

Factly Monthly

Compilation

2026

**For UPSC CSE Prelims
Exam**

March 2026

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Arbitrage Funds

News: Arbitrage funds are gaining attention as investors notice price gaps between NSE and BSE during volatile market phases.

About Arbitrage Funds

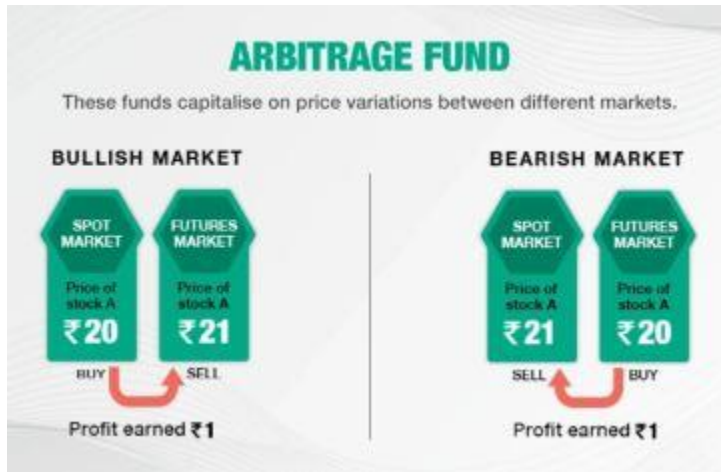


Figure 1. Source – MF

- Arbitrage funds are hybrid mutual funds that aim to earn returns by buying a stock at a lower price in one market and selling it at a higher price in another market at nearly the same time.

- The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) classifies arbitrage funds as equity-oriented funds and requires them to maintain at least 65 percent gross exposure to equities or equity-related securities.

- Key features

- Investment strategy: Arbitrage fund managers buy a stock at a lower price in

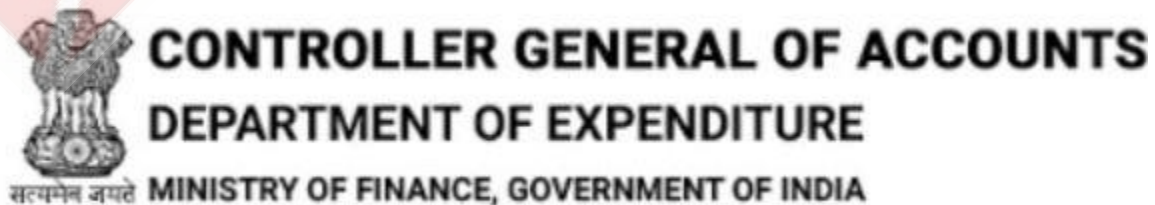
the cash market and sell its Futures contract at a higher price, or exploit price differences between NSE and BSE.

- They execute trades almost at the same time to capture price spreads without predicting market direction.
- Risk Profile: These funds use hedged positions but are not risk-free.
- Returns depend on the availability of price gaps.
- When spreads are narrow or absent, returns may be modest.
- They are considered to provide relatively stable and moderate returns.
- Taxation: They are treated as equity-oriented funds because of the required equity exposure.
- Alternative Asset Class: They offer a market-linked and flexible option with easier redemption and generally no premature-withdrawal penalties, unlike fixed deposits.

Controller General of Accounts (CGA)

News: The CGA launched the Government Bank Dashboard and Government Bank Manual to strengthen governance and efficiency in government banking transactions.

About Controller General of Accounts (CGA)



Source – FinMin

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- The Controller General of Accounts is the Principal Advisor on accounting matters to the Union Government.
- Legal Status: It is not a constitutional body.
- The Allocation of Business Rules, 1961 mention the duties and responsibilities of the CGA.
- Nodal Ministry: It works under the Department of Expenditure, Ministry of Finance.
- Functions:
 - Management Accounting System: CGA establishes and manages a technically sound Management Accounting System.
 - Preparation of Accounts: It prepares and submits the accounts of the Union Government and produces monthly and annual analysis of expenditures, revenues, borrowings, and fiscal indicators.
 - Exchequer Control and Internal Audit: It is responsible for exchequer control and internal audits.

About Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG)

- Constitutional Status: The CAG is a constitutional body established under Article 148 of the Constitution of India.
- Appointment: The President appoints the CAG on the recommendation of the Prime Minister.
- Audit Functions: The CAG audits all receipts and expenditure of the Union and state governments, including bodies financed by the government.
- Institutional Role: The CAG heads the Indian Audit and Accounts Department, which is managed by officers of the Indian Audit and Accounts Service.
- The Annual Appropriation Account (Civil) and Union Finance Accounts are submitted to Parliament under Article 150 of the Constitution on the advice of the CAG.

Football for Schools (F4S) Programme

News: Union Minister Dr. Sukanta Majumdar distributed footballs at PM SHRI Kendriya Vidyalaya, Dakshin Dinajpur, under the Football for Schools initiative.

About Football for Schools (F4S) Programme



Figure 2. Source – PIB

- The Football for Schools Programme is run by FIFA in collaboration with UNESCO to promote education through football.
- Launched in: It was launched in mid-2019 with pilot projects in Puerto Rico and Lebanon.
- Initiative By: It is run by FIFA in collaboration with UNESCO.
- Implemented by: In India, it is implemented by the Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Education, with support from the All India Football Federation and the Sports Authority of India.
- Nodal Agencies: Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti and Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan serve as

designated nodal institutions.

- Aim: The programme aims to contribute to the education, development, and empowerment of around 700 million children.

- **Objective:** It seeks to make football accessible to both boys and girls by integrating football activities into the education system.
- **Policy Alignment:** It aligns with UNESCO's Kazan Action Plan, Education 2030 Framework, and WHO Global Action Plan on Physical Activity.
- **Nationwide coverage:** Football for Schools (F4S) programme has achieved nationwide coverage, successfully reaching 33 States and Union Territories as of March 2026.

Ichhamati and Jalangi Rivers

News: Government of West Bengal signed an MoU with Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) and the State Mission for Clean Ganga to develop the Ichhamati and Jalangi river basins.

About Ichhamati River



Figure 3. Source: ResearchGate

- Ichhamati river is a trans-boundary river flowing through India and Bangladesh.
- **Course of river:**
 - It originates as a distributary of the Mathabhangha River (distributary of the Padma) at Majhdia village in Nadia district of West Bengal.
 - It flows southward through Nadia and North 24 Parganas, forming part of the India-Bangladesh boundary.
 - Finally, it joins the Kalindi River near Hasnabad (West Bengal) and empties into the Bay of Bengal near Moore Island.
- It also acts as a connector with the 'Nadia Group of River' on the North and the Sundarbans Reserve forest in the south.
- It is facing issue of heavy silt deposition, which reduces its water flow during the dry season and increases the risk of flooding during the monsoon.

About Jalangi River

- Jalangi River is a distributary which branches off the main channel of the Ganga.
- It flows into Bangladesh as the Padma.
- **Course of river:** It flows through Murshidabad and Nadia districts of West Bengal to merge with the Bhagirathi-Hooghly, the main distributary of the Ganga in West Bengal.

Jiyo Parsi Scheme

News: The 2nd meeting of the Jiyo Parsi Advisory Committee was held in Mumbai under the chairmanship of Dr. Chandra Shekhar Kumar, Secretary, Ministry of Minority Affairs.

