

Factly Monthly

Compilation

2026

**For UPSC CSE Prelims
Exam**

February 2026

INDEX

New Country Partnership Framework (NCPF)	5
Buckwheat	5
Key Facts about Latvia.....	7
NPS Swasthya Pension Scheme (NSPS)	8
Orange Economy	9
Moltbook Platform	11
Grain ATMs	12
Cocoa and Cashew Get Budget (2026-27) Boost.....	13
Al-Jawf Region.....	15
Seychelles.....	16
Power Gap Index.....	17
Pradhan Mantri Dakshata Aur Kushalta Sampann Hitgrahi Yojana (PM-DAKSH)	18
Rare Earth Corridors	20
Commission for Social Development (CSocD).....	21
Bharat-VISTAAR.....	22
Project Vault.....	24
Turtle Trail	25
Pakhal Wildlife Sanctuary	26
Exercise KHANJAR XIII	27
Key Facts about Tanzania.....	28
NE-RACE Portal.....	29
Anthropic AI Workplace Suite.....	30
BRICS Centre for Industrial Competencies (BCIC).....	30
Nalsarovar Bird sanctuary	32
FORGE Initiative.....	33
Saltwater Crocodiles.....	34
Devnimori Relics.....	35
Blyth's tragopan	37
Saltwater Crocodile.....	38
'Vayu Shakti 2026' Exercise	40
SaaSpocalypse.....	41
Thwaites Glacier	42
New Marine Worm Species	42
Key facts about Malaysia.....	44

Factly Compilation February 2026

Global Teacher Prize 2026	45
Copernicus Sentinel-2 Mission.....	46
PM CARES, PMNRF, and NDF	47
Key Facts about Eritrea	48
Esports Nations Cup (ENC) 2026	49
SWAVALAMBINI Programme.....	50
Removal of Lok Sabha speaker	51
Mangrove Clam (<i>Geloina erosa</i>)	52
Form 7 Controversy	53
Network Readiness Index Report 2025.....	54
Breach of Privilege Notice	55
New Telescopes NLST, NLOT Planned for Ladakh	56
Continental Mantle Earthquakes.....	57
Corruption Perceptions Index 2025.....	58
BIOFACH 2026	59
India and UK Sign Social Security Agreement for Temporary Employees	61
Consumer Price Index (CPI) with Base 2024=100	61
Right to Recall.....	63
AgriStack.....	64
MHA Guidelines on Vande Mataram	64
Tamil Brahmi Script & Valley of the Kings.....	66
Species Turnover	67
Motions of Parliament.....	68
Tangkhul Hui and Kombai Breeds	70
Bacillus subtilis	71
Combined Maritime Forces (CMF)	72
Urban Challenge Fund	74
PM RAHAT Scheme.....	74
Army Ant Species	75
Novel Oral Polio Vaccine Type 2 (nOPV2).....	75
Monsoon Breaks.....	76
Sangtam Community.....	77
AI Impact Summit 2026.....	78
OI Chiki Script	79
Twin Tube Road-Cum-Rail Tunnel Project.....	80

Factly Compilation February 2026

SAHI and BODH Initiatives	80
Prime-Editing-mediated Readthrough of premature Termination codons (PERT)	81
Exercise MILAN 2026.....	82
Bodhan AI.....	83
United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA)	84
Piton de la Fournaise	84
Privileges Committee.....	85
Pistol Shrimp.....	86
Bharrana Site	86
AI-Preneurs of India.....	87
Malabar Pied Hornbill	88
Rajya Sabha Elections.....	89
Naneghat Caves	90
Municipal Bonds.....	90
Beat the Heat.....	91
VoicERA	92
Vibrant Villages Programme-II (VVP-II).....	92
Himalayan Salamander	93
Tirukkural	94
Bio-AI Mulankur.....	95
Bharat GI	96
International Energy Agency (IEA)	97
Key Facts about Rwanda.....	98
Merchandise Trade Indices.....	99
Taftan volcano	100
Gentoo penguin	100
Takeshima / Dokdo Islands.....	101
Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL)	102
National Monetisation Pipeline 2.0 (NMP 2.0)	103
Kole Wetlands.....	104
PRASHAD scheme	105
Hoysala Dynasty.....	105
New Delhi Declaration on AI Impact	107
C. Rajagopalachari	108
Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccination Programme.....	109

Factly Compilation February 2026

Rapti River	110
Kerala as Keralam	112
Lal Baradari.....	113
Exercise VAJRA PRAHAR.....	113
Exercise 'DHARMA GUARDIAN'	114
SUJVIKA Portal.....	115
Epstein-Barr Viral Infection.....	116
Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC)	117
India's First State Innovation Mission (SIM)	118
Xerocomo	119
Rail Tech Policy, Portal and e-Railway Claims Tribunal.....	119
Hexagon Alliance	121
Indravati River	122
Israel's Multi-layered Defence Against Iranian Missiles.....	122
AI4Agri Summit 2026	124
Blue Nile River	125

New Country Partnership Framework (NCPF)

News: India and the World Bank Group announced a new Country Partnership Framework to support India's next phase of growth aligned with Viksit Bharat.

About New Country Partnership Framework (NCPF)



Figure 1. Source – World Bank

- The New Country Partnership Framework is a strategic partnership **between India and the World Bank Group for the period 2026-2031.**

- **Key aspects of NCPF**

- **Growth and vision alignment:** The framework aims to accelerate India's growth while supporting the national vision of Viksit Bharat.

- **Financing support:** It provides **annual financing of \$8-10 billion over five years** using the World Bank Group's full range of instruments and expertise.
- **Global jobs strategy:** It applies the World Bank Group's global jobs strategy based on physical and human infrastructure, regulatory certainty, and risk-management tools.
- **Priority sectors:** The framework focuses on **infrastructure and energy, agribusiness, healthcare, tourism, and value-added manufacturing to generate jobs at scale.**
- **Private sector-led jobs:** It prioritises job creation by upgrading skills, reducing barriers for small and medium enterprises, and expanding opportunities for youth and women.
- **Strategic outcomes:** It targets rural prosperity and resilience, urban transformation, investment in people, and strengthening energy security, core infrastructure, and climate resilience.

Buckwheat

News: Buckwheat has regained attention due to its promotion with apiculture in Ladakh and its seeds being sent to the International Space Station.

About Buckwheat



Figure 2. Source – Mongabay

- Buckwheat is a **pseudo-cereal seed crop** known for **high nutrition** and its **ability to grow in harsh mountain conditions**.
- **Naming:** The name buckwheat is derived from the **Anglo-Saxon** words *boc* meaning **beech** and *whoet* meaning **wheat**, as its **seeds resemble beech nuts**.
- **Botanical Aspect:** Buckwheat is a **dicot herbaceous plant** belonging to the **Polygonaceae family** and is botanically related to **sorrel and rhubarb**.
- **Varieties:** The **two** main varieties of buckwheat are-
 - **Common buckwheat (*Fagopyrum esculentum*)**
 - **Tartary or Himalayan tartary buckwheat (*Fagopyrum tartaricum*).**
- **Cultivation in India:** Buckwheat is widely grown in **Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Sikkim, and Arunachal Pradesh**, and sporadically in the Nilgiris and Palani hills.
- **Key features**
 - It adapts well to **poor soils, high altitudes, and short growing seasons**.
 - It's an excellent **source of complex carbohydrates that delay digestion**, extend satiety, slow down glucose release and provide sustained energy throughout the day.
 - Additionally, it contains notable amounts of **fibre, protein, vitamins** (B-complex vitamins like niacin, folate, and riboflavin), and **minerals** (magnesium, manganese, and phosphorus).
 - It is a **gluten-free crop with a low glycaemic index**.
- **Uses:** Buckwheat is used as flour in **porridge, pancakes, and noodles**, and its **flour** is a common ingredient in many fasting recipes in India.
- **Significance**
 - **Environmental:** It supports **mountain agriculture and beekeeping** in cold and marginal regions.
 - **Space Agriculture:** **Ladakh-grown** buckwheat seeds are being studied on the **ISS for future space food potential**.

Key Facts about Latvia

News: In Baltic nation of Latvia, the Latvian Environment and Meteorology Centre has reported that country recorded a temperature of -32 degrees Celsius recently.

Key Facts about Latvia



Figure 3. Source – Latvia

- **Location:** Latvia is a country in the **Baltic region of northern Europe**.
- **Boundaries:** It is one of the **three Baltic states**, along with **Estonia to the north** and **Lithuania to the south**.
 - It borders **Russia to the east** and **Belarus to the southeast** and shares a **maritime border with Sweden to the west**.
- **Capital:** **Riga** – the **largest city in the Baltics**.
 - It is famous for its **stunning Art Nouveau (Jugendstil) architecture** and a **UNESCO World Heritage medieval Old Town**.
- **Climate:** Latvia has a **temperate climate**.
- **Rivers:** The **longest river on Latvian territory is the Gauja (452 km)**.
 - The **longest river flowing through Latvian territory is the Daugava**, which has a **total length of 1,005 km** of which **352 km is on Latvian territory**.
- **Peaks:** Latvia's highest point is **Gaiziņkalns, 311.6 m (1,022 ft)**.
- **Coastlines:** The length of Latvia's **Baltic coastline is 494 km**.
 - An **inlet of the Baltic Sea**, the shallow **Gulf of Riga** is situated in the northwest of the country.
- **Political System:** It is a **parliamentary republic**. The head of state is the **President**, and the **government is led by the Prime Minister**.
- **Independence:** Latvia **first** declared independence in **1918**.
 - It was forcibly incorporated into the **Soviet Union from 1940-1941** and **1944-1991**.

- It restored its **independence in 1991** after the “**Singing Revolution**” and the peaceful **Baltic Way protest**.
- It is a member of:
 - European Union
 - Eurozone
 - NATO
 - The Council of Europe
 - The United Nations
 - The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
- **Traditions:** Rich folklore, with over 1.2 million folk songs (Dainas), celebrating nature, life cycles, and mythology. Midsummer’s Eve (Jāņi) is the most important annual celebration.

NPS Swasthya Pension Scheme (NSPS)

News: PFRDA launches **NPS Swasthya Pension Scheme (NSPS)** on Pilot Basis under its **Regulatory Sandbox Framework** to integrate **healthcare financing** with **pension savings** under the National Pension System (NPS).

About NPS Swasthya Pension Scheme (NSPS)



Source – PIB

- **Nature:** Sector-specific **contributory scheme** under the **Multiple Scheme Framework (MSF)** of NPS
- **Coverage:** Designed to meet **out-patient (OPD) and in-patient medical expenses**
- **Eligibility:** Open to **all Indian citizens** on a **voluntary basis**
- **Implementation:** Launched by **Pension Funds (PFs)** with prior PFRDA approval

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- **Pilot Mode:** Limited duration with **restricted number of subscribers** (Proof of Concept – PoC)

Key Features of National Pension System (NPS)

- **Mandatory Requirement:** Subscriber must have a **Common Scheme Account under NPS**
- **Contributions:**
 - Subscribers can contribute **any amount** as per existing NPS (non-government) norms
 - Subscribers **above 40 years** (excluding government employees) may transfer **up to 30%** of their corpus from the Common Scheme Account to NSPS
- **Withdrawals for Medical Needs:**
 - **Partial withdrawal up to 25%** of own contributions for medical expenses
 - **No cap on number of withdrawals**, subject to a **minimum corpus of ₹50,000**
 - In **critical in-patient cases**, if expenses exceed **70% of corpus**, **100% premature withdrawal** is permitted
- **Relaxed Norms:** Certain provisions of **PFRDA (Exits and Withdrawals under NPS) Regulations, 2015** have been relaxed for the pilot
- **Claim Settlement & Safeguards**
 - Withdrawn amounts are paid **directly to Health Benefit Administrators (HBA), TPAs, or hospitals** against valid claims
 - **Unutilised balance**, if any, is transferred back to the subscriber's **Common Scheme Account**
- **Institutional Collaboration**
 - Pension Funds may collaborate with **FinTech companies and health service administrators** for effective implementation

Orange Economy

News: India's creative industry found mention in Union Finance Budget speech, as she announced plans to boost the country's 'orange economy'.

About Orange Economy



Source – Times Now

- It is also known as the **creative economy**.
- It is the **knowledge-based economic activities** upon which the ‘creative industries’ are based.
- It is a **production model** where **goods and services have intellectual value** because they are the product of the **ideas and expertise** of their creators.
- The **United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD)** defines it as an **evolving concept** which builds on the **interplay between human creativity and ideas and intellectual property, knowledge and technology**.
 - The **first mandate on creative economies** came from the **UNCTAD XI’s outcome document – the Sao Paulo consensus – in 2004**.
- **Creative Industries under Orange Economy**
 - Advertising, architecture, arts and crafts, design, fashion, film, video, photography, music, performing arts, publishing, research & development, software, computer games, electronic publishing, and TV/radio
- People **conceptualize and arrange this work**, the **produce and/or publish** it and **get paid** for it.
- This is **no different** from other production processes, **except** that the major input stems from original or copyrightable intellectual property (IP).
- According to **United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)**, the Orange Economy accounts for **3% of global gross domestic product (GDP)** and **30 million jobs worldwide**.

India’s Orange Economy

- India’s **Animation, Visual Effects, Gaming and Comics (AVGC) sector** is a growing industry projected to **require two million professionals by 2030**.

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- Economic Survey 2025-26 has stated that **revenue from gaming in 2024** was around **Rs 232 billion**, while **animation and VFX amounted** to around **Rs 103 billion**.
- **Live entertainment** accounted for **more than Rs 100 billion in 2024**, with strong spillovers to **tourism and urban services**.
- **Budget 2026-27:** Union government has proposed to **support the Indian Institute of Creative Technologies, Mumbai**, in setting up **AVGC content creator labs in 15,000 secondary schools** all over the country and **500 colleges**.

Moltbook Platform

News: Moltbook is in the news because it has drawn attention to autonomous communication among AI agents on a public platform without direct human participation.

About Moltbook Platform



Figure 4. Source – NDTV

- Moltbook is an **online platform** where artificial intelligence agents interact with one another in a shared digital environment without human users.
- **Launched by:** Moltbook was launched in **January 2026 by developer Matt Schlicht**.
- **Working mechanism**
 - **Only autonomous AI agents** are permitted to register, post, comment, and upvote content on the platform, while humans are limited to observing interactions.
 - After a human owner connects an AI agent to Moltbook, the agent operates independently using APIs and programmed behaviour without continuous human input.
- **Key features**
 - **Platform Structure:** It follows a Reddit-like structure with topic-based communities known as submolts, which are created and managed by AI agents.
 - **Discussion Scope:** AI agents exchange views on technical and philosophical topics based on their training data and interaction patterns.

- **Adaptive Interaction:** Agents modify their responses over time by remixing ideas from discussions, resulting in debate-like conversation threads.
- **Concern:** Security concerns exist because autonomous AI agents connected through APIs and external services may face vulnerabilities that could expose credentials or private information if safeguards are not enforced.

Grain ATMs

News: Some beneficiaries of the Public Distribution System (PDS) in Bihar will soon be able to procure grains from machines dubbed “grain ATMs” or Annapurti.

About Grain ATMs

HOW IT WORKS

- Beneficiary has to enter his/her Aadhaar card or ration card details on the machine that has a touchscreen attached to it
- On authentication, the food grain will get filled in bags kept under the machine

- A grain ATM or Annapurti (meaning “provider of grain”) is an **automated machine** that dispenses food grains (wheat and/or rice).

- **Developed by:** World Food Programme (WFP) has developed the technology and **has worked in collaboration with the Food Corporation of India and various state governments.**

- **Aim:** To enhance food

security in the state by ensuring that PDS beneficiaries **can access their rations at any time, reducing the need for long waits and manual distribution issues.**

- **Features:**

- It can **release 50 kg of grain in five minutes.**
- It can **work 24×7 like ATMs.**
- It is **designed to consume only 0.6 watts per hour and can be powered through solar energy.**
- It also **requires internet connectivity** to access the PDS database and **the individual profile of a Below Poverty Line (BPL) cardholder.**

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● **Working of the Grain ATM:**

- Once a PDS beneficiary swipes their **beneficiary or grain ATM card** on a PoS machine, linked to the ration card or to their Aadhar card.
- The beneficiary is **asked to select the grain option and its quantity.**
- They **must also undergo Aadhar-based biometric authentication.**
- The **maximum limit of grain disbursement** is also **specified.**
- Once the grain is dispensed, the beneficiary's PDS data is updated, and a slip is also issued for confirmation and as a physical record.

Cocoa and Cashew Get Budget (2026-27) Boost

News: The Union Budget 2026-27 has also proposed a dedicated programme for Indian cashew and cocoa.



Source – Kisan India

About Cocoa

About	Cocoa is an important commercial plantation crop, native to Amazon basin of South America.
Zone	Cocoa grows best in tropical regions between 20° North and 20° South latitude.
Altitude	Cocoa is grown from sea level up to about 500 metres above sea level.
Rainfall	Minimum rainfall: 90-100 mm per month
Temperature	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Cocoa grows well within a temperature range of 15°C to 39°C.● Optimum temperature: Around 25°C.

Soil	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Cocoa grows well in clay loam and sandy loam soils. ● Cocoa can grow in soils with a pH range of 4.5 to 8.0, with an optimum range of 6.5 to 7.0. ● Cocoa requires deep and well-drained soil for proper root development.
Shed Requirement	Cocoa plants require shade during the early stages of growth . Young cocoa plants grow best with about 50% sunlight .

Cocoa Production in India and World

- **Cocoa cultivating states in India:** Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Andhra Pradesh, where it is grown **mostly as an intercrop with coconut and arecanut**.
- **Production in India:** Cocoa production in India is currently estimated at around **25,000 to 30,000 tonnes per year**, which is much lower than the domestic demand of about **1.5 lakh tonnes**.
- **Top export destinations of India:** UAE, Netherlands, Japan, Saudi Arabia.
- **Main cocoa producing countries:** Ivory Coast, Ghana, Indonesia, Brazil, Nigeria, Cameroon and Malaysia.

About Cashew

About	Cashew is a cash crop, native to Brazil in Latin America.
Soil	Cashew grows best in well-drained, deep sandy loam soils, though all soils ranging from sandy to laterite are also suitable.
Temperature & Humidity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● 20 to 38 degree celsius, with relative humidity between 60% and 95%. ● Extremely low temperatures and frost are harmful to cashew cultivation.
Altitude	It grows from sea level to an altitude of 1,000 m.
Rainfall	2000 to 3500 mm

Cashew Production in India and World

- **Cashew Producing states in India:** Andhra Pradesh, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala, Maharashtra, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Gujarat and West Bengal.
- **Emerging producing states:** North-Eastern states and parts of Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand.
- **Production:** India stands as the **second largest producer of cashew in the world**.
 - India's **annual raw cashew nut (RCN) production** is around **0.7 million tonnes (0.7 mt)**.

- **Main Cashew producing countries:** India, Vietnam, Côte d'Ivoire, Guinea-Bissau, Tanzania, Benin, Brazil and other countries in East and West Central Africa and South East Asia.
- **Production:** World production of cashews currently **ranges between 720,000 and 790,000 metric tons (kernel basis) per year.**
 - **India, with 170,000-195,000 MT of annual production,** ranks first, followed by Côte d'Ivoire, Vietnam and Tanzania averaging 149,000; 82,000 and 53,000 MT, respectively.

Al-Jawf Region

News: Al-Jawf region in Saudi Arabia witnessed unusual heavy snowfall and rainfall, covering parts of its desert landscape in white.

About Al-Jawf Region



Figure 6. Source – Govt. of Saudi Arabia

- Al-Jawf Region is a **province in northern Saudi Arabia** and is among the **earliest inhabited regions of the Arabian Peninsula.**
- **Location:** Al-Jawf is located in the **northern part of Saudi Arabia.**
- **Borders:** It borders **Jordan and Iraq,** and is **part of the Arabian Desert.**
- **Climate:** The region is typically **arid,** with **hot summers and mild winters,** characterized by vast stretches of **sandy terrain.**
- **Geographical features**
 - The region contains **large lava fields such as Harrat al-Harrat** and several mountains, including Jabal Touqa.
 - The **Great Nafud Desert** extends across the region and covers a very large area.
 - **Sirhan Valley** is the most important valley and supports agricultural activity in the region.
 - **Dumat al-Jandal Lake** is a major physical feature located above sea level.

- **Cultural Significance:** Al-Jawf has historical and archaeological importance, with **ancient sites such as Al-Rajajil** and ruins from past civilizations, highlighting its long history of human settlement.

Seychelles

News: Seychelles President Dr. Patrick Herminie will be on a state visit to India from February 5 to 10 at the invitation of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Key Facts about Seychelles



Figure 7. Source – World Atlas

- Seychelles is an **island country** located in the **western Indian Ocean, northeast of Madagascar and east of mainland Africa.**
- **Total area:** 446 km²
- **Capital:** Victoria on Mahe
- The country **consists of an archipelago of 115 islands** (only 8 are permanently **inhabited**).
- **Island groups:** It consists of **two Island groups – Inner Island and outer island groups.**
 - **Seychelles Inner Islands:** It is also known as the Mahé group of Island and **consists of 45 islands.**
 - The largest are **Mahé, Praslin, La Digue and Silhouette Island.**
 - They are **surrounded by coral reefs and have narrow coastlines and ranges of hills.**
 - **Morne Seychellois** is the **highest peak of the archipelago.**
 - **Seychelles Outer Islands:** The Seychelles Outer Islands are a **chain of coral atolls**, such as the **Amirante and Alphonse Islands.** They are **mostly uninhabited.**
- **Flora:** Seychelles has a unique variety of plants such as **Coco de Mer palm, which produces the largest seed in the world and grows only in Seychelles.**
 - The islands also have **mangroves, orchids, fruit trees, and many native plants.**

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- **Fauna:** It is home to many rare animals such as **Seychelles sheath-tailed bat**, **giant Aldabra tortoises**, **Gardiner's frog**, and birds such as the **Seychelles Paradise Flycatcher**, **Magpie Robin**, and **Blue Pigeon**.
- **UNESCO World Heritage Sites:** The **Vallée de Mai on Praslin** with its rare coco-de-mer nuts and the **Aldabra Atoll**, the largest uplifted coral atoll in the world.

Power Gap Index

News: Economic survey 2025-26 has cited data from the Power Gap Index to explain how India is a victim of geopolitics and a strategic power gap and is operating below its full strategic potential.

About Power Gap Index



RANK	TREND	COUNTRY/TERRITORY	COMPREHENSIVE POWER	EXPECTED POWER	POWER GAP
19	↘	SRI LANKA	7.8	10.6	-2.9
20	↘	NEPAL	5.0	8.2	-3.2
21	↘	MONGOLIA	6.0	9.2	-3.2
22	↘	PAPUA NEW GUINEA	4.6	7.9	-3.3
23	—	TAIWAN	15.7	19.5	-3.7
24	—	PAKISTAN	14.5	18.3	-3.8
25	—	INDIA	40.0	44.0	-4.0
26	↗	RUSSIA	32.1	38.9	-6.8
27	↘	NORTH KOREA	12.8	21.0	-8.2

Source: Indian Express

- It is a secondary analysis **derived from the Asia Power Index**.
- **Released by:** Australia-based Lowy Institute.
- It reveals the **difference between a country's expected influence, based on its resources, and its actual influence in the region**.
- This insight also helps analysts and policymakers assess how effectively a country converts that strength into regional influence.
- **What does positive power gap shows:** A positive Power Gap score means a country exerts more influence than its resources would predict. It suggests effective conversion of resources into influence through diplomacy, alliances and economic statecraft.

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- **What does negative power gap shows:** A negative Power Gap score indicates underperformance. It highlights a disconnect, where a country possesses significant capabilities but is not leveraging them fully in geopolitics.
- **How the Power Gap Index is calculated:** It consists of eight measures of power, 30 thematic sub-measures and 131 indicators.
 - The Index scores 27 countries' comprehensive power using a weighted average across eight thematic measures.
 - The **eight measures of power**, consists of **four resource measures**, which look at what countries have, and **four influence measures**, which look at what countries do with what they have.
 - These are combined into a weighted score out of 100.
 - It is then derived by comparing this overall power score with an expected score based solely on a country's resource base.
- **Findings of the Index**
 - The Index shows that **India is not fully utilizing its strategic potential**.
 - India has a **Power Gap score of -4.0**, the lowest in Asia (excluding Russia and North Korea), indicating a gap between its capabilities and actual influence.
 - **Japan has a Power Gap score of 11.3**, which reflects its position as a **"smart power."** Japan effectively uses limited resources to achieve strong **diplomatic, economic, and cultural influence** in the region.
 - North Korea has a **Power Gap score of -8.2**. It derives most of its power from its **military strength and nuclear weapons**. However, its **diplomatic and economic isolation** limits its regional influence.
 - Many **developing countries** show **influence shortfalls**. This reflects **unrealized potential** and **internal constraints** that prevent them from projecting power internationally.

Pradhan Mantri Dakshata Aur Kushalta Sampann Hitgrahi Yojana (PM-DAKSH)

News: The Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment provided updated information on PM-DAKSH implementation, outcomes, and its merger with PMKVY.

About Pradhan Mantri Dakshata Aur Kushalta Sampann Hitgrahi Yojana (PM-DAKSH)

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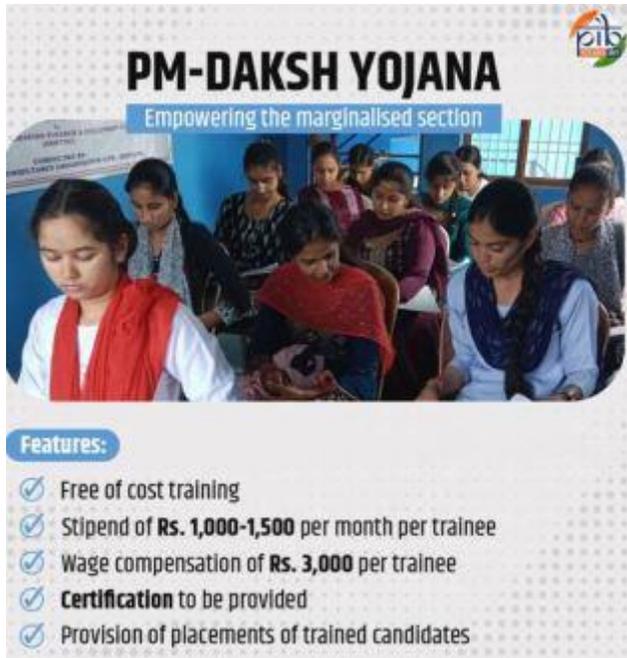


Figure 8. Source – PIB

- PM-DAKSH is a **National Action Plan** for **skilling marginalized persons, including SCs, OBCs, EBCs, DNTs, and sanitation workers** such as waste pickers.
- **Objective:** The objective of PM-DAKSH is to **enhance skill levels of target groups** and support them in wage or self-employment for socio-economic development.
- It follows a multi-pronged strategy to **improve skills for wage and self-employment** by supporting **artisans, women, and youth for socio-economic development.**
- **Type of scheme:** It is a **Central Sector** scheme.
- **Launched by:** The scheme was launched by the **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment in 2020-21.**
- **The scheme is implemented through:**
 - National Scheduled Castes Finance and Development Corporation (**NSFDC**) for **SCs.**
 - National Backward Classes Finance and Development Corporation (**NBCFDC**) for **OBC, EWS and DNTs.**
 - National Safai Karamcharis Finance and Development Corporation (**NSKFDC**) for **Safai Karamcharis.**
- **Key features of PM-DAKSH**
 - The scheme provides **skill training to Indian citizens aged 18 to 45 years.**
 - There are **four types of skill development training programmes** under PM-DAKSH Yojanaviz –
 - Up-skilling/Re-skilling
 - Short Term Training Programmes
 - Long Term Training Programmes
 - Entrepreneurship Development Programme.

