy, R. Vaishali, Harika Dronavalli, Divya being the youngest of them
- Despite lower FIDE ranking and staring down the World Rapid Champion, Divya admitted to confidence issues but came out victorious

The Esteemed Challenger: Koneru Humpy

- Humpy, aged 37, continues to be a highly-respected figure in Indian chess
- She was the youngest woman to become a Grandmaster, breaking Judit Polgar's record at just 15 years and 27 days
- After the match, she acknowledged that Divya had played "clearly better" at parts of the game.

Summing up The Achievement

- Divya's win is a significant feat not only for her but also for Indian chess, heralding a vibrant future
- By defying the odds, she showcased her sheer skill and composure
- Such achievements play a vital role in inspiring the younger generation of chess players in India and across the world.

Recent updates in International Cricket: July 2025

Historic Test Victory for India at Edgbaston

- On July 6, 2025, India achieved an historic Test victory at Edgbaston, beating England by a record 336-run margin - the biggest overseas win for India in terms of runs.
- Akash Deep stole the show with 10 wickets, the best Test figures by an Indian in England.
- This victory was India's first Test win at Edgbaston after seven losses.
- Multiple records were broken during the match, including the highest total runs in a test match between England and India.
- India levelled the series 1-1, marking a memorable moment in Indian cricket history.

Increase in IPL's Total Value in 2025

- In 2025, the IPL's total value rose to $18.5 billion, reflecting its evolving status as a premier sports league.
- RCB became the most valued franchise at $269 million after winning the 2025 title, with Mumbai Indians and CSK in the following spots.
- On a related note, record-breaking sponsorships and viewership occurred from JioHotstar and Star Sports.
- The Tata Group extended its sponsorship deal, and PBKS exhibited the highest growth in brand value.
- The success of the league demonstrates that IPL is now recognised globally, fusing cricket, entertainment, and media.

Sachin Tendulkar's portrait at the MCC Museum

- On July 10, 2025, Sachin Tendulkar's portrait was officially revealed at the MCC Museum at Lord's Cricket Ground in London.
- Stuart Pearson Wright painted the portrait, and Tendulkar rang the bell to begin the Test match between India and England.
- Tendulkar shared early experiences in England and noted the portrait's significance in his journey.
- Additionally, Tendulkar commended Shubman Gill, India's new captain, for his calm leadership and excellent form.

ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026

- On July 11, 2025, Italy and the Netherlands secured their spots in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 following the Europe Qualifiers.
- Italy's first appearance at this global event was ensured by them holding the Netherlands until the 17th over, maintaining a better net run rate.
- The World Cup will take place in India and Sri Lanka in 2026.

MI New York's victory in 2025's Major League Cricket

- On July 14, 2025, MI New York defeated Washington Freedom by 5 runs to win the 2025 Major League Cricket title at the Grand Prairie Stadium in Dallas.
- MI New York made a remarkable comeback, with contributions from players like Quinton de Kock and Nicholas Pooran. This is the team's second MLC title.

June 2025's ICC Player of the Month Winners

- ICC's Player of the Month titles for June 2025 went to South Africa's Aiden Markram and West Indies captain Hayley Matthews.
- Both players expressed pride in their performances and focus on future goals.

Andre Russell's Retirement from International Cricket

- Andre Russell declared his retirement from international cricket, ending a decorated 15-year career.

ECB Awarded Hosting Rights of ICC World Test Championship Finals

- The ECB was given hosting rights for the 2027, 2029, and 2031 ICC World Test Championship Finals. The decision was announced during the ICC Annual Conference 2025 in Singapore.

Joe Root Becomes Second-Highest Run-Getter in Test Cricket

- Joe Root surpassed Dravid, Kallis, and Ponting in a single innings at Old Trafford to become the second-highest run-getter in Test cricket.
- With this, Root affirmed his status as a modern legend of the game.

Highlights of Major Badminton and Tennis Events in 2025

Jannik Sinner's Wimbledon Victory

- Jannik Sinner secured his first Wimbledon title on July 13, 2025, by defeating Carlos Alcaraz, the two-time defending champion.
- The match scores were 4-6, 6-4, 6-4, 6-4.
- This victory marked Sinner's fourth Grand Slam title and ended Alcaraz's 24-match winning streak.
- This win signifies a remarkable comeback for Sinner after his defeat to Alcaraz at the French Open.

Iga Swiatek's Triumphant Victory at Wimbledon

- Iga Swiatek claimed her first Wimbledon title, and sixth Grand Slam title overall, on July 12, 2025.
- She beat Amanda Anisimova with an exceptional score of 6-0, 6-0 in under an hour.
- This victory places Swiatek as the sole active female player with victories on all three surfaces.
- Her triumphant comeback indicates her inherent tenacity, in spite of her recent struggles and a brief doping ban.

Recap of the 2025 Japan Open Badminton

- The 2025 Japan Open Badminton event was dominated by Shi Yuqi of China in men's singles and An Se-young from South Korea in women's singles.
- China was the most successful nation, with three gold medals to its name.
- South Korea and Malaysia also gave commendable performances.

- The event underscored the dominance of Asian nations in worldwide badminton championships.

India's Historic Achievements at the Badminton Asia Junior Championships 2025

- In a historic moment for India at the Badminton Asia Junior Championships 2025, duo Tanvi Sharma and Vennala Kalagotla became the first Indian women's singles pair to win medals in the same edition.
- Junior World No. 1, Tanvi demonstrated her dominance with consistent straight-game victories.
- Despite her lower ranking at World No. 103, Vennala showcased resilience in tightly-contested matches.
- This extraordinary feat accentuates India's rising prominence in junior women's badminton.

Recent Developments in Indian Chess Scenario

SuperUnited Rapid & Blitz 2025

- Indian Grandmaster D Gukesh won the rapid title at the SuperUnited Rapid & Blitz 2025 in Zagreb, Croatia, on 4th July, with a score of 14 points.
- Gukesh's exceptional performance in the event put him ahead in the Grand Chess Tour, leading against Jan-Krzysztof Duda and Magnus Carlsen.
- The overall winner was decided based on combined scores of the Rapid and Blitz formats.
- Despite challenges in the Blitz section, Gukesh showcased remarkable progress.
- Norwegian Grandmaster Magnus Carlsen secured the SuperUnited Rapid and Blitz title on 7th July.

New Additions to India's Grandmaster Tally

- Chennai's Harikrishnan A. Ra became India's 87th Grandmaster.
- He achieved this feat at the La Plagne International Chess Festival in France on 11th July 2025.
- Harikrishnan received his coachings from Shyam Sundar and has previously earned GM norms in Switzerland (2023) and Spain (June 2025).
- He aims to reach an Elo rating of 2600, with plans to compete in Spain and Portugal before pursuing an MBA in the USA.