About Jiyo Parsi Scheme



Figure 4. Source – Ministry of Minority Affairs

- The Jiyo Parsi Scheme is a Central Sector Scheme to address the declining population of the Parsi community.
- Launched Year: It was launched in the financial year 2013–14.
- Objective: To reverse the downward trend in the Parsi population by adopting scientific methods and structured interventions, stabilizing their numbers and increase the population of Parsis in India.

• Components: It comprises three components:

- Medical Assistance: Under this, financial support is provided for medical treatment in accordance with standard medical protocols.
 - Health of the Community: Under this, Parsi couples are encouraged to have more children, and financial assistance is extended to help them care for their dependent elderly family members and children.
- Advocacy: This focuses on supporting Parsi couples facing infertility and family-related issues through counseling sessions, outreach programmes and advocacy films.
 - Implemented through: It is implemented through the State Governments with the support of concerned Parsi institutions.
 - Eligible Parsi couples receive financial assistance under the various components of the scheme through the Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) mode.

Eligible Manufacturer Importers (EMIs) Scheme

News: Recently, the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs issued detailed eligibility conditions and operational guidelines for the EMI scheme.

About Eligible Manufacturer Importers (EMIs) Scheme



Source – ET

- The EMI Scheme is a trust-based Customs facilitation scheme that allows deferred payment of Customs duty.
- **Launched By:** The scheme is launched by the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs under Section 47(1) of the Customs Act, 1962.
- **Aim:** The scheme enables Eligible Manufacturer Importers to clear imported goods without paying Customs duty at the time of clearance and promotes compliance under the Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) framework.
- **Implementation period:** The facility will remain valid from 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2028.
- **Eligibility criteria**
 - The importer must have strong Customs and GST compliance, sound financial standing, adequate turnover, and a clean past track record.
 - Existing Authorised Economic Operator (AEO)-T1 entities, including MSMEs, are eligible if they meet the prescribed conditions.
- **Key features**
 - **Deferred payment facility:** The scheme allows clearance of imported goods without upfront Customs duty payment, and duty is payable monthly under the Deferred Payment of Import Duty Rules, 2016.
 - **Progression to higher AEO status:** Approved Eligible Manufacturer Importers (EMIs) are encouraged to obtain AEO-T2 or AEO-T3 status for enhanced facilitation.
 - **Creation of new category:** The scheme creates a new category called Eligible Manufacturer Importers with duty payable on a monthly basis.

About Authorised Economic Operator (AEO) Framework

- **International basis:** The AEO programme operates under the World Customs Organisation SAFE Framework of Standards, adopted in June 2005 to secure the international supply chain.
- **Nature of programme:** It is a voluntary compliance programme that builds close partnership between Customs and trade stakeholders in the international supply chain.
- **Launch and Implementation in India:** It was launched by the Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs as a pilot in 2011, revised in 2016, and is implemented by the Directorate of International Customs.
- **The Authorised Economic Operator framework has four categories, which are explained below:**
 - **AEO-T1 (Authorised Economic Operator – Tier 1):** This is the foundational level of certification and is granted on the basis of review of submitted documents.

- **AEO-T2 (Authorised Economic Operator – Tier 2):** This is the intermediate level of certification and requires document verification along with a physical site visit by Customs authorities.
- **AEO-T3 (Authorised Economic Operator – Tier 3):** This is the highest level of certification and is granted to businesses that have held AEO-T2 status for at least two years or have AEO-certified partners.
- **AEO-LO (Authorised Economic Operator – Logistics Operator):** This category is meant for logistics operators such as customs brokers, warehouse operators and transporters, who are part of the supply chain other than importers and exporters.

Key Facts About Qatar

News: Qatar's air force shot down two Iranian aircraft and intercepted missiles and drones targeting its energy facilities.

Key Facts About Qatar



Figure 5. Source – Britannica

- **Location:** It is located on the northeastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula.
- **The Qatari peninsula** extends about 160 km into the Persian Gulf.
- **Borders:** Qatar shares a single land border with Saudi Arabia to the south.
 - It is surrounded by the Persian Gulf on all other sides.
 - The Gulf of Bahrain separates it from Bahrain.
 - **Capital:** Doha is the capital and largest city.
- **Topography**
 - Qatar has a mostly flat and barren desert landscape.
 - Sand dunes dominate the southern

region, especially in Khor al Adaid or the Inland Sea.

- The north and west have rocky terrain with low limestone formations.
- Salt flats known as sabkhas are also present.
- **Major Mountain:** The highest point is Qurayn Abu al Bawl at 103 m in Jebel Dukhan.
- **Climate:** Qatar has a dry desert climate with sunshine all year.
 - Winters are mild with an average temperature of 18.5°C in January.
 - Summers are very hot and temperatures often reach 40°C.
 - The country receives about 70 mm of rainfall annually.
- **Economy:** Qatar has a high-income economy largely dependent on oil and natural gas.
 - Income from these resources and related industries accounts for more than 90 % of annual exports.
 - It holds the third largest reserves of liquefied natural gas in the world.
- **Strategic Role:** Qatar is a member of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).
 - It hosts a major United States military base at Al Udeid.

Durand Line

News: Pakistan and Afghanistan have fought a second major clash in six months, more serious than routine Durand Line skirmishes during the U.S.A presence in Afghanistan.

About Durand Line



Source: National Geography Education

- **Location:** The Durand Line is a 2,640 km border dividing Afghanistan and Pakistan.
- **History:** It is the result of an agreement between Sir Mortimer Durand, a secretary of the British Indian government, and Abdur Rahman Khan, the emir, or ruler, of Afghanistan.
- **Signed in:** The agreement was signed on November 12, 1893, in Kabul, Afghanistan.
- **Status and dispute:** After the partition of British India in 1947, Pakistan inherited the Durand agreement but Afghanistan did not recognize the Durand Line.
- This remains a dispute between the two countries.
- It stretches from the Karakoram Range in the northeast (near China) to the Registan Desert in the southwest (near Iran).
- It also passes through the Spin Ghar (White Mountains), which includes Khyber Pass.
- It cuts across 12 Afghan provinces and 3 Pakistani provinces namely Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan, and Gilgit-Baltistan.

Ruddy Shelduck

News: For over 20 years, residents of Mudh village in Ladakh have been protecting the Ruddy shelduck that visits Ladakh during breeding season.