- **Present status:** From 2024–25 onwards, PM-DAKSH has been merged with the [Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana \(PMKVY\)](#) of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship.

Rare Earth Corridors

News: The Union Budget 2026–27 announced Dedicated Rare Earth Corridors to complement the REPM scheme and strengthen domestic rare earth capabilities.

About Rare Earth Corridors



Figure 9. Source – IE

- Rare Earth Corridors are **integrated, state-anchored industrial value chains** linking **mining, processing, research, and manufacturing of rare earths**.
- **Target States:** The Dedicated Rare Earth Corridors will be established in the mineral-rich states of –
 - Odisha
 - Kerala
 - Andhra Pradesh
 - Tamil Nadu
- **Focus on:** The corridors focus on **mining, processing, research, and manufacturing**, using the **mineral-rich base of coastal states** with beach sand minerals.
- **Aim:** The initiative **aims** to build a domestic rare earth value chain, support clean energy transition, and operationalise the **National Critical Minerals Mission at the state level**.
- **Principal Source:** **Monazite-bearing beach sands** are the principal source of rare earths in India and are present in the identified coastal states.
- **Key features**
 - **Integrated corridor approach:** Mining, separation, processing, research, and manufacturing facilities are co-located to reduce logistics and technology gaps.
 - **State-led execution:** The initiative promotes state-level value addition and industrial clustering beyond national-level policy focus.

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- **Linkage with incentives:** The corridors align with the Sintered **Rare Earth Permanent Magnet (REPM) scheme** and sales-linked incentives for integrated manufacturing units.
- These corridors **directly complement** the existing presence of **IREL (India) Limited** in Odisha and Kerala.
- **Significance**
 - The Rare Earth Corridors promote **self-reliance** by reducing import dependence on China, enhance **strategic resource security**, and strengthen **national security and defence preparedness**.
 - They support the **clean energy transition** and **Net Zero 2070** goals, while reinforcing **policy and institutional reforms** under the **Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act (MMDR Act, amended in 2023)** and the **National Critical Minerals Mission**.

About IREL (India) Limited

- IREL (India) Limited, formerly **Indian Rare Earths Limited**, has **operated under the Department of Atomic Energy since 1963**.
- With a processing capacity of 10 lakh tonnes, it **produces strategic ilmenite, rutile, zircon, sillimanite, and garnet**.
- It runs **extraction in Odisha and a refining unit at Aluva, Kerala**.

Commission for Social Development (CSocD)

News: India reaffirmed its commitment to inclusive social development at the **64th Session of the Commission for Social Development**, held with participation of over 100 UN member states.

About Commission for Social Development (CSocD)



Source – ECOSOC

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- The Commission for Social Development is a **functional commission** of the **United Nations Economic and Social Council (UN-ECOSOC)**.
- It **advises the United Nations and member states** on social development policies from a global perspective.
- It is **one of the six principal organs of the UN**, which was **established by the UN Charter (1945)**.
- **Establishment:** The Commission was established in **1946** by an **ECOSOC resolution**.
- It was **originally called the Social Commission** and was renamed the Commission for Social Development in **1966**.
- **Functions:** The Commission provides policy advice on social development issues.
 - Since the **1995 Copenhagen World Summit**, it has been responsible for **following up and implementing the Copenhagen Declaration and Programme of Action**.
- **Members:** The Commission has **46 members**.
 - Members are **elected by ECOSOC** for **four-year terms** based on equitable geographical distribution.
- **Headquarter :** The Commission meets every year at the **United Nations Headquarters in New York**, usually in February.
- **India's Leadership**
 - India chaired the **62nd Session (2024)** for the **first time since 1975**, led by Ambassador Ruchira Kamboj.

Bharat-VISTAAR

News: The Union budget proposes 'Bharat-VISTAAR'(Virtually Integrated System to Access Agricultural Resources) and the ICAR package on agricultural practices with AI systems.

About Bharat-VISTAAR



Source: PIB

- **Bharat-VISTAAR** stands for **Virtually Integrated System to Access Agricultural Resources**.
- It is a **multilingual, AI-powered digital platform** designed specifically to support Indian farmers.
- **Core Objective:** To **improve farm productivity**, enhance decision-making, and reduce risks through intelligent advisory services.
- The platform strengthens India's **Digital Agriculture Mission** and supports the objectives of the national AI Mission.
- **Integration of Existing Systems:** Bharat-VISTAAR **will integrate AgriStack portals, ICAR's agricultural practice packages, and advanced AI systems** to provide unified agricultural information.
- **Features:**
 - **Multilingual Access:** Bharat-VISTAAR **will be available in multiple Indian languages** to ensure easy access for farmers across different regions.
 - **Personalized Advisory Support:** The platform will offer **customized recommendations to farmers** based on crop type, soil condition, weather patterns, market trends, and regional farming practices.

- **Enhanced Decision-Making:** Through AI-based data analysis, **the system will help farmers make informed decisions regarding crop selection**, irrigation, fertilizer use, pest control, and harvesting time.
- **Risk Reduction:** By using predictive analytics and real-time information, **Bharat-VISTAAR aims to reduce crop failures, minimize financial losses, and improve climate resilience.**
- **Technology-Driven Farming:** The initiative **promotes data-driven and precision agriculture** by encouraging the use of modern digital technologies in farming.
- **Support to Small and Marginal Farmers:** Bharat-VISTAAR **focuses on empowering small and marginal farmers** by providing them with access to advanced digital advisory tools.

Project Vault

News: The United States announced Project Vault to build a critical minerals stockpile to reduce dependence on China and manage supply disruptions.

About Project Vault



Figure 10. Source – The White House

- Project Vault is a **public-private partnership** created to **buy and store critical minerals and rare earth elements.**
- **Announced by:** The initiative was **announced by** the President of the United States, **Donald Trump.**
- **Objectives:** To establish a **Strategic Critical Minerals Reserve**, to ensure that American businesses and workers are not harmed by shortages of critical minerals.
- **Funding:** Project Vault will **combine \$1.67 billion in private seed funding with \$10 billion from the US Export-Import Bank.**
- **Target Minerals:** Focuses on essential materials for defense, tech, and green energy sectors, including **gallium, cobalt, lithium, and rare earth elements.**
- **Key features**

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- **Stockpiling mechanism:** Companies commit to future purchases at fixed prices and pay upfront fees, after which Project Vault buys and stores required minerals.
- **Access and replacement rule:** Companies can use stored minerals if they replace them, and can fully access stockpiles during major supply disruptions.
- **Price stability measure:** Firms must repurchase the same quantity later at the same price to help reduce market price volatility.
- **Strategic Significance:** Part of the “America First” strategy to reduce heavy dependence on China, which currently dominates 80–90% of global mineral refining.

Turtle Trail

News: The Union Budget 2026 proposes the development of turtle trails along key nesting sites in the coastal areas of Odisha, Karnataka, and Kerala.

About Turtle Trail



Figure 11. Source – PIB

- Creation of Turtle trail aims to protect endangered sea turtles and generate new livelihood opportunities for local communities dependent on coastal ecosystems.
 - **Developed at:** It will be developed along key nesting sites in the coastal areas of Odisha (Gahirmatha and Rushikulya), Karnataka and Kerala. These regions are critical habitats for the Olive Ridley turtles, known for arribadas.
 - **Note:** Mass nesting or arribada of endangered Olive Ridley sea turtles is recorded only along India, Costa Rica and some handful of beaches in the world.
- **Key features:**
 - **Controlled and supervised anthropogenic activities** in turtle nesting sites.
 - **Local communities, fishermen, and volunteers are actively involved** in monitoring and protecting turtle nesting sites.

- Awareness and education programs are conducted to inform the public about the importance of turtle conservation.
- Artificial lighting along the coast is regulated to prevent hatchlings from becoming disoriented.
- Issues related to development of Turtle trail: Unregulated tourism, artificial lighting, noise, mining and construction near beaches can disturb nesting turtles and hatchlings.

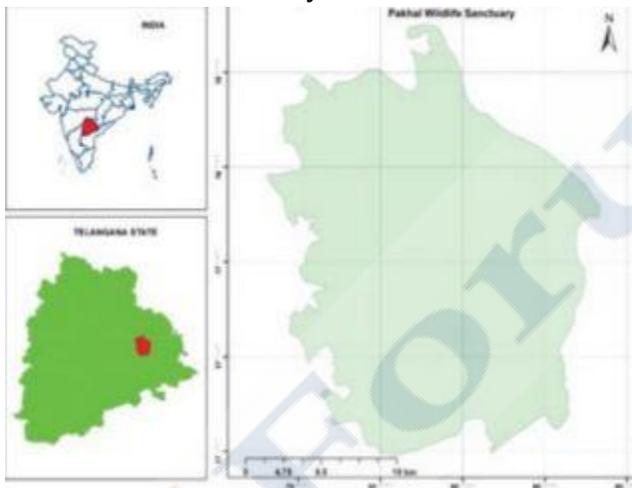
Read more: [Olive Redly Turtle](#)

Pakhal Wildlife Sanctuary

News: Scientists from the Botanical Survey of India (BSI) have identified a new species of flowering plant in Pakhal Wildlife Sanctuary.

About

Pakhal Wildlife Sanctuary



Pakhal Wildlife Sanctuary map

Figure 12. Source – BSI

- **Location:** It is situated in **Warangal district of Telangana.**
- It was declared a sanctuary in **1952.**
- **Area:** Approximately 839 square kilometres
- It is **home to Pakhal Lake**, which was **constructed in 1213 AD** on the orders of King **Ganapati Deva of the Kakatiya dynasty.**
- **Vegetation:** The sanctuary is characterized by **mixed deciduous forests.**
- **Flora:** The vegetation mainly includes **bamboo and teak, along with a wide variety of plant species such as Terminalia, Pterocarpus, and Mahua.** It also supports numerous herbs, shrubs, and climbers.
- **Fauna:** **Leopard, wild boar, panther, hyena, sloth bear, chital, mountain gazelle, blackbuck, crocodile,** etc are found here.
 - Reptiles like the **python, cobra, russell's viper, common krait, monitor lizard, Indian chameleon,** and occasionally, **marsh crocodiles** are also found here.

About *Dicliptera pakhalica*

- **Floral species name:** *Dicliptera pakhalica*
- **Family:** Acanthaceae
- The **genus *Dicliptera* is one of the most species-rich within the Acanthaceae family**, with more than 220 species distributed across tropical and subtropical regions worldwide.
- **Features:** It has **spiny (echinate) seeds**, an **obovoid-shaped fruit capsule**, a **stem with downward-pointing (adpressed deflexed) hairs**, and the **absence of glandular hairs on its fruit and floral parts**.
 - It **flowers between November and January**, with fruiting extending from December to March.

Exercise KHANJAR XIII

News: The thirteenth edition of Exercise KHANJAR has begun at Misamari in Assam, involving Special Forces from India and Kyrgyzstan.

About Exercise KHANJAR XIII



Figure 13. Source – BSI

Source – AIR

- Exercise KHANJAR XIII is a **joint military exercise** conducted **between India and Kyrgyzstan** to enhance Special Forces cooperation.
- **First edition:** India and Kyrgyzstan have been conducting this exercise **annually since 2011** with **venues alternating between both countries**.
- **Held at:** The exercise is being held **at Misamari in the Sonitpur district of Assam**.

- **Objective:** The objective is to enhance interoperability for joint operations in **urban warfare and counter-terrorism under a United Nations mandate.**
- **Participating forces:** **India's elite Parachute Regiment** and **Kyrgyzstan's Scorpion Brigade** are participating in the exercise.
- **Key Features**
 - The forces will practice sniping, room intervention, and building clearance operations.
 - Training will also include mountain craft and specialized counter-terrorism drills.

Key Facts about Tanzania

News: India and Tanzania held the fourth meeting of the Joint Defence Cooperation Committee (JDCC) in Zanzibar from February 2 to 3 to further strengthen bilateral ties.

Key Facts about Tanzania



Figure 14. Source: World Atlas

- **Location:** It is located in East Africa.
- **Bordering Nations:** It is bordered by seven countries: the **Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, Kenya, Uganda, Mali, Mozambique, and Rwanda.**
 - The **eastern border** of Tanzania meets the **Indian Ocean.**
- **Capital:** Dar es Salaam
- **Official Language:** Swahili and English
- **Geography:** The **East African Rift Valley** is a **major physical feature** that **runs through** Tanzania.
 - It is **divided** into the **Eastern Rift and the Western Rift.**
 - The **Eastern Rift** includes **Mount Kilimanjaro, the highest mountain in Africa.**
- **Major Lake:** Tanzania has shorelines along **three major African Great Lakes: Lake Victoria, Lake Tanganyika (western rift), and Lake Nyassa.**
- **Major River:** Ruvuma, Rufiji, Wami, and Pangani
- **Major Islands:** **Zanzibar, Pemba, and Mafia** located off the eastern coast in the Indian Ocean.

- **Conservation reserves:** The country is home to famous wildlife areas such as **Serengeti National Park and Ngorongoro Crater.**
- **Zanzibar's Stone Town is a UNESCO World Heritage Site** and is a major tourist attraction.

NE-RACE Portal

News: The NE-RACE portal, launched to strengthen market linkages for farmers of the North Eastern Region (NER), has facilitated agri-trade worth ₹895.56 lakh as of January 2026.

About NE-RACE



Figure 15. Source: nerace.in

- **NE-RACE is a digital agri-marketing platform** that connects **farmers, FPOs, SHGs and cooperatives** of the North Eastern Region with **buyers across India and abroad.**
- It enables **direct buyer-seller linkages** and reduces intermediaries.
- **Key Features**
 - It supports **Farm-to-Business (F2B)** marketing of agri and horticultural products.
 - It provides **buyer-seller matchmaking**, logistics guidance and digital traceability.
 - It is equipped with a **multi-lingual helpdesk** and field-level support.
 - It supports **seven languages** to improve farmer onboarding and accessibility.
- **Products Covered**
 - **Spices, fruits and vegetables**, including region-specific products like **Kiwi, Black Rice and Ginger.**
 - It focus on **high-value horticultural produce** of the North East.
- **Implementing Agencies**
 - **Developed by:** North Eastern Council (NEC)
 - **Managed by:** North Eastern Development Finance Corporation (NEDFi)

Anthropic AI Workplace Suite

News: Global technology stocks declined sharply after Anthropic launched its AI-powered workplace automation suite. It raised concerns that AI may replace, rather than support, traditional software and IT services.

About Anthropic AI Workplace Suite



Figure 16. Source: TOI

- It is a **set of autonomous, AI agent-based tools** for enterprise automation.
- **Developed by:** Anthropic
- The suite **operates through Claude Cowork agents** powered by the **Claude AI model**.

● Features:

- It is designed to **autonomously handle complex, multi-step professional work**.
- It can **directly perform tasks that previously required human workers** to use platforms like Salesforce or ServiceNow.
- It reduces **dependence on human workers and conventional SaaS tools**.
- It **bundles domain-specific skills, connectors to tools** and sub-agents for multi-step workflows.
- **Multiple plug-ins: 11 new plugins** for productivity, product management, marketing, legal, finance, research, and data analysis to automate and streamline work.

BRICS Centre for Industrial Competencies (BCIC)

News: India has joined the BRICS Centre for Industrial Competencies (BCIC) to provide integrated support services to manufacturing companies and Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises across BRICS countries.

About BRICS Centre for Industrial Competencies (BCIC)



Source: PIB

- It was initiated in collaboration with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).
 - **Note:** UNIDO is a specialized United Nations agency with a unique mandate to promote inclusive and sustainable industrial development.
- It is a **one-stop networking hub** for manufacturing companies in BRICS Plus countries.
- **Objective:** It focuses on BRICS Plus countries to make **transition into 'Factories of the Future'**, **expand internationally, and adopt sustainable practices.**
- **Vision:**
 - To **become the BRICS-driven technology marketplace** for small and medium-sized enterprises,
 - To **promote market access and business internationalization**
 - To **provide scalable solutions** which can be adopted throughout BRICS and other partner countries.
 - **The centre focuses on developing Industry 4.0 competencies.**
- **Members:** Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Iran, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Egypt, Ethiopia and Indonesia.
- **Partners:** Partners include smart manufacturing centres, digital excellence hubs, business support organizations, export agencies, chambers of commerce, universities, research institutions, business incubators and other specialized entities.

- **Nodal Agency in India:** The National Productivity Council (NPC) has been designated as the India Centre for BRICS Industrial Competencies.

Nalsarovar Bird sanctuary

News: Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary has recorded more than five lakh birds from over 200 species in its latest census, showing a significant 21% increase from 4.12 lakh in 2024.

About Nalsarovar Bird Sanctuary

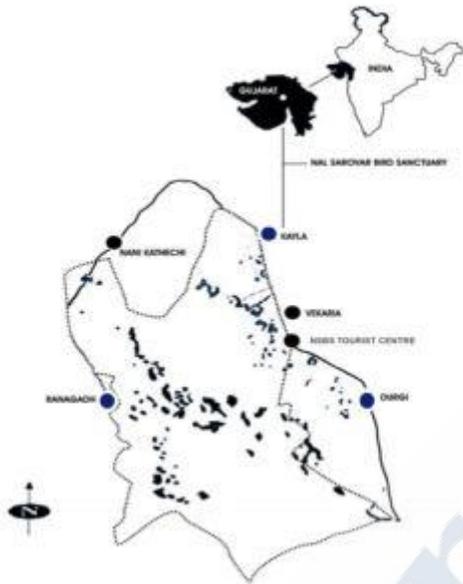


Figure 17. Source – Research Gate

- **Location:** Located to the west of Ahmedabad near Sanand village, Gujarat.
- It is a natural lake with shallow waters and muddy lagoons, dotted by 360 islets.
- **River associated:** Nalsarovar Lake is situated across the **Sabarmati River**.
- It was **declared as a Ramsar site in 2012**.
- **Flora:** The sanctuary has **48 species of algae and 72 species of flowering plants**.
 - The locally famous 'pilu' trees which harbour a red berry type edible fruit are also found here.
- The **common aquatic plants** found here are **Cyperus sp., Scirpus sp., Typha unguistata, Eleocharis palustris, Ruppia, Potamogeton, Vallisnaria, Naias, Chara** etc.
- **Fauna:** It is home to more than 250 species of birds.
 - **Important birds** including **greater and lesser flamingoes, pelicans, ducks & geese, rails, coots, cranes, cormorants, herons, egrets, storks, ibises, spoonbills, teals, sarus cranes, moorhens and waders** etc are found here.
 - **Other animals:** Other animals like **wild ass, Mongoose, jungle cat, Indian fox, jackal, wolf and hyena** are also found here.

FORGE Initiative

News: India has extended support to the FORGE Initiative, launched at the inaugural Critical Minerals Ministerial (Washington DC, February 2026).

About FORGE Initiative



Figure 18. Source – DD News

- **FORGE (Forum on Resource, Geostrategic Engagement)** is a **multilateral framework on critical minerals**.
- It is the **successor to the US-led Mineral Security Partnership (MSP)**.
- It is launched to address emerging **geostrategic and supply chain risks** in critical minerals.
- **Objective: De-risk global critical mineral supply chains** by reducing **excessive concentration and overdependence on few suppliers**.
- **Key Features**
 - The FORGE Initiative focuses on **diversification, transparency and resilience** of critical mineral supply chains.
 - It promotes **cooperation at both policy and project levels** among participating countries.
 - The initiative emphasises **responsible mining and processing practices** to ensure sustainability.
 - It targets **critical minerals essential for clean energy transition and advanced technologies**.
- **Minerals Covered:** Lithium, Cobalt, Nickel, Rare Earth Element
- **Participation: 50+ countries**, including:
 - **India**
 - **United States**
 - **European Union**
- **Importance for India**
 - Reduces **import vulnerability** in strategic minerals.

- Supports EVs, renewable energy and battery storage.
- Aligns with **Net Zero by 2070** goal.
- Complements domestic initiatives:
 - **National Critical Minerals Mission (NCMM)**
 - **Rare Earth Corridors** (Budget 2026–27)

Saltwater Crocodiles

News: A recent genetic study has confirmed that the now-extinct crocodiles of the Seychelles were saltwater crocodiles (*Crocodylus porosus*).

About Saltwater Crocodiles

STUDY FINDINGS

- > Saltwater crocodiles in the Indian Sundarbans prefer creeks & rivers with width less than 170m
- > **Salinity preference** | 14-26 parts per thousand
- > **Ambient temp preference during basking** | 20°C-28°C
- > Similar study to be carried out for **three more years**
- > Study to span **over 3 months every year**
- > **Focus** also on identifying nesting sites



Figure 19. Source – Tol

- The **saltwater crocodile** (*Crocodylus porosus*) is the **largest and heaviest living reptile** in the world and an **opportunistic apex predator**.
- It is also known as the **estuarine or Indo-Pacific crocodile**.
- It is uniquely adapted to **marine and brackish environments** due to

specialized salt-excreting glands.

- **Habitat:** The species inhabits **mangroves, estuaries, rivers, and coastal areas** across the **Indo-Pacific region**.
- It is noted for its high territoriality, solitary behaviour, and long-distance oceanic dispersal ability.
- **Distribution**
 - It has a wide **Indo-Pacific** distribution, occurring along the **eastern coast of India, Southeast Asia, the Sundaic region, northern Australia, and Micronesia**.
 - In **India**, it is primarily found in **Odisha, the Sundarbans of West Bengal, and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands**.
- **Characteristics**

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- The saltwater crocodile is **highly territorial** and **largely solitary**, with dominant males controlling extensive stretches of rivers, estuaries, or coastal areas.
- It possesses specialized **salt-excreting glands** that enable it to survive for long periods in seawater.
- It is an **opportunistic hypercarnivorous apex predator** capable of long-distance oceanic dispersal.
- It is the **largest and heaviest living reptile**, exhibiting exceptional adaptability to both marine and freshwater environments.
- **Threats**
 - **Habitat loss and degradation** due to coastal development, mangrove destruction, and alteration of estuarine ecosystems.
 - **Human–crocodile conflict**
 - **Historical overexploitation and extermination** linked to hunting and early human settlement
 - **Disturbance from increasing human activity** in nesting and basking sites, affecting breeding success
- **Conservation Status-**
 - **IUCN Red List: Least Concern**
 - **CITES: Appendix I** (with exceptions)
 - **Schedule I of India's Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.**

Devnimori Relics

News: India organised the first-ever public exposition of the Devnimori Relics of Lord Buddha outside India at the Gangaramaya Temple, Colombo (Sri Lanka).

About Devnimori Relics



Source: High Commission of India

- The **Devnimori Relics** originate from the **Devnimori archaeological site** near **Shamlaji** in the **Aravalli district of Gujarat**. The inscription language is **Brahmi script & Sanskrit**.
- The site was first scientifically explored in **1957** by archaeologist **Prof. S. N. Chowdhry**.
- Archaeological findings indicate the **spread and flourishing of Buddhism in western India** during the **early centuries of the Common Era**.
- The relics symbolise **Lord Buddha's teachings of peace, compassion, and harmony**

Major Archaeological Findings at Devnimori

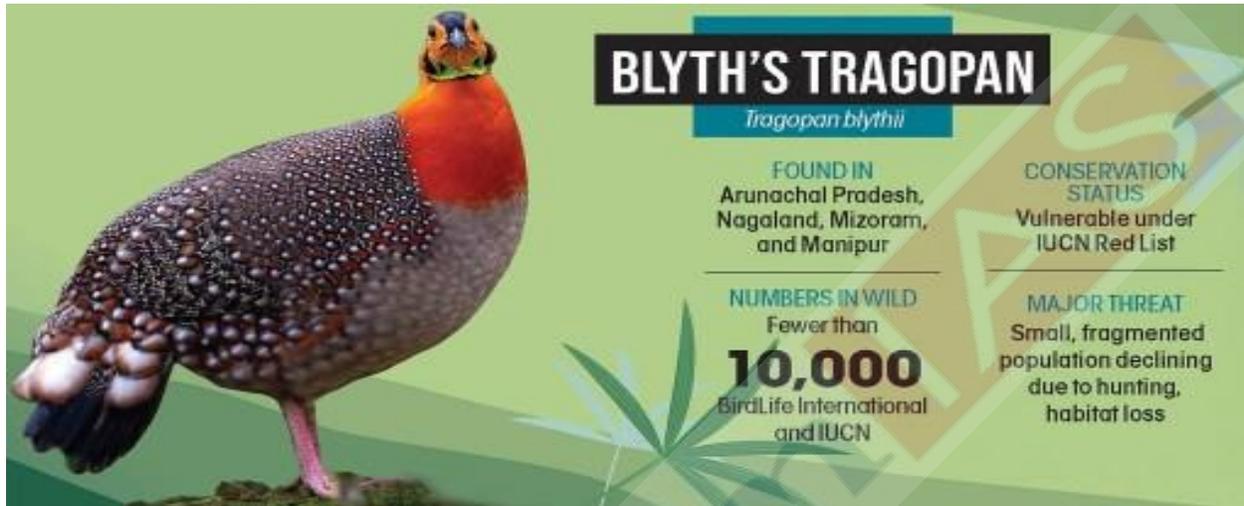
- **Relic Casket**
 - Discovered inside the **Devnimori Stupa** at a height of about **24 feet from the base**.
 - Made of **green schist stone**.
 - Bears inscriptions in **Brahmi script and Sanskrit** reading "**Dashabala Sharira Nilaya**", meaning *abode of the Buddha's bodily relics*.
- **Copper Container**
 - A **copper box** with a flat base and slip-on lid fitted onto a rim ledge.
 - Contained **organic material with holy ashes, silk cloth fragments, beads, and black clay covering**.
- **Amphora-like Bottle**
 - A **gold-coated silver-copper miniature bottle**.
 - Features a cylindrical body, narrow neck, and **screw-type lid**, resembling ancient amphora vessels.

Preservation: The relics are preserved in a **desiccator sealed within an air-tight glass enclosure** to prevent moisture damage and deterioration.

Blyth's tragopan

News: Blyth's tragopan is an indicator species for some of Asia's most biodiverse and least-explored mountain ecosystems.