Hosting of FIDE World Cup 2025 by India

- The FIDE World Cup 2025, scheduled from October 30 to November 27, will be hosted by India with 206 players participating.
- The event will run in knockout format and provides three qualification spots for the 2026 Candidates Tournament.
- India's strong performance in recent international events and its rich chess culture make it an ideal host for such a prestigious tournament.
- Rising chess stars like Gukesh, Praggnanandhaa, and Erigaisi exemplify India's status as an upcoming chess powerhouse.

Future Events

- Chess enthusiasts anticipate the next Grand Chess Tour event to be held in Saint Louis, Missouri, in August 2025.

Overview of the 2025 Grand Prix Season

The British Grand Prix at Silverstone

- The British Grand Prix at Silverstone took place on July 6, 2025, hosted in damp conditions contributing to an exciting race.
- The triumph was claimed by Lando Norris, a significant event which marked his maiden win at the British circuit.
- It was an advantageous race for Norris when Oscar Piastri, originally in first place, was given a 10-second penalty. This situation facilitated Norris in closing the points gap in the Formula 1 Championship.
- This victory was the first for the McLaren team at Silverstone since 2008, marking a historic triumph after 17 years.
- Nico Hülkenberg ended the race at third place, while Max Verstappen finished fifth after an unfortunate spin during the race.
- The race also saw many rookie drivers failing to finish due to the challenging wet track.
- For Norris, the victory was the fulfilment of a dream, particularly as it transpired in front of his home crowd.

The Belgian Grand Prix at Spa

- The following race, the Belgian Grand Prix, was staged at Spa.
- This event saw Oscar Piastri attain the victory, a crucial win over his teammate Lando Norris. This achievement added to his lead in the Drivers' Championship, extending it to 16 points.
- The weather was varied throughout the race, posing a challenge to tyre strategies and making for an unpredictable journey.
- Charles Leclerc concluded the race in third place, while Hamilton demonstrated remarkable skills by climbing an impressive 11 positions to finish in 7th position.
- Ultimately, the Belgian Grand Prix underscored the dominance of the McLaren team and reinforced Piastri's emerging title credentials during this season.

Developments in International Athletics & Football

India's Strategic Bid for World Athletics Championship

- India intends to place a strategic bid to host the World Athletics Championship in 2029 or 2031. The announcement was made in Bengaluru by AFI official Adille Sumariwalla on July 6, 2025.
- The bidding process commences this year and final decisions will be made by September 2026.
- Venue-wise, India has a better chance in 2031 since Tokyo (2025) and Beijing (2027) are already confirmed to host.
- The country is also keen on hosting the 2028 Junior World Championships and other Athletics Relay events in the future.
- These attempts coincide with India's objective to host the Olympics in 2036.

CONCACAF Gold Cup 2025

- Mexico achieved a stunning victory in the CONCACAF Gold Cup 2025 final against the United States. The final score was 2-1.
- The match occurred at the NRG Stadium in Houston, marked by sensational moments, high-level performances, and emotional commemorations.
- Raul Jimenez and Edson Alvarez scored the goals for Mexico.
- This win garners Mexico a record 10th Gold Cup title.

Neeraj Chopra Classic 2025

- Neeraj Chopra inaugurated his titular event Neeraj Chopra Classic 2025 in Bengaluru, triumphing in it with an 86.18-metre javelin throw.
- Runners up included Kenya's Julius Yego, who finished second with an 84.51-metre throw, and Sri Lanka's Rumesh Pathirage, who came third at 84.34 metres.
- Not only did this new event underscore Neeraj's success, but it also highlighted India's growing prominence in international athletics.

Ranking of Indian Men's Football Team

- The FIFA rankings saw the Indian men's football team drop six places to 133rd - its lowest position since December 2016.
- This descent follows consecutive losses to Thailand and Hong Kong in June 2025, contributing to coach Manolo Marquez's resignation.
- Their next opportunity for progress comes in October against Singapore.

FIFA Club World Cup 2025

- Chelsea FC clinched the FIFA Club World Cup 2025 title by defeating PSG 3-0 in New Jersey.
- Cole Palmer took centre stage, scoring two goals and providing an assist to Joao Pedro for the third.
- The win rewarded Chelsea with $40 million in prize money and Palmer with the prestigious Golden Ball award for best tournament player.

UEFA Euro 2025 Women's Championship

- The UEFA Euro 2025 Women's Championship was won by the England Women's Football Team after defeating Spain in a heart-stopping penalty shootout.
- Despite losing the opener, the team made a commendable comeback, showcasing resilience and tactical brilliance.
- This win for the Lionesses affirms the growing stature and recognition of women's football on the international platform.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

India-UK Vision 2035 and Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA)

Introduction of the Vision 2035 and CETA

- The India-UK Vision 2035 and the CETA were unveiled during the Indian Prime Minister's visit to the UK.
- With these agreements, both nations aim to push bilateral trade beyond USD 100 billion by 2030.

Key Elements of India-UK Vision 2035

- Trade and Economic Cooperation: Through CETA, the goal is to boost bilateral trade, generate employment, and oversee the planning of a Bilateral Investment Treaty.Technology and Innovation: The focus is primarily on advancing technologies like Artificial Intelligence, quantum computing, telecom, etc.
- Defence: Agreements include a 10-year regional defence industrial strategy with emphasis on joint study and production.
- Climate and Sustainability: Collaboration to enhance green finance, develop offshore wind and nuclear technologies, and establish joint supply chains for green goods.
- Education and Skills: The UK will support the establishment of university campuses in India, and mutual qualification recognition will be encouraged.
- Global Governance: Both nations are committed to advocating multilateralism and reforms in various institutions.

Key Highlights of India-UK CETA

- Promises 99% duty-free access for India to the UK market, benefiting numerous industries.
- Indian professionals will have simplified market access in several sectors, along with simplified visa processes.
- Aims at inclusive growth by promoting participation from women, youth, MSME, farmers, and innovators.

Potential Impact of CETA

- Anticipated to double bilateral trade, increase UK exports to India, and stimulate job creation by expanding economic activities.
- The agreement will encourage investment from both countries.

Evolution of India-UK Relations

- Bilateral trade reached USD 21.34 billion in 2023–24, with exports and imports from both countries experiencing growth.
- The UK and India have strengthened their ties in the field of defence, healthcare, technology, and innovation.

Friction between India-UK

- Key areas of differences include extradition issues, disagreements over the Russia-Ukraine war, disagreements over implementation of climate tariffs, and issues relating to Intellectual Property Rights.

Steps to Strengthen India-UK Relations

- Deepen security ties through partnerships like AUKUS and expand cooperation on multiple fronts.
- Collaborate on various environmental initiatives.
- Expand market access and promote India as a hub for global capability.
- Engage the extensive Indian community in the UK for various strategic roles.

Conclusion

- With the establishment of the India-UK Vision 2035 and CETA, both nations have an opportunity to strengthen their ties in various sectors.
- Careful handling of policy differences and focused diplomacy is needed for a more robust partnership.

Strengthening India-Brazil Relations: The Five Priority Pillars

Introduction

- The government of India, led by its Prime Minister, recently completed a state visit to Brazil.
- During the visit, both countries reaffirmed their commitment to an established strategic partnership created in 2006.
- Five core pillars of cooperation were agreed upon to enhance bilateral relations between the two countries.