About Ruddy Shelduck



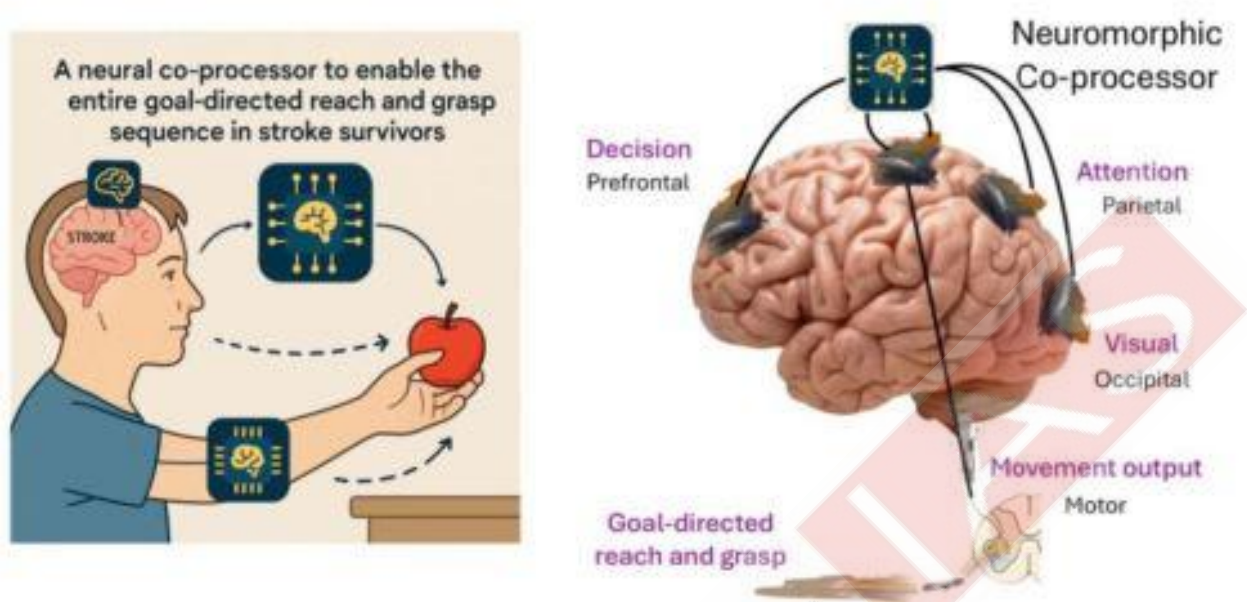
Source: DTE

- The Ruddy shelduck is a large and brightly colored waterfowl known for its orange-brown body and loud, honking call. They are also called the Brahminy duck.
- Scientific name: *Tadorna ferruginea*
- Habitat: They usually live near inland water bodies such as lakes, rivers, reservoirs, marshes, and wetlands.
- Distribution: They are widely distributed across Europe, Central Asia, and parts of North Africa.
 - Most populations are migratory and move to South Asia during the winter months.
 - Note: Ladakh is the only breeding site for Ruddy shelduck in India.
- Appearance: The male can be identified by a narrow black ring around its neck, while the female has a paler head and lacks the black collar.
- Behaviour: They are social birds and are often seen in pairs or small groups.
 - Large flocks may gather during winter or molting periods.
 - They are monogamous and form strong pair bonds that may last for life.
 - They are nocturnal and highly vocal with loud, nasal honking calls.
- Diet: They are omnivores and feed on grasses, plant shoots, grains, aquatic plants, and small invertebrates.
- Threat: Habitat loss and hunting
- Conservation status
 - IUCN Red List: Least Concern

“Moonshot” Project

News: Recently, the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) launched an ambitious Moonshot Project to develop advanced brain co-processors using neuromorphic hardware and artificial intelligence.

About “Moonshot” Project



Source – Moonshot Project

- The Moonshot Project is an advanced research initiative that aims to develop brain co-processors to decode neural signals, process them using artificial intelligence, and restore lost brain functions.
- Launched by: The project is launched by the Indian Institute of Science (IISc).
- Funded by: The project is funded by the Pratiksha Trust, founded by Senapathy 'Kris' Gopalakrishnan and Sudha Gopalakrishnan.
- Aim: The project aims to develop implantable and non-invasive brain co-processors that decode neural activity from recordings, process it using artificial intelligence, and send signals back to the brain through neural stimulation or neurofeedback.
- Key Features
 - Key focus: The project focuses on restoring sensorimotor functions such as reaching and grasping in stroke survivors through brain co-processors.
 - Technology used: The system combines neuromorphic hardware, artificial intelligence algorithms, neural recordings, and closed-loop stimulation to restore coordinated movement.
 - Dual approach: The project develops both implantable devices and non-invasive brain co-processors to support neurological rehabilitation.
 - Digital public goods: The initiative plans to develop India-specific stereo EEG and ECoG databases and create open-source AI tools, datasets, and visualization platforms.
 - Two-phase development: Phase one develops and validates a non-invasive neural co-processor, while phase two aims to build a minimally invasive embedded implant.
- Significance: The project will build indigenous neurotechnology capacity in India and support stroke rehabilitation by restoring critical functions such as goal-directed reaching and grasping.

Cassava Brown Streak Disease

News: Cassava Brown Streak Disease (CBSD) is threatening cassava, a key staple crop for millions of people in sub-Saharan Africa.

About Cassava Brown Streak Disease



Figure 6. Source: DTE

- It is a **viral disease** that causes **loss of cassava root (tuber) production and quality**.
- **Caused by:** It is caused by two types of viruses: **Cassava Brown Streak Virus (CBSV)** and **Ugandan Cassava Brown Streak Virus (UCBSV)**
- **Spread:** It was **first reported in Eastern Africa** during the 1930s and has now spread to several **eastern, central and southern African countries**.
- **Symptoms:** Symptoms can appear on **leaves, stems, and cassava roots**.
 - Typical CBSD symptoms are **leaf chlorosis, brown streaks on stems and dry hard rot in roots** which

affecting both the quality and quantity of edible storage roots.

- Its symptoms **vary from variety to variety, and from one geographical location to another**.
- **Transmission:** It **spreads through infected cassava stem cuttings and by whiteflies, transmitting the virus between plants**.
- **Management:** There are **currently no effective treatments** for plants infected with a virus.
- Management relies on **resistant varieties, virus-free planting material, good agronomic practices, disease monitoring, and controlled movement of planting materials**.

WHO's 90-70-90 Target

News: Union Health Minister Jagat Prakash Nadda reaffirmed India's commitment to eliminating cervical cancer while addressing a press briefing virtually at the World Health Organization headquarters.

About WHO's 90-70-90 Target



Source – WHO

- The WHO's 90-70-90 target is a global strategy to eliminate cervical cancer as a public health problem by 2030.

- **Launched in:** The WHO launched the 90-70-90 strategy in 2020.
- **Aim:** The strategy aims to eliminate cervical cancer as a public health problem through vaccination, screening, and treatment.
- **Three Key Targets:**
 - **90% Vaccination:** The strategy aims to ensure that 90% of girls receive the Human Papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine by the age of 15.
 - **70% Screening:** The strategy aims to ensure that 70% of women are screened with a high-performance test by the ages of 35 and 45.
 - **90% Treatment:** The strategy aims to ensure that 90% of women with pre-cancer receive treatment and women with invasive cancer are properly managed.
- **India's context**
 - **National HPV Vaccination Drive:** India has started a national HPV vaccination drive for girls aged 9–14 to prevent cervical cancer.
 - **Use of vaccines:** The programme uses indigenous Cervavac and other vaccines for the vaccination campaign.
 - **Disease Burden:** The initiative targets the high disease burden of cervical cancer in India, including over 80,000 deaths annually.

Key Facts About Finland

News: The President of Finland, Dr. Alexander Stubb, visited India on March 5, 2026, and participated as the Chief Guest at the Raisina Dialogue.

Key Facts About Finland



Figure 7. Source – Britannica

- **Location:** Finland is a Nordic country located in the northern Europe.
- **Borders:** It shares land borders with Norway in the north, Sweden in the northwest, and Russia in the east.
- **Maritime boundary:** It is also bounded by the Gulf of Finland in the south, the Gulf of Bothnia in the southwest, and the Baltic Sea.
- **Capital:** The capital city of Finland is Helsinki.
- **Climate:** The climate ranges from humid continental in the south to boreal in the north, with very cold winters.
- **Terrain:** Finland is heavily forested and contains thousands of lakes, rivers, marshlands, and boreal forests.
 - The landscape is mostly flat with hills formed due to glacial activity.
- **Important Lakes:** Lake Saimaa is the

largest lake in Finland.