About Blyth's Tragopan



Source: DTE

- Blyth's tragopan is a **rare and colourful mountain ground-dwelling pheasant**.
- **Family:** Phasianidae
- **Scientific name:** *Tragopan blythii*
- **Habitat:** It lives in **montane broadleaf forests, rhododendron forests, bamboo thickets, and dense undergrowth**.
 - It **prefers moist, cool mountain environments with thick vegetation**.
 - **Migration:** During winter, it descends to elevations of about 1,400 metres. In summer, it moves up to higher altitudes of around 3,300 metres.
- **Distribution:** It is found in **Bhutan, northeast India, northern Myanmar, southeastern Tibet, and parts of China**.
 - In India, it is mainly found in **Arunachal Pradesh, Nagaland (State bird), Mizoram, and Manipur**.
 - It is the **state bird of Nagaland**.
- **Physical Features:**
 - The male Blyth's tragopan has a **deep brown upper body marked with red, maroon, and white spots**.

- Its **breast is bright crimson with a distinct black half-collar** beneath the chin.
- The **face is orange-yellow and bordered by a black crown and collar.**
- The **head, neck, and shoulders show vivid scarlet feathers.**
- **During the breeding season, the male develops pale blue horns and an inflated, brightly coloured throat lappet.**
- The **male measures about 65 to 70 centimetres** and **female measures about 59 centimetres in length.**
- The **female has pale grey-brown feathers with faint spots** that help her blend into the forest floor.
- **Behaviour:** It is usually found alone or in small groups of four to five birds. The bird is most active during early morning and late evening hours.
- **Diet:** It feeds mainly on seeds, berries, shoots, leaves, and insects found on the forest floor.
- **Threats:** Habitat destruction caused by anthropogenic activities
- **Conservation Status:** IUCN Red List of Threatened Species: **Vulnerable**
 - Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972: **Schedule I**
 - CITES: **Appendix I**

Saltwater Crocodile

News: A recent genetic study has confirmed that the now-extinct crocodiles of the Seychelles were saltwater crocodiles (*Crocodylus porosus*).

About Saltwater Crocodiles

STUDY FINDINGS

- > Saltwater crocodiles in the Indian Sundarbans prefer creeks & rivers with width less than 170m
- > **Salinity preference** | 14-26 parts per thousand
- > **Ambient temp preference during basking** | 20°C-28°C
- > Similar study to be carried out for **three more years**
- > Study to span **over 3 months every year**
- > **Focus** also on identifying **nesting sites**



Figure 20. Source – Tol

- The **saltwater crocodile** (*Crocodylus porosus*) is the **largest and heaviest living reptile** in the world and an **opportunistic apex predator**.
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- It is uniquely adapted to **marine and brackish environments** due to specialized salt-excreting glands.
- **Habitat:** The species inhabits **mangroves, estuaries, rivers, and coastal areas** across the **Indo-Pacific region**.
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 - The saltwater crocodile is **highly territorial and largely solitary**, with dominant males controlling extensive stretches of rivers, estuaries, or coastal areas.
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 - **CITES: Appendix I** (with exceptions)

- **Schedule I of India's Wildlife Protection Act, 1972.**

'Vayu Shakti 2026' Exercise

News: The Indian Air Force will conduct a major firepower exercise called Exercise Vayu Shakti at the Pokaran Field Firing Range in Rajasthan.

About 'Vayu Shakti 2026' Exercise



Source: TOI

- It is a **major air combat exercise** by **Indian Air Force**, modelled after **Operation Sindoor**.
- **Location:** The exercise will take place at the Pokaran Field Firing Range, Jaisalmer, Rajasthan.
- **Scheduled date:** 27 February 2026
- It is expected to be the **Indian Air Force's largest air combat drill of the year**.
- **Objective:** To test **operational strategy and weapon systems to strike simulated enemy targets**.
- **Participating Commands:** Airbases and assets of the IAF's Western and South Western Air Commands will participate in the exercise.
- **Features:**
 - The exercise will be **conducted in a simulated wartime scenario and monitored through the IAF's Integrated Air Command and Control System (IACCS)** for real-time coordination.
 - Almost all frontline fighter aircraft and air defence systems that were part of Operation Sindoor will engage.
 - It includes **Rafale, Su-30 MKI, Tejas, MiG-29, Jaguar, Mirage-2000, and Hawk**. (Note: The MiG-21 (retired) will not feature in the exercise for the first time.)

- **Long-, medium-, and short-range radar inputs** will be integrated to create a comprehensive air picture for offensive and defensive missions.
- **Fixed-wing transport aircraft** such as C-130J and C-295 will participate in operational tasks.
- Helicopter units, including **Prachand, Chinook, Mi-17, and Advanced Light Helicopter platforms**, will support mission operations.
- **Drones and loitering munitions** will be deployed for surveillance and strike roles.
- **Multi-layered air defence systems**, including Akash missiles, L-70 guns, and anti-drone platforms, will remain at operational readiness.

SaaSpocalypse

News- The software industry was shaken suddenly by what analysts are calling a “SaaSpocalypse”- caused by new AI tools launched by the US startup Anthropic.

About SaaSpocalypse:

- The term “SaaSpocalypse” was **coined by the Jefferies Group**, a United States multinational investment bank.
- It refers to a **market sell-off driven by fears that artificial intelligence may replace traditional Software as a Service (SaaS) software models.**

About Claude Cowork

- Anthropic, a United States artificial intelligence company, launched Claude Cowork with eleven plugins to automate legal, compliance, sales, marketing, finance, and data analysis tasks.
- These artificial intelligence tools can independently execute workflows, reducing the need for human users and specialised software products.

Impact: Software and information technology stocks fell sharply in the United States, Europe, and India following the announcement.

Significance

- The sell-off reflects fears that artificial intelligence may weaken seat-based Software as a Service revenue models and labour-intensive IT services.
- It signals deep uncertainty about how artificial intelligence will transform the global technology sector.

Thwaites Glacier

News- Thwaites Glacier is in the news due to scientific concern over its rapid melting and its potential impact on global sea levels.



Source- Britannica

About Thwaites Glacier

- Thwaites Glacier is widely **known as the “Doomsday Glacier”** due to its potential to significantly raise global sea levels.
- **Location:** It is located in **West Antarctica** and flows into the **Amundsen Sea**.
- **Dimensions:** It is the **widest glacier on Earth**, measuring **about 120 kilometres in width and covering nearly 1.9 lakh square kilometres**.
- **Monitored by:** The glacier is **monitored by the International Thwaites Glacier Collaboration, a multinational scientific research initiative**.
- **Significance:** Thwaites Glacier **holds back ice in the West Antarctic Ice Sheet**, while its ice shelf acts as a brace that slows the flow of ice into the ocean.

New Marine Worm Species

News- Researchers from the Zoological Survey of India discovered two new marine worm species along the polluted coastline of West Bengal.

These worms are “*bio-warriors*” that survive in extreme conditions where most life cannot, highlighting the delicate and often unseen biodiversity along India’s northern coasts.



Source- IE

About New Marine Worm Species

- Researchers discovered two new polychaete marine worm species that reveal hidden and resilient biodiversity along **India's northern Bay of Bengal coast**.
- **Location:** The discovery was made in **the Digha and Bankipur** regions of Purba **Medinipur district** in **West Bengal**.
- **Discovery by:** The discovery was made by researchers from the Zoological Survey of India in collaboration with international experts.

About *Namalycastis solenotognatha*

- **Naming:** Its name is derived from the Greek words *solenotos* (channeled) and *gnatha* (jaw), referring to its unique jaw structure.
- **Habitat:** It survives in extreme, sulfide-rich, foul-smelling mudflats and is found on decomposing mangrove wood and hardened clay.
- **Key features:** It has an unusual channeled jaw with many canals emerging from the pulp cavity.

About *Nereis dhritiae*

- **Naming:** The species is named **after Dhriti Banerjee, the first woman director of the Zoological Survey of India**.
- **Habitat:** It lives inside wooden dock piles on sandy beaches that remain submerged during high tide.
- **Key features:** The species shows strong resilience by surviving in heavily polluted and human-impacted coastal areas.

Key facts about Malaysia

News- PM Modi is on a two-day official visit to Malaysia, focusing on cooperation in artificial intelligence, defence, and the semiconductor sector.

About Malaysia



Source- Britannica

- **Location:** It is a Southeast Asian country located just **north of the Equator**.
- **Two Regions:** The **South China Sea** divides it into **Peninsular Malaysia (West Malaysia)** and **East Malaysia** (on Borneo Island).
- **Capital:** Kuala Lumpur.
- **Land Borders:** Thailand, Brunei, and Indonesia.
- **Maritime Borders:** Philippines, Singapore, and Vietnam.
- **Important Water Bodies:** It is bordered by the **Strait of Malacca, South China Sea, Celebes Sea, and Sulu Sea**.
- **Highest Peak:** **Mount Kinabalu (4,095 m)**, located in Sabah (East Malaysia).
- **Major Rivers:** Pahang, Rajang, and Kinabatangan.
- **Form of Government:** Malaysia is a federal constitutional monarchy with a parliamentary system

Global Teacher Prize 2026

News– Indian teacher Rouble Nagi won Global Teacher Prize 2026 at the World Governments Summit in Dubai, UAE, for setting up hundreds of learning centres.



Source- NDTV

About Global Teacher Prize

- It is an *annual international honour* conferred on an outstanding teacher who has made a meaningful difference in the lives of students and the wider community.
- It was *instituted in 2014*.
- The objective of the award is to emphasise the vital role of teachers and to acknowledge their exceptional service to society.

Eligibility and Selection

- The prize is *open to teachers across the world*, including those working in *public, private, and alternative educational institutions*.
- Applicants are assessed on parameters such as *innovative pedagogy, classroom accomplishments, community engagement*, and contribution to improving educational standards.
- The evaluation also takes into account the impact on students' learning outcomes and the teacher's ability to work effectively in difficult circumstances.
- Teachers may either self-apply or be nominated by others.

Award and Organisation

- The recipient is *awarded \$1 million*, making it one of the most prestigious recognitions in the education sector.
- The prize is presented by *GEMS Education and organised by the Varkey Foundation* in collaboration with *UNESCO*.

Copernicus Sentinel-2 Mission

News- The Copernicus Sentinel-2 mission captured satellite images of Northern Italy during the February 2026 Winter Olympics.

About Copernicus Sentinel-2 Mission

- It is an Earth observation satellite mission that monitors land surface conditions using high-resolution imagery.
- It is part of **Copernicus**, the **European Union's Earth observation programme**.
- **Developed by:** The mission has been developed by the European Space Agency for the European Union.
- **Aim:** The mission aims to monitor variability in land surface conditions and environmental health using optical multispectral data.
- **Satellite Constellation**
 - It comprises a land monitoring constellation of **two polar-orbiting satellites** placed in the same sun-synchronous orbit.
 - The **twin satellites, S-2B and S-2C**, provide a wide swath **width of 290 kilometres and a high revisit time**.
- **Key Features**
 - The mission **delivers high-resolution optical multispectral imagery across 13 spectral bands**.
 - The data supports applications such as **agriculture monitoring, disaster management, ecosystem observation, and water quality assessment**.
 - It enables **real-time observation of environmental changes** across large land areas.

About Copernicus Programme

- Copernicus is the Earth observation component of the European Union's Space Programme.
- It is managed by the European Commission and implemented in partnership with agencies such as the **European Space Agency (ESA)**, the **European Organisation for the Exploitation of Meteorological Satellites (EUMETSAT)**, the **European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF)**, and others.
- The programme is named after Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543).

- Its objective is to provide accurate and timely data for environmental management, climate change monitoring, civil security, and policy-making

PM CARES, PMNRF, and NDF

News- The PMO informed the Lok Sabha Secretariat that questions related to PM CARES, PMNRF, and NDF are not admissible under Lok Sabha rules.

About the PM CARES Fund

- **Established in:** The fund was set up on March 27, 2020, after the Covid-19 outbreak, as a public charitable trust.
- **Funding source:** The corpus consists entirely of voluntary public contributions and does not receive money from the Consolidated Fund of India.
- **Administration:** The fund is controlled by the Prime Minister's Office and the Ministers of Defence, Home Affairs, and Finance are **ex-officio trustees**. The PM may also nominate additional trustees.
- **Audit and transparency:** The Supreme Court stated that PM CARES is a public charitable trust and there is **no requirement for audit by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India. The Centre stated that it is not a public authority under the RTI Act.**
- **Utilisation of funds:** The fund is meant to deal with emergency or distress situations and to provide relief to affected persons.

About the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund

- **Established in:** The fund was created in January 1948 to assist displaced persons from Pakistan.
- **Funding source:** It is funded fully through voluntary public contributions without government budgetary support.
- **Administration:** The Prime Minister serves as ex-officio Chairperson, assisted by staff on an honorary basis.
- **Audit and transparency:** The fund is **audited annually by an independent non-government auditor** and is **not treated as a public authority under the RTI Act.**
- **Utilisation of funds:** The resources are used for immediate relief to families affected by natural calamities, accidents, riots and also to assist with high-cost medical treatments (e.g., cardiac surgery, kidney transplants, cancer care).

About the National Defence Fund

- **Established in:** The fund was created in 1962, after the Indo-China War, to support the welfare of Indian Armed Forces personnel, para-military forces, and their dependents.
- **Funding source:** It relies only on voluntary donations from the public.
- **Administration:** An Executive Committee administers the fund, with the Prime Minister as Chairperson and Defence, Finance, and Home Ministers as Members.
- **Audit and transparency:** It is not subject to the CAG's statutory audit, unlike regular defence expenditures audited.

Key Facts about Eritrea

News- Recently, Ethiopia has accused Eritrea of military aggression, border occupation, and supporting armed groups, amid renewed tensions after the Tigray conflict.

About Eritrea



Figure 21. Source- Wikipedia

- **Location :** It is a country located in the **Horn of Africa** region of East Africa.
- **Capital-** Asmara
- **Land Borders:** It shares land borders with **Sudan to the west, Ethiopia to the south, and Djibouti** to the southeast.
- **Maritime Borders:** Across the Red Sea, Eritrea shares **maritime boundaries with Saudi Arabia and Yemen.**
- **Strategic Chokepoint:** It controls the western coast of the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, which is a vital global shipping route.
- **Regional Groupings:** Eritrea is a member of the African Union (AU) and COMESA

Key Geographical Features

- **Geographical Divisions:** Eritrea has coastal **lowlands, central highlands, and western lowlands, shaped by the East African Rift system.**
- **Major River:** Important rivers include **the Tekezé, Mereb, Barka, and Anseba.**
- **Highest Point: Mount Emba Soira** is the highest point at 3,018 meters..

- **Climate:** Eritrea has **three major climate zones**, namely the **temperate, subtropical, and tropical climate zones**.

Esports Nations Cup (ENC) 2026

News: Chess has been added to the Esports Nations Cup (ENC) 2026, a global nation-based esports tournament to be held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia.

About Esports Nations Cup (ENC) 2026



Source: Times of India

- It is an international, country-based esports competition in which players compete by representing their respective nations rather than private clubs or franchises.
- **Organiser-** Esports World Cup Foundation (EWCF)
- **Location-** The tournament will take place from 2 November to 29 November 2026 in **Riyadh, Saudi Arabia**.
- **Games and Titles**
 - ENC 2026 will feature **16 competitive esports titles** across multiple genres such as strategy, shooters, racing, and mobile gaming.
 - **Chess** has been included as one of the competitive titles for the first time.
- **Prize Structure:**
 - Every participant will be assured of prize money.
 - Uniform placement rewards will be offered across all games to maintain fairness.

- **Chess at ENC 2026**

- Players will first compete in a **round-robin group stage** consisting of **16 groups of 8 players each**.
- The **top four players** from each group will qualify for a **64-player knockout stage**.
- Matches will be played in **Rapid time control (10+0)** format.
- **Armageddon games** will be used as tie-breakers.

SWAVALAMBINI Programme

News: Recently, the Minister of State, Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), filed a written reply in the Lok Sabha regarding the progress of the Swavalambini programme.

About the SWAVALAMBINI Programme



Source: PIB

- It is a **Women Entrepreneurship Programme** for young women in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).
- **Launched by**- Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE).
- **Implemented by:** National Institute for Entrepreneurship and Small Business Development (NIESBUD), Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE), Guwahati and NITI Aayog.
- **Coverage** - It aims to establish over 30 women-led enterprises, particularly targeting regions like Assam, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Uttar Pradesh, and Telangana in its pilot phase.
- **Programme structure**

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- **Target group:** 1,200 female students from Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs) and universities.
- **Entrepreneurship Awareness Programme (EAP):** All 1,200 students attend an introductory programme to build basic awareness about entrepreneurship.
- **Entrepreneurship Development Programme (EDP):** Out of these, 600 students receive advanced training covering skills, finance, market linkages, compliance, and networking.
- **Mentorship support:** This is followed by 21 weeks of mentorship and handholding to help them turn their ideas into sustainable businesses.
 - NITI Aayog provides mentoring, helps with seed funding, and recognizes successful entrepreneurs through the Award to Reward (ATR) initiative.

Removal of Lok Sabha speaker

News- The Opposition on February 10 moved a no-confidence motion seeking the removal of the Lok Sabha Speaker, which will be examined and processed as per rules.

About Removal of Lok Sabha speaker

Constitutional Provisions: Article 94 of the Constitution provides for vacation, resignation, and removal of the Speaker and Deputy Speaker of the House of the People.

- **Vacation:** Under Article 94(a), the Speaker or Deputy Speaker vacates office **if they cease to be a member of the House.**
- **Resignation:** Under Article 94(b), they may **resign by writing** under their hand.
- **Removal:** Under Article 94(c), they may be **removed by a resolution of the House passed by a majority of all the then members.**

The procedure is **governed by Rules 200 to 203 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha.**

Procedure for Removal

- **Notice Requirement:**
 - A written notice must be **submitted to the Secretary-General of the Lok Sabha.**
 - The notice may be given **jointly by two or more members.**
 - **At least 14 days' notice is mandatory** before the resolution can be moved.

- **Listing of Motion:** After the notice period, the motion for leave to move the resolution is listed for a day fixed by the presiding authority.
- **Support Threshold:** When the motion is taken up, **at least 50 members must rise in their places to support it.**
- **Discussion Timeline**
 - If the required support is met, the motion is **admitted and must be taken up within 10 days.**
 - The discussion is **strictly confined to the specific charges mentioned in the resolution.**
- **Voting Condition:** Removal requires a resolution **passed by a majority of all the then members of the House.**

Rights During Removal Proceedings

- The Speaker has the **right to speak and take part in proceedings.**
- They may vote in the first instance but cannot exercise a casting vote in case of equality.
- Even after dissolution, the Speaker continues in office until the first meeting of the new House.

Historical Context

- No-confidence motions against the Speaker were moved against **Ganesh Vasudev Mavalankar (1954), Hukam Singh (1966), and Balram Jakhar (1987).**
- In all three cases, the motions failed and none were removed from office.

Mangrove Clam (*Geloina erosa*)

News- Indian Council of Agricultural Research and Central Marine Fisheries Research Institute have successfully achieved captive breeding and full life-cycle completion of mangrove clam under controlled hatchery conditions.



Figure 22. Source- TOI

About Mangrove Clam (*Geloina erosa*)

- It is an ecologically and economically important bivalve found in mangrove and estuarine ecosystems.
- **Scientific Name:** The scientific name of mangrove clam is *Geloina erosa*, and it is also placed under the genus *Polymesoda* in some literature.

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- The Mangrove Clam, commonly known as the **mud clam** or locally as “**Kandal Kakka**” in northern Kerala.
- **Habitat:** It inhabits organic-rich muddy substrates in intertidal mangrove zones and tolerates a wide salinity range from brackish to nearly freshwater conditions.
- **Distribution:** It is widely distributed across South and Southeast Asia and the Indo-Pacific region, including parts of northern Kerala.
- **Key Features**
 - **Large Size:** It is one of the largest mud clams in the world and can reach up to 10 cm shell width.
 - **Burrowing Nature:** It is a deep-burrowing bivalve found in muddy mangrove ecosystems.
 - **Filter Feeding:** It feeds by filtering suspended particles and plankton from water.
 - **Ecological Role:** It recycles nutrients and stabilizes sediments, which strengthens mangrove ecosystems.
 - **Life Cycle:** Its life cycle includes larval stage, spat, juvenile and adult phases.
- **Threats:** Wild stocks in India are declining due to indiscriminate harvesting, habitat degradation, pollution, and coastal development, along with absence of scientific stock assessment and fishing restrictions.
- **Significance:** It supports food security, sustainable livelihoods, and mangrove ecosystem conservation.

Form 7 Controversy

News- Bulk Form 7 applications during Special Intensive Revision have raised concerns about misuse and large-scale deletion of voters.

About Form 7 Controversy

- Form 7 controversy relates to bulk objections filed to delete names from electoral rolls during the ongoing special intensive revision.
- **Legal Basis**
 - Form 7 is governed by Section 13(2) of the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960, framed under the **Representation of the People Act, 1950**.

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- Filing a **false declaration is punishable** under Section 32 of the Representation of the People Act, 1950, with imprisonment up to one year or fine or both.
- **Key 2022 Amendment:** In 2022, the Election Commission amended Form 7 to allow any voter in a constituency to file an objection, instead of restricting it to persons from the same booth or polling station, thereby widening its ambit.
- **Aim:** Form 7 aims to allow objections to incorrect inclusion of names in electoral rolls on valid and specific grounds.
- **Permissible Grounds:** Objections can be filed on grounds such as death, duplication, shifting of residence, ineligibility due to age or citizenship, or misrepresentation.
- **Mechanism**
 - **Eligible Applicant:** Only a person whose name is already in the roll can file Form 7. Booth Level Agents can also file objections.
 - **Physical Verification:** Booth Level Officers must conduct physical verification of address and eligibility.
 - **Death Cases:** In case of death, verification requires signatures of three neighbours and a death certificate.
 - **Absence Check:** If the voter is absent, three physical visits are required.
 - **Hearing Notice:** The concerned voter is issued a notice for a hearing before any decision is taken.
 - **Appeal Provision:** Appeals can be filed before the district magistrate within 15 days.

Core of the Controversy

- **Bulk Filing:** Allegations claim systemic and coordinated bulk filing of Form 7 applications.
- **Scale of Deletions:** Names of 6.5 crore electors were removed from draft rolls, reducing voters from 51 crore to 44.4 crore.
- **Affected States:** Highest deletions were reported from Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Gujarat.

Network Readiness Index Report 2025

News: India has improved its ranking in the Network Readiness Index (NRI) 2025, moving up four places to secure the 45th position globally.

About Network Readiness Index (NRI)

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- It assesses how prepared countries are to leverage **information and communication technologies (ICTs)** for development and competitiveness.
- It evaluates **127 economies**.
- The index is prepared by the **Portulans Institute** (Washington DC).
- **Methodology:** The NRI evaluates countries based on **53 indicators**, grouped under **four pillars: Technology, People, Governance and Impact**.
- **India's Score:** India increased its overall score from **53.63 in 2024 to 54.43 in 2025**, reflecting steady improvement in digital readiness.
- **Global Leadership:** India secured the **1st rank globally** in indicators such as **annual investment in telecommunication services, AI scientific publications, ICT services exports, and e-commerce legislation**.
 - India achieved **2nd rank in Fibre-To-The-Home (FTTH)/building internet subscriptions, mobile broadband internet traffic, and international internet bandwidth**, and **3rd rank** in domestic market scale and income inequality indicators.
- **Income Group Performance:** Among lower-middle-income countries, India stands at **2nd position (after Vietnam)** and has performed better than expected relative to its income level in terms of network readiness.

Breach of Privilege Notice

News: A DMK MP, Tiruchi Siva, has moved a privilege notice against Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal. He alleged that the Minister held a press conference on the Indo-US trade deal before briefing Parliament while it was in session.

About Breach of Privilege Notice

- A Breach of Privilege is the violation of respective rights and immunities of either **House of Parliament** and **State Legislative Assembly**.
- It is treated as a **serious offence** and is punishable by the concerned House.
- **Sources of Parliamentary Privileges**
 - Constitutional provisions
 - **Article 105** – Powers, privileges and immunities of Parliament and its members.
 - **Article 194** – Similar provisions for State Legislatures.

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- Laws enacted by Parliament, Rules of Procedure of both Houses, Parliamentary conventions and Judicial interpretations.
- **Procedure to move notice**
 - Under certain rule which are mentioned below a member of parliament submits a written notice to the Lok Sabha Speaker and Chairman of Rajya Sabha-
 - **Lok Sabha:** Rule 222 in Chapter 20 of the Lok Sabha Rules.
 - **Rajya Sabha:** Rule 187 in Chapter 16 of the Rajya Sabha Rules.
- **Examples of Breach of Privilege**
 - Making **false or defamatory statements** about Parliament or its members.
 - Casting reflections on the **impartiality of the Speaker**.
 - Publishing **false, distorted or premature reports** of parliamentary proceedings.
 - Publishing committee evidence before it is tabled in the House.
 - **Threatening, obstructing or intimidating** an MP.
 - Announcing important **executive decisions outside Parliament** during session, bypassing legislative scrutiny.
- **Committee of Privileges**
 - Each House has a **Committee of Privileges** to examine cases of breach.
 - It performs **semi-judicial functions** and recommends action.
 - **Lok Sabha Committee:** 15 members.
 - **Rajya Sabha Committee:** 10 members.

New Telescopes NLST, NLOT Planned for Ladakh

News: In this year's Union Budget, the government sanctioned two new telescopes and approved the upgradation of an existing telescope in Ladakh.

About New Telescopes NLST, NLOT Planned for Ladakh

- The government approved the **National Large Solar Telescope (NLST)** and the **National Large Optical-Near Infrared Telescope (NLOT)** to study the Sun and the origins of the universe.
- **Nodal Agency:** The **Indian Institute of Astrophysics (IIA), Bengaluru**, is the nodal agency for the NLST and NLOT

About National Large Solar Telescope (NLST)

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- **Location:** It will be built in the Merak region near Pangong Tso lake in Ladakh.
- **Purpose:** It will help scientists study solar dynamics, magnetism, energetic solar events, and space-weather processes affecting Earth and national space assets.
- **Working Mechanism:** It is a 2-metre aperture solar telescope that will operate in visible and near-infrared wavelengths of the electromagnetic spectrum.
- **Key Features:**
 - It will become India's third ground-based solar observatory.
 - It is expected to be operational in 5–6 years.
 - It will support data from Aditya-L1.

About National Large Optical–Near Infrared Telescope (NLOT)

- **About:** It is a 13.7-metre segmented-mirror telescope to study exoplanets and the universe's origins.
- **Location:** It will be built in Hanle, Ladakh.
- **Purpose:** It will conduct research on exoplanets, stellar and galactic evolution, supernovae, and the origins of the universe.
- **Working Mechanism:** It will use 90 smaller hexagonal mirror segments that act as one large primary mirror and operate in optical-infrared wavelengths.

Continental Mantle Earthquakes

News- Stanford researchers created the first global map of continental mantle earthquakes, published on February 5, 2026 in Science.

About Continental Mantle Earthquakes

Continental mantle earthquakes are rare earthquakes that occur deep within the Earth's mantle beneath continents.

Global Distribution:

- Although only 459 continental mantle earthquakes have been identified worldwide, they are regionally clustered.
- A high concentration is found beneath the **Himalayas in southern Asia** and the **Bering Strait between Asia and North America**.