Special Honours

- The Prime Minister of India was conferred the Grand Collar of the National Order of the Southern Cross, the highest state honour of Brazil.
- This took place after his participation in the 17th BRICS Summit 2025 in Rio de Janeiro.
- India will host the 18th BRICS Summit in 2026, taking over the BRICS Chairship.

The Five Pillars of India-Brazil Relations

- Defence and Security Cooperation: Both countries signed agreements to deepen strategic cooperation, including a Cybersecurity Dialogue.
- Food & Agricultural Security: Emphasis was laid on sustainable agriculture and food access, and opposition was voiced against trade barriers impacting food security.
- Energy Transition & Climate Action: The importance of sustainable biofuels and support for Brazil's UNFCCC COP30 Presidency was discussed.
- Digital Transformation & Emerging Technologies: The countries agreed to convene joint commission for technological collaboration in various areas.
- Industrial Partnerships in Strategic Areas: Key sectors of collaboration identified included pharmaceuticals, mining and critical minerals, and oil & gas.

Key Highlights and Challenges of India-Brazil Relations

- Diplomatic ties were established in 1948, with India having an embassy in Brasília and a Consulate General in Sao Paulo.
- However, geographical distance, competition in agricultural & biofuels markets, cultural & awareness gaps, and diverging global priorities pose challenges.
- Despite these, collaborations in defence, space & technology, energy & biofuels, and cultural exchanges have been significant.

Strengthening India-Brazil Relations Further

- Both countries can boost trade and economic engagement through diversification of trade commodities and reduction of non-tariff barriers.
- Logistics can be improved by establishing an India-Brazil maritime corridor and direct flights.
- Green partnerships can be enhanced with more collaboration on biofuels and critical minerals.
- Agricultural ties can be deepened through joint ventures in organic food and GM crops.
- Strengthening institutional mechanisms helps build stronger diplomatic ties, such as annual Prime Minister-President summits and state-level partnerships.

India-Namibia Relations and India's Strategic Interest in Africa

Introduction to India-Namibia Relations

- The Indian Prime Minister's State Visit to Namibia marked the first by an Indian PM in 27 years.
- During his visit, he addressed the Namibian Parliament and showed India's commitment to a partnership with Africa.
- India's Prime Minister was conferred Namibia's highest civilian award – the Order of the Most Ancient Welwitschia Mirabilis.
- Namibia expressed their intentions to join the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) and the Global Biofuels Alliance, and signed a licensing agreement to adopt UPI technology.

Brief Overview of Namibia

- Namibia is located in Southern Africa, bordered by Angola, Zambia, Botswana, and South Africa, with the Atlantic Ocean along its western edge.
- Namibia is known as the driest nation in sub-Saharan Africa and is home to many deserts, including the Namib, the Kalahari, the Succulent Karoo, and the Nama Karoo.
- Germany established colonial rule over most of the region in 1884. The main rivers in the country are Zambezi, Okavango, and Kunene.

The Significance of Welwitschia Mirabilis

- Welwitschia mirabilis, a native plant of the Namib Desert in Namibia and southern Angola, is known as a "living fossil" due to its longevity and unique features.
- This plant is the namesake of Namibia's highest civilian award - the Order of the Most Ancient Welwitschia Mirabilis.
- Many desert-dwelling animals, such as zebras, oryx, and black rhinoceros, rely on this plant's leaves as a vital water source.

Key Highlights of India-Namibia Relations

- India has had historical and political ties with Namibia since 1946, and full diplomatic relations were established in 1990.
- The two countries have cooperated on various projects, including the Cheetah Translocation Project.
- India provides development assistance to Namibia, including vaccines, establishment of INCEIT and the India Wing at the University of Namibia, and an IAF Technical Team for training Namibian Air Force pilots.
- Bilateral trade between the two countries reached USD 568.40 million in 2024–25.

Africa's Strategic Importance to India

- Africa's geographical position is vital for securing India's maritime trade routes.

- Africa's rising economic power and access to critical minerals have strengthened India-Africa relations.
- Africa is also a key geopolitical ally for India, due to its diplomatic leverage as a powerful global bloc and the large diaspora of Indians in Africa.

Key Obstacles in Deepening India-Africa Ties

- Despite growing ties, Indian investments in Africa trail behind China and the West.
- Issues over the perceived quality of Indian exports and a diplomatic perception of India over-focusing on certain regions of Africa limit stronger relations.
- Security crises and instability in Africa, as well as India-China competition for African resources, present significant challenges.

Suggestions for Deepening India-Africa Relations

- Revamping trade frameworks and instituting strategic dialogue are necessary to strengthen economic partnerships.
- India should also play a role in helping African nations counter neo-colonialism and promote self-reliance.
- Innovative capacity building in sectors like agri-tech, renewable energy, and healthcare, as well as deepening security partnerships and infrastructure development, are also recommended.

Reset in India-Maldives Relations

Introduction

- India's Prime Minister marked a reset in bilateral ties between India and the Maldives by participating as the guest of honour at the 60th Independence Day celebrations in the Maldives.
- The relationship had previously been strained due to the Maldivian President's India Out campaign and negative social media remarks connected to his administration.

Key Outcomes of Visit

- Progress on Strategic Partnership: India reiterated its "Neighbourhood First" and MAHASAGAR policies during both countries' review of the 2024 Economic and Maritime Security Partnership.
- Economic & Digital Partnership: The countries agreed on a proposed Free Trade Agreement and Bilateral Investment Treaty, which promise to create new opportunities. Further, they welcomed the local currency trade and agreements on Unified Payments Interface and RuPay card to boost the digital economy and tourism.
- Financial Support: India extended a USD 550 million Line of Credit (LoC) for infrastructure, decreasing the Maldives' annual debt repayment by 40% through an Amendatory Agreement on existing LoCs.

Why is Maldives Recalibrating its Ties with India?

- Severe Economic Crisis: Recent severe economic downturns in the Maldives, depleted foreign exchange reserves, and a downgrade of Moody's credit rating prompt a need for stronger relations.
- Economic Dependence on India: Strained relations lead to loss of significant revenue from Indian tourists; additionally, dependence on India for essentials like food, medicines, and construction materials also influences Maldives' approach towards India.

Importance of Improved India-Maldives Relations

- Strategic Importance: The Maldives' location along key International Shipping Lanes in the Indian Ocean makes it significant for facilitating global trade and energy flow.
- Security Cooperation: India's consistent security provision, marked by thwarting a coup in the Operation Cactus (1988) and consistent joint exercises, denotes its significance to the Maldives.
- Tourism, Education, and Climate Change Cooperation: Indian tourists contribute to a major share of arrivals in the Maldives; India serves as a preferred education destination for Maldivian students, and a key ally for India in advancing climate change adaptation and mitigation efforts.