- **Highest Point:** Highest point is Mount Halti at 1,328 meters.

- **Flora:** Finland is dominated by coniferous taiga forests, including pine, spruce, and birch.
- **Fauna:** Major wildlife includes brown bear, grey wolf, wolverine, elk, and the endangered Saimaa ringed seal.
- **International cooperation**
 - It is one of the eight member states of the Arctic Council, and it plays an important role in Arctic governance and climate research.
 - It is a member of the European Union (EU) and NATO, which strengthens its role in regional and global cooperation.

Karbi Anglong Ginger

News: Assam achieved a major agricultural milestone by sending its first trial export of GI-tagged Karbi Anglong Ginger to London.

About Karbi Anglong Ginger

Karbi Anglong Ginger

(Zingiber officinale Rosc.)



Figure 8. Source: AssamGov

- **About:** It is an **important cash crop** of Assam.
- It is grown in **Singhasan Hills of Karbi Anglong district** of Assam **using the age-old system of Jhum and Tila cultivation.**
- **Cultivation conditions required:** It requires **fertile soil, unique climatic conditions and dense forest cover.**
 - **Production season:** It starts with sowing in **March – April** and ends in **January.**
- It received **Geographical Indication (GI) tag in 2014.**
- **Properties:**
 - It is one of the **most flavourful varieties of Ginger** in India and is **known for its strong pungent**

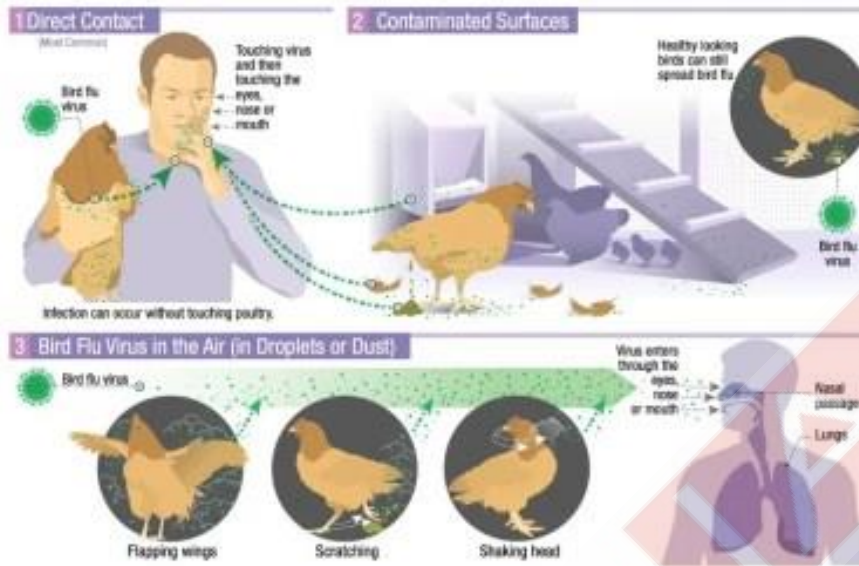
aroma.

- It is **used in traditional medicine** for its digestive and anti-inflammatory benefits.
- Its **dry rhizome contains high oleoresin oil and low fibre**, which increases its **market value.**
- It has a **distinct earthy taste with mild spiciness**, making it suitable for cooking.

Avian Influenza A (H5N1)

News: Japan's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries has confirmed an outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza at a poultry farm in Hokkaido.

About Avian Influenza A (H5N1)



Animal-To-Human Transmission of Avian Influenza

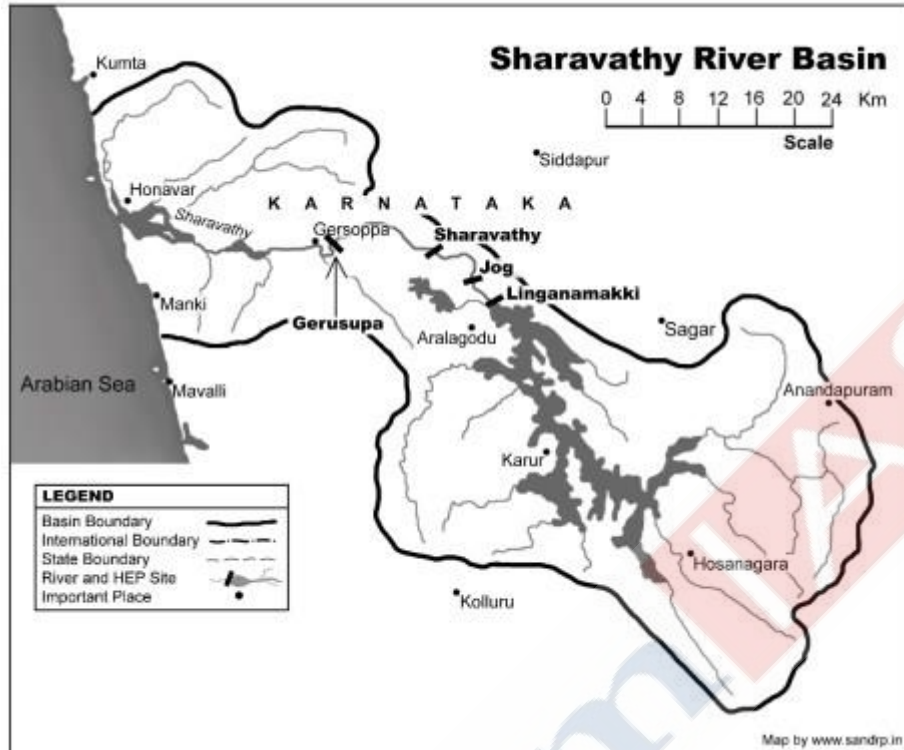
Source: CDC

- Avian influenza is a type A influenza virus of the genus Alphainfluenzavirus of the family Orthomyxoviridae.
- It is a single-stranded RNA virus with a genome consisting of eight negative-sense RNA segments.
- It is a highly infectious influenza virus that primarily infects birds but can also affect mammals, including humans in rare cases.
- Origin: It first emerged in 1996 in China and since 2020, it has been reported across Europe, Africa, Asia, North America, South America, and mainland Antarctica.
- Transmission: Humans are infected by close contact with infected birds and other animals and contaminated environments.
- The virus does not transmit easily from person to person.
- Symptoms: It infects upper respiratory tract and lungs and sometimes spreads to other parts of body.
- Symptoms may include eye redness (conjunctivitis), mild fever, cough, sore throat, runny or blocked nose, muscle aches, headache, and fatigue.
- Prevention: Infection can be prevented by avoiding direct contact with wild birds, poultry, or livestock that appear sick or dead.

Sharavathi River

News: Karnataka High Court recently issued notices to the Centre and the State government on a PIL questioning the legality of approvals granted by the State Wildlife Board and the National Board for Wildlife's Standing Committee for the Sharavathi Pumped Storage Project.