Key Characteristics of Continental Mantle Earthquakes (CMEs)

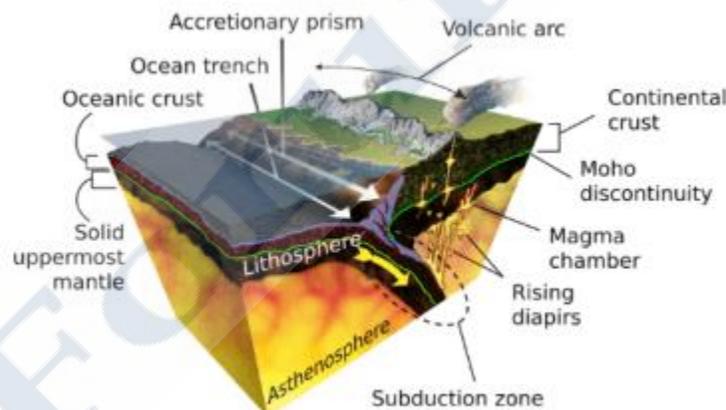
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- **Origin:** These earthquakes occur in the mantle, below the Mohorovičić discontinuity (Moho), which separates the crust from the mantle.
- **Depth:** They can occur more than 80 km below the Mohorovičić discontinuity (Moho), which separates the crust from the mantle.
- **Identification:** Scientists identify them by comparing Sn waves, which travel through the mantle, and Lg waves, which move through the crust.
- **Impact:** They are too deep to cause serious shaking at the surface.

Significance

- **Crust–Mantle Coupling:** They show that the crust and mantle behave as a coupled system in collision zones.
- **Stress and Lithosphere Dynamics:** They help scientists understand the strength and ductility of the continental lithosphere and show how stress extends below the Moho.

About Mohorovičić discontinuity (Moho)



Source- Wikipedia

- Mohorovičić discontinuity is the boundary between Earth's **crust** and the underlying **mantle**
- It was identified in **1909** by the Croatian seismologist **Andrija Mohorovičić**.
- The Moho is defined by a sharp increase in the speed of P-waves (compressional waves), typically jumping from about **6.7–7.2 km/s** in the lower crust to about **7.6–8.6 km/s** in the upper mantle.

Corruption Perceptions Index 2025

News- India climbed five places to 91st rank out of 182 countries in the Corruption Perceptions Index 2025.

About Corruption Perceptions Index 2025

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- The Corruption Perceptions Index 2025 ranks countries by perceived levels of public sector corruption.
- **Released by:** It is released annually by **Transparency International**, a German registered association, since 1995.
- **Total Countries Involved:** The index ranked **182 countries and territories in 2025**.
- **Scale Used:** The results are given on a scale **from 0 (highly corrupt) to 100 (very clean)**.

Methodology Used

- The methodology was **revised in 2012** for consistent comparison across countries and years.
- It involves selecting data sources, rescaling them to a uniform 0–100 scale, aggregating results, and estimating uncertainty.
- It uses **13 surveys and assessments from 12 institutions**.

Key Findings

- **Top Performers:** Denmark scored **89**, followed by Finland with **88** and Singapore with **84**.
- **Bottom Performers:** South Sudan and Somalia scored **9**, while Venezuela scored **10**.

India's Performance in 2025

- India ranked 91st with a one-point increase in score and improved from 96th position.
- India scored 39 and was listed among countries dangerous for journalists reporting on corruption.
- The report noted slow anti-corruption progress in the Asia Pacific region.

BIOFACH 2026

News: India has been designated as the 'Country of the Year' at BIOFACH 2026.

About BIOFACH 2026



Source: Asianet News Central

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- **About:** It is the **world's leading trade fair for organic products** held on **10 February 2026**.
- **Note:** BIOFACH Germany is **the world's largest and most influential exhibition** dedicated exclusively to organic food and agriculture.
- **Held at:** Nuremberg, Germany
- **Organised by:** NürnbergMesse GmbH (Germany).
 - **India's participation Organiser:** India's participation at the event was organised by the **Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA)** under the **Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Government of India**.
- **Focus areas:**
 - **Showcasing India Organic Products:** The event **emphasized India's strong organic production base, strengthened regulatory framework such as National Programme for Organic Production (NPOP)** and commitment to sustainable agriculture.
 - **Promote Opportunities:** India **promoted export opportunities and partnerships** through curated organic food tastings.
 - **Growing India-EU relations:** It **emphasized the need for an early Mutual Recognition Agreement (MRA)** on organic products with the European Union.
- **India's Participation:** The India Pavilion covered an area of **1,074 square metres** and hosted **67 co-exhibitors**, including exporters, FPOs, cooperatives, certification bodies, and state agencies.
 - **Products showcased:** The **pavilion showcased a diverse range of Indian organic products**, including cereals, pulses, spices, beverages, and value-added items.
 - Exhibitors from more than **20 Indian States participated in the event**, presenting region-specific organic products.
 - **Five GI-tagged rice varieties were served to visitors** to highlight India's heritage rice varieties.
 - India recorded a **50 percent increase in pavilion area and participation** compared to previous editions of BIOFACH.
 - India emerged as the **largest non-European Union exhibitor** and ranked among the **top five exhibiting countries** at the fair.
 - India's **participation reinforced its position as a reliable global supplier of high-quality, sustainably produced organic products**.

India and UK Sign Social Security Agreement for Temporary Employees

News: India signed an Agreement on Social Security relating to Social Security Contributions with the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland in New Delhi.

About the agreement



Figure 23. Source: DD News

- **Signed between:** India and UK
- **Aim:** To facilitate greater mobility of professionals and workers between India and the United Kingdom.
- The agreement seeks to avoid double social security contributions by employees of both countries who are on temporary assignments in each other's territories for a period of up to 36 months.
- It will support mobility and continued social security coverage of the employees on short term overseas assignments.
- This arrangement forms part of the broader India-UK trade deal framework and will come into effect along with the implementation of the Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement (CETA).
- The signed agreement will be hosted on the website of the Ministry of External Affairs and the website of the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation for the information of the stakeholders so that they can secure Certificates of Coverage (CoC) to avoid making double social security contributions.

Consumer Price Index (CPI) with Base 2024=100

News- The Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation released the Consumer Price Index with base year 2024=100.

About Consumer Price Index (CPI) with Base 2024=100

- The Consumer Price Index with base 2024=100 measures the changes over time in general level of retail prices of selected goods and services that households purchase for the purpose of consumption.
- **Published by:** Ministry of Statistics & Programme Implementation.
- **Data collected by:** The Field Operations Division of the National Sample Survey, under MoSPI.

Factly Compilation February 2026

- **Base Year:** The base year of the **new CPI series is 2024=100**, replacing the **earlier base year of 2012=100**.
- **Methods Used**
 - The **Jevons index** is used for compiling elementary indices at the item level.
 - The **Young or Modified Laspeyres' index** is used for compiling higher level indices.
- **Data Collection Period:** Price data are collected **monthly from rural and urban markets**, while **online prices are collected weekly**.

Key Features of CPI 2024 Series

- **Revised Item Basket:** The number of weighted items has **increased from 299 to 358 at the all-India level**, with **goods rising from 259 to 308** and **services from 40 to 50**, which improves the representation of present consumption patterns.
- **Updated Weights:** The weights are based on the Household Consumption Expenditure Survey 2023–24, and they reflect changes in household spending, including a decline in the share of Food & Beverages while it remains the largest component.
- **COICOP 2018 Adoption:** The series follows the Classification of Individual Consumption According to Purpose 2018, which **replaces 6 broad groups with 12 divisions, 43 groups, 92 classes and 162 sub-classes for better classification and global comparability**.
- **Rural Housing Inclusion:** Rural house rent is included for the first time, and the weight of rural housing is 11.764 percent, which strengthens the coverage of rural housing consumption.
- **New Items Added:** Items such as online media services, value added dairy products, barley and its product, pen-drive and external hard disk, attendant, babysitter and exercise equipment are included in the basket.
- **Outdated Items Removed:** Items like VCR or DVD player, radio, tape recorder, second-hand clothing, CD or DVD cassettes and coir rope are removed from the basket.
- **Digital Data Collection:** The series introduces Computer Assisted Personal Interviewing and includes e-commerce prices, online sources and administrative data to improve data quality, timeliness and coverage.

Right to Recall

News- Raghav Chadha raised the idea of introducing Right to Recall in Parliament and sparked fresh debate on electoral reform.

About Right to Recall

- Right to Recall is a mechanism that **empowers voters to remove an elected representative before the completion of the term.**
- It is a **process initiated by the electorate** through a petition or a specific voting procedure, rather than by a legislative body or a court.
- **Grounds:** Voters can call for recall if representative are found to be non-performing, corrupt, or unresponsive to the needs of the constituency.

Legal Status in India

- **Local Level:** Several states have implemented RTR for local bodies (Panchayats and Municipalities), including **Madhya Pradesh** (the first state to do so), **Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Rajasthan,** and **Uttar Pradesh.**
- **National & State Level:** There is **no provision** for recalling Members of Parliament (MPs) or Members of Legislative Assemblies (MLAs).

Historical Evolution

- The concept traces back to the **Vedic idea of Rajdharma.**
- **In 1944, M.N. Roy** proposed a system including right to elect and recall.
- The Constituent Assembly discussed it, but **Dr. B.R. Ambedkar** rejected it due to fear of instability.
- **In 1974, Jayaprakash Narayan** supported it during the Total Revolution movement.

Other Tools for Direct Democracy

- **Referendum:** A procedure where a proposed law or significant issue (like a constitutional amendment) is referred to the electorate for a direct “Yes” or “No” vote. In India, historical referendums occurred in **Sikkim** (1975) to join the Indian Union.
- **Initiative:** A process allowing citizens to propose a new law or constitutional amendment by gathering a specific number of signatures on a petition. Countries like **Switzerland** frequently use this tool.
- **Plebiscite:** Typically used to obtain the opinion of the people on an issue of public importance, such as territorial disputes or independence. Unlike a referendum, it is often used for non-legislative matters.

AgriStack

News- In the Budget Speech on February 1, India's Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced Bharat-VISTAAR to integrate AgriStack portals with AI systems.

About AgriStack

- AgriStack is a Digital Public Infrastructure for the farm sector under the Digital Agriculture Mission.
- **Initiative by:** AgriStack is an initiative under the Digital Agriculture Mission and was approved by the Union Cabinet in September 2024.
- **Objective:** The objective of AgriStack is to enhance farm productivity, enable better decisions for farmers, and reduce risk by providing customised advisory support.
- **Key Features**
 - AgriStack is built on **three foundational registries:** the **Farmer Registry**, the **Crop Sown Registry**, and **Geo-referenced Village Maps**, created by State Governments or Union Territories.
 - **Under the Farmer Registry**, farmers are given a **unique digital identity** linked with land records, livestock ownership, crops sown, and schemes and benefits availed.
 - **The Crop Sown Registry** records details of crops planted by farmers through mobile-based Digital Crop Surveys conducted each season.
 - **The Geo-referenced Village Map Registry** contains geographic information of land records linked with their exact locations.

About Bharat-VISTAAR

- Bharat-VISTAAR (Virtually Integrated System to Access Agricultural Resources) is an AI-driven, multilingual digital platform designed to transform Indian agriculture.
- It is proposed in the Union Budget 2026–27,
- It integrates AgriStack data with ICAR scientific practices to provide real-time, personalized advisories on farming, pests, and markets.
- It focuses on precision farming and enhancing farmer income.

MHA Guidelines on Vande Mataram

News: The Union Ministry of Home Affairs has issued new guidelines mandating that all six stanzas of the National Song be performed and that Vande Mataram should be sung or played before the National Anthem when both are played.

About MHA Guidelines on Vande Mataram

- **Order of Playing with National Anthem:** When both Vande Mataram and Jana Gana Mana are played at an event, Vande Mataram should be sung or played before Jana Gana Mana.
- The audience **shall stand when the official version of the national song is played**, except when it appears in a newsreel or documentary, where standing is not required.
- **Occasions for Playing/Singing**
 - The national song is **to be sung or played on the arrival and departure of the President at formal State functions and other government-organized events.**
 - It is **also to be sung immediately before and after the President addresses the nation** over All India Radio and television.
 - It **should also be played on the arrival and departure of the Governor or Lieutenant Governor** at formal State functions, when the national flag is brought on parade.
 - The official version of the national song **should be played along with mass singing during the unfurling of the national flag and at cultural or ceremonial functions** other than parades.
 - The **Government of India may direct the performance of the National Song on additional occasions as required** by special orders of the Government of India.
 - The Ministry has **stated that on all specified occasions, the full six-stanza official version of Vande Mataram must be used**, and collective singing should be encouraged wherever feasible.
- **Band Performance Protocol:** When the national song is played by a band, **it should be preceded by a roll of drums to alert the audience** that it is about to be played, unless another specific indication is given.
 - A **suitably trained choir of adequate size should coordinate its singing with the band, and an adequate public address system should be arranged.**
- In schools, **the day's work may begin with community singing of the national song.**
 - School authorities **should make adequate arrangements** to popularize the singing of the national song and the national anthem.
- **Constitutional and legal Framework**

- On **24 January 1950**, the Constituent Assembly adopted the **first two stanzas of Vande Mataram** as the National Song of India.
- The **Constitution of India does not mention the term “National Song.”** Its status is **based on the resolution and established governmental practice**, not on a constitutional provision.
- **Article 51A(a)** (Fundamental Duties) requires every citizen to respect the Constitution, the National Flag and the National Anthem. It does **not** mention the National Song.
- There is **no specific constitutional provision** granting protection or defining the status of Vande Mataram, unlike the National Anthem.

About National Song (Vande Mataram)

- **Composition:** It was originally **composed in Sanskrit by Bankimchandra Chatterjee** and **included in his novel Anand Math (1882).**
- **First Sung:** The song was **first sung at the 1896 session of the Indian National Congress** in Calcutta by Rabindranath Tagore.
- **Adoption:** **On 24 January 1950, the Constituent Assembly officially adopted it** as the National Song of India.
- **Official Version Duration:** The official version of Vande Mataram has **a duration of approximately three minutes and ten seconds.**
- **Total Stanzas:** The complete song **contains six stanzas.**

Tamil Brahmi Script & Valley of the Kings

News: Researchers have discovered nearly 30 inscriptions in Tamil Brahmi, Prakrit, and Sanskrit in tombs at the Valley of the Kings in Egypt.

Key Findings



Figure 24. Source: IE

- Nearly **30 inscriptions in Tamil-Brahmi, Sanskrit, and Prakrit** inside **six tombs in Egypt's Valley of the Kings.** They dated from the **1st to 3rd centuries CE.**

- About **20 inscriptions** are in Tamil-Brahmi, including the repeated name “Cikai Koṛṛaṇ,” and other names such as **Kopāṇ, Cātaṇ and Kirāṇ.**

About Tamil-Brahmi Script

- It was a variant of the Brahmi script in southern India, also known as **Tamili** or **Damili.**
- **Dated between:** 300 BC and 100 AD
- It is **written in three languages:** Tamil, Prakrit and Pali
- **Distant Feature:** Brahmi characters **have geometric features such as lines, curves, corners, and dots.**
 - Brahmi script is **written from left to right.**
- Tamil Brahmi inscriptions have been **found on cave entrances, stone beds, potsherds, jar burials, coins, seals, and rings.**
- **Greatest work related to Tamil brahmi script:** The Thirukkural, one of the greatest works on ethics and morality was written in Tamil Brahmi.

About Valley of the Kings

- The Valley of the Kings is a **long, narrow valley located just west of the Nile River in Upper Egypt and formed part of the ancient city of Thebes.**
- It served as the **burial site for nearly all pharaohs of the 18th, 19th, and 20th dynasties (1539–1075 BCE),** from Thutmose I to Ramses X.
- In **1979, UNESCO designated the Valley of the Kings as part of the World Heritage Site of ancient Thebes,** which also includes **Luxor, the Valley of the Queens, and Karnak.**

Species Turnover

News- A study in Nature Communications reported that short-term species turnover has slowed in many ecosystems over the past century.

About Species Turnover

- Species turnover is the rate at which species exit and are replaced by others within ecological communities.
- It occurs because of species interactions such as competition, predation, and mutualisms.

Key Aspects of Species Turnover:

- **Spatial Turnover (β -Diversity):** Researchers analysed biodiversity surveys across land, freshwater, and marine habitats, showing variation in species composition across different ecosystems.

- **Temporal Turnover:** Short-term turnover over 1–5 years has slowed in many communities over the last century, often declining by about one-third.
- **Drivers:** Changes in species composition are often shaped by internal ecosystem dynamics, environmental degradation, shrinking regional species pools, and anthropogenic impacts like habitat destruction, pollution, and fragmentation.

Motions of Parliament

News- BJP MP Nishikant Dubey gave notice for a substantive motion against Rahul Gandhi, seeking cancellation of his Lok Sabha membership.

About Motions of Parliament

Meaning

- A motion in Parliament is a formal proposal made by a member of the House to initiate discussion or influence the legislative process. It requests the House to take a specific action, express an opinion, or implement an order.
- A motion is moved only with the consent of the Speaker or Chairman. Once a motion is moved, debate begins, and the House considers the issue.

Different Types of Motions

Motions in Parliament are classified into three main categories, with further subdivisions. Each category has a specific role in guiding parliamentary discussion and decision-making.

- **Substantive Motions:**
 - A substantive motion is a self-contained and independent proposal submitted for the approval of the House.
 - The conduct of persons in high authority can only be discussed on a substantive motion drawn in proper terms.
 - Motions for the impeachment of President, or a no-confidence motion are examples of substantive motions.
- **Substitute Motions:** Substitute motions are moved in place of the original motion for considering a policy, situation, statement, or any other matter. These motions are drafted so that they can express an opinion by themselves. However, they are not strictly substantive motions because they depend on the original motion and are introduced as an alternative to it.

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- **Subsidiary Motions:** Subsidiary motions depend on or relate to other motions, or they follow from some proceedings of the House. They do not have independent meaning and cannot express a decision of the House without reference to the original motion or proceedings.

Other Important Motions in Parliament

- **Closure Motion:** A closure motion is moved to end discussion on a matter that has already been debated. If the House accepts it, further debate stops and the issue is put to a vote. It has different forms, including simple closure, closure by compartments, kangaroo closure, and guillotine closure, which vary in the way debate is limited or concluded.
- **Calling Attention Motion:** This motion is used by a member to draw the attention of a minister to a matter of urgent public importance. The member also seeks an official and authoritative statement from the minister regarding the issue.
- **Privilege Motion:** This motion is raised when a member believes that parliamentary privileges have been violated, especially if a minister has withheld important information or provided false or misleading facts.
- **Adjournment Motion:** This motion is introduced to discuss a definite and urgent public matter. It interrupts the normal business of the House and requires specific support for admission and a minimum duration of debate.
- **No Confidence Motion:** This motion is used in the Lok Sabha to test whether the government still enjoys the support of the majority of members.
- **Confidence Motion:** This motion is moved to prove that the government has majority support in the House, especially in uncertain political situations.
- **Censure Motion:** This motion expresses the House's disapproval or criticism of the policies or actions of ministers.
- **Motion of Thanks:** This motion follows the President's address and is debated in both Houses. Its passage reflects approval of the government's policies.
- **Cut Motion:** This motion allows members to oppose proposed government expenditure by suggesting reductions through disapproval of policy, economic reduction, or token reduction.

Tangkul Hui and Kombai Breeds

News : Indigenous dog breeds from Tamil Nadu and Nagaland are being inducted into Assam Rifles dog squads to gradually replace foreign breeds.

About Tangkul Hui and Kombai Breeds

Background:

- The **Ministry of Home Affairs issued a directive in 2025** to increase the induction of Indian canine breeds in dog squads of all armed forces.
- The **Assam Rifles** is the nodal force implementing this process by identifying suitable indigenous breeds to work with existing trained dogs.
- The **Assam Rifles Dog Training Centre (ARDTC), Jorhat** is the training facility where both breeds will be trained and prepared for operational deployment.

About Tangkul Hui breed



Figure 25. Source-thesangaiexpress

- **Origin:** The Tangkul Hui (also called Haofa) is an indigenous working dog raised by the Tangkul people in Ukhrul district of Manipur and traditionally used for hunting.
- **Key Features**
 - **Disease Resistance:** It is highly disease-resistant and known for strong stamina rather than speed.
 - **Intelligence and Alertness:** It is an intelligent and alert watchdog, typically black with white markings.
 - **Physical Characteristics:** It has a strong body, powerful jaws, and erect ears.
- **Rarity:** It exists in two size varieties and has a limited population, making it rare.

About Kombai breed



Source- Copyright infringement not intended

- **Origin:** The Kombai is an indigenous working dog from Tamil Nadu, especially the Kombai region of Theni district.
- **Key Features**
 - **Strong Physical Build:** It has a broad, muscular and athletic body suited for guard roles.
 - **Distinct Appearance:** It has a short reddish-brown coat with a black mask-like muzzle.
 - **Loyal and Protective Nature:** It is deeply attached to owners and highly defensive.
 - **Traditional Working Role:** It has been used for guarding property and hunting large game.

About Assam Rifles

- It is India's oldest paramilitary force, **established in 1835**.
- The Assam Rifles is often nicknamed "**Sentinels of the North East**" and "**Friends of the Hill People**".
- It functions **under dual control of the Home Ministry administratively and the Defence Ministry operationally**.
- It's primarily responsible for border security, counter-insurgency, and maintaining law and order in the Northeast region.
- Its trained dogs help in seizing arms and narcotics across northeastern states and Jammu and Kashmir.

Bacillus subtilis

News: Kerala became India's first State to declare *Bacillus subtilis* as its State microbe.

About Bacillus subtilis

Source: Animalia life

- It is the **type species for the genus *Bacillus*** which are **gram-positive, spore-forming bacilli**.
- **Found in:** It is **commonly found in diverse environments** ranging from soil to the gastrointestinal tract of cattle and humans.

- **Properties:** It can produce endospores by forming a thick protective layer around its DNA and other cellular components.
 - This **protective structure allows it to withstand harsh chemicals**, extreme temperatures, environmental stresses, and radiation.
 - It is widely used in laboratory research, especially genetic studies, **because its durability and sensitivity to genetic mutations make it easy to study.**
 - It **also produces useful enzymes** that are applied in many industries for various purposes.
- **Application:**
 - As a **probiotic**, it **supports human and animal gut health** and helps digestion.
 - In industry, it is **used to produce important enzymes for food processing**, detergents, and pharmaceuticals.
 - It plays a **role in wastewater treatment and environmental clean-up** by breaking down harmful substances.

Combined Maritime Forces (CMF)

News: The Indian Navy has assumed command of Combined Task Force 154 under the Combined Maritime Forces, reinforcing India's commitment to maritime security and capacity building.

About Combined Maritime Forces (CMF)



Figure 26. Source: PIB

● **About:** Combined Maritime Forces (CMF) is a **multinational maritime partnership** that supports the **International Rules-Based Order to promote security, stability and prosperity** across approximately 3.2 million square miles of international waters.

● **Headquarters:** Bahrain

● **Focus Areas:**

- Counter-narcotics and counter-smuggling operations.

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- Suppresses piracy and enhances maritime security.
- Promotes regional cooperation
- When requested, respond to environmental and humanitarian crises.
- **Combined Task Forces (CTFs): It comprises five Combined Task Forces:**
 - **CTF 150** conducts **Maritime Security Operations outside the Arabian Gulf.**
 - **CTF 151** focuses on **counter-piracy operations.**
 - **CTF 152** conducts **Maritime Security Operations inside the Arabian Gulf.**
 - **CTF 153** supports **maritime security in the Red Sea.**
 - **CTF 154** focuses on **maritime security training.**
- **Membership:** CMF comprises 47 nations.
 - **India** is part of the Combined Maritime Forces (CMF).
 - **Other members include** Albania, Argentina, Australia, Bahrain, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Denmark, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iraq, Italy, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Republic of Korea, Kuwait, Malaysia, Mauritius, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Oman, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Seychelles, Singapore, Spain, Sweden, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Türkiye, UAE, United Kingdom, United States, and Yemen.
- **Mandate:** The member nations operate collaboratively **without being bound by a fixed political or military mandate.**
 - **Participation is purely voluntary.** No nation is asked to carry out any duty that it is unwilling to conduct.
 - The **contribution from each country varies depending on its ability to contribute assets** and the availability of those assets at any given time.
- **Leadership structure:** CMF is **commanded by a U.S. Navy Vice Admiral** who also serves as Commander, U.S. Navy Central Command (NAVCENT) and United States Fifth Fleet.
 - **All three commands are co-located at U.S. Naval Support Activity Bahrain.**
 - The **Deputy Commander** is a **UK Royal Navy Commodore.**
 - **Senior headquarters staff positions** are filled by **personnel from member nations.**

Urban Challenge Fund

News- The Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi approved the launch of the Urban Challenge Fund with total Central Assistance of Rs.1 lakh crore.

About Urban Challenge Fund

- **Type of Scheme:** It is a new centrally sponsored scheme.
- **Ministry involved:** It is implemented by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.
- **Aim:** It aims to build resilient, productive, inclusive, and climate-responsive cities that drive the country's next phase of economic growth.
- **Funding:** The scheme provides total Central Assistance of ₹1 lakh crore, covering 25% of project cost with mandatory market-based financing.
- **Duration:** It will operate from FY 2025–26 to FY 2030–31, with an extendable implementation period up to FY 2033–34.
- **Key Features**
 - **Market-based financing:** At least 50% project funding must come from municipal bonds, bank loans and PPPs.
 - **Transparent Project Selection:** Projects will be chosen through a competitive challenge mode supporting high-impact and reform-oriented proposals.
 - **Reform-linked framework:** Funding is tied to governance, financial, operational and urban planning reforms, supported by defined KPIs and third-party verification.
 - **Private sector participation:** Structured risk-sharing frameworks and service benchmarking will encourage private investment and efficiency.
 - **Credit enhancement support:** A dedicated Rs. 5,000 crore corpus will improve creditworthiness of 4223 cities, especially Tier-II and Tier-III cities.
 - **Comprehensive urban coverage:** Major cities, capitals and eligible smaller ULBs, including those in hilly and North-Eastern regions, will receive support.

PM RAHAT Scheme

News- The Union Cabinet approved PM RAHAT on February 14, 2026, launched from Seva Teerth to strengthen emergency response after road accidents.

About PM RAHAT

- PM RAHAT (**Road Accident Victim Hospitalization and Assured Treatment**) is an emergency healthcare and social security initiative focused on **saving lives after road accidents**.
- **Launched by:** Approved by the Union Cabinet and launched from the Prime Minister's new office at Seva Teerth.
- **Aim:** It aims to ensure timely medical care, financial certainty for hospitals, and a structured emergency response system during the Golden Hour.