Strengthening India-Maldives Relations Further

- Economic & Developmental Cooperation: Accelerating agreements like FTA, boosting Indian investments, and adopting local currency trade could further solidify ties.
- Security & Strategic Collaboration: Strengthened maritime security through joint patrols, EEZ monitoring, donation of patrol vessels and drones, and enhanced intelligence-sharing could play a pivotal role.
- People-to-People Ties: Engaging the Maldivian youth, supporting independent media, promoting film collaborations, and addressing sovereignty concerns with sensitivity could further enhance diplomatic ties.

India-Argentina Relations

Introduction and Overview

- Commemorated 75 years of diplomatic relations and 5 years of strategic partnership between India and Argentina were highlighted when the Prime Minister of India visiting the country; the first visit in 57 years.
- Recognition of Indian global prominence and strong bilateral ties were emphasised with the awarding of "Key to the City of Buenos Aires" to the Prime Minister of India.

About Argentina

- Located in Southern South America, Argentina is the second largest country in South America and the eighth largest globally.
- It shares borders with Chile, Bolivia, Paraguay, Brazil, Uruguay, and the Atlantic Ocean.
- Argentina is divided into four significant regions: the Andes Mountains, the Northern region, the Pampas, and Patagonia.
- With its resource-rich, industrialised economy and skilled workforce, Argentina is among South America's largest economies.

Key Takeaways from PM's State Visit to Argentina

- There was a focus on expanding the India–MERCOSUR Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) to boost bilateral trade as two countries agreed to enhance strategic and economic engagement.
- Energy security was discussed in depth. Both

countries expressed commitment to explore shale energy collaboration. India also expressed its interest in partnering with Argentina's state-owned energy company, YPF, to support its growing energy needs.
- Defence and digital cooperation formed an important part of the discussions. The countries pledged to boost defence manufacturing with co-development and technology transfer. They also discussed mutual adoption of digital infrastructure like UPI, telemedicine, and digital health.
- Reinforcement of their shared democratic values, South-South cooperation, and multilateralism was underscored by both sides.

Key Areas of Cooperation Between India & Argentina

- Decorated politics with the Indian establishment of an embassy in Buenos Aires in 1949 and Argentina maintaining a Consulate General in Mumbai since 2009.
- Economic cooperation between India and Argentina has seen steady growth; trade reached USD 5.2 billion in 2024. The main trading commodities include petroleum products, agrochemicals, textiles and pharmaceuticals from India, and soybean oil, leather, and cereals from Argentina.
- In terms of energy and critical minerals, Argentina supplies lithium, copper, and rare earth elements for India's clean energy transition.
- Technical and development cooperation has been strengthened with ITEC scholarships, ICCR programmes, and capacity-building initiatives.
- The cultural and value-based relations are deep-rooted and shared among both nations and have seen large participation at international events.

Historical Connections

- Connections were made to past high-profile visits, such as Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's visit to Argentina in 1968.
- Literary links bind both nations, seen through events, such as Rabindranath Tagore's 1924 visit to Argentina, where he fell ill and was hosted by intellectual Victoria Ocampo. Tagore forged a lasting cultural bond through his relationship with Ocampo and her magazine, deepening Argentina's interest in Indian culture.

India - Trinidad and Tobago Relations

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Visit to Trinidad and Tobago

- Narendra Modi's visit marked the first Indian Prime Ministerial visit since 1999.
- He was conferred with Trinidad and Tobago's highest civilian honour, The Order of the Republic, for his global leadership and humanitarian efforts during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Geography and Economy of Trinidad and Tobago

- It is located in the southeastern West Indies, comprised of two main islands along with several small islands.
- It is rich in resources like oil and gas and has key industries such as petroleum refining and tourism.
- Famous for its environmental diversity, from rainforests to swamps, it is home to diverse species and the world's largest natural reservoir of asphalt deposit.

Agreement Highlights from the PM's Visit

- Agreements for cooperative efforts in healthcare, disaster resilient infrastructure, and biofuels were made.
- India will fund up to five grassroots community development projects annually.
- Both nations agreed to collaborate on digital solutions and extend support to each other's agricultural sectors.
- In terms of cultural ties, India will re-establish two Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) Chairs at the University of the West Indies.

Historical Relations and Economic Ties Between India and Trinidad and Tobago

- Connections trace back to 1845 when Bhojpuri Girmitiyas came to Trinidad and began shaping the socio-economic fabric of the country.
- Bilateral relations have been warm and dynamic since their formal establishment in 1962.
- Their trade relations have consistently grown, with India importing and exporting a considerable amount of goods.

The Indentured Labour System and the Bhojpuri Girmitiyas

- This exploitative system was introduced post-slavery and abolished in 1920 due to Mahatma Gandhi's efforts.
- 'Girmitiyas', from Bhojpuri districts, were transported to British colonies like Trinidad and Tobago under this system.

India - Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Relations

- CARICOM, established to promote economic integration, consists of 15 Member States and 6 Associate Members.
- India has provided continuous capacity building and developmental aid to CARICOM countries.
- The India-CARICOM partnership is built on seven key pillars: capacity building, agriculture and food security, renewable energy and climate change, innovation, technology and trade, cricket and culture, ocean economy, and healthcare.

United States Withdrawal from UNESCO

Introduction and About UNESCO

- UNESCO, stands for United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.
- This specialised agency of the United Nations facilitates peace through international cooperation in domains like education, science, and culture.
- Its headquarters resides in Paris and it holds the membership of 194 Nations and 12 Associate members.
- UNESCO's establishment dates back to 16th November 1945 with India as one of its founding members.
- Its primary responsibility includes promoting inclusive, equitable, and lifelong learning opportunities, protecting cultural heritage, enhancing scientific research along with promoting

sustainability, advancing mutual understanding and tolerance.

United States Association with UNESCO

- The US, quite recently, proclaimed its decision for the third time, to withdraw from UNESCO, pinpointing supposed bias against Israel as the reason.
- The US had its first exit in 1984 under the Reagan administration because of allegations regarding mismanagement, corruption, and alignment with Soviet interests.
- Its second exit was in 2017, during Trump's first term, citing anti-Israel bias as justification, triggered after UNESCO's decision to include Palestine as a member state in 2011.
- The most recent exit is supposed to happen in 2025, under Trump's second term. This was announced mere two years after the US had rejoined UNESCO under the Biden administration in 2023.

Potential Impact of US Withdrawal from UNESCO

- On a global scale, the US withdrawal from UNESCO could lead to a major financial crunch, a geopolitical power shift favouring China, and a setback to various science and education programs.
- Such recurring disengagements could also lead to a crisis in multilateralism, leaving developing countries disoriented and frustrated due to inconsistent international support and policies.
- For India, this could pose both opportunities and challenges - while India might get a scope to expand its diplomatic influence and exhibit soft power in UNESCO, funding cuts and rising Chinese influence could strain India's resources and geopolitical balance.

The Way Forward

- To deal with such disruptions, UNESCO should aim for inclusive governance and organise its functioning that limits any geopolitical interference.
- Moreover, adopting equitable funding models should be considered seriously to address emergent issues like AI ethics, digital learning, and climate education.
- Additionally, efforts to ensure transparent governance, enhancing South-South cooperation and backing of regional programs would be beneficial for effective and impactful action.