About Sharavathi River



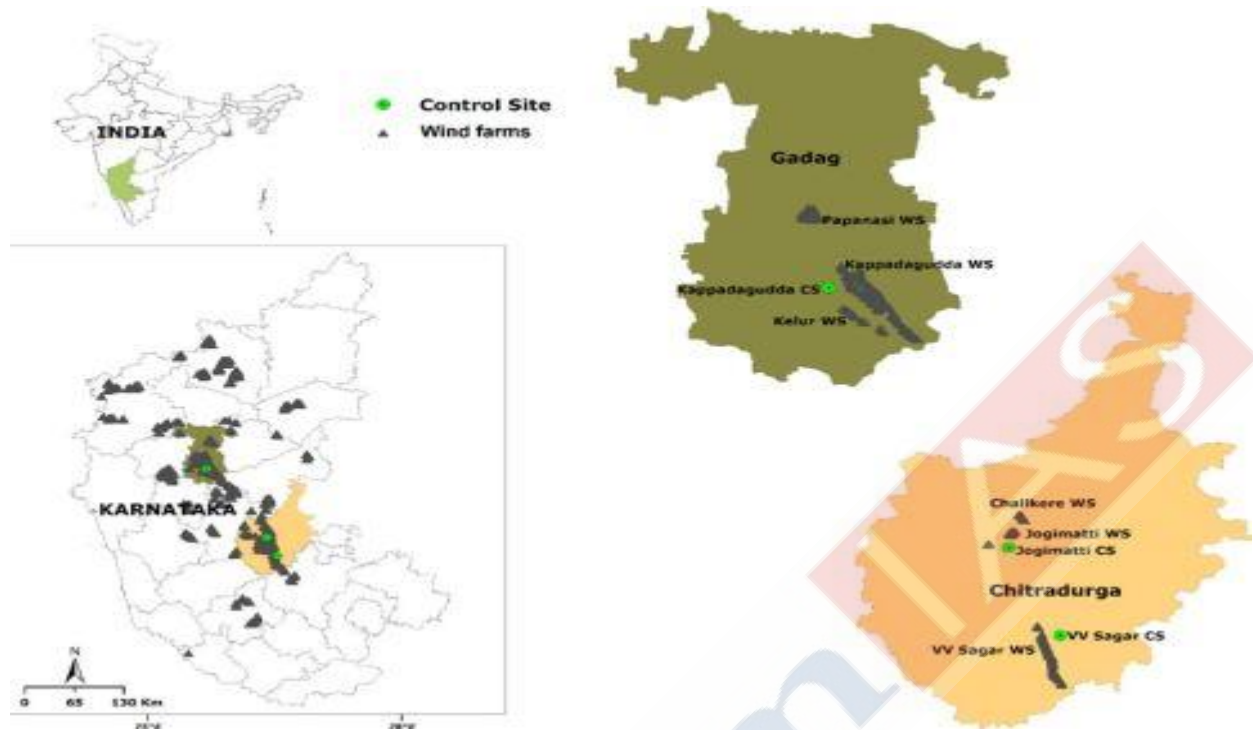
Source: SANDRP

- **Location:** It flows through the districts of Uttara Kannada and Shimoga in Karnataka.
- **This river is one of west flowing river in India.**
- **Origin:** It originates from Ambutirtha in the Tirthalli region.
- **Course of river:** After flowing through Tirthalli region, it finally joins the Arabian sea at Karki in Honavar district of Karnataka.
- **During its course, it forms the Jog Falls which is one of India's highest waterfalls.**
- **Tributaries:** Nandihole, Hilkunjihole, Sharmanavathi, Hilkunjihole, Nagodi hole, Hurlihole, Yennehole, Mavinahole, Gundalahole, Kalkattehole, and Kandodihole.
- **Catchment area:** About 3042 sq. km.
- **Dams situated on the river**
- **It plays a major role in Karnataka's hydropower generation, particularly through the Linganamakki Dam and associated projects.**
- **Sharavathi Pumped Storage Project (PSP) is a 2,000 MW hydropower project on the Sharavathi river. It aims to utilise renewable energy sources and reduce carbon emissions.**
- **The project proposes a pumped storage plant between the existing Talakalale and Gerusoppa dams.**
- **Water will be pumped upward during off-peak hours using grid power and released during peak demand to generate electricity.**

[Kappatagudda Wildlife Sanctuary](#)

News: High Court of Karnataka has directed State government to issue a further notification to include the left-out areas of the Kappatagudda reserve forest as part of the Kappatagudda Wildlife Sanctuary.

About Kappatagudda Wildlife Sanctuary



Source – ResearchGate

- **Location:** Kappatagudda Wildlife Sanctuary is located in the Gadag district of Karnataka.
- It is described as the “Western Ghats of North Karnataka” due to its rich biodiversity.
- **Area:** It covers an area of about 244 sq. km.
- **Established in:** 2019
- **River associated:** Tungabhadra River forms southern boundary of the sanctuary.
- **Vegetation:** Dry deciduous forests, grasslands, scrublands, and riverine ecosystems
- **Flora:** It hosts diverse flora including teak, *Butea monosperma*, acacia scrub, and native grasses, along with around 400 medicinal plant species.
- **Fauna:** The sanctuary is home to various mammals such as langurs, spotted deer, barking deer, leopards, Indian wolves, and striped hyenas, gray wolves, jungle cats, and several antelope species.
- Over 180 bird species have been recorded, with some rare sightings like the White-naped Tit.
- **Historical and cultural significance:** It features ancient temples such as Kappatagudda Jain Basadi and ruins from the Chalukya and Rashtrakuta dynasties.
- It also hosts notable monuments such as the Brahma Jinalaya Jain temple, Trikuteshwara Temple, and the 12th-century Dambala Temple built in the Western Chalukyan style.

[IMPAct4Nutrition \(I4N\) Platform](#)

News: NITI Aayog and UNICEF India signed a Statement of Intent to strengthen collaborative interventions for improving maternal and child nutrition in Aspirational Districts and Blocks.

About IMPAct4Nutrition (I4N) Platform



**IMPAct^{for}
Nutrition**

**PRIVATE SECTOR
ENGAGEMENT
FOR POSHAN ABHIYAAN**

Source - I4N

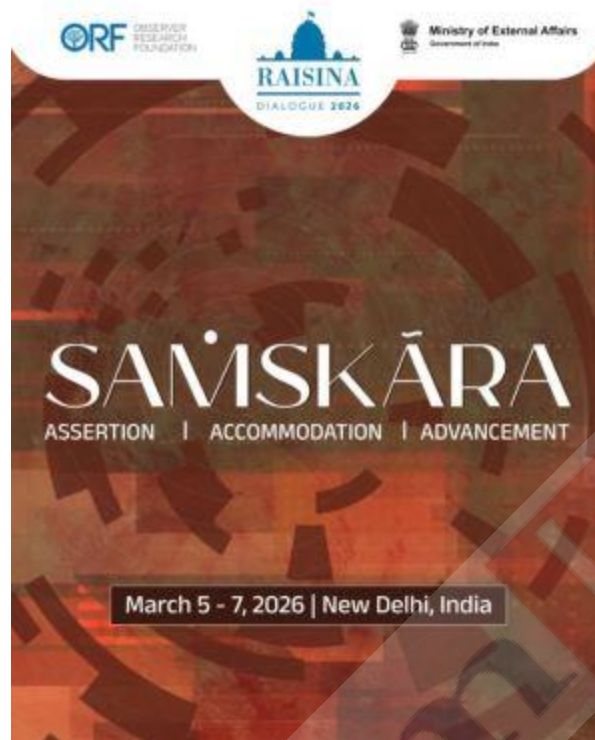
- The IMPAct4Nutrition (I4N) platform is also known as the Initiative to Mobilize Private Action for Nutrition.
- It is a knowledge and resource platform on nutrition that connects businesses with the social movement around POSHAN Abhiyaan.
- **Launched in:** The platform was launched in 2019.
- **Aim:** The initiative aims to encourage businesses to actively participate in improving nutrition awareness and promoting healthy lifestyles.
- **Partners:** Incubated by UNICEF India, the platform is supported by partners including CII, NASSCOM, Tata Trusts, Sight and Life, and CSRBOX.
- **Aligned With:** The initiative supports the POSHAN Abhiyaan programme launched by India in 2018.
- **Key initiatives**
 - **Corporate engagement:** The platform mobilises businesses and CSR partners to support nutrition-focused interventions.
 - **Knowledge hub:** It acts as a central hub for sharing nutrition knowledge and best practices.
 - **ACE card strategy:** A unique framework involving Assets for nutrition, CSR/Cash for nutrition, and Employees' engagement to drive behavioral change.
 - **Workplace nutrition:** It promotes nutrition awareness among employees, families, customers, and the wider community.