Key Features of the Scheme

- **Cashless Treatment:** Every eligible road accident victim receives cashless treatment up to ₹1.5 lakh.
- **Coverage Duration:** Treatment is covered for 7 days from the date of accident.
- **Golden Hour Focus:** Integration with **Emergency Response Support System (ERSS) 112** ensures rapid hospital access during the critical first hour.
- **Stabilisation Window:** Stabilisation treatment is provided for 24 or 48 hours, depending on severity.
- **Implemented Through:** The scheme implemented through a robust, technology-driven framework amalgamating the **Electronic Detailed Accident Report (eDAR)** platform of the Ministry of Road

Transport and Highways with the **Transaction Management System (TMS 2.0)** of the National Health Authority.

- **Reimbursement to Hospitals:** Payments are made through the Motor Vehicle Accident Fund with defined financial mechanisms.
- **Grievance Redressal:** District-level Grievance Redressal Officers ensure accountability and address complaints.

Army Ant Species

News- Researchers from Karnataka and Odisha discovered two new army ant species in Andhra Pradesh's Eastern Ghats, as reported in Asian Myrmecology.



Figure 27. Source- DH

About Army Ant Species

- **They are keystone predators** that play a critical role in regulating arthropod populations and shaping forest biodiversity by consuming large quantities of invertebrates on a daily basis.
- **Scientific name:** The scientific names of the newly discovered army ant species are **Aenictus chittoorensis** and **Aenictus lankamallensis**.
- **Location of Discovery:** They were discovered in the **Sri Venkateswara Wildlife Sanctuary** in the

Southern Eastern Ghats of Andhra Pradesh.

- **Distribution:** They are found mainly in **tropical ecosystems**.
- **Institutions involved:** The research was conducted by scientists from **Ashoka Trust for Research in Ecology and the Environment (ATREE)**, Bengaluru, and **National Institute of Science Education and Research (NISER)**, Odisha.
- **Key Features**
 - **Physical feature:** They possess large, sharp mandibles and a strong stinging ability, which help them capture and subdue prey.
 - **Nomadic Nature:** They **lack permanent nests** and are constantly on the move to find food for their massive colonies.
 - **Bivouacs:** Instead of physical structures, they form temporary living quarters called "bivouacs" using the **interlocked bodies** of worker ants.
 - **Social Structure:** They form massive colonies that carry out coordinated hunting activities.
 - **Sensory Adaptations:** These ants are **practically blind**; they navigate and coordinate mass raids using a sophisticated system of **chemical pheromones**.
 - **Keystone predators:** They regulate arthropod populations and support ecological balance.

Novel Oral Polio Vaccine Type 2 (nOPV2)

News: The World Health Organization has granted prequalification to an additional Novel Oral Polio Vaccine Type 2 (nOPV2).

About Novel Oral Polio Vaccine Type 2 (nOPV2)



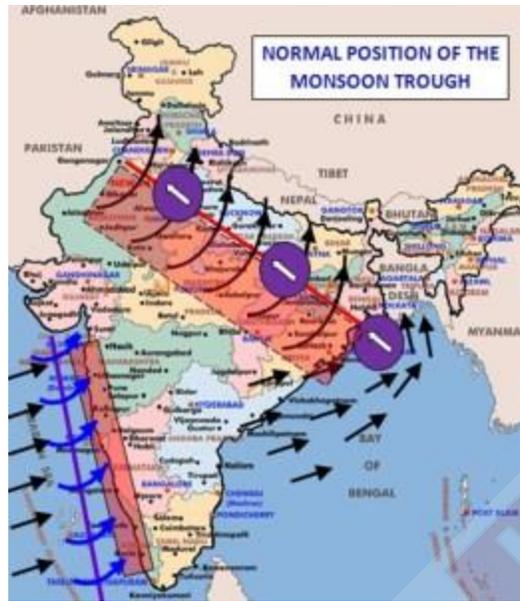
Figure 28. Source: TOI

- It is an improved oral vaccine designed to prevent outbreaks caused by circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus type-2.
- The vaccine is used for active immunization in all age groups, especially during outbreaks of poliovirus type-2.
- **Developed By:** Global Polio Eradication Initiative
- **Type:** Live-attenuated oral vaccine targeting Polio type 2
- **Aim of nOPV2**
 - To stop outbreaks of poliovirus type-2 in a safer and more effective way.
 - To reduce the risk of vaccine-derived virus mutations.
 - To strengthen global progress toward the eradication of polio.
- **Key Features**
 - The vaccine is genetically more stable than the traditional monovalent oral polio vaccine type-2.
 - The improved stability reduces the chance that the vaccine virus will mutate and cause new outbreaks.
 - The vaccine provides strong intestinal immunity, which helps stop virus transmission quickly.
 - It can be supplied in multi-dose vials (20- and 50-dose formats) suitable for high-volume vaccination programs.
 - It has a shelf life of up to 24 months and can be kept at routine vaccine storage temperatures, facilitating use across a range of environments.

Monsoon Breaks

News: New research shows that dry desert winds blowing from the west and northwest of India can help predict monsoon break periods, offering an early warning system for farmers. These breaks, marked by reduced rainfall during the Southwest Monsoon, can seriously affect agricultural production.

About Monsoon Breaks



Source: weather.com

- **About:** During the **south-west monsoon period**, after having rains for a few days if rain fails to occur for one or more weeks, it is known as **Monsoon break**.
- These dry spells are quite common during the rainy season.
- **Reasons for Monsoon Breaks:** Monsoon breaks occur **due to the shifting movement of the monsoon trough** during the Southwest Monsoon.
 - The **trough and its axis move northward or southward** for various reasons, which changes the distribution of rainfall across India.
 - When the **axis of the trough lies over the plains**, these regions receive good rainfall, but **when it shifts toward the foothills of the Himalayas**, dry spells occur in the plains.
 - The **frequency and intensity of tropical depressions forming over the Bay of Bengal also influence** the amount and duration of monsoon rainfall.
 - These **tropical depressions follow the axis of the monsoon trough**, and their variation causes irregular wet and dry spells.

Sangtam Community

News: The apex body of Nagaland's Sangtam community has passed a resolution to protect pangolins within its jurisdiction.

About Sangtam Community

Source: Indigenous Peoples Literature

- **Sangtam** are **Naga ethnic group** in Northeast India.
- **Location:** They mainly reside in **Tuensang District** and **Kiphire District** of Nagaland.
- **Origin:** According to oral traditions, their ancestors may have migrated from **Mongolia** through **China** and have been involved in the construction of the **Great Wall of China**.
- **Clan:** The Sangtam society is divided into six major clan groups, known as **Shuh**.
 - Their villages are structured around **clan systems, with strong kinship bonds** shaping social life.
 - **Community life is active and close-knit**, marked by shared customs and mutual support.

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- They are **well known for their craftsmanship and indigenous architectural styles.**
- **Livelihood:** They traditionally depends on **jhum cultivation (shifting agriculture)** as their main source of livelihood.
- **Religion: Christianity** is the predominant religion among the Sangtam community.
- **Festivals: Mongmong** is one of the most important festivals of the Sangtams. Other festivals are 'vi thung' and hünapungbi.

AI Impact Summit 2026

News: The Union Government is hosting the India AI Impact Summit 2026 in New Delhi, bringing global leaders, policymakers, and innovators together.

About AI Impact Summit 2026



Figure 29. Source – KPMG

- **Hosted by:** The **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** is hosting AI Impact Summit 2026 at **Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi.**
- **Duration:** The summit is being held from **16 to 20 February 2026.**
- **Origin:** It is the **fourth global AI summit**, after earlier meetings in the **United Kingdom, South Korea, and France**, and the first hosted in the **Global South.**
- **Objective:**
 - The summit aims to **move beyond discussion and focus on practical results, stronger cooperation, and real progress** in global AI governance.
 - It seeks to **promote inclusive growth, social development, people-centred innovation**, and environmental protection, while strengthening the voice of developing countries and addressing risks such as job loss, bias, and rising energy use.
- **Theme:** The official theme is **Sarvajana Hitaya, Sarvajana Sukhaya**, meaning “**welfare for all and happiness for all**”.
- **Guiding Principles: Three Sutras**
 - **People:** Focuses on human-centered AI that respects dignity and inclusivity.
 - **Planet:** Emphasizes environmental responsibility and climate resilience in AI development.
 - **Progress:** Aims for inclusive economic growth and social empowerment.
- **Areas of Cooperation: Seven Chakras**
 - **Human Capital:** It focuses on building skills and workforce readiness through AI reskilling.
 - **Inclusion for Social Empowerment:** It promotes shared AI solutions that strengthen citizen-centric services and last-mile delivery.
 - **Safe and Trusted AI:** It develops practical governance and safety frameworks to ensure responsible use.
 - **Resilience, Innovation and Efficiency:** It supports environmentally responsible and equitable AI growth..
 - **Science:** advances research and improves access to data and computing resources.

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- **Democratizing AI Resources:** ensures affordable and equitable access to AI infrastructure.
- **AI for Economic Growth & Social Good:** It promotes inclusive development and impactful applications.
- **Significance:** The summit promotes global collaboration and practical, people-centric artificial intelligence aligned with development priorities and inclusive growth.

Ol Chiki Script

News: Ol Chiki script is in the news due to its centenary celebrations, including commemorative initiatives and growing institutional recognition of its legacy.

About Ol Chiki Script



Source – DD News

- Ol Chiki is the **official script of the Santhali language**, a prominent tribal language with strong oral traditions.
- **Developed by:** It was developed in 1925 by Pandit Raghunath Murmu to provide a scientific and dedicated writing system for Santhali.
- **National Recognition**
 - The **Constitution of India** was **officially translated into Santhali** using the Ol Chiki script and released in **December 2025**.
 - The Government of India issued a **₹100 commemorative coin** and a **postage stamp to mark 100 years of the script**.
- **Key linguistic features include**
 - It is designed exclusively for the Santhali language.
 - It has 30 letters representing vowels and consonants.
 - Each symbol corresponds directly to a specific sound.
 - It accurately captures glottal stops and unique phonetic elements.
- **Significance:** It strengthened linguistic identity, enabled formal education and governance use, and affirmed the cultural heritage and intellectual traditions of the Santhal community.

Twin Tube Road-Cum-Rail Tunnel Project

News: The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs has approved construction of India's first underwater twin tube road-cum-rail tunnel project.

About Twin Tube Road-Cum-Rail Tunnel Project

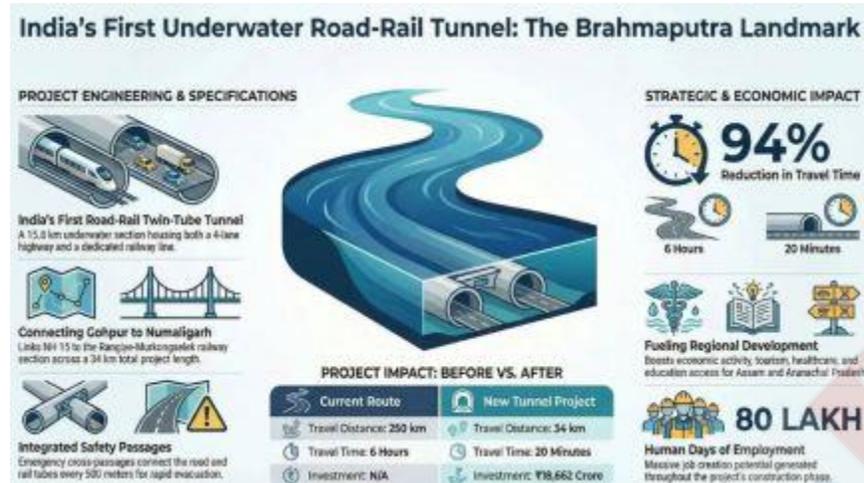


Figure 30. Source – Times Now

- It is **India's first underwater road-cum-rail tunnel project** designed for integrated high-capacity transport connectivity.
- **Location:** The project will be built beneath the **Brahmaputra River in Assam.**
- **Connectivity:** It will connect **Gohpur on NH-15 to Numaligarh on NH-715.**
- **Project Details**
 - **Length:** Total project

length is 34 km, including a 15.79 km underwater tunnel.

- **Cost:** The total capital cost is Rs. 18,662 crore.
- **Construction Mode:** It will be built under the Engineering, Procurement and Construction (EPC) mode.
- **Distance Reduction:** The distance will **reduce from 240 km to 34 km.**
- **Travel Time Reduction:** Travel time will reduce from about 6 hours to 20 minutes.
- **Key Features**
 - **Twin Parallel Tunnels:** Two tunnels enable smooth road and rail movement.
 - **Underwater Engineering:** It will be India's first underwater road-cum-rail tunnel and second in the world.
 - **Multimodal Integration:** Integrates key railway sections – the **Rangia-Mukongselek line under the Rangia Division of Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR)** on the Gohpur side and the **Furkating-Mariani loop line** under the Tinsukia Division of NFR on the Numaligarh side.
 - **Alternative route:** It provides an alternative to the existing route that passes through the ecologically sensitive **Kaziranga National Park.**
- **Significance:** The project will **improve connectivity, enhance freight efficiency, reduce logistics cost, boost tourism, and support economic and strategic growth** in the Northeast region.

SAHI and BODH Initiatives

News: The Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare will launch two key national initiatives SAHI & BODH at the India AI Summit at Bharat Mandapam.

About SAHI (Strategy for Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare for India)



Source – PIB

- **SAHI** stands for **Strategy for Artificial Intelligence in Healthcare for India**.
- **About:** SAHI is a national guidance framework **to enable the safe, ethical, evidence-based, and inclusive adoption of Artificial Intelligence** across India's healthcare system.
- **Aim:** **To provide strategic direction on governance, data stewardship, validation, deployment, and monitoring of AI solutions along with** supporting States and institutions in responsible adoption aligned with public health priorities.

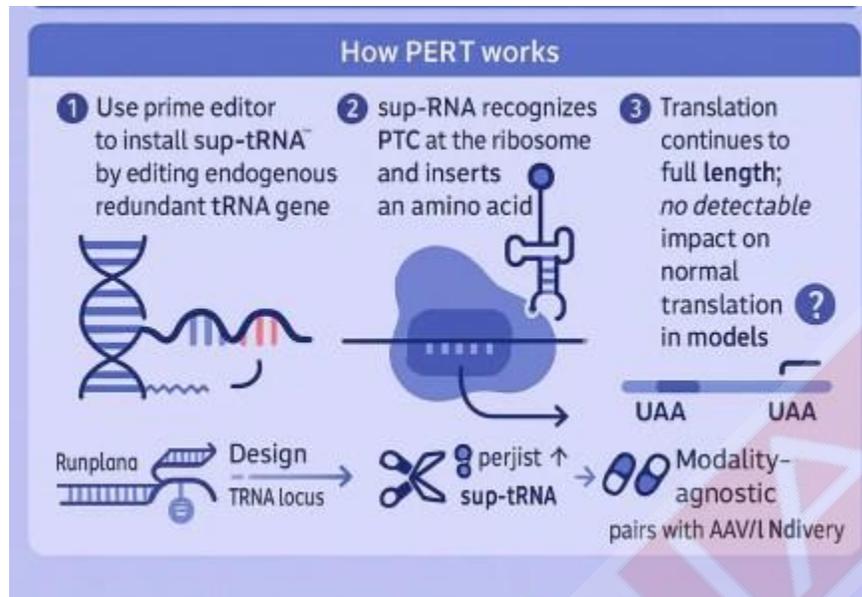
About BODH (Benchmarking Open Data Platform for Health AI)

- **BODH** stands for **Benchmarking Open Data Platform for Health AI**
- **Developed by:** Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur in collaboration with the National Health Authority
- It is a **privacy-preserving benchmarking platform** that enables **rigorous evaluation of AI models using diverse, real-world health data** without sharing underlying datasets.
- It is **designed to strengthen trust, transparency, and quality assurance in Health AI deployment** as a digital public good under the Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission.

Prime-Editing-mediated Readthrough of premature Termination codons (PERT)

News: Researchers from the Broad Institute recently reported a new gene-editing strategy called Prime Editing-Mediated Readthrough of Premature Termination Codons (PERT) that may enable a single treatment to address many genetic diseases caused by nonsense mutations.

About Prime Editing-Mediated Readthrough of Premature Termination Codons (PERT)



Source: dcard

- PERT is a genome-editing strategy designed to treat genetic diseases caused by nonsense mutations, which prematurely halt protein production.
- **Problem addressed** – Nonsense mutations introduce premature termination codons (PTCs) in mRNA, causing early stoppage of translation and resulting in incomplete, nonfunctional proteins responsible for many inherited disorders.
- **Core technology used** – PERT is based on prime editing, an advanced CRISPR/Cas9-based system that works as a precise “search-and-replace” tool and does not create double-strand breaks in DNA.
- **Key mechanism** – PERT does not directly correct the disease-causing mutation. Instead, it inserts an engineered suppressor transfer RNA (tRNA) into the genome.
- **Role of suppressor tRNA** – The engineered tRNA recognizes premature stop codons and inserts an amino acid in place of the stop signal, enabling the ribosome to continue translation and produce a full-length functional protein.
- **Unique feature** – The suppressor tRNA is inserted at a redundant tRNA gene site, ensuring stable expression without disrupting essential genes, and making the strategy independent of the specific mutated gene.
- **Advantages & Limitation** – A single PERT-based therapy could potentially treat multiple unrelated genetic diseases caused by nonsense mutations, reducing time and cost of drug development; however, the technology is still in early research stages and requires further animal and clinical testing to establish safety and long-term efficacy.

Exercise MILAN 2026

News- Indian Navy inaugurated MILAN Village on 15 February 2026 at Eastern Naval Command as part of Exercise MILAN 2026 events.



Figure 31. Source- Jagranjosh

About Exercise MILAN

- Exercise MILAN is a **biennial multilateral naval exercise** hosted by the Indian Navy.
 - **Origin:** It was launched in **1995** under the **Andaman and Nicobar Command**.
 - **Location:** Exercise MILAN 2026 is being held at **Visakhapatnam** from **15 to 25 February 2026**.
 - **Theme:** The theme is **“Camaraderie, Cooperation, Collaboration.”**
- **Aim :** It aims to foster mutual understanding, trust, and professional interaction among maritime partners for a free, open, inclusive, and rules-based maritime order.
 - **Phases:** The exercise typically comprises **two Phase:**
 - **Harbor Phase:** Focuses on professional seminars, cultural exchanges, and social interactions (e.g., the MILAN Village).
 - **Sea Phase:** Involves complex maritime maneuvers including anti-submarine warfare, air defense, and search-and-rescue operations.
 - **Aligned with:** It aligns with India’s **SAGAR** (Security and Growth for All in the Region) and the newly conceptualised **MAHASAGAR** (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions) initiatives.

Bodhan AI

News- Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan announced integration of AI tools in teaching, following the launch of Bodhan AI at IIT Madras.

About Bodhan AI

- Bodhan AI is a **not-for-profit organisation** created to **build the Bharat EduAI Stack for AI-based education across all levels**.
- **Launched by:** It was launched by **Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan** under the **Education Ministry**.
- **Anchoring Institute:** It is developed at the Centre of Excellence in AI for Education hosted by **IIT Madras**.
- **Funding:** It is **supported by an initial ₹500 crore** allocation announced in the Union Budget.
- **Aim:** It aims to make education equitable, high quality, affordable, and accessible by embedding AI to support students, teachers, and institutions.

Key Initiatives

- **Bharat EduAI Stack:** Bodhan AI is developing this as Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI), similar to UPI, to provide open and interoperable AI tools for large-scale educational use.
- **Target Areas:** The platform focuses on personalised student learning, AI support for teachers and parents, and data-informed institutional administration.
- **Multilingual Support:** It aims to build AI capabilities for Indian languages and dialects to ensure inclusive access.

- **Sovereign Infrastructure:** It prioritises building sovereign AI models and infrastructure aligned with India-centric educational needs.

United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA)

News- The Indian Army is hosting the UN Fellowship Training Programme on Small Arms and Light Weapons Control for the Asia-Pacific region.

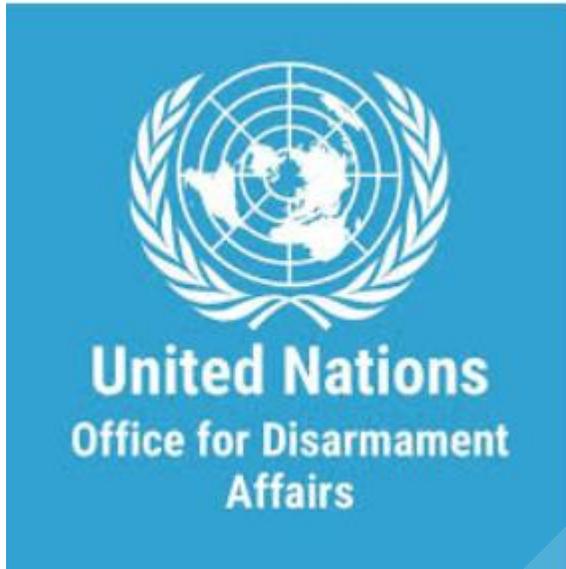


Figure 32. Source- UN

About United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs (UNODA)

- It is a United Nations Secretariat office responsible for promoting global disarmament and arms control.
- **Established:** It was established in January 1998 as the **Department for Disarmament Affairs** under UN reforms.
- **Headquarters:** Its headquarters is located in New York, USA.
- **Primary Goal:** Its main goal is the **complete elimination of weapons of mass destruction and strict control of conventional weapons.**
- **Organisation structure**
 - It is led by an Under-Secretary-General and High Representative.
 - It comprises **five branches**, including the

Weapons of Mass Destruction Branch (WMD), the **Conventional Arms Branch (CAB)**, the **Information and Outreach Branch (IOB)**, the **Conference on Disarmament Secretariat and Conference Support Branch**, and the **Regional Disarmament Branch (RDB)**, which manages three regional centres.

Key Functions

- **Support for Disarmament of Weapons of Mass Destruction:** It supports multilateral efforts for disarmament and non-proliferation of nuclear, chemical, and biological weapons.
- **Control of Conventional Weapons:** It promotes transparency, confidence-building, and practical measures to curb the flow of small arms.
- **Support to the Conference on Disarmament:** It provides organisational and substantive support to the Conference on Disarmament, which is a multilateral negotiating forum.
- **Regional and Advisory Support:** It offers advisory services to member states and coordinates regional disarmament centres and activities.

Piton de la Fournaise

News: Piton de la Fournaise on Reunion Island erupted again, marking its second eruption of the year.

About Piton de la Fournaise



Figure 33. Source: Volcanodiscovery

- It is one of the **world's most active and productive volcanoes**.
- **Type:** It is a **typical basaltic shield volcano**.
- **Location:** It is located on the **east-southeastern edge** of the French island **La Réunion** in the western Indian Ocean.
- **Age:** It is **about 530,000 years old**.
- **Height:** 2632 meters
- It is **in a phase of frequent but short-lived eruptions** that start with lava fountains and produce large lava flows.
- **Status:** In 2010, it gained global recognition after being included in a **UNESCO World Heritage Site**.

Privileges Committee

News- Stand-up comedian Kunal Kamra and Shiv Sena leader Sushma Andhare appeared before Maharashtra Legislative Council Privileges Committee regarding alleged derogatory remarks.

About Privileges Committee

- The Privileges Committee examines cases of breach of privilege of the House, its members, or its committees and makes recommendations.
- **Origin:** Parliamentary privileges in India originated from the Charter Act, 1833 and later developed through the Government of India Act, 1935.

Sources of Parliamentary Privileges- Privileges of Parliament and State Legislatures are derived from several sources:

- **Constitution of India:** Articles 105 and 194 grant privileges to Parliament and State Legislatures.
- **Article 122 and Article 212** bar courts from questioning legislative proceedings on procedural grounds.
- **Parliamentary conventions** based on British parliamentary practices.
- **Statutory laws** enacted by Parliament.
- **Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business** of both Houses.
- **Judicial interpretations** by constitutional courts.

State Legislatures also have their own Privileges Committees, functioning under the privileges granted to them under Article 194.

Power and Functions of the Privileges Committee

- It examines every question of breach of privilege referred by the House or the Speaker/Chairman.
- It determines, based on facts, whether a breach of privilege has occurred.
- It makes recommendations to the House regarding action to be taken.
- It states the procedure for implementing its recommendations.
- It may conduct preliminary inquiry in defection-related petitions if referred by the Speaker/Chairman.

Composition of the Privileges Committee:

- The committee has **15 members in Lok Sabha** and **10 members in Rajya Sabha**.
- Members are **nominated by the Speaker in Lok Sabha** and by the **Chairman in Rajya Sabha**.
- In Rajya Sabha, the **Deputy Chairman heads the committee**.

Procedure

- **Initiation Stage:** A question of privilege is raised only with the consent of the Speaker or the Chairman, who decides whether the matter should proceed further.
- **Reference Decision:** After consent, the House may choose to consider the matter directly or refer it to the Committee of Privileges for detailed examination.
- **Committee Inquiry:** The Committee studies the issue carefully, examines the facts of the case, and prepares a report along with its recommendations.
- **Final Decision:** The House considers the committee's report and takes the final action in accordance with its decision.

Punishment

- If a breach of privilege or contempt of the House is established, punishment may include warning, reprimand, imprisonment, or enforcement of attendance.
- For members, penalties may include suspension or expulsion.
- Custody or punishment may be limited to the duration of the House session.

Pistol Shrimp

News- Researchers from the School of Industrial Fisheries at Cochin University of Science and Technology discovered a new pistol shrimp species in Kochi backwaters.