QUICK HIGHLIGHTS

✓ IGIA Airport in Delhi ranks among the top 10 hub airports in Asia-Pacific and the Middle East, according to the Airports Council International (ACI APAC & MID). It is the only Indian airport to feature in the list. The airport provides connections to 153 destinations.

✓ Mumbai is ranked 6th globally and 1st in the Asia-Pacific region for under-construction data centre capacity, according to Cushman & Wakefield 2025. The city has 335 MW of data centre capacity currently under development.

✓ On June 3, 2025, President Droupadi Murmu introduced three significant regulations for Ladakh. These included the Ladakh Reservation (Amendment) Regulation which entitles locals to 85% reservation in public jobs, and the Hill Councils Amendment which ensures 33% reservation for women in Leh and Kargil. The Ladakh Official Languages Regulation recognises English, Hindi, Urdu, Bhoti, and Purgi as official languages, endorsing native languages like Shina, Brokskat, and Balti. These regulations aim to boost local empowerment, cultural heritage, and women's representation in governance.

✓ On 9th June 2025, Puducherry adopted the National e-Vidhan Application (NeVA), becoming the 19th legislature in India to do so. Union Minister Dr. L. Murugan inaugurated the digital platform, which aids paperless legislative functioning. The introduction of NeVA, supported entirely by central funding, contributes to the Digital India vision by promoting real-time legislative transparency, livestreaming, and saving paper. It represents a move towards "One Nation, One Application", enhancing eco-friendly governance, citizen accessibility, and institutional efficiency.

✓ India has been ranked 131st among 148 countries in the World Economic Forum's Global Gender Gap Report 2025, scoring a gender parity rate of 64.1%. The reason for this low ranking is primarily the reduced representation of women in politics.

✓ In the Impact Rankings of 2025, Amrita Vishwa Vidyapeetham and LPU were India's leading entries, ranked 41 and 48 respectively, among India's total 135 entries. JSS Academy and Shoolini University also earned spots in the top 100. These rankings evaluated the universities' performance in relation to the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

✓ India has slipped to the 71st position in the Global Energy Transition Index 2025, from the previous rank of 63, according to the World Economic Forum. Despite improvements in clean energy utilisation and efficiency, limitations in energy equity and grid reliability have led to this decline.

✓ In the 2025 UN Sustainable Development Goals Index, India ranked 99th, scoring 67 and appearing in the top 100 for the first time. The nation made significant progress in healthcare, digital access and infrastructure, contributing to its improved global standing.

✓ India has witnessed the 3rd highest growth in global power generation capacity over the past five years, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA). This growth has been spurred by urbanisation and industrial growth. A significant contribution has also come from renewable energy sources, particularly solar power.

✓ The 2025 list of 360 ONE Wealth Creators in India features young entrepreneurs under 40, chiefly

dominated by the Ambani siblings, Nikhil Kamath, and Bhavish Aggarwal. The collective total wealth of these individuals is approaching a staggering ₹100 trillion.

- ✓ The TRAI Telecom report Q1 2025 shows that India had 1.2 billion total subscribers, generating a gross revenue of ₹98,250 crore. There was noted high ARPU and a surge in data consumption. The report highlights strong growth in 5G Fixed Wireless Access (FWA).
- ✓ Canara Bank has abolished the Average Monthly Balance requirement for all savings bank accounts, including salary and NRI types, hence removing related penalties. This measure, aimed at promoting financial inclusion, will benefit a broad customer base. Founded in 1906, Canara Bank operates over 9,800 branches worldwide with a strong presence in rural areas.
- ✓ Deutsche Bank has named Stefan Schaffer the CEO of Deutsche India's Global Capability Centre (GCC). In addition to this, Schaffer also holds the roles of Global CIO for Corporate Functions and Head of Global Technology Centres. This move highlights Deutsche Bank's dedication to technological innovation and standardisation, as well as to its India operations which support global functions across finance, technology, risk, and operations with a workforce of 20,000. Schaffer's previous experience in Bucharest shows the bank's push towards a unified digital presence globally.
- ✓ On 1 June 2025, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) announced a $10 billion urban transformation initiative in India. The ambitious 5-year strategy encompasses enhancements to metro networks, RRTS corridors, and urban infrastructure across over 100 cities. Funded by sovereign loans, private capital, and the Urban Challenge Fund, the project further incorporates $3 million technical assistance for project planning. ADB's focus is evidently on skill development, women's empowerment, and inclusive urban growth, aligning with India's Viksit Bharat @ 2047 mission.
- ✓ State Bank of India (SBI) has significantly bolstered the government's non-tax revenue by contributing a dividend of ₹8,076.84 crore for FY 2024-25, marking an increase from the previous year's ₹6,959.29 crore. This substantial payment was officially handed over to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman by SBI Chairman C.S. Setty. The increased dividend underscores SBI's strong financial performance with a ₹15.90/share dividend and reaffirms its crucial role in fiscal resource mobilization.
- ✓ Scapia has partnered with Federal Bank to introduce India's first dual-network credit card, the Scapia Federal RuPay Credit Card, which combines Visa and RuPay. The card offers UPI compatibility, zero forex markup, Scapia Coins, and airport lounge benefits for both domestic and international use. This introduction aligns with Scapia's 2025 Summer Release platform upgrades, including AI recommendations, bespoke fare choices, and reward enhancements, marking a significant milestone in India's fintech evolution.
- ✓ The Asian Development Bank (ADB) has greenlit a $109.97 million loan to bolster Gujarat's Skills Development Program, aiming to boost technical education, foster inclusive employment, and escalate industrial competitiveness. This initiative will modernise training infrastructure, introduce industry-relevant courses, and enhance governance at institutions such as Kaushalya: The Skill University. The programme is structured to nurture a future-ready workforce.
- ✓ DFCC Bank PLC, a prominent Sri Lankan financial institution, has become the first foreign corporate to list a green bond on India's NSE International Exchange (NSE IX) at GIFT City. This LKR 2.5 billion bond, earlier listed in Sri Lanka and on the Luxembourg Stock Exchange, aims to finance solar energy projects aligning with Sri Lanka's renewable goals for 2030. Adhering to ICMA Green Bond Principles, the bond supports the UN Sustainable Development Goals, specifically Affordable and Clean Energy and Climate Action.
- ✓ SBI General Insurance has enlisted Mohd. Arif Khan as Deputy CEO to guide the company's growth and innovation phase. With over 25 years of experience at SBI, Khan brings knowledge in retail banking, digital systems and leadership training, aiming to enhance customer experience, drive technological innovation and broaden SBI General's presence in emerging markets. Khan's multiple certifications and academic accolades reflect SBI General's endeavour for excellence in insurance services and leadership transformation.
- ✓ Punjab National Bank (PNB) has provided ₹17.02 crore to the families of 26 defence and paramilitary martyrs under the Rakshak Plus Scheme by June 11, 2025. The scheme offers comprehensive insurance benefits to uniformed personnel, including ₹1 crore accidental cover and ₹1.5 crore air accident cover, and it also supports partial disabilities. The initiative by PNB is aimed at honouring the sacrifices of Indian soldiers, ensuring their families are supported, and underscoring the bank's role in nation-building.
- ✓ The RBI's enhanced liquidity stress testing framework is a noteworthy advancement in enhancing the financial system's ability to withstand shocks. The central bank aims to cultivate a resilient, transparent, and future-prepared financial ecosystem by including NBFCs, UCBs, and its own portfolio in stress test models and incorporating climate transition risk. Furthermore, the implementation of a Growth-at-Risk model will better coordinate monetary policy with possible macroeconomic vulnerabilities.
- ✓ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is preparing to reassess its inflation targeting framework and required liquidity levels in FY26, due largely to concerns over fluctuating food prices. There are increasing talks about adopting core inflation as a more reliable benchmark for monetary policy.