Raisina Dialogue 2026

News: Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended the inaugural session of the Raisina Dialogue 2026 in New Delhi with global leaders, policymakers and experts.

About Raisina Dialogue 2026

Factly Compilation March 2026



Source – ORF

- Raisina Dialogue 2026 is India's flagship conference on geopolitics and geo-economics that addresses major issues facing the international community.
- **Organizers:** The Dialogue is hosted by the Observer Research Foundation (ORF) in partnership with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA).
- **2026 edition:** The Raisina Dialogue 2026 is the eleventh edition of the conference.
- **Theme:** The theme of the 2026 edition is "Saṁskāra – Assertion, Accommodation, Advancement."
- **Chief Guest:** The President of Finland, Dr. Alexander Stubb, attended the inaugural session as the Chief Guest.
- **Participation:** Around 2700 participants from 110 countries will join the Dialogue in person, including ministers, former heads of state and government, members of parliament, military commanders, industry leaders, technology experts, academics, journalists, scholars and youth.
- **Thematic Pillars for 2026:** The dialogue was structured around six core pillars:
 - **Contested Frontiers: Power, Polarity, and Periphery**
 - **Repairing the Commons: New Groups, New Guardians, New Avenues**
 - **White Whale: The Pursuit of Agenda 2030**
 - **The Eleventh Hour: Climate, Conflict, and the Cost of Delay**
 - **Tomorrowland: Towards a Tech-topia**
 - **Trade in the Time of Tariffs: Recovery, Resilience, Reinvention**
- **Significance:** The Raisina Dialogue provides a global platform for leaders and experts to discuss major geopolitical and geo-economic challenges.

Khelo India Tribal Games (KITG)

News: The Union Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports announced that the inaugural Khelo India Tribal Games will be held in Chhattisgarh.

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About Khelo India Tribal Games



Source - PIB

- Khelo India Tribal Games is a national sporting event dedicated exclusively to tribal athletes to promote mass participation and sporting excellence.
- Inaugural edition: The inaugural edition of the Khelo India Tribal Games will be organized for the first time in India from March 25 to April 6, 2026.
- Theme: “Tribal Pride, Sporting Glory (Janajatiya Garv, Khel Samman)”
- Mascot: The official mascot is “Morveer”, which represents the spirit, pride and identity of India’s tribal communities.
- Aim: The Games aim to promote mass participation in sports and strengthen the talent base emerging from tribal areas.
- Host State: The inaugural Games will be hosted by Chhattisgarh in Raipur, Jagdalpur and Sarguja.
- Organising Bodies: The event will be jointly managed by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, Sports Authority of India, Indian Olympic Association, National Sports Federations and the Chhattisgarh state organising committee.
- Sports Disciplines: The Games will include seven medal sports - athletics, football, hockey, weightlifting, archery, swimming and wrestling and two demonstration sports - mallakhamb and kabaddi.

Inspiring Women Through Action (ASMITA) Programme

News: The Union Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports organized a nationwide athletics league under ASMITA programme across the nation.

About Inspiring Women Through Action (ASMITA) Programme



Source: My Gov

- ASMITA stand for Achieving Sports Milestone by Inspiring Women Through Action.
- ASMITA Programme is part of Khelo India's gender-neutral mission to promote sports among women through leagues and competitions.
- Launched in: 2021
- Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sport
- Aim: ASMITA leagues aim to increase the participation of women in sports and to utilise the leagues as a platform for identification of new talent across the length and breadth of India.
- Participation: Since its launch, it has seen nearly three lakh women participate in 33 sports through over 2,600 leagues nationwide.
- The Khelo India ASMITA league is a core component of the 'Khelo Bharat Niti,' promoting sports for nation-building and women's empowerment.
- The Sports Authority of India (SAI) supports National Sports Federations to conduct Khelo India women's leagues across multiple age groups at both zonal and national levels.

Commission on the Status of Women

News: Minister of State for Women and Child Development will visit New York from 9-12 March 2026 to attend Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) -70.

About Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)



Figure 9. Source – CSW

- The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) is the principal global intergovernmental body dedicated to promoting gender equality and the empowerment of women.
- Established: It was established by a resolution of the Economic and Social Council on 21 June 1946.
- Membership
 - Number of members :

Forty-five Member States of the United Nations serve as members of the Commission at any time.

- Elected by: Members are elected by the Economic and Social Council on the basis of equitable geographical distribution.
- Term: Member States are elected for a period of four years.
- Functions
- Promoting Rights: The Commission promotes women's political, economic, civil, social, and educational rights.
- Monitoring Progress: It reviews progress and challenges in implementing the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.
- Gender Mainstreaming: It works to integrate a gender perspective in United Nations activities.
- It take a leading role in monitoring and reviewing progress and problems in the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

Sexual Harassment Incident Notification for Empowerment (SHINE) App

News: Indian Railways recently launched 'SHINE' app for women employees to lodge complaints about sexual harassment at the workplace.

About SHINE App

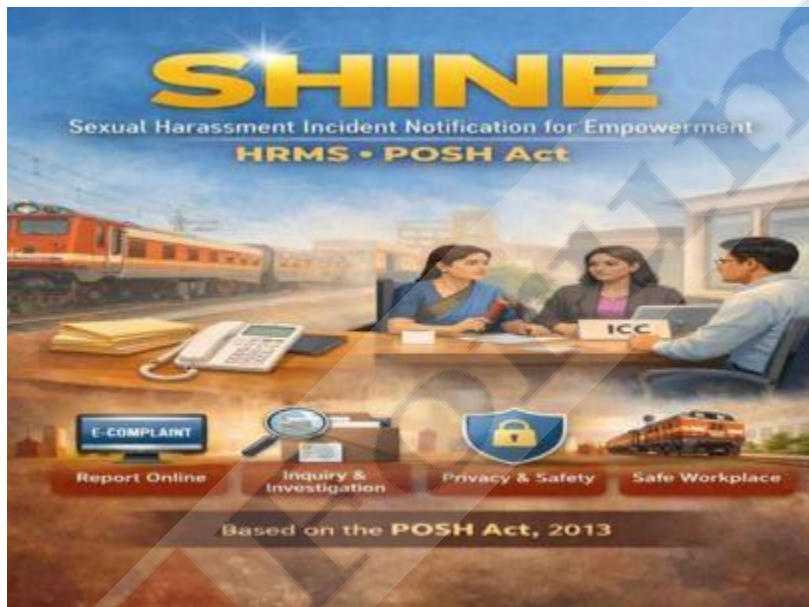


Figure 10. Source – Indian Railways

- SHINE stands for Sexual Harassment Incident Notification for Empowerment.
- SHINE app is a customized application developed to enable women employees to report incidents of sexual harassment at the workplace in a secure and efficient manner.
- Launched by: Indian Railways, on the occasion of International Women's Day.
- Key features
 - It operates in addition to the Internal Complaints Committees (ICCs) constituted in organisations in compliance with the Vishaka Guidelines.