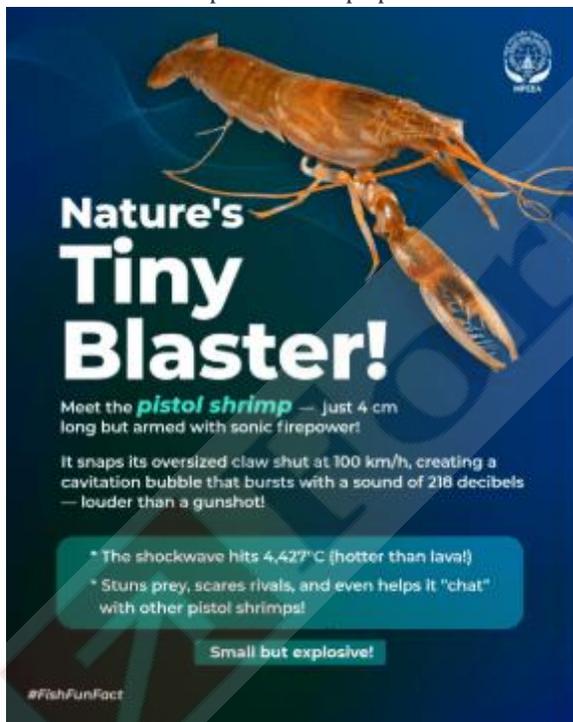


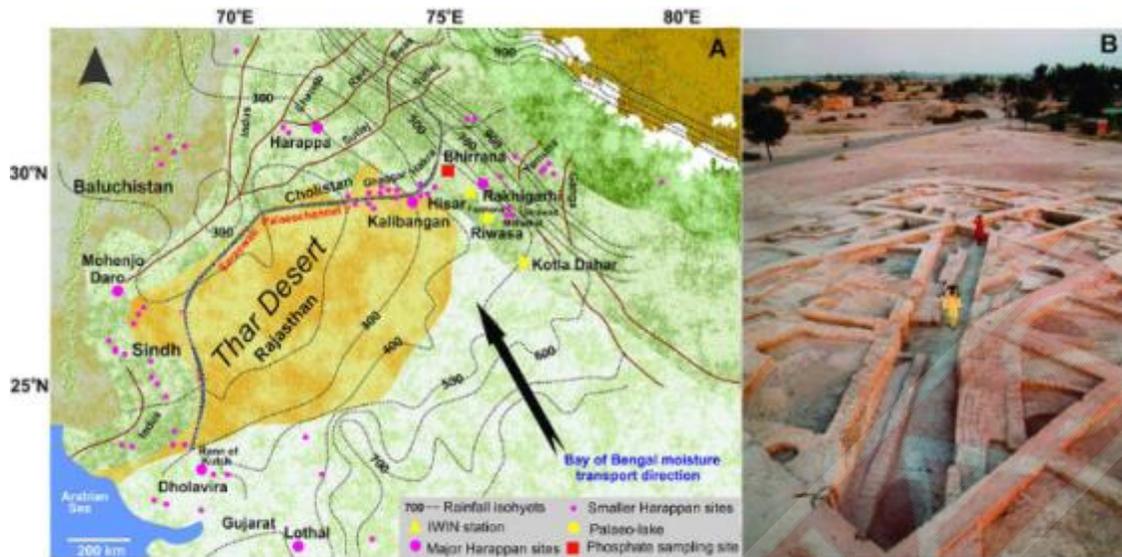
Figure 34. Source- MPEDA

About Pistol Shrimp

- The **Pistol Shrimp**, also known as the **Snapping Shrimp**, is a marine crustacean classified under the family **Alpheidae**.
- It has one disproportionately large claw that can generate an intense underwater shockwave.
- The snapping mechanism produces a **cavitation bubble** rather than firing a solid object.
- When this bubble collapses, it causes **sonoluminescence**, resulting in a brief flash of light.
- The temperature within the collapsing bubble may rise to nearly **4,400°C**, comparable to the surface temperature of the Sun.
- The snapping sound can reach approximately **218 decibels**, ranking among the loudest biological noises in marine environments.
- These shrimps are widely distributed worldwide, particularly in **tropical and temperate coral reefs and seagrass habitats**; they typically inhabit burrows and, in some species, form **mutualistic associations with goby fishes**.

Bharrana Site

News- Researchers using radiocarbon dating at Bharrana indicate that the Harappan Civilisation of the Indian subcontinent could be over 8,000 years old.



Source: Harappa.com

About Bhirrana Site

- Bhirrana is an archaeological site that shows **early settlement phases of the Harappan Civilisation**.
- **Location:** It is located in **present-day Haryana** along the **paleo-channels of the Ghaggar river**.
- **Excavated by:** The site was excavated by **Shri L. S. Rao** of the Archaeological Survey of India.
- **Estimated Age:** Radiocarbon dating indicates that settlement at Bhirrana **dates back nearly 8,000 years**.
- **Evolutionary Phases (Bhirrana)-** The cultural development at Bhirrana is divided into four successive phases showing gradual settlement growth.
 - **Period-IA (Hakra Wares Culture):** This phase shows well-plastered subterranean dwelling pits dug into natural soil, along with a ceramic assemblage.
 - **Period-IB (Early Harappan):** During this phase, houses were built with mud bricks, and pottery showed six fabrics similar to Kalibanga-I.
 - **Period-IIA (Early Mature Harappan):** This phase shows transformation in the city layout, and the settlement was enclosed by a mud-brick fortification wall.
 - **Period-IIB (Mature Harappan):** This final phase shows typical Harappan antiquities, including steatite seals and associated pottery.

Key Findings

- **Material culture and artefacts:** Antiquities include beads of semiprecious stones, terracotta objects, copper bangles, and bone objects.
- **Settlement and cultural sequence:** Excavations revealed a 4.20-metre thick deposit showing a four-fold cultural sequence.

AI-Preneurs of India

News: Atal Innovation Mission under NITI Aayog launched AI-Preneurs of India at the India AI Impact Summit 2026 at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi.

About AI-Preneurs of India



Figure 35. Source: PIB

- **Launched by:** NITI Aayog
- It is a **flagship coffee table publication** that chronicles the journeys of 45 pioneering AI startups that are shaping solutions for real-world challenges.
- The launch **marked the 7th edition of AIM's Innovations For You coffee table series.**
- **Features of the Book**
 - It features **startups working across more than 30 sector domains**, including healthcare, education, sustainability, mobility, sports analytics, deep tech, and social impact.
 - The book **draws from a nationwide network of Atal Incubation Centres** and

reflects the geographic and thematic diversity of India's AI innovation landscape.

- The book **shows that AI innovation in India is extending far beyond traditional technology hubs.**
- This **edition follows a founder-first storytelling approach** that captures technological breakthroughs along with motivations, challenges, and perseverance of entrepreneurs.
- The book **highlights the human stories behind AI innovation** and **shows a shift from profit-centric narratives** to purpose-driven entrepreneurship.

Malabar Pied Hornbill

News- To protect the rare Malabar Pied Hornbill and encourage natural forest growth, the Chhattisgarh Forest Department has begun setting up six "hornbill restaurants" in the [Udanti Sitanadi Tiger Reserve](#).

About Malabar Pied Hornbill (*Anthracoceros coronatus*)



Figure 36. Source- IE

- It is a member of the hornbill family (Bucerotidae) and is also referred to as the Lesser Pied Hornbill.
- **Appearance** - It is a medium-sized forest bird distinguished by its bold black-and-white coloration and a large, curved bill topped with a well-developed casque.
- **Habitat** - This species inhabits evergreen and moist deciduous forests. It is frequently

observed near human habitations, particularly where fruit-bearing trees are present.

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- **Geographical distribution** – It is found in the Western Ghats and north-eastern Himalayan foothill regions of India and Nepal, the Satpura Hills, as well as in Sri Lanka. It is confined to the Indian subcontinent.
- **Feeding behaviour** :
 - Primarily frugivorous and feeds largely on fruits.
 - During the breeding season, it may shift to a more omnivorous diet.
 - Natural predators include leopards, snakes, and the Indian Shaheen Falcon, which has recently seen an increase in population at the Udanti Sitanadi Tiger Reserve.
- **Ecological Importance** – The species serves as an important indicator of forest ecosystem health and stability, reflecting the condition of its habitat.
- **Conservation status** :
 - **IUCN Red List**: Near Threatened.
 - Estimated global population ranges between 3,000 and 32,000 mature individuals

Rajya Sabha Elections

News- The Election Commission announced biennial elections for 37 Rajya Sabha seats across 10 states, with polling scheduled on 16 March.

About Rajya Sabha Elections :

Rajya Sabha elections are indirect elections through which representatives of States and Union Territories are chosen for the Upper House.

Constitutional Provision:

- **Article 80 (1):**
 - The Rajya Sabha shall consist of the President and not more than 250 members.
 - Out of these, 12 are nominated by the President and the rest represent the States and Union Territories.
- **Article 80 (2):** The allocation of seats in the Rajya Sabha to the States and Union Territories shall be as specified in the Fourth Schedule.
- **Article 80 (3):** The members nominated by the President shall be persons having **special knowledge or practical experience in literature, science, art, or social service.**
- **Article 80 (4):** Representatives of each State are elected by the elected members of the State Legislative Assembly in accordance with **proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote.**
- **Article 80 (5):** Representatives of Union Territories are chosen in such manner as Parliament may by law prescribe.

Term: The Rajya Sabha is **not subject to dissolution**, and **one-third of its members retire every second year.**

Qualification: **Article 84 of the Constitution lays down the qualifications** for membership of Parliament. Qualification for the membership of the Rajya Sabha are:

- A person must be a **citizen of India** and take an **oath or affirmation before an authorised person of the Election Commission.**
- The person must **not be less than 30 years of age.**
- The person must possess **other qualifications prescribed by law made by Parliament.**

Composition: At present, the Rajya Sabha has 245 seats, including elected members and nominated members.

Manner of Election:

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- **Indirect Election:** Representatives of States are elected indirectly by elected members of State Legislative Assemblies.
- **Voting System:** Elections follow proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote. **Representation of the People Act, 1951**, Mandates that the election is conducted through a **single transferable vote** system.
- **Union Territories:** Representatives of Union Territories are chosen in a manner prescribed by Parliament.
- **Polling Condition:** Polling takes place only when the number of candidates exceeds the number of vacancies.
- **Open Ballot:** Voting is conducted through an open ballot under the Representation of the People Act, 1951, as amended in 2003. MLAs of political parties must show their ballot to the authorised party agent, while independent MLAs cannot show their ballot.

Anti-defection law applicability:

- The Election Commission clarified in July 2017 that the provisions of the **Tenth Schedule, including the anti-defection law, do not apply to Rajya Sabha elections.**
- Therefore, **political parties cannot issue a whip**, and members are not bound by party instructions in these elections.

Naneghat Caves

News= Over the past year, illegal constructions were reported in protected areas near = Naneghat rock-cut caves, leading to ASI criminal cases and initiation of demolition process.

About Naneghat Caves

- The Naneghat caves are ancient **rock-cut caves** from the **first century BCE** known for important inscriptions and trade-route significance.
- **Location:** They are located in a mountain pass in the **Western Ghats** between the **Konkan coast and Junnar** in **Junnar taluka of Pune district in Maharashtra.**
- **Commissioned by:** They were commissioned by a queen of the Satavahana dynasty, Nayanika or Naganika, likely the wife of king Satakarni.
- **Key features**
 - **Language and Script of Inscriptions:** The caves contain Sanskrit inscriptions written in Brahmi script and in a Middle Indo-Aryan dialect.
 - **Religious Affiliation and Rituals:** The inscriptions mention **Vedic and Hinduism deities** and describe **Vedic sruta rituals.**
 - **Satavahana Historical Record:** They narrate details of the lives of the Satavahana royal family and record names that provide historical information about early rulers.
 - **Early Numeration Symbols:** The inscriptions display the world's oldest numeration symbols for 2, 4, 6, 7 and 9 resembling modern Nagari and Hindu-Arabic numerals.

Municipal Bonds

News- The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs organised a high-level consultation to discuss strategies for deepening the municipal bond market.

About Municipal Bonds

A municipal bond is a debt instrument issued by municipal corporations or urban local bodies to raise funds from investors.

Evolution in India:

- Municipal bonds **was introduced in India during the 1990s**, following the process of urban decentralisation and the reforms initiated by **the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992**, which empowered ULBs to act as independent entities.
- Municipal bonds were first issued by the **Bangalore Municipal Corporation (BMP) in 1997**.
- **The Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) bond of 1998 was the first issue to be rated and listed**

Concept and Mechanism: Municipal bodies borrow funds from investors and repay principal with interest over a specified period. Investors include mutual funds, banks, insurance companies, and retail investors.

Purpose: The funds raised are used to finance socio-economic development and urban infrastructure projects such as water supply, waste management, transport, and housing.

Regulatory Framework and Institutional Support

- **Regulation:** Securities and Exchange Board of India (**SEBI**) regulates issuance through the Issue and Listing of Municipal Debt Securities Regulations, 2015.
- **Policy Support:** MoHUA provides policy support and coordination with urban local bodies.
- **Financial Oversight:** RBI supervises financial transactions and ensures fiscal compliance.
- **Credit Assessment:** Credit rating agencies evaluate the creditworthiness of municipal bodies.

Types of Municipal Bonds

- **General Obligation Bonds:** Repayment is secured by overall municipal revenue, including tax income.
- **Revenue Bonds:** Repayment comes from income generated by specific projects.
- **Green Municipal Bonds:** Issued to fund environmentally sustainable infrastructure projects.

Beat the Heat

News: During Mumbai Climate Week, the Maharashtra government announced that 30 Indian cities have joined the global Beat the Heat programme.

About Beat the Heat

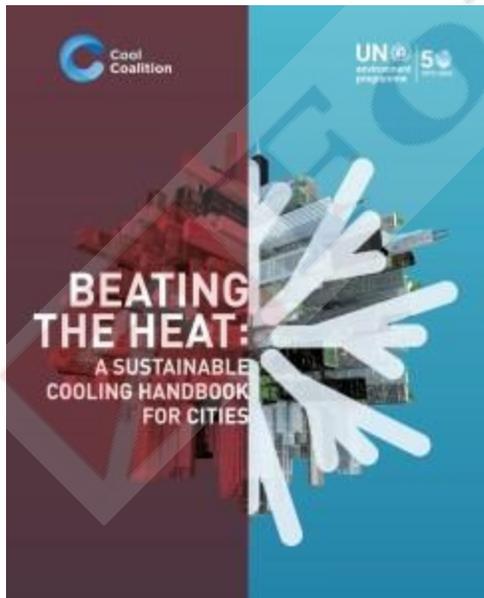


Figure 37. Source: UNEnvironment

- It is an initiative announced under COP30 Presidency (Brazil).
- **Led by:** United Nations Environment Programme (Cool Coalition)
- **Aim:** To translate global climate commitments into practical local actions to reduce extreme heat risks.
- **Features:**
 - The programme **helps cities assess heat risks and identify areas** that need cooling solutions.
 - It **promotes increasing green cover, using cool roofs, and adopting eco-friendly urban planning practices**.
 - It **supports the use of efficient and low-emission cooling technologies** through public procurement policies.
 - It **encourages long-term planning for heat resilience** instead of only emergency responses.
 - It **supports the Global Cooling Pledge**, under which 72 countries are working to reduce cooling-related emissions by over 60% by 2050 while expanding access to sustainable cooling.

- **India's Participation:** India has 44 cities participating in this international initiative, of which Maharashtra accounts for a major share—nearly 70% of the total Indian cities involved.

VoicERA

News: Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology recently launched by VoicERA.

About VoicERA



Figure 38. Source: NewsonAir

- **VoicERA** is an open-source, end-to-end Voice AI technology stack that was launched at the India AI Impact Summit 2026.

- The platform is **deployed on the BHASHINI National Language Infrastructure** to support multilingual voice and language AI systems across India.

- **Led by:** Digital India BHASHINI Division under the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology**.

- The development of VoicERA

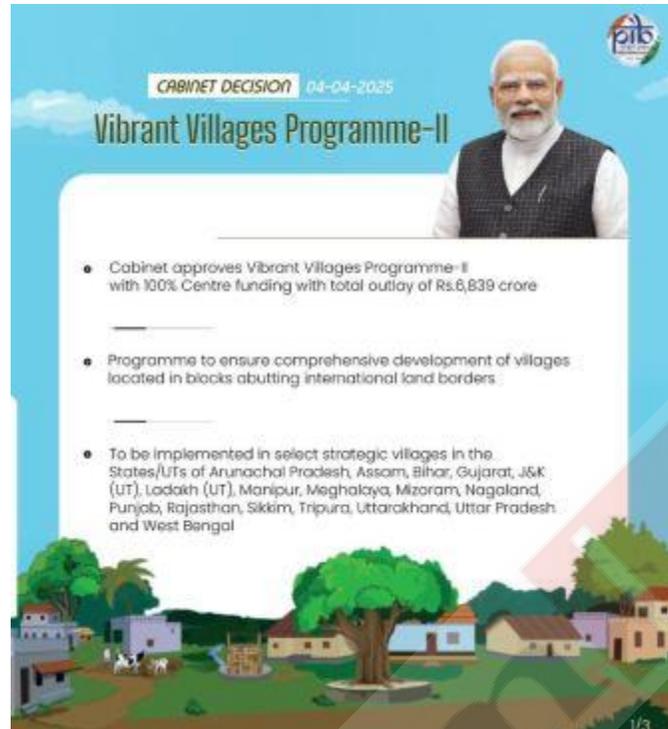
involved **collaboration with organizations such as EkStep Foundation, IIT Bengaluru, and AI4Bharat.**

- **Features:**
 - VoicERA is **designed to be open, modular, interoperable, cloud-deployable, and on-premise ready** so that organizations can easily build scalable voice systems.
 - The platform **helps reduce duplication of development effort and prevents vendor lock-in** by allowing multiple stakeholders to build on a shared infrastructure.
 - **VoicERA expands BHASHINI's capabilities** beyond translation into real-time speech systems, conversational AI, and multilingual telephony services.
 - The system **enables government departments to quickly launch voice-based citizen services in areas** such as agriculture advice, education support, grievance redressal, and public scheme information.
- **Significance:** VoicERA strengthens India's Digital Public Infrastructure by providing a secure, scalable, and inclusive voice interface for population-scale public services.

Vibrant Villages Programme-II (VVP-II)

News: Union Home Minister Amit Shah launched Vibrant Villages Programme-II in Nathanpur village of Assam with an outlay of ₹6,839 crore.

About Vibrant Villages Programme-II (VVP-II)



Source – PIB

- It is a programme for **comprehensive development of villages in blocks along international land borders**, expanding the **focus beyond northern border areas** to other international border regions.
- **Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Home Affairs (MoHA)**
- **Type of Scheme:** It is a **Central Sector Scheme** approved with an outlay of ₹6,839 crore.
- **Objectives:** The programme aims to **improve living conditions, create livelihood opportunities, ensure prosperous and safe borders, control trans-border crime, and integrate border populations with the nation.**
- **Implementation Period:** It will be **implemented till financial year 2028-29.**
- **Geographic Coverage:** It will cover **selected strategic villages** along international land borders in **17 states and UTs, excluding northern border areas already covered under Vibrant Villages Programme-I.**

About Vibrant Villages Programme (VVP-I)

- It was approved as a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme on 15 February 2023 for northern border villages.**
- It covered **662 villages across Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Sikkim, Uttarakhand, and Ladakh.**
- It focused on **livelihood generation, connectivity, infrastructure, and basic services** to encourage people to stay in border villages.

Himalayan Salamander

News: Every monsoon in Darjeeling hills, breeding habitats of the Himalayan salamander are shrinking, prompting restoration efforts by the West Bengal Forest Department.

About Himalayan Salamander



Figure 39. Source – East Mojo

- The **Himalayan salamander (Tylotriton himalayanus)** is a rare, semi-aquatic amphibian **found in the hilly regions of the Eastern Himalaya.**

- It is **one of only two salamander species** in India, the other **being Tylotriton verrucosus.**

- **Habitat:** It lives in **cold mountainous regions**, including forests, rice fields, tea gardens, and shores of mountain ponds and lakes.

- **Distribution:** It occurs from **Nepal eastwards through the eastern Himalayas to Southeast Asia**, including India, Bhutan,

Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam, and Southwest China.

- In **India**, it is recorded from several northeastern regions, including the **Darjeeling district.**

- **Key characteristics**

- **Body structure:** It has a **lizard-like body** with a blunt oval head, flat snout, distinct bony ridges, rows of knob-like dorsal warts, and a laterally compressed tail with a fin fold.
- **Colouration:** Its body is **dark to light brown** on the upper side, becomes light brown on the sides, and appears creamy on the lower side
- **Behavior:** It emerges from beneath the forest floor during the monsoon to breed, performs a **slow mating dance for about 90 minutes**, and **migrates to seasonal ponds** to lay eggs on semi-submerged vegetation.

- **Threat**

- Habitat destruction
- Pollution
- Freshwater fish introduction
- Killing for food or medicinal use threaten survival

- **Conservation Status:**

- **Schedule I** of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972
- **Least Concern by the IUCN**

Tirukkural

News: Thiruvalluvar was invoked by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thiruvalluvar Day, praising his works and urging people to read Tirukkural.

About Tirukkural



Source – Bharat Bharati

- The *Tirukkural* (literally “Sacred Couplets”) is a **classical Tamil text** consisting of 1,330 couplets on **ethics, politics, economics, and love**.
- **Authored by:** It was authored by **Thiruvalluvar**.
- **Timeline:** It was composed during the **post-Sangam period**, roughly **between 100 CE and 500 CE**.
- **The Three Pillars:** The text is **divided into three sections** reflecting the goals of life:
 - **Aram (Virtue):** Focuses on individual ethics and moral codes (Dharma).
 - **Porul (Wealth/Polity):** Discusses governance, statecraft, and economy (Artha).
 - **Inbam (Love):** Deals with personal relationships and emotional life (Kama).
- **Key Features**
 - **Structure:** It contains **1,330 stanzas arranged into 133 chapters**, each with **ten couplets**.
 - **Ethics:** It emphasizes **moral conduct** and the **realities of human life**.
 - **Equality:** It **discourages divisions based on religion, caste, creed, and race**.
 - **Wide scope:** It discusses personal conduct, **social life, governance, justice, and family life**.
 - **Universal relevance:** It is widely **applicable across communities** and is seen as a **pillar of Tamil literary heritage**.

About Thiruvalluvar

- He was a **celebrated Tamil poet-philosopher** and moral **teacher** whose ethical vision transcended religious and cultural boundaries.
- **Titles:** He is known by **several titles**, including **Mudharpaavalar and Deivappulavar**.
- His **birthplace** is believed to be **Mylapore near Chennai**.
- His ideas emphasize **morality, education, and human welfare** through ethical action.
- **Thiruvalluvar Day:** Celebrated annually on the **second day of the Tamil month Thai (January)**.

Bio-AI Mulankur

News: DBT along with the Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC), will establish “Bio-AI Mulankur” hubs in 2026.

About Bio-AI Mulankur

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Source: birac

- **“Bio-AI Mulankur” hubs** is to create integrated, closed-loop research platforms where AI-based predictions, laboratory validation and data analytics operate in a unified framework.
- **Established by:** Department of Biotechnology (DBT) and the Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC)
- The initiative **aligns with the Biotechnology for Economy, Environment, & Employment Policy.**
- **Aim:** To **strengthen high-performance biomanufacturing** to drive economic growth, environmental sustainability and employment generation.
- **Objective:** To institutionalise AI as a core scientific engine within biotechnology
- **Bio-AI hubs are proposed to be established across academia and industry** to provide **critical and novel research** leads impacting **Health, Agriculture and Environment through conglomeration of AI and Biology.**
- **Focus:** The hubs will **focus on frontier domains** including **Genomics diagnostics, Biomolecular and therapeutic design, Synthetic biology and Ayurveda-based evidence research.**

Bharat GI

News: Sundar Pichai, CEO of Google and Alphabet Inc., visited the Bharat GI Coffee Lounge at the Bharat Mandapam during the India AI Impact Summit 2026.

About Bharat GI

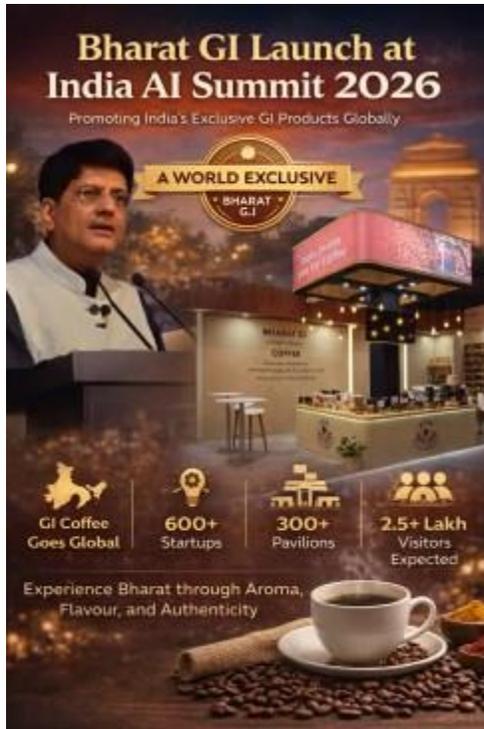


Figure 40. Source: Zee Business

- Bharat GI as a **unified national intellectual property brand** to showcase India's unique GI products to the global market.
- **Launched By:** Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)
- **Aim:** It is marketed under the tagline "A World Exclusive" and aims to give GI products global recognition, premium branding, and international visibility.
- **Products Covered:** It includes items such as GI coffee, spices, handicrafts, textiles, and other region-specific products that reflect India's cultural identity.
- **About Bharat GI Coffee**
 - Bharat GI Coffee is a **national brand** by the **Commerce Ministry**.
 - It is to promote **Geographical Indication-tagged products, and houses coffees from multiple regions** like Coorg and Araku Valley.

International Energy Agency (IEA)

News- At the recent annual ministerial meeting in Paris, the IEA welcomed progress on India's request for full membership of the organisation.

About International Energy Agency (IEA)

- IEA is an autonomous intergovernmental organisation within the OECD framework working on energy security and sustainable energy cooperation.
- **Establishment:** It was established in **November 1974** in response to the global oil crisis.
- **Headquarters:** It is based in **Paris**.

Core Mandate

- It maintains systems to **address oil supply disruptions**.
- It **promotes rational global energy policies and cooperation**.
- It **monitors international oil markets and energy trends**.
- It supports energy technology collaboration and policy integration.

Membership Criteria

- Membership is **limited to OECD countries**.
- Countries **must maintain oil reserves equal to 90 days of net imports**.
- They must **have emergency response measures and reporting systems**.

Governance & Structure

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- **Governing Board:** It is the main **decision-making body**, composed of Energy Ministers or their representatives, and its decisions are binding on members.
- **Ministerial Meeting:** It is held **every two years to set strategic priorities** and guide future work programmes.
- **Standing Groups:** The IEA has four Standing Groups — Long-Term Co-operation (SLT), Emergency Questions (SEQ), Oil Market (SOM), and Global Energy Dialogue (SGD).
- **Committee:** The Committee on Energy Research and Technology (CERT) supports technology development and cooperation.

Major Reports & Publications

- World Energy Outlook, World Energy Balances, Energy Technology Perspectives, World Energy Statistics, and Net Zero by 2050.

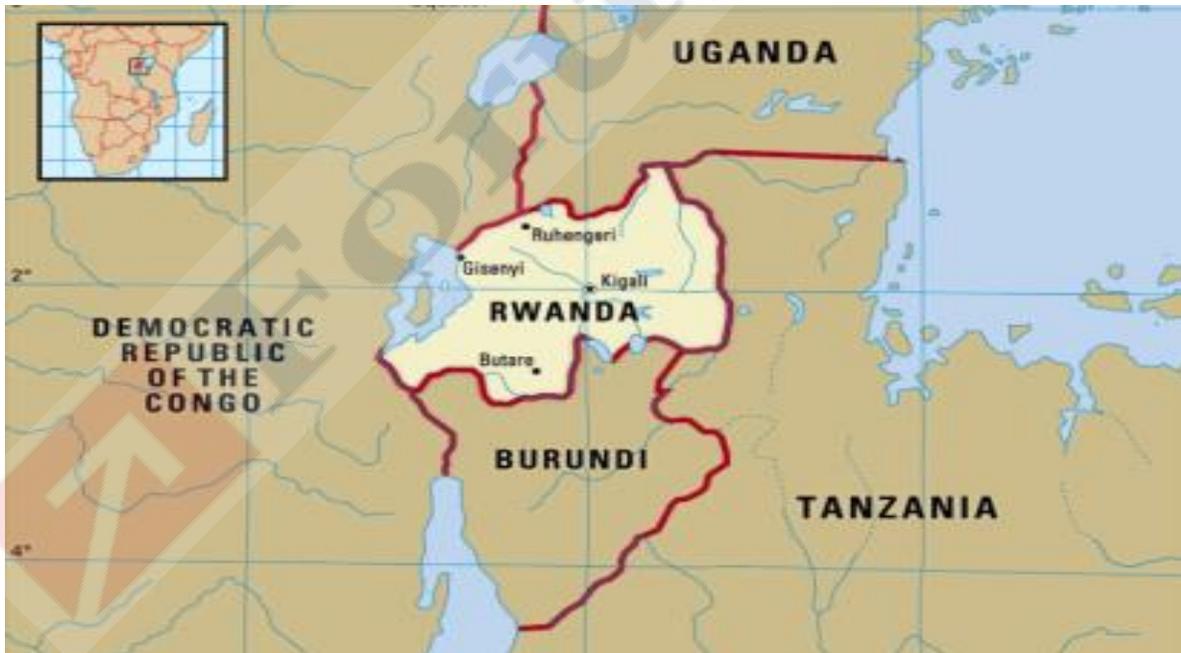
India and the IEA

- **Status:** India became an Associate member in 2017.
- **Strategic Partnership:** India seeks full membership, which requires changes to the IEA's founding legal framework.