Additionally, RBI intends to enhance liquidity management to maintain a surplus of around 1% of NDTL, facilitating smoother policy transmission. This move emphasises the central bank's dedication to financial stability, price control, and growth through a robust policy framework.

- ✓ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has approved PayPal Payments and Worldline ePayments India to function as cross-border payment aggregators (PAs). This decision is in compliance with an RBI directive from October 2024, which mandated that these companies secure independent authorisation rather than operating under the old OPGSP model. This move is anticipated to greatly aid India's freelancers, SMEs, and exporters, bolstering India's digital economy and its global trade participation.
- ✓ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has effectively managed the withdrawal of ₹2,000 notes, with a return rate of 98.26% observed by 31 May, 2025. Originating from the 2016 demonetisation, these high-value notes are currently under phased eradication in line with the Clean Note Policy due to ageing currency stock and low usage. RBI offices and India Post continue to offer exchange or deposit services. This measure has been perceived as a significant stride towards efficient currency management and minimisation of unaccounted cash reserves.
- ✓ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) levied 353 penalties amounting to ₹54.78 crore on various regulated entities during the fiscal year 2024-25. The penalties were related to non-compliance with cybersecurity, exposure norms, IRAC guidelines, KYC norms, and fraud/data reporting. Cooperative banks were most heavily penalised (264 times), followed by NBFCs, HFCs, and commercial banks. This indicates RBI's increasing emphasis on regulatory enforcement, transparency, and risk management in the Indian banking system.
- ✓ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) released a draft proposal on 9 April 2025, proposing revised rules for lending against gold, with the objective of bringing consistency across financial institutions and rectifying discrepancies. The surge in gold loan activities, principally among banks, instigated these guidelines. They are aimed at increasing borrower safety, maintaining transparency, and standardising lending norms. However, concerns have emerged about possible disturbances to rural credit, mainly impacting small-scale borrowers in southern India.
- ✓ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has revised its gold loan guidelines, raising the loan-to-value (LTV) ratio to 85% for loans up to ₹2.5 lakh, but limiting it to 80% for ₹2.5–5 lakh and to 75% beyond ₹5 lakh. These changes, effective from April 1, 2026, aim to enhance credit accessibility for smaller borrowers and tackle the issue of increasing Non-performing Assets (NPAs) in the sector. The decision incorporates feedback from the Department of Financial Services (DFS) and stipulates stricter collateral valuation, quicker gold return, and protective measures against misleading advertisements.
- ✓ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has initiated a special scheme promoting original Hindi book writing within the realms of economics, banking, and finance. This offer, providing recognition and financial rewards, is open to UGC-recognised professors, both in-service and retired. Eligible books should be written in Hindi, have a minimum of 20 pages, and be published between 1 April, 2024 and 31 March, 2025. Applications must be submitted by 30 June, 2025.
- ✓ The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has made amendments to its gold loan LTV norms, now permitting a higher loan-to-value ratio of up to 85% for small loans. Effective from 1st April 2026, this initiative is predicted to considerably aid Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs), particularly those with a massive proportion of loans under ₹5 lakh. As per Crisil Ratings, these revised rules provide more lending flexibility and counterbalance new LTV computation regulations that incorporate accrued interest in bullet repayment loans.
- ✓ Major global institutions have released diverging forecasts for India's FY26 GDP growth. The OECD reduced its projection to 6.3% due to potential U.S. tariffs, a weak monsoon, and global trade tensions. Conversely, UBS increased its forecast to 6.4% due to expected support from stronger private consumption, tax relief, and potential RBI rate cuts. Both institutions concurred that public investment and lower interest rates will continue to bolster economic activity, despite the OECD warning of a broader global economic slowdown with growth predicted at just 2.9%.
- ✓ Nomura has adjusted India’s GDP forecast to 6.2%, noting a disparity between robust indicators like GST collections and weaker trends in sectors like automobile sales and bank credit growth. This contrasts with RBI's projection of 6.5%. Despite a careful growth outlook, Nomura has increased its Nifty 50 target to 26,140, expressing confidence in India's macroeconomic resilience. BofA Securities has also reaffirmed a positive long-term view on Indian equities, citing continuous structural reforms and digitisation progress.
- ✓ The World Bank has preserved India's FY26 GDP forecast at 6.3%, keeping it as the fastest-growing major economy globally. The report attributes India's robust services sector, low inflation rates, and the Reserve Bank of India's monetary easing as growth catalysts. Commending India's fiscal discipline, it underlined a medium-term aim to lower the public debt-to-GDP ratio to 50% by FY31. This comes as many world economies are experiencing growth downgrades due to trade conflicts, policy uncertainty, and stagnant investment.
- ✓ India's unemployment rate increased to 5.6% in May 2025, mainly due to a seasonal decrease in rural farm employment post-harvest. The situation has particularly impacted youth and women, with female labour force participation dropping to 27.8%.

This trend highlights existing structural issues with generating sufficient and inclusive employment in rural areas. There has also been a notable rise in urban and rural youth unemployment, indicating the need for concentrated employment creation strategies.