- Accessible to: It is accessible to all female employees of Indian Railways, allowing them to directly register complaints regarding workplace sexual harassment.
- The app also allows reporting of incidents on behalf of others including – Visitors, Contractual staff, Students and other individuals who may not have direct access to the application.
- Access through: The app can be accessed through the Employee Self Service (ESS) system and women employees can lodge complaints through the Human Resources Management System (HRMS).
- Once a complaint is filed, it is received online by the designated committee responsible for handling such cases.
- The platform ensures confidentiality of complaints and facilitates timely and effective resolution by the concerned authorities.

- It was developed to strengthen the complaint mechanism by making it more confidential, transparent, and expeditious.

Very Low Earth Orbit (VLEO) Satellite Systems

News: Bharat Electronics Limited and Bellatrix Aerospace signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to design, develop and manufacture next-generation satellite systems and payloads for Very Low Earth Orbit operations.

About Very Low Earth Orbit (VLEO) Satellite Systems

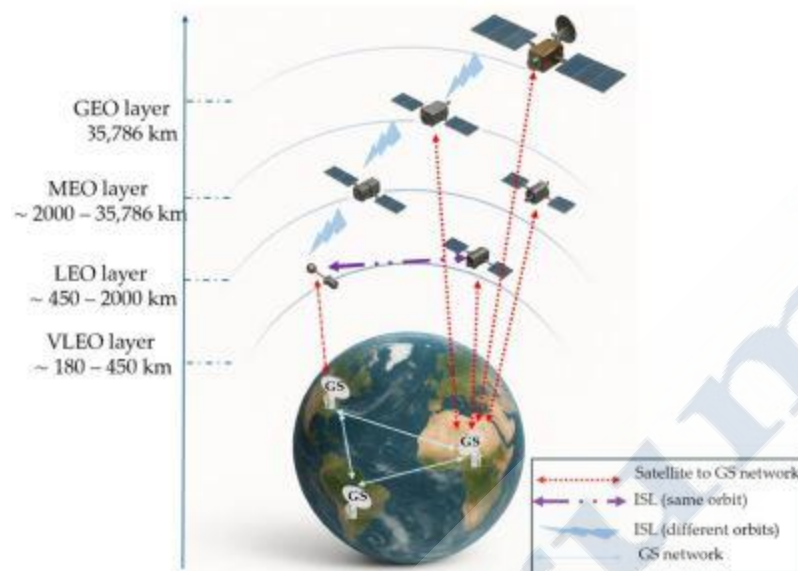


Figure 11. Source – MDPI

- The Very Low Earth Orbit (VLEO) refers to altitudes between 100 km and 450 km, significantly lower than traditional Low Earth Orbit (LEO).

- Key Features

- Enhanced imagery: Being closer to earth allows for ultra-high-resolution imaging (up to 10 cm per pixel) with smaller, more cost-effective optics compared to traditional satellites.
- Ultra-low latency: The shorter distance reduces signal travel time, which is critical for real-time applications like 6G networks,

autonomous vehicles, and remote surgery.

- Space sustainability: VLEO is “self-cleaning” because atmospheric drag naturally de-orbits satellites at the end of their life, preventing the buildup of long-term space debris.
- Lower launch costs: Small launch vehicles can deliver more mass to lower altitudes, and the more benign radiation environment allows the use of cheaper, commercial-grade electronics.
- Challenges
- Atmospheric drag: Residual atmosphere creates strong drag, requiring frequent or continuous propulsion to maintain orbit.
- Higher fuel consumption: Satellites closer to Earth require greater fuel to counter orbital decay.
- Material degradation: High levels of atomic oxygen can corrode spacecraft surfaces and require special protective coatings.

T20 Men’s Cricket World Cup 2026

News: The Prime Minister, Narendra Modi, congratulated the Indian cricket team after it won the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026 title.

About T20 Men's Cricket World Cup 2026



Source -

The Hindu

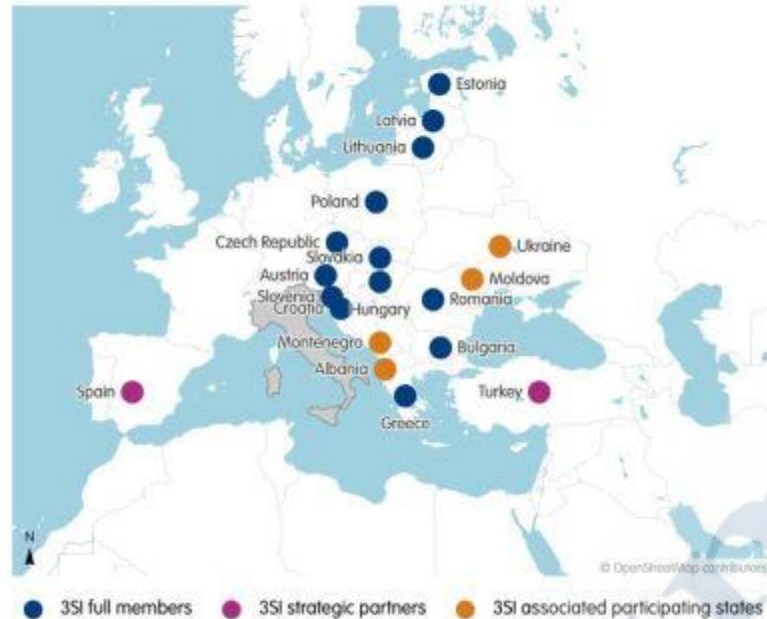
- The ICC Men's T20 World Cup is an international cricket tournament played in the Twenty20 International format.
- Organized by: The tournament is organised by the International Cricket Council (ICC).
- Frequency: The tournament is held every two years.
- First edition: The first edition of the tournament was played in 2007 in South Africa.
- Latest edition: The 10th edition was held from 7 February to 8 March 2026.
- Co-hosted by: The 2026 tournament was co-hosted by India and Sri Lanka.
- Venues: Five venues in India and three in Sri Lanka.
- Participating teams: A total of twenty teams (largest T20 World Cup in history) competed in 55 matches.
- Key facts
 - Winner (2026): India national cricket team defeated New Zealand national cricket team by 96 runs in the final.
 - India's titles: India has won the T20 World Cup three times (2007, 2024, and 2026).
 - Highest runs: Sahibzada Farhan scored 383 runs in the tournament season.
 - Top wicket takers: Jasprit Bumrah and Varun Chakravarthy took 14 wickets each.
- Major awards:
 - Player of the Match (Final): Jasprit Bumrah.
 - Player of the Tournament: Sanju Samson, who scored 321 runs in five matches with an average of 80.25.
- India also became the first team to win back-to-back titles in 2024 and 2026.

Three Seas Initiative (3SI)

News: India's External Affairs Ministry discussed connectivity and infrastructure cooperation with Croatia's envoy for the Three Seas Initiative during Raisina Dialogue 2026 in New Delhi.