Key Facts about Rwanda

News- India expressed readiness to deepen engagement with Rwanda in emerging technologies and innovation sectors.

About Rwanda



Source- Britannica

- Rwanda is a **landlocked country in East Africa**, known as the “**Land of a Thousand Hills**” due to its high elevation and rolling terrain.
- **Location:** Rwanda lies **south of the Equator in east-central Africa** and forms part of the **Great Rift Valley region**.

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- **Border:** Rwanda shares borders with **Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.**
- **Capital:** The capital and largest city is **Kigali.**
- **Geographical Features**
 - **Terrestrial ecoregions:** Rwanda has **three terrestrial ecoregions**, namely the Albertine Rift montane forests, the Victoria Basin forest-savanna mosaic, and the Ruwenzori-Virunga montane moorlands.
 - **Mountain ranges:** The country's major mountain ranges include **the Albertine Rift and the Virunga ranges.**
 - **Major peak:** The highest peak in Rwanda is **Mount Karisimbi**, which rises to 4,507 metres.
 - **Major rivers:** Rwanda is connected to the **Nile and Congo river systems**, including rivers such as **Nyabarongo, Kagera, Ruzizi, Luhwa, and Akanyaru.**
 - **National Resources:** Rwanda possesses limited natural resources, including deposits of gold, tin ore, tungsten ore, and methane.

Merchandise Trade Indices

News- India's Merchandise Trade Indices have been revised with a new base year FY 2022-23 to reflect structural changes in trade patterns.

About Merchandise Trade Indices

- Merchandise Trade Indices measure changes in the unit values and quantities of India's exports and imports over time.
- **Published by:** It is compiled and published by the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics (DGCI&S), Ministry of Commerce & Industry.
- **Purpose**
 - It measures changes in the unit values and quantities of India's exports and imports.
 - It indicates external sector price movements and supports economic analysis and national accounts compilation.
- **Usage**
 - Government institutions use these indices for **economic analysis and policy formulation.**
 - The National Accounts Division uses them as **deflators for estimating real exports and imports.**
 - The Reserve Bank of India uses them for **external sector and balance of payments analysis.**
 - Ministries, research organisations, and analysts use them for **trade policy review and empirical research.**
- **Base Year:** The base year has been **revised from FY 2012-13 to FY 2022-23 (2022-23 = 100).**
- **Revision Committee:** The revision was recommended by a committee constituted by DGCI&S under the chairmanship of Prof. Nachiketa Chattopadhyay, Indian Statistical Institute, Kolkata.
- **Indices Compiled**
 - The revised series includes **monthly, quarterly and annual export and import unit value indices.**
 - It includes trade indices **classified by Principal Commodity, Standard International Trade Classification (SITC), and Broad Economic Categories (BEC).**
 - It includes **bilateral and region-wise trade indices for India's top 20 export and import partner nations.**

- It includes Terms of Trade indices (Net, Gross and Income Terms of Trade).

Improved Methodology: Methodological refinements have been introduced in the selection of the common commodity basket and in the treatment of missing unit values, as explained in the committee report.

Taftan volcano

News: The Taftan Volcano in southeastern Iran has risen by about 3.5 inches (9 cm) over a period of ten months.

About Taftan volcano



Figure 41. Source: VolcanoDiscovery

- **Location:** Mount Taftan is a stratovolcano situated in southeast Iran, close to the border with Pakistan.
- **Volcano Type:** Composite stratovolcano
- **How it is formed:** It was formed by the subduction of the Arabian ocean crust under the Eurasian continent.
- **Composition:** It is built of layers of lava and ash. It vents through summit fumaroles (volcanic vents that emit gas).
- **History:** It was believed to have been dormant for roughly 7.1 lakh years.
- **Height:** It rises about 4,000 meters (13,000 feet) above sea level, making it the tallest peak in southeastern Iran.
- **Summits:** Narkuh and Matherkuh
- It features an active hydrothermal system with sulfur-emitting fumaroles.

Gentoo penguin

News: Gentoo penguin have become the first bird species confirmed with H5 avian influenza on an Australian territory, after testing positive on Heard Island.

About Gentoo penguin



Figure 42. Source: animalia

- The Gentoo penguin (*Pygoscelis papua*) belongs to the genus *Pygoscelis*.
- They are closely related to the Adélie penguin and Chinstrap penguin.
- **Distribution**-They are mainly found along the coasts of the Antarctic Peninsula, nearby sub-Antarctic islands, and the Falkland Islands in the southern Atlantic Ocean.
- **Habitat**-These penguins usually live along coastal areas, which helps them easily reach the sea for food while remaining close to their nesting sites.
- **Characteristics of Gentoo Penguins**

- **Fastest swimmers:** Gentoo penguin are the fastest underwater swimmers among all penguin species.
- **Geographical range:** They are found exclusively in the Southern Hemisphere, typically between 45° and 65° south latitude.
- **Behavior:** These birds are diurnal and highly social, breeding in large colonies and staying together throughout the year.
- **Diet:** Gentoo penguins are carnivorous (piscivorous), primarily feeding on fish, along with krill and other marine organisms.
- **Conservation status:**
 - **IUCN Red List:** Least Concern

Takeshima / Dokdo Islands

News: South Korea recently protested a Japanese government-backed “Takeshima Day” event, calling it an unjust assertion of sovereignty.

About Takeshima / Dokdo Islands



Source: ResearchGate

- It is located in the **south-western part of the Sea of Japan.**
- It is **known as Takeshima in Japan and Dokdo in South Korea.**
- It is **215 kms from mainland Korea and 250 kms from Japan.**
- It has also been known as the Liancourt Rocks, named by French whalers after their ship in 1849.
- It is a group of islands, including the **two main islands, Mejima (Higashijima) Island and Ojima (Nishijima) Island** and around 30 smaller rocks.
- **Administration:**
 - It is **currently administered by the Republic of Korea (ROK).**

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- Japan claims sovereignty over islands, and it **remains a source of tension between Japan and South Korea** since long time.
- **Strategic and economic significance:** It is located in rich fishing waters and may also contain vast reserves of natural gas hydrate.

Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL)

News- India and Brazil exchanged the Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL) access Agreement during President Lula's State Visit to India in February 2026.



Source- PIB

About Traditional Knowledge Digital Library (TKDL)

- It is a **globally unique database of Indian traditional knowledge.**
- **Established by:** It was **established in 2001** by the Government of India.
- **Ministry involved:** The Ministry of AYUSH was involved in its establishment in collaboration with **Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR).**
- **Objective:** Its primary objective is to prevent the erroneous grant of patents on Indian traditional knowledge and to safeguard the country's knowledge heritage from misappropriation.

Key Features

- **Comprehensive Database:** It contains information on over 5.2 lakh formulations and practices from **Ayurveda, Unani, Siddha, Sowa Rigpa and Yoga, sourced from authoritative traditional texts.**
- **Structured and Translated Content:** Knowledge from multiple languages and disciplines is translated, structured and linked with modern scientific and technical terminology.
- **Multilingual Access:** The database is available in **English, German, French, Japanese and Spanish.**
- **Controlled Access:**
 - Access to the TKDL database is provided to patent offices through Non-Disclosure Agreements to ensure controlled use.
 - With the inclusion of the National Institute of Industrial Property (INPI) of Brazil, the total number of patent offices worldwide that have access to the TKDL has increased to eighteen.

National Monetisation Pipeline 2.0 (NMP 2.0)

News- Union Finance Minister launched National Monetisation Pipeline 2.0, targeting Rs. 16.72 lakh crore asset monetisation during FY 2026–2030.



Source- PIB

About National Monetisation Pipeline 2.0 (NMP 2.0)

- It is the **second phase of the government's asset monetisation programme.**
- It provides a medium-term roadmap for **monetising operational public infrastructure assets to generate resources for new infrastructure development.**
- **Developed by:** It has been **developed by NITI Aayog** in consultation with infrastructure line ministries.
- **Implementing by:** It is implemented under the **guidance of the Ministry of Finance.**
- **Monitored by:** It is monitored by the Core Group of Secretaries on Asset Monetisation under the Cabinet Secretary.
- **Aim**
 - It aims to recycle public assets and mobilise funds for fresh infrastructure development without increasing fiscal burden.
 - It also aims to provide visibility and investment opportunities for private sector participation.
- **Total Target:** The total **monetisation potential under NMP 2.0 is Rs. 16.72 lakh crore** for FY 2026–2030.
- **Private Investment:** It includes private sector investment of Rs. 5.8 lakh crore.
- **Asset Type:** It focuses on **monetising operational brownfield public infrastructure assets.**

Key Features

- **Medium-Term Roadmap:** It provides a structured methodology and roadmap for ministries and investors.
- **Multiple Monetisation Models:** It includes PPP concessions, InvITs, securitisation of cash flows, strategic auctions, and partial divestments.
- **Revenue Allocation Mechanism:** Proceeds are allocated to Consolidated Fund of India, PSUs, State Consolidated Funds, or recorded as direct private investment.

- **Sector-Wide Coverage:** It covers highways, railways, power, ports, coal, mining, telecom, aviation, tourism and urban infrastructure.
- **Process Standardisation:** It focuses on simplification and time-bound execution based on lessons from NMP 1.0.

About National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP 1.0)

- It was announced in August 2021 by NITI Aayog as a four-year plan covering FY22 to FY25.
- It seeks to unlock Rs. 6 lakh crore by leasing brownfield infrastructure assets to private players while retaining government ownership.
- It aims to generate revenue for new infrastructure, improve asset efficiency, and increase private sector participation

Kole Wetlands

News: A scientific study at the Kole wetlands recorded 12 species of pygmy grasshoppers, including four species newly documented in the State.

About Kole Wetlands

Source: ResearchGate

- It is the **largest brackish, humid tropical wetland ecosystem on the southwest coast of India.**
- **Location:** The Kole wetlands are **located in Kerala and spread over Thrissur and Malappuram districts.**
- **Named after:** They are named after “Kole”, which **indicates a field that gives a bumper crop in Malayalam.**
- **Recognition**– It was declared as a Ramsar site of international importance in 2002.
- **Rivers associated:** The rivers that feed the wetlands include **Karuvannur, Kecheri and the Puzhakkal.**
- **Features:**
 - The Kole areas are **low-lying and have a central, narrow strip covering a long expanse,** with many pockets running into cultivated land on either side.
 - The region **is naturally subject to saltwater intrusion,** and **during the monsoon, the entire region gets submerged** under water, which is cultivated by draining the water and by erecting bunds.
- **Wildlife:** The wetlands have been **recognised as one of India’s Important Bird Areas** by BirdLife International.
 - They are **considered the third largest bird area in India** after Chilika Lake and Amipur Tank.

About Pygmy grasshoppers

- Pygmy grasshoppers are **small, ground-dwelling insects.**
- They are **typically associated with moist habitats.**
- They are **highly sensitive to changes in microhabitat conditions and act as a valuable bio-indicators** of wetland health.
- Pygmy grasshoppers are characterised by **an extended pronotum that covers much of their body.**

PRASHAD scheme

News: The Centre is planning to develop tourist sites around major temples in Andhra Pradesh under the PRASHAD scheme.

About PRASHAD scheme

- The full form of the PRASHAD scheme is '**Pilgrimage Rejuvenation And Spiritual Augmentation Drive**'.
- It is a **Central Sector Scheme**.
- It was **launched in the year 2014-2015** with the **objective of integrated development of identified pilgrimage and heritage destinations**.
- **Launched by:** Ministry of Tourism.
- **Aim:** To integrate pilgrimage destinations in a **prioritised, planned and sustainable manner to provide a complete religious tourism experience**.
- **Focus:** This scheme **focuses on developing and identifying pilgrimage sites across India** for enriching the religious tourism experience.
- **Funding:** It intends to **utilize voluntary contributions through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and Public-Private Partnerships (PPP)** to strengthen the long-term sustainability of its projects.
- **Components of the scheme:**
 - **Infrastructure Development:** Development of tourism infrastructure at pilgrimage sites, including basic amenities, last-mile connectivity, lighting, parking, and other facilities for visitor convenience and safety.
 - **Integrated Tourism Development of Heritage City:** Focuses on improving civic infrastructure in heritage cities.
 - **Capacity and Skill Development & Knowledge Management:** Supports special courses and short-term training programs to address skill gaps, promotes local indigenous art and crafts, and ensures documentation and preservation of tourism knowledge.
 - **Online Presence:** Development of GIS-based portals, mobile applications, dashboards, and project monitoring systems to deliver tourism services, enable bookings, track progress, and support data analytics and reporting.
 - **Information, Education, and Communication activities (IEC):** IEC activities to promote awareness and outreach for the development of identified pilgrimage destinations.

Hoysala Dynasty

News: Several Hoysala-era temples and basadis (Jain shrines) in Hassan, Mandya, and Mysuru districts have drawn attention to Karnataka's rich yet often overlooked medieval architectural heritage.

About Hoysala Dynasty



Source – Wikipedia

- The Hoysala Dynasty was a **prominent South Indian dynasty** that ruled from the **10th to the 14th centuries** mainly in **present-day Karnataka**.
- **Political history**
 - **Origins:** The Hoysalas were **feudatories of the Chalukyas of Kalyana**,
 - **Founder:** **Sala** was regarded as the founder of the dynasty.
 - **Capital:** The early capital was **Belur**, which later shifted to **Dvarasamudra (present-day Halebidu)**.
- **Important kings**
 - Kings such as **Vinayaditya, Ballala I, and especially Ballala II** strengthened and **expanded** the kingdom.
 - King **Vishnuvardhana (c. 1108–1152 CE)** was one of the most important rulers.
 - He **defeated the Cholas** at **Talakad** and assumed the title **Talakadugonda**.
 - He commissioned the **Chennakesava Temple at Belur**, marking a **new phase in Hoysala temple architecture**.
- **Hoysala administration**
 - The Hoysala state followed a **centralised monarchical system** with **structured administrative divisions**.
 - **Central administration:** The empire was managed by **senior ministers** called **Pancha Pradhanas**, including officials such as **Sandhivigrahi (foreign affairs)** and **Mahabhandari (treasury)**.
 - **Provincial structure:** The empire was **divided into provinces** like **Nadu, Vishaya, Kampana, and Desha** for effective governance.
 - **Local governance:** Provincial administration included **Mahapradhana, Bhandari, Heggaddes, and Gavundas** who managed agriculture and resources.
 - **Elite guards:** Elite royal bodyguards called **Garudas** protected the king.

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- **Coins:** The coins like **Honnu, Pana, and Haga** were issued with inscriptions.
- **Religious Patronage:** The Hoysalas patronized **Shaivism, Vaishnavism, and Jainism**, which shaped the religious character of their kingdom.
 - **Vishnuvardhana's Conversion:** King Vishnuvardhana **initially followed Jainism**, but later **converted to Srivaishnavism** under the influence of **Sri Ramanujacharya**, and this shift encouraged temple construction.
- **Rise of Bhakti traditions:**
 - During **12th century**, **Virashaivism associated with Basavanna** and **Vaishnavism supported by thinkers like Ramanujacharya** and Madhvacharya gained prominence in the region.
- **Society**
 - **Role of women:** Women like **Queen Umadevi and Queen Shantala Devi** played active roles in governance and culture.
 - **Urban centres:** **Pattana and nagaram** served as important commercial and cultural centres.
 - **Temple role:** Temples played **religious, social, economic, and judicial roles** in society.
- **Literature**
 - **Language:** **Kannada and Sanskrit** literature developed significantly.
 - **Important Kannada writers:** **Harihara, Raghavanka (Harishchandracharite), Nemichandra (Leelavati Prabhanda), and Janna** contributed to literature.
- **Art & Architecture**
 - **Architectural style:** The Hoysalas **combined Vesara and Dravida** elements and developed a **distinct Hoysala style**, which later came to be recognised as **Karnata Dravida**.
 - **Platform design:** Their temples were usually constructed on **star-shaped raised platforms**, and the **jagati around the temple** functioned as an **open pradakshinapatha** for circumambulation.
 - **Structural features:** The structures were **carved from soft soapstone** and displayed **polished pillars, rhythmic projections, celestial dancers**, dense friezes of epic scenes, and beautifully carved **madanika** figures.
 - **Notable temples:** Important examples include the **Chennakeshava Temple at Beluru, the Hoysaleswara Temple at Halebidu, and the Keshava Temple at Somnathpura**.

New Delhi Declaration on AI Impact

News: The number of countries endorsing the New Delhi Declaration on AI Impact has increased to 91 signatories.

About New Delhi Declaration on AI Impact



Source – IANS

- The New Delhi Declaration on AI Impact is a **non-binding, multi-nation consensus document for governing the development and deployment of Artificial Intelligence.**
- **Signed by:** The declaration has been signed by **91 countries and international organisations.**
- **Guided by:** It is Guided by the principle of “**Sarvajan Hitaya, Sarvajan Sukhaya**” (Welfare for all, Happiness for all).
- **Aim:** The declaration **aims to bridge the AI Divide** by democratizing foundational AI resources for global economic growth and social good.
- **Key Features of New Delhi Declaration on AI**
 - **Seven Chakras Framework:** The declaration is structured around seven Chakras and represents a broad multilateral consensus on AI governance.
 - **Democratizing AI Resources:** It emphasises affordable digital infrastructure and connectivity as essential for unlocking AI’s full potential and ensuring equitable access to AI resources.
 - **Economic Growth and Social Good:** It promotes open and accessible AI approaches for scalability and adaptability. It notes the Global AI Impact Commons to enable adoption and scaling of successful AI use cases.
 - **Secure and Trusted AI:** It promotes voluntary frameworks, benchmarks, and best practices to build secure, trustworthy, and adaptable AI systems.
 - **Science and Research Collaboration:** It encourages removing barriers and expanding AI research infrastructure to accelerate scientific innovation through global cooperation.
 - **Access for Social Empowerment:** It supports a voluntary platform for exchange of learning and scalable practices to advance AI adoption for social empowerment.
 - **Human Capital:** It stresses skilling, reskilling, AI literacy, and workforce development supported by voluntary guiding principles and playbooks.
 - **Resilience, Innovation, and Efficiency:** It underlines energy-efficient AI systems and recognises voluntary guiding principles and a playbook for resilient AI infrastructure.

C. Rajagopalachari

News- President Droupadi Murmu unveiled C. Rajagopalachari’s statue at Rashtrapati Bhavan, replacing Edwin Lutyens.



Figure 43. Source- The Print

About C. Rajagopalachari

- Chakravarti Rajagopalachari, popularly known as Rajaji or CR, was a freedom fighter, social reformer, and statesman.
- **Early Life:** He was born in December 1878 in Thorapalli in Krishnagiri district of Tamil Nadu.
- **Education :** He studied in his village school and later moved to Madras in 1896 to study law. He became a Bachelor of Law in 1899 and started legal practice in Salem.
- **Political Reform**
 - **Local Leadership (1911–1917):** He was elected to the Salem Municipal Council in 1911 and became its Chairman in June 1917.
 - **Swatantra Party (August 1959):** He founded the Swatantra Party to provide a constitutional opposition and support free enterprise with regulation.
 - **Opposition to Coercive Planning (mid-1950s):** He opposed coercive Soviet-type planning and supported democratic balance.

Role in Freedom Struggle

- **Congress Participation:** He attended the 1906 and 1907 sessions of the Indian National Congress.
- **Rowlatt and Non-Cooperation (1919–1920):** He supported the Rowlatt Satyagraha in 1919 and led the Non-Cooperation Movement in Tamil Nadu in 1920.
- **Salt Satyagraha:** In 1930, he led the march from Trichy to Vedaranyam and was arrested.
- **Quit India Differences (1942):** He differed with Gandhi and proposed negotiation.
- **Rajaji Formula (April 1944):** He conveyed Gandhi's acceptance of the proposal to Muhammad Ali Jinnah.

Social Reform

- **Temple Entry (July 8, 1939):** He supported Dalit entry into temples and introduced protective legislation..
- **Anti-Discrimination Law:** He backed a Bill making discrimination punishable.
- **Hindi Policy:** He introduced Hindi in schools in 1938 but later opposed its imposition.
- **Social Upliftment:** He worked for the welfare of backward classes and promoted social equity.

Legacy: He was awarded the **Bharat Ratna in 1954.**

Death: He passed away on **25 December 1972.**

Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccination Programme

News: The Union Health Ministry is set to launch a nationwide Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination programme.

About Human Papillomavirus (HPV) Vaccination Programme



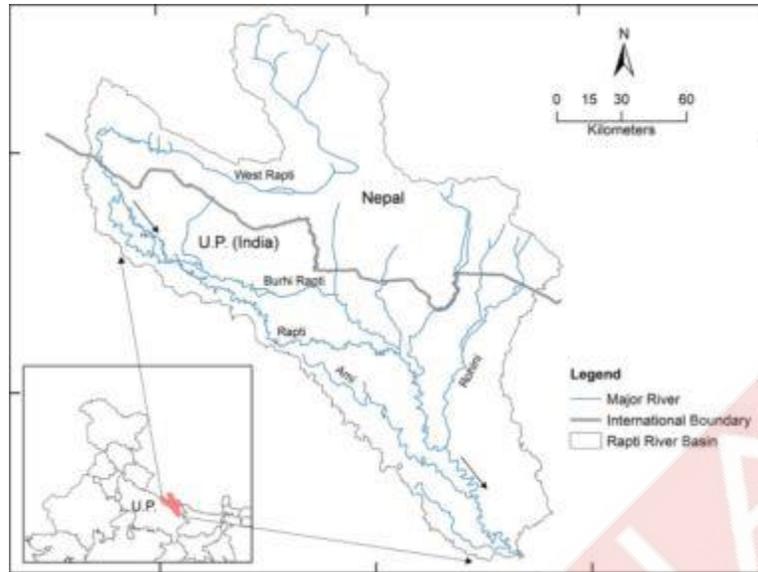
Source: TH

- It is a **nationwide free HPV vaccination programme** for adolescent girls in 2026.
- **Aim:** The initiative aims to **prevent cervical cancer**.
- **Target age group:** The programme will target **girls aged 14 years** across the country. Vaccinating at 14 **ensures long-lasting immunity before possible infection**.
- Vaccination will be **voluntary and free of cost**.
- **Vaccine type:** India will use **Gardasil, a quadrivalent HPV vaccine**, for protection from HPV types 16 and 18, which cause cervical cancer, as well as types 6 and 11.
- **Where vaccinations will be given:** Vaccines will be administered at government health facilities such as: **Ayushman Arogya Mandirs, Community hospitals, District hospitals and Government medical colleges**.
- **Protection offered by the vaccine:** Gardasil protects against HPV types: **16 and 18** (linked to cervical cancer) and **6 and 11**.
 - The vaccine is **93–100% effective in preventing cervical cancer** caused by covered HPV types.
- **Dose recommendations:** A **single-dose schedule provides protection comparable to 2-dose schedules**. **Two or three doses** are required for **immunocompromised or HIV-infected individuals**.
- **Safety measures:** All vaccination sessions will be supervised by **trained medical officers** and **vaccination sites will be linked to 24×7 government health facilities**.

Rapti River

News: The NGT has ordered the Uttar Pradesh government to amend official records and restore the Suav's classification from a "drain" to a "river" in revenue records and the gazetteer, warning that non-compliance may lead to legal punishment.

About Rapti River



Source – ResearchGate

- **Origin:** It rises south of a prominent E-W ridgeline midway **between the western Dhaulagiri Himalaya and the Mahabharat Range** in Nepal at an elevation of about 3048 m.
- **Course of river:** Initially, the river **flows westward for nearly 100 km** due to the Dundwa Range, a subrange of the Shiwalik Hills.
 - After bypassing this natural barrier, **it resumes its southward course towards the Ganga Basin.**
 - After **flowing through Nepal, it enters Eastern Uttar Pradesh.**
- **Basin topography:** The entire basin's topography is made **up of lofty mountains, inner and outer Tarai, and undulating plain regions.**
- **Climate:** The Rapti River basin **has two climatic zones-**
 - a **temperate climate** in the **Himalayan highlands**
 - a **subtropical climate** in the **plains**
- **Major Tributaries:** Burhi Rapti, Banganga, **Suav Nala**, Ami, Rohini, Taraina, Tura, Bhakla, Parasi and Sikri, etc.
 - The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has **directed the Uttar Pradesh government to restore the Suav's status from "nullah" (drain) to "river"** in official revenue records and the gazetteer.
- **Tributary of:** Rapti River is an important **left bank tributary of the Ghaghra River.**
- **Wildlife:** The river supports rich biodiversity, including **Indian Skimmer, Sarus Crane, Lesser Adjutant, River Tern, Gangetic dolphin, muggar, gharial, and many species of water-dependent birds.**
- **Religious significance:** The ancient **Buddhist pilgrimage site Shravasti, with the remains of Saheth-Maheth, lies on the banks of the Rapti**, where Gautama Buddha spent much of his monastic life.
 - The Rapti River, also known as **"Airavati" in ancient texts, is considered one of the sacred rivers associated with Hindu and Buddhist traditions.**

Kerala as Keralam

News: The Union Cabinet approved the proposal to rename Kerala as Keralam and initiated the constitutional process through the Kerala (Alteration of Name) Bill, 2026.