- ✓ Indian Railways has successfully tested its first hydrogen-powered coach at the Integral Coach Factory in Chennai. This part of the "Hydrogen for Heritage" project involves converting diesel power cars into hydrogen fuel cell systems and setting up a hydrogen refuelling station in Haryana. The effort, led by the Research Designs and Standards Organisation (RDSO), aligns with India's strategy to achieve energy independence and become a global hub for green hydrogen production by 2070. Hydrogen fuel, with zero emission energy and high energy density, allows for the decarbonisation of heavy-duty sectors like transportation, steel and cement production.
- ✓ TEMA India, a Mumbai-based company, has inaugurated India's first private heavy water testing facility. The facility will manufacture and test distillation columns to upgrade depleted heavy water, crucial for Pressurised Heavy Water Reactors (PHWRs). Traditionally, this task was handled by the Bhabha Atomic Research Centre (BARC), but shifting to the private sector intends to reduce project timelines by 1-2 years. Heavy water, also known as deuterium oxide, plays a key role in nuclear reactors, acting as a coolant and moderator while requiring 99.9% purity.
- ✓ Kargil Vijay Diwas is celebrated annually on 26th July in India to honour soldiers' bravery in the 1999 Kargil War. In 2025, the Indian Army launched initiatives including an e-shradhanjali portal, a QR code-based audio app sharing war stories, and a new Line of Control (LoC) viewpoint at the Batalik sector. The war began when Pakistani troops occupied strategic heights in Kargil, leading the Indian Army to launch Operation Vijay, with the IAF and Navy launching Operation Safed Sagar and Talwar respectively. Memorials in Dras, Ladakh and Delhi honour the successful operations and major conflicts.
- ✓ India's first Tribal Genome Sequencing Project has been initiated in Gujarat with the aim to map the genetic profile of tribal populations and identify potential genetic health risks such as Sickle Cell Disease and Thalassemia. Managed by the Gujarat Biotechnology Research Centre, the project plans to sequence the genomes of 2,000 individuals from tribal communities across 17 districts. This process of Genome Sequencing, which helps determine the exact order of nucleotide bases in an individual's DNA, can reveal insights into potential disorders and facilitate personalised healthcare.
- ✓ Yakten, a village in Sikkim's Pakyong district, has been declared India's first digital nomad village under the 'Nomad Sikkim' initiative. This program is aimed at fostering sustainable tourism, remote job opportunities, grassroots entrepreneurship, and adheres to the Sikkim CM's "One Family, One Entrepreneur" scheme. The initiative targets the transformation of areas in Sikkim into sustainable hubs for digital professionals, both nationally and internationally, and provides an income for homestay hosts during the off-season. Facilities include high-speed Wi-Fi, eco-friendly practices, and a zero-waste management system.
- ✓ India celebrated National Flag Day on 22nd July 2025, marking the adoption of the Indian National Flag by the Constituent Assembly in 1947. The flag, commonly known as Tiranga, has evolved over years from its first design in 1904 by Sister Nivedita to the present design largely attributed to Pingali Venkayya in 1947. It consists of three horizontal stripes - saffron representing the nation's strength and courage, white signifying purity, truth, and peace, and green symbolising fertility, growth, and prosperity. The Ashoka Chakra, based on the wheel from the Sarnath Lion Capital, signifies justice and the cycle of life.

MEETING AND SUBMITS

National Conference on Good Governance Practices

Introduction and Background

- The National Conference on Good Governance Practices was held in Bhubaneswar, Odisha.
- The event was a joint venture between the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) and the Odisha government.
- The conference aimed to shine a spotlight on governance innovation and evaluate its impact at the grassroots level.

Theme and Major Highlights

- The conference theme was "Good Governance Practices" which entailed discussions around award-winning initiatives under the Prime Minister's Awards for Excellence in Public Administration.
- Innovative digital tools like the Centralised Public Grievance Redressal and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS) and Digital Life Certificate (Jeevan Pramaan) were introduced and discussed having become representative models for innovative governance around the world.

CPGRAMS

- CPGRAMS, launched by the DARPG under the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances & Pensions, is an online platform for lodging grievances related to public service delivery which operates 24x7.
- It extends its services to all central ministries and state departments, providing an option to appeal if the resolver doesn't find resolution satisfactory.
- CPGRAMS, however, does not deal with Right to Information queries, court or sub-judice matters, religious issues, and service-related grievances of

government employees.

Jeevan Pramaan

- Jeevan Pramaan is a biometric-enabled digital service launched in 2014, aimed to simplify life certificate submission for pensioners.
- This service allows pensioners to digitally verify their identity, eliminating the need for physical presence.
- The utilisation of this service ensures constant pension disbursement and mitigates the risk of fraud.
- It is accessible to Central, State, and other government pensioners.
- As an indicator of its broad acceptance, over 10.31 crore digital life certificates have been presented through Jeevan Pramaan since its launch.

2nd BIMSTEC Ports Conclave Hosted by India

Overview and Significance

- India recently hosted the 2nd BIMSTEC Ports Conclave in Visakhapatnam with the aim of strengthening maritime connectivity and promoting sustainable development in the region.
- The BIMSTEC (Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation) Ports Conclave 2025's theme was "Navigating the Future: Blue Economy, Innovation and Sustainable Partnerships."
- This event aligns with India's Sagarmala goals of port-led growth and enhanced connectivity. It bolsters India's leadership potential in Bay of Bengal maritime cooperation and boosts its Indo-Pacific role due to stronger BIMSTEC ties.

Key Outcomes of 2nd BIMSTEC Ports Conclave

- Member countries were advised to ratify and implement the BIMSTEC Agreement on Maritime Transport Cooperation (AMTC), a pact that was signed during the 6th BIMSTEC Summit in Bangkok in 2025.
- The AMTC is designed to stimulate growth in ports, enhance maritime trade and tourism and leverage skill development across BIMSTEC nations.
- The Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project (KMTTP), a critical corridor linking India's Northeast with the Bay of Bengal, was acknowledged during the conclave. This project, developed collectively by India and Myanmar, aids efficient cargo manoeuvres from India's eastern ports to the Northeast via Myanmar.
- The conclave proposed a BIMSTEC Sustainable Maritime Transport Centre to be established in Mumbai under the Indian Ocean Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Maritime Transport (IOCE-SMarT), focusing on policy harmonisation, environment-friendly transition, and digital innovation in the maritime sector.
- The conclave also emphasised the potential for Cruise Tourism, proposing eco-sensitive cruise routes along with Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) led cruise terminals. The intention is to position the Bay of Bengal as a sustainable tourism corridor.

About BIMSTEC

- BIMSTEC is a regional organisation founded on 6th June 1997 through the Bangkok Declaration, aiming to facilitate economic and technical cooperation among Bay of Bengal nations.
- The cooperation group originated as BIST-EC (Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka, Thailand Economic Cooperation), then it was called BIMST-EC after Myanmar joined in 1997. It was eventually renamed BIMSTEC in 2004 after Nepal and Bhutan joined.
- In 2014, the BIMSTEC Secretariat was established in Dhaka, Bangladesh.
- Initially, the sectors of cooperation included trade, technology, energy, transport, tourism, and fisheries. In 2008, these sectors were expanded to comprise agriculture, public health, counter-terrorism, environment, and climate change. These sectors were reorganised in 2021, with each member nation leading in specific areas.
- India leads the Security pillar in BIMSTEC, which includes counter-terrorism, transnational crime, disaster management, and energy.

Chemical Weapons Convention in India

Introduction to the Chemical Weapons Convention

- The Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) is a treaty formed to ban the usage of chemical weapons.
- Under the convention, all chemical weapons must be destroyed within a certain timeframe.
- Since 1997, the CWC has been enforced and observed by the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), of which there are 193 member states.
- Chemical weapons are defined within the convention as any toxic chemical or device that is intended to cause intentional harm or death, this includes munitions and equipment for delivery.
- The CWC also mandates the destruction of old and forgotten chemical weapons and requires its members to declare riot-control agents such as tear gas.