About Kerala as “Keralam”



Figure 44. Source – NewsOnAir

- **Kerala as Keralam** refers to the **proposal to officially change the constitutional name of the State from Kerala to its Malayalam name, Keralam.**
- **Historical context**
 - **Ancient Origin:**
 - The earliest reference to the region appears in **Rock Edict II of Emperor Ashoka in 257 BCE** as “Keralaputra,” which is **linked to the Chera dynasty.**
 - The term Keralam **evolved from Cheram or Cheralam**, where **cher** means to join and **alam** means **land or region**, indicating an integrated land.
 - **Era of freedom struggle**
 - During the national independence struggle, there was a strong demand for the **formation of a unified State for Malayalam-speaking people.**
 - This political demand later developed into **the Aikya Kerala movement for unification.**
- **State Formation:** The State Reorganisation Commission recommended creation of Kerala based on **linguistic identity.**
 - Kerala was **officially formed on 1 November 1956**, which is celebrated as **Kerala Piravi Day.**
- **Constitutional naming:** Despite linguistic origins, the **Constitution recorded the name Kerala instead of Keralam.**
 - The **Kerala Assembly later requested correction** of the constitutional name to reflect linguistic identity and historical continuity.
- **Constitutional basis**
 - **Article 3** of the Constitution **empowers Parliament to alter the name of any existing State by law.**
 - The **First Schedule of the Constitution** contains the names and territorial boundaries of States and Union Territories.
 - The name change **requires amendment of the First Schedule after parliamentary approval** and Presidential assent.
 - The Bill can be **introduced in Parliament only** with the **prior recommendation of the President.**
 - The **State Legislature is consulted, but Parliament is not bound by its views.**
 - The Bill requires a **simple majority in Parliament** and is **not treated as a constitutional amendment under Article 368.**
- **Procedure followed**
 - **State resolution:** The Kerala Legislative Assembly passed a resolution in June 2024 **requesting the Central Government to change the State’s name from Kerala to Keralam.**

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- **Cabinet approval:** The Union Cabinet approved the proposal and cleared the **Kerala (Alteration of Name) Bill, 2026** for further constitutional process.
- **Presidential reference:** The **President will refer** the Kerala (Alteration of Name) Bill, 2026 to the **Kerala Legislative Assembly for its views**.
- **Parliamentary passage:** After receiving the Assembly's views, the Bill will be **introduced in Parliament with the President's recommendation** and passed by **simple majority**.
- **Amendment:** After passage and Presidential assent, the **First Schedule will be amended**, and the new name **Keralam will become legally valid**.

Lal Baradari

News: Lal Baradari on Lucknow University campus became controversial after fencing, with student protests and debate over access, usage, and heritage restoration.

About Lal Baradari



Figure 45. Source – Tol

- Lal Baradari is a **historic 19th-century heritage building** of the **Nawabi era** located within the **Lucknow University campus, Uttar Pradesh**.
- The structure forms part of the **former royal gardens of the Awadh Nawabs** in the historic **Qaisarbagh garden area**.
- **Construction:** It was founded by **Nawab Ghaziuddin Haider** (the first King of Oudh) in **1814** and completed by his successor **Naseeruddin Haider Shah in 1820**.
- **Purpose:** It was built for the **convenience**

of the ruling nobility and European wives.

- Later, it housed a **bank** and other **university establishments** before being abandoned due to deterioration.
- **Architecture:** It is a notable example of **Mughal and Nawabi architectural fusion**, constructed primarily of **lakhauri bricks and carved stone**.
- **Naming:** The building is called **Lal Baradari** because it is a **red-coloured structure** and **baradari** refers to a **pavilion with twelve doorways**.
- **Restoration:** Restoration proposals include grants from the Union Ministry of Culture, Archaeological Survey of India restoration work, CSR funding support, and conservation support under **Pradhan Mantri Uchchatar Shiksha Abhiyan (PM-USHA)**.

About Nawab Ghaziuddin Haider

- Nawab Ghaziuddin Haider (reigned **1814–1827**) was the last **Nawab Wazir of Awadh** and the **first** to officially assume the title of **King of Oudh (Padshah-i-Awadh)**.
- He was the **first in Awadh to strike coins in his own name** rather than the Mughal Emperor's.

Exercise VAJRA PRAHAR

News: The US Army contingent arrived in India for the 16th edition of Exercise VAJRA PRAHAR at Bakloh, Himachal Pradesh, in 2026.

About Exercise VAJRA PRAHAR



Figure 46. Source – India News

- Exercise VAJRA PRAHAR is a **joint bilateral Special Forces exercise** conducted between the **Indian Army and the United States Army**.

- **Started in:** The exercise was **first conducted in India in 2010** as part of expanding defence collaboration between both countries.

- **Aim:** The exercise aims to **promote military cooperation** by enhancing **interoperability, jointness, and mutual**

exchange of special operations tactics and expertise.

- **2026 Edition:** The **current edition is the 16th edition of Exercise VAJRA PRAHAR** conducted in 2026 in **India**.
- **Location:** The 16th edition is being conducted at the **Special Forces Training School, Bakloh, Himachal Pradesh, India**.
- **Participants**
 - The **Indian Army** is represented by **Special Forces units** comprising 45 personnel.
 - The **United States Army** is represented by 12 personnel from the **Green Berets Special Forces**.
- **Key Features**
 - **Joint Operational Training:** The exercise focuses on joint mission planning, joint tactical drills, and strengthening joint operational readiness in mountainous terrain.
 - **Exchange of Expertise:** Participating troops share best practices, operational experiences, and special operations tactics, techniques, and procedures.

Exercise 'DHARMA GUARDIAN'

News: The 7th edition of Exercise 'DHARMA GUARDIAN' commenced at the Foreign Training Node, Chaubattia in Uttarakhand.

About Exercise 'DHARMA GUARDIAN'



Source: PIB

- **About:** It is an **annual Joint Military Exercise between the Indian Army and the Japan Ground Self-Defence Force (JGSDF).**
- **Location:** It is being conducted at the **Foreign Training Node, Chaubattia in Uttarakhand.**
- **Edition:** It is the **7th edition of this Joint Military Exercise.**
- **First Edition:** The first edition of Exercise Dharma Guardian in **2018** was conducted in **Misawa, Japan.**
- **Frequency:** It is **held alternately** in India and Japan.
- **Participants:** There are **120-member contingent from each side.**
 - **JGSDF** is represented by troops **from the 32nd Infantry Regiment** and the Indian Army contingent drawn from the **Ladakh Scouts.**
- **Aim:** To **strengthen military collaboration and enhance combined capabilities** to undertake joint operations in a semi-urban environment.
- **Focus:** Participating troops will **focus on achieving high levels of physical fitness, refining joint planning processes and synchronising tactical drills.**
- **Features:**
 - It is **centered on the integration of advanced technologies, strengthening interoperability, and refining modern operational capabilities.**
 - **Key tactical activities** during the exercise include:
 - Establishing a Temporary Operating Base
 - Developing an Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) grid
 - Setting up Mobile Vehicle Check Posts
 - Conducting Cordon and Search Operations in hostile environment
 - Executing Heliborne Operations
 - Undertaking House Intervention Drills

SUJVIKA Portal

News: Recently, SUJVIKA Portal was launched during the 40th foundation day of the Department of Biotechnology.

About SUJVIKA Portal

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Source: Newsonair

- It is a **AI-driven biotech trade intelligence portal**.
- **Developed by:** Department of Biotechnology (DBT) in collaboration with Industry partners **ABLE**.
- It is a **Trade Statistics Digital Intelligence Platform** that presents **authenticated biotechnology product import data** in a structured and accessible format.
- **Features:**
 - It **provides sector-wise insights into biochemical products, industrial enzymes, and other biotechnology imports**.
 - It **enables researchers, startups, and industry** to identify high-value and high-volume imports, assess import dependency and **prioritize indigenization and R&D efforts**.
 - It **also supports evidence-based planning and promotes public-private partnerships** for strengthening domestic biomanufacturing.

Epstein-Barr Viral Infection

News: Researchers may be closer to developing a vaccine that protects against Epstein-Barr Viral Infection.

About Epstein-Barr Viral (EBV) Infection

EPSTEIN-BARR VIRUS

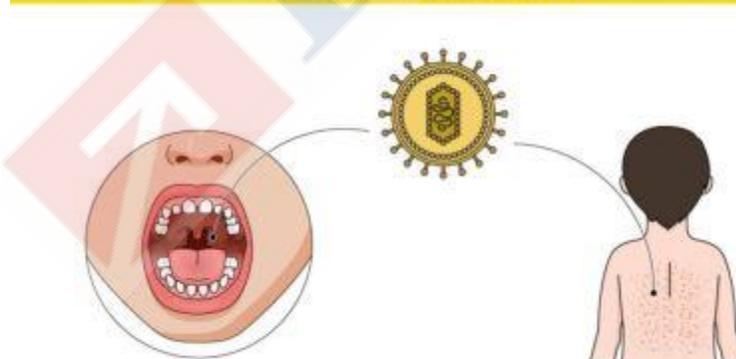


Figure 47. Source – Mind The Graph

other autoimmune diseases.

- It is a **widely spread double-stranded DNA virus** and is a **member of the herpes virus family**.
- It is also known as **human herpesvirus 4**.
- It most commonly **affects children, teenagers, and young adults**, although people of any age can become infected.
- It is the **virus responsible for causing infectious mononucleosis** and

- **Symptoms:** It may include **fatigue, fever, sore or inflamed throat, swollen lymph nodes in the neck, enlarged spleen, swollen liver and skin rash.**
 - Many infections cause **no symptoms** or **only mild illness**
- **Who Is at Risk:** After infection, stays **inactive (latent)** in the body.
 - It can reactivate later. People with **weak immune systems** are **more likely to have symptoms during reactivation.**
- **Transmission:** It is **highly contagious virus and spreads through body fluids** such as saliva.
 - It can also **spread through blood transfusions or organ transplants.**
 - It can survive on objects **as long as they remain moist**
- **Prevention:** It can be prevented by minimizing close contact with infected individuals and not sharing personal belongings.
- **Treatment:** There is **no vaccine** for EBV.
 - It can **be managed with adequate hydration and plenty of rest along with medications.**

Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC)

News: The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO released the Integrated Ocean Carbon Research Report highlighting uncertainties and knowledge gaps in ocean carbon sink.

About Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC)



Figure 48. Source – UNESCO

- The Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission is a **UNESCO body** that promotes **international cooperation in marine science and ocean management.**
 - **Established in:** The IOC was **established in 1960** as a body with functional autonomy **within UNESCO.**
 - **Members:** The IOC **consists of 152 Member States.**
 - **India:** India was among the **founding member states.**
- **Governing bodies**
 - **Assembly:** The Assembly **meets once every two years** to review work and formulate a common work plan.
 - **Executive council:** The Executive Council, **consisting of up to 40 Member States, meets every year** to review ongoing work and prepare Assembly meetings.
 - **Key Functions**
 - **Marine Science Coordination:** The IOC coordinates research, services, and programmes to improve knowledge of ocean and coastal areas.
 - **Capacity Development:** It promotes capacity-building and supports sustainable development and marine environment protection.

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- **Ocean Observation and Warning:** It coordinates ocean observations, tsunami warning systems, and ocean science programmes.
- **Ocean Decade Coordination:** It coordinates the UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development 2021–2030.

About Integrated Ocean Carbon Research (IOC-R) Report

- **Released by:** Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC)
- **Key Findings:** The ocean absorbs **25–30% of CO₂ emissions**, but models differ by **10–20% globally** due to limited observations and incomplete understanding.
- **Recommendations:** The report recommends improving global observations, refining models, strengthening scientific capacity, and promoting cross-disciplinary research.

India's First State Innovation Mission (SIM)

News: Atal Innovation Mission (AIM) under NITI Aayog launched India's first State Innovation Mission in Tripura to strengthen innovation and entrepreneurship ecosystems.

About India's First State Innovation Mission (SIM)



Figure 49. Source – PIB

- The State Innovation Mission is part of the approved AIM 2.0 programme, under the aegis of NITI Aayog's State Support Mission (SSM).
- It is designed as a **long-term institutional mechanism** to support States and Union Territories in building robust, inclusive, and context-specific innovation ecosystems aligned with national priorities and local strengths.
- **Launched by:** It was launched by the **Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)** under NITI Aayog.
- **Launch at:** It was launched at the

Hapania International Exhibition Centre in Agartala, Tripura.

- **Aim:** The mission aims to support States and Union Territories in **designing innovation strategies and strengthening innovation ecosystems** aligned with development priorities.
- **Key Features**
 - **Institutional and incubation framework:** SIM was institutionalised under **Tripura Institution for Transformation (TIFT)**, and **T-NEST (Tripura - Nurturing Entrepreneurship and Startups)** was launched as a dedicated incubation and innovation facility.
 - **District innovation and ecosystem support:** Innovation Centres were created in eight districts, and the mission supports innovation strategy, policy support, partnerships, and provides infrastructure, mentorship, and funding support to startups and innovators.
- **Significance:** The mission promotes inclusive innovation-led development and enables States to unlock local potential and strengthen entrepreneurship ecosystems.

About Atal Innovation Mission (AIM)

- **Initiative by:** It is a flagship initiative of the Government of India under NITI Aayog.

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- **Launched in:** It was set up in 2016.
- **Objective:** It aims to promote a culture of innovation and entrepreneurship by creating innovative mindset in schools and supporting entrepreneurship across institutions and industries.

Xerocoma

News: A recent study identified Xerocoma as a new plant adaptation in Northern Western Ghats that protects dormant buds during harsh seasonal cycles.

About Xerocoma



Figure 50. Source – Mongabay

- **Xerocoma is a plant adaptation strategy** in which dry, cottony plant fibres form at the rootstock and envelop dormant buds to protect them during harsh seasonal conditions.
- **Structure formation:** Xerocoma forms as **dry, cottony balls** at the **root-shoot junction** and fully encloses **developing buds**.
- **Fibre composition:** It consists of tough **lignocellulose plant fibres** that create a **protective covering** around sensitive growth points.
- **Growth coordination:** This structure develops along with growing buds and later loosens when leaves begin to emerge.
- **Stress protection:** It protects buds from desiccation **stress, harsh heat, drying winds, and surface fires** during the dry season.
- **Regrowth support:** It ensures that buds remain safe and capable of regrowth when favourable conditions return after stress.
- **Species exhibit this phenomenon**
 - Xerocoma occurs in **six plant species** belonging to the **Asteraceae and Acanthaceae families**.
 - Observed species include **Senetio edgeworthii, Neuracanthus sphaerostachyus, and a Dicliptera species**.
- **Significance:** Xerocoma provides a model for studying how plants structurally adapt to environmental stress and survive harsh seasonal conditions.

Rail Tech Policy, Portal and e-Railway Claims Tribunal

News: The Union Minister for Railways announced the RailTech Policy and the complete digitisation of the Railway Claims Tribunal (RCT) under Indian Railways' flagship "52 Reforms in 52 Weeks" initiative.

About Rail Tech Policy, Portal and e-Railway Claims Tribunal



Figure 51. Source – ET

About Rail Tech Policy

- It is designed to enable massive and systematic induction of technology into the Railways.
- **Aim:** To engage innovators, startups, industry and institutions to promote innovation in Indian Railways.
- It provides a **user-friendly interface, increases the scale-up grant more than three times and doubles the maximum grant** for prototype development and trials.

About Rail Tech Portal

- It is a **dedicated portal for innovation** and will function through a **completely digital, end-to-end process**.
- **Objective:** To **simplify the system of**

vendor selection and create a simplified, innovation-driven framework focused on trial and adoption of new technologies.

- **Features:**
 - **Innovation challenges can be initiated by any innovator or department via a single detailed proposal.**
 - **Key innovation areas include:** AI-based Elephant Intrusion Detection System and fire detection, drone rail monitoring, sensor-based VPU load devices, solar coaches, AI cleaning and fog detection, and AI-driven pension/dispute systems.

About e-Railway Claims Tribunal

- The **e-Railway Claims Tribunal** enables **end-to-end computerisation** and digitisation of the Railway Claims Tribunal.
- **Beneficiaries:** It will particularly benefit claimants, advocates, Railways and the Tribunal by enabling easy tracking, improved scheduling and data-driven decision-making.
- **Features:**
 - **Anywhere Access:** It will transform the filing, processing and adjudication of claims by making the process **faster, more transparent and accessible from anywhere** in the country.
 - **Single Platform:** It will **connect all 23 Benches on one platform**, enabling **paperless courts, digitised case management, online filings and notices, online orders and judgments, and hybrid hearings.**
 - **Key Modules of e-RCT:** E-Filing, Case Information System (CIS), Documents Management System (DMS)

About “52 Reforms in 52 Weeks” Initiative

- The ‘52 reforms in 52 weeks’ initiative **focuses on strengthening safety, enhancing operational efficiency, and improving passenger services.**
- A key priority is **to reduce consequential train accidents** and bring down train accident figures to a single digit.

- It also **includes accelerating the adoption of AI and advanced technologies** for safety, maintenance, and operations.
- The initiative also focuses on **better talent management, employee skill development, and improved onboard catering services.**

Hexagon Alliance

News: On the eve of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's state visit to Israel, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has unveiled a proposal for Hexagon Alliance.

About Hexagon Alliance



Source: Live mint

- **About:** It is a **proposed six-nation strategic framework to strengthen economic, diplomatic, and security cooperation across West Asia and the Mediterranean.**
- **Proposed by:** Hexagon alliances is a **new strategic coalition proposed by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu** which could reshape alignments in West Asia.
- **Aim:** It aims at **countering Iran's influence and other regional threats.**
 - It is also being seen as counter of "Shia axis" also known as the "axis of resistance".
 - **Note:** **Axis of resistance** is an **informal, Iran-centred network of allied groups** that oppose Israeli and Western influence in the Middle East.
- **Member nations:** The bloc includes **Israel, India, Greece, Cyprus, and undisclosed Arab/African and Asian countries.**
 - As of now, **no country has endorsed this plan** – or its sectarian framing.
- **Significance:** It is a **structured grouping of countries that share similar security concerns and strategic interests.**

Indravati River

News: Two Maoists were killed in an encounter with security forces in Chhattisgarh's insurgency-hit Bijapur district during an anti-Naxal operation along the Indravati river belt.

About Indravati River

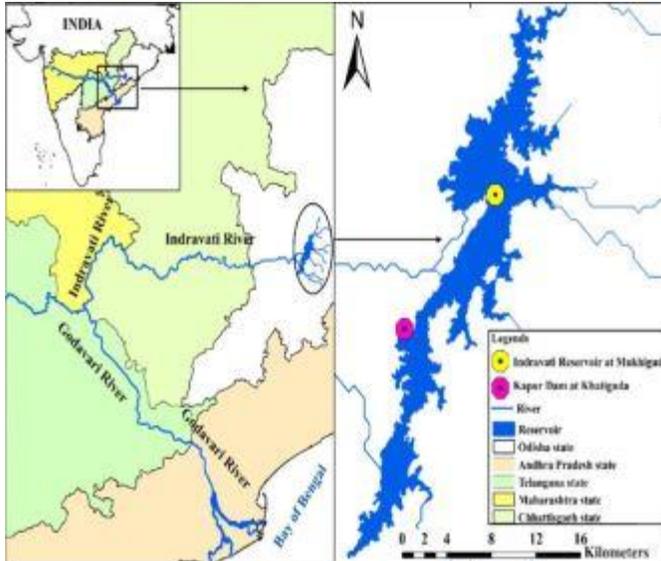


Figure 52. Source – ResearchGate

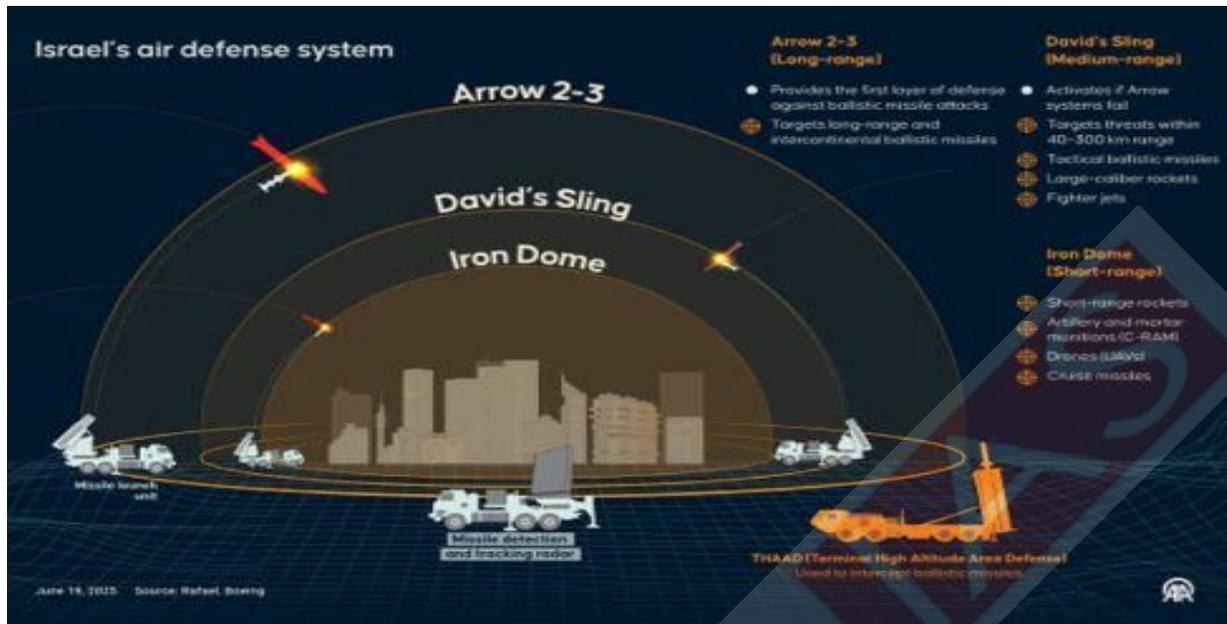
- **Origin:** It originates in Kalahandi district of Odisha on the western slopes of the Eastern Ghats and then flows westward.
 - During its course, it forms the boundary between Maharashtra and Chhattisgarh at several places.
- It is one of the most important rivers of Chhattisgarh.
- It is often called the “lifeline” of Bastar, which is considered one of the greenest regions in India.
- **Tributary of:** It is a tributary of the Godavari River.
- **Length:** It is about 530 km long and has a catchment area of approximately 41,700 sq. km.

- **Tributaries:** Its major tributaries include the Bhaskel River, Narangi River, Nimbra River, Kotri River, Bandia River, and Nandiraj River.
- **Chitrakoot Falls**, also known as the “Niagara of Chhattisgarh,” is formed on Indravati River.
- **Indravati National Park** is located on the banks of Indravati River.
- **Indravati Dam and Bodhghat Hydel Project** is also situated on Indravati River.

Israel's Multi-layered Defence Against Iranian Missiles

News: Israel has multi-layered air defences against Iranian ballistic missiles, an umbrella it may need to lean on as the United States and Iran teeter toward potential military conflict that could draw Iranian attacks on Israeli territory.

About Israel's Multi-layered Defence Against Iranian Missiles



Source – DD News

About ARROW

- The **long-range Arrow-2 and Arrow-3 interceptors**, developed by **Israel**, are designed to **engage incoming targets both in and outside the atmosphere respectively**.
- They operate at an **altitude** that allows for **safe dispersal of any non-conventional warheads**.
- **State-owned Israel Aerospace Industries** is the project's **main contractor** while **Boeing BA.N** is involved in **producing the interceptors**.

DAVID'S SLING

- The **mid-range David's Sling** system is designed to **shoot down ballistic missiles** fired from **100 km to 200 km** away.
- **Developed by:** Developed and manufactured **jointly** by **Israel's state-owned Rafael Advanced Defense Systems** and **RTX Corp RTX.N**, a U.S. company previously known as **Raytheon**.
- It is also designed to **intercept aircraft, drones and cruise missiles**.

IRON DOME

- The **short-range Iron Dome** air defence system was **built to intercept the kind of rockets** fired by **Palestinian Islamist militant group Hamas** in **Gaza**.
- **Developed with U.S. backing**, it became **operational in 2011**.
- Each **truck-towed** unit fires **radar-guided missiles** to blow up **short-range threats** such as **rockets, mortars and drones** in mid-air.
- **Naval version:** A naval version of the Iron Dome, to protect ships and sea-based assets, was **deployed in 2017**.
- The system **determines** whether a rocket is on course to **hit a populated area**. **If not**, the rocket is **ignored** and allowed to **land harmlessly**.
- Iron Dome was **originally** billed as **providing city coverage** against rockets with ranges of **between 4 km and 70 km** but experts say this has since been expanded.

IRON BEAM

- **Developed by Israel** for more than a decade and declared **fully operational in late 2025**.
- It is a **ground-based, high-power laser system** designed to **intercept smaller aerial threats**, such as **UAVs and mortars**.

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- Using lasers to **super-heat and disable aerial threats**, Iron Beam's operation is expected to be substantially **cheaper** than some of the other aerial defence systems that use intercepting missiles to shoot down incoming threats.

U.S. THAAD SYSTEM

- The **U.S. military** had sent the **advanced anti-missile system THAAD – Terminal High Altitude Area Defense – to Israel.**
- THAAD is a **critical part of the U.S. military's air defences** and is designed to **intercept and destroy short, medium and intermediate-range ballistic missile threats** in their **terminal phase of flight.**

AIR-TO-AIR DEFENCE

- Israeli **combat helicopters and fighter jets** have fired air-to-air missiles to **destroy drones** that head to Israel.

AI4Agri Summit 2026

News: The AI4Agri 2026 Global Conference & Investor Summit was recently held on February 22–23, 2026, in Mumbai.

About AI4Agri Summit 2026



Source: DD News

- It is a **global knowledge-exchange platform** that brings **together policymakers, state governments, international experts, and practitioners.**
- It **promotes evidence-based use of AI and digital public infrastructure** to improve agricultural productivity, resilience, and farmer incomes.
- **Organized by:** Government of Maharashtra
- **Theme:** **Inclusive and Responsible AI for Agriculture, Empowering Women Farmers, Driving Innovation, and Building Climate Resilience**
- **Partners:** It has strategic **partnership with leading multilateral and development institutions** such as **World Bank, Asian Development Bank (ADB), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), etc.**
- **Objectives:**
 - **Enable global knowledge exchange, research networks, and innovation transfer** in AI-driven agriculture.

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- Mobilize investment, showcase startups, and scale ready AI & AgriTech solutions
- Build multi-stakeholder collaboration and strengthen global cooperation.
- Shape future policies, governance models, and standards for responsible, ethical and inclusive AI adoption in agriculture
- Promote inclusive growth by empowering women farmers and supporting sustainable, climate-resilient agricultural transformation.

Blue Nile River

News: A new report has warned that the GERD reservoir on Blue Nile River is showing signs of ‘instability’; a breach could flood Sudan and Egypt downstream.

About Blue Nile River



Figure 53. Source – Initiative for Great Rivers

- **Origin:** The Blue Nile River originates at **Lake Tana in Ethiopia.**
- It is **Ethiopia's largest river.**
- **Tributaries:** Its waters come from tributaries such as the **Atbara, Dinder and Rahad rivers, which rise in the Ethiopian highlands.**
- **Course:** It travels for approximately **1,450 km** through **Ethiopia and Sudan.**
- **Tributary of:** It **meets the White Nile River near Khartoum in Sudan.**
 - The **combined stream** flows **north into Egypt**, before **emptying into the Mediterranean Sea near Alexandria** as the Nile River.
- It supplies about **85% of the water to the Nile** during the rainy season.
- **Famous dams**
 - Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam (**GERD**) in **Ethiopia.**
 - The **Al-Ruṣayriṣ and Sannar dams** in **Sudan.**