India's Role in the Chemical Weapons Convention

- India, being one of the original signees of the CWC, exercises the convention via the National Authority Chemical Weapons Convention (NACWC).
- The NACWC was founded under the Chemical Weapons Convention Act, 2000.
- The Indian Chemical Council (ICC), as India's oldest chemical industry association, was awarded the OPCW-The Hague Award 2024.
- This is a great honour as the ICC became the first industry body worldwide to receive such a prestigious award.

The 23rd Regional Meeting of the CWC

- Recently, India served as the host for the 23rd Regional Meeting of National Authorities of States Parties in Asia under the CWC.
- This highlights India's pivotal role in ensuring the enforcement of the Chemical Weapons Convention in Asia.

The Global Impact of the OPCW and the CWC

- The OPCW is globally recognised for its efforts to eradicate chemical weapons, earning it the Nobel Peace Prize in 2013.
- The CWC, in addition to the OPCW, plays a significant role in promoting global peace and

security by working towards the complete eradication of chemical weapons.

Overview of the 17th BRICS Summit and the Group's Global Significance

Summary of the 17th BRICS Summit and Key Outcomes

- India's Prime Minister attended the 17th BRICS Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The theme was "Strengthening Global South Cooperation for More Inclusive and Sustainable Governance."
- During the Summit, the signing of the Rio de Janeiro Declaration took place.
- Notable newcomers included Indonesia joining BRICS, with Belarus, Bolivia, Kazakhstan, Cuba, Nigeria, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, Uganda, and Uzbekistan welcomed as BRICS partner countries.
- India is set to assume the chairship of BRICS and host the 18th summit in 2026.
- Key outcomes included BRICS advocating for UN Security Council expansion, the adoption of the Leaders' Framework Declaration on Climate Finance, and advancements in talks on a Cross-Border Payments Initiative.

Understanding BRICS and Its Role in Global Governance

- BRIC was originally coined by British economist Jim O'Neill in 2001 to represent the emerging economies of Brazil, Russia, India, and China, with South Africa added in 2010.
- Iran, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, and Ethiopia joined the group in 2024 while Indonesia joined in 2025.
- The group accounts for 45% of the world's population and 37.3% of global GDP.
- BRICS provides a collective forum for members to advocate for global institutional reforms and acts as a counterbalance to the G7.

Key Challenges in BRICS' Functionality and Potentials

- The absence of a permanent seat or a dedicated secretariat, global alliances, and economic instabilities among members, tend to undermine its institutional framework.
- Despite accounting for over 18% of global trade, intra-BRICS trade is relatively low. Additionally, attempts to create a common BRICS+ currency have been slow.

Strategies for Enhancing BRICS' Institutional Capacity and Leadership

- Institutional reforms such as the establishment of a permanent secretariat and financial integrations like alternative SWIFT systems can enhance its effectiveness.
- Greater geopolitical cooperation, joint R&D in AI and green tech, and cultural exchange programmes can increase BRICS' global influence.

Concluding Remarks on the Future of BRICS

- With institutional reforms and financial integration, BRICS can serve as a significant platform for Global South representation and challenge predominant Western systems.
- India's BRICS chairmanship in 2026 is an opportunity to advance these objectives.

The Sevilla Commitment for Financing Sustainable Development

Understanding the Sevilla Commitment

- The Sevilla Commitment is a comprehensive framework incorporated at the Fourth International Conference on Financing for Development (FfD4) held in Sevilla, Spain.
- Aiming to close the USD 4 trillion annual SDG financing gap, the commitment particularly targets developing countries.
- The key focus includes strengthening domestic resource mobilisation, expanding digital economies and climate resilience while empowering women.
- The Sevilla Commitment targets to align financial flows and policies with economic, social and environmental goals while ensuring debt sustainability.

Evolution of the Financing for Development Process

- The Financing for Development Process has evolved over a series of conferences beginning in 1997 with the UN General Assembly's Agenda for Development.
- This timeline includes the Monterrey Consensus (2002), the Doha Declaration (2008), and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (2015), each providing a milestone in global cooperation for sustainable development finance.

Key Sevilla Platform for Action Initiatives

- Numerous initiatives have been launched for debt management, including the Debt Swaps for Development Hub, Debt-for-Development Swap Programme, and the Pause Clause Alliance.
- Initiatives also include investment strategies such as Coalition for Global Solidarity Levies and the SCALED platform.

Sovereign Debt Challenges in Developing Countries

- Developing countries face massive debt burdens, with many having debt servicing exceeding public spending on crucial sectors such as health and education.
- The overlapping fiscal demands also hinder their overall development.
- High interest rates and limited access to finance increase the problem, particularly for countries most vulnerable to climate change.

Proposed Reforms for Global Financing System

- Several measures should be implemented to ensure an equitable and inclusive global financing system.
- Key proposals include a shift from loans to grants for climate-vulnerable countries, gender-responsive budgeting, and the creation of a sovereign debt workout mechanism.
- The reform of credit rating systems is also crucial to ensure they are transparent, accountable and incorporate climate resilience indicators.
- Priority should be given to investments that support gender equity and social inclusion goals.
- This comprehensive approach taken by the Sevilla Commitment seeks to address the challenges of sustainable development finance present globally, particularly in developing and climate-vulnerable nations. Its initiatives and measures illustrate the evolving and increasingly sophisticated strategies required to ensure economic stability, equality and resilience for all

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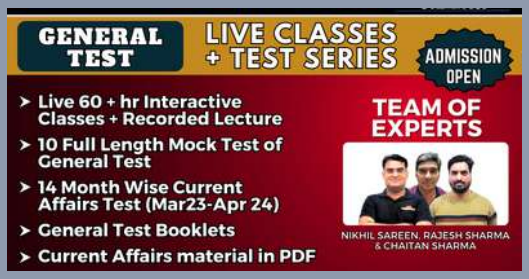

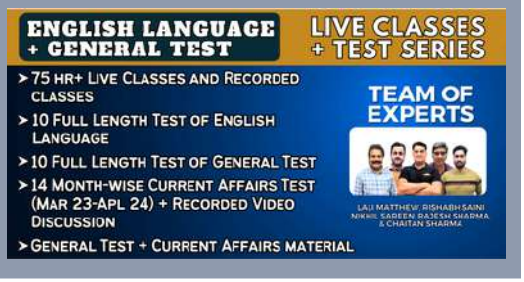

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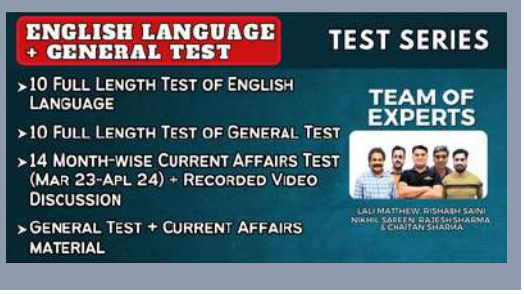

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