About Three Seas Initiative (3SI)

Three Seas Initiative (3SI) participating members and partners



Source – Open Street Maps

- The Three Seas Initiative (3SI) is regional political and economic cooperation platform connecting 13 European Union countries located between the Baltic, Adriatic, and Black Seas.
- Established in: The initiative was established in 2015 by the former presidents of Poland and Croatia.
- Aim: The initiative aims to foster North–South connectivity and overcome the Soviet-era dominance of East–West infrastructure, thereby addressing structural disparities in the post-Cold War European context.
- Members: The member states include Austria, Bulgaria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, and Slovenia.
- Strategic partners: Strategic partners include the United States, Germany, the European Commission, and Japan, while regional partners include Ukraine and Moldova.
- Key features
 - Connectivity infrastructure development: The initiative focuses on developing transport corridors, highways, railways, ports, and logistics links connecting the Baltic, Adriatic, and Black Seas.
 - Economic integration: Improved connectivity helps expand trade, investment, and economic cooperation among Central and Eastern European countries.
 - Energy security enhancement: The initiative promotes diversified energy sources and infrastructure to reduce reliance on single energy suppliers.
 - Digital connectivity promotion: It encourages the development of broadband networks, digital infrastructure, and innovation cooperation across the region.
 - Investment support mechanism: The Three Seas Initiative Investment Fund, established in 2019, provides financial support for infrastructure projects.
 - Business and investment cooperation: Three Seas Business Forums provide a platform where companies, financial institutions, and organisations collaborate on transport, energy, and digital projects.

- **Significance:** The initiative helps reduce the infrastructure gap between Western Europe and Central and Eastern Europe while strengthening economic cooperation and connectivity.

Exercise Cold Response

News: NATO began its biennial Arctic military exercise Cold Response on March 9 amid tensions related to U.S. President Trump's push to take over Greenland.

About Exercise Cold Response



Source – DD News

- Exercise Cold Response is a large-scale biennial NATO military exercise conducted in the European Arctic to test the alliance's defence capability in extreme Arctic conditions.
- **Organized by:** The exercise is organized by Norway under the framework of the [North Atlantic Treaty Organization \(NATO\)](#).
- **Exercise Location:** The drills are conducted mainly across northern Norway and Finland in the European Arctic region.
- **Objective:** The exercise aims to strengthen NATO's collective defence capability, improve interoperability among allied forces, and demonstrate deterrence near Arctic borders.
- **Frequency:** The exercise is conducted every two years (biennially).
- **Participants:** Around 25,000 troops from about 14 NATO and partner countries, including the United States and Denmark, participate in the exercise.
- The exercise has become part of Arctic Sentry – the NATO mission to strengthen its presence in the polar region.
- **Key features**
 - **Arctic Defence Exercise:** The drills focus on defending NATO in the European Arctic, particularly in areas where Norway and Finland share borders with Russia.
 - **Civilian Support to Military:** The exercise places strong emphasis on the role of civilians, businesses, and public institutions in supporting military operations during war or crises.
 - **Medical Preparedness Scenario:** The military will test the capacity of hospitals in northern Norway to treat a large number of casualties arriving from a simulated frontline in Finland.
- **Significance:** The exercise strengthens NATO's defence preparedness and presence in the Arctic region near the Russia–Finland border.

Exercise "LAMITIYE-2026"

News: Indian Armed Forces contingent arrived at Seychelles to participate in Exercise "LAMITIYE-2026" with Seychelles Defence Forces (SDF).

About Exercise "LAMITIYE-2026"



Source: PIB

- Exercise LAMITIYE is a joint military training exercise between the Indian Army and the Seychelles Defence Forces
- Meaning: 'LAMITIYE' meaning 'Friendship' in the Creole language.
- First Edition: It was first conducted in Seychelles in 2001.
- 2026 edition: This year edition is the 11th edition of this exercise.
- Conducted at: It is being conducted at the Seychelles Defence Academy from 09-20 March 2026.
- Participants: The contingent comprises of personnel from the ASSAM Regiment and participation from Indian Navy and Indian Air Force including INS Trikand and a C-130 aircraft.
- Features:
 - The exercise aims to enhance synergy in Sub-conventional Operations within a Semi-Urban environment and strengthen cooperation and interoperability during Peacekeeping Operations.
 - It will include Field Training Exercises, combat discussions, case studies, lectures, and demonstrations, culminating in a two-day Validation Exercise.
 - It will also help build and promote bilateral military relations by exchanging skills, experiences, and best practices.

Key Facts About Malawi

News: India has dispatched a consignment of 1,000 metric tons of rice to Malawi following the drought caused by the El Nino effect.

Key Facts About Malawi



Source: World Atlas

- **Location:** Malawi is a landlocked country in southeastern Africa.
- It is located in the Great Rift Valley along the western shore of Lake Malawi, which is the southernmost lake of the Great African Rift Valley.
- **Borders:** Malawi shares international borders with Tanzania, Zambia, and Mozambique.
- **Capital City:** The capital of Malawi is Lilongwe.
- **Climate:** Predominately sub-tropical
- **Terrain:** The region can be divided into four physiographic regions –
 - Great Rift Valley
 - The central plateau
 - Highland region
 - Isolated mountains
- **Lakes:** The Great Rift Valley hosts Lake Malawi, the third-largest lake in Africa.
- **Major Rivers:** The Shire River is the largest river in Malawi and serves as the only outlet of Lake Malawi.
- **Highest Peak:** The highest mountain is Mount Mulanje, with a height of 3,002 m (9,849 ft).

[ICANN85 Community Forum](#)

News: The ICANN85 Community Forum is being organized from 7th to 12th March 2026 at Jio Convention Center in Mumbai.

About ICANN85 Community Forum



Source: ICANN

- It is a platform that **brings governments, technical experts, and industry stakeholders** together to discuss **how collectively they can keep the internet open, secure, and accessible for everyone.**
- **Organised at:** Jio Convention Center in Mumbai
- **Organized by:** It is organised by Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (**ICANN**) and hosted in collaboration with the **National Internet Exchange of India (NIXI) under MeitY.**
- **Features:** It comprised **more than 200 sessions** focused on **key issues related to the secure and stable operation of the Internet**, including the evolution of the Domain Name System, cybersecurity practices, and the upcoming expansion of generic top-level domains (gTLDs).

About Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN)

- It is a **non profit public benefit organization** with participants from around the world.
- **Established in:** 1998
- **Mission:** Its mission is to keep the **global Internet stable, secure, and unified.**
- **How it works:** A user must enter a unique address (a name or number) on a device to connect with another person on the Internet,
 - **These addresses must be unique** so that computers can correctly find and communicate with each other.
 - **ICANN coordinates and manages these unique identifiers worldwide.**

About National Internet Exchange of India (NIXI)

- It is a **not-for-profit organization** under **section 8 of the Companies Act 2013.**
- **Nodal Ministry:** It was set up under the aegis of the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).**
- **Role:** It plays a critical role **in strengthening India's Internet infrastructure.**
 - It **facilitates efficient exchange of domestic Internet traffic, managing the .IN and .भारत (.Bharat) country-code top-level domains, and promoting the adoption of Internet services across the country.**
 - It supports a **secure, resilient, and inclusive Internet ecosystem aligned with India's digital growth ambitions.**

LIGO India

News: Construction of the LIGO India observatory in Hingoli district remains delayed as the ₹1,600-crore construction tender has not yet been awarded.

About LIGO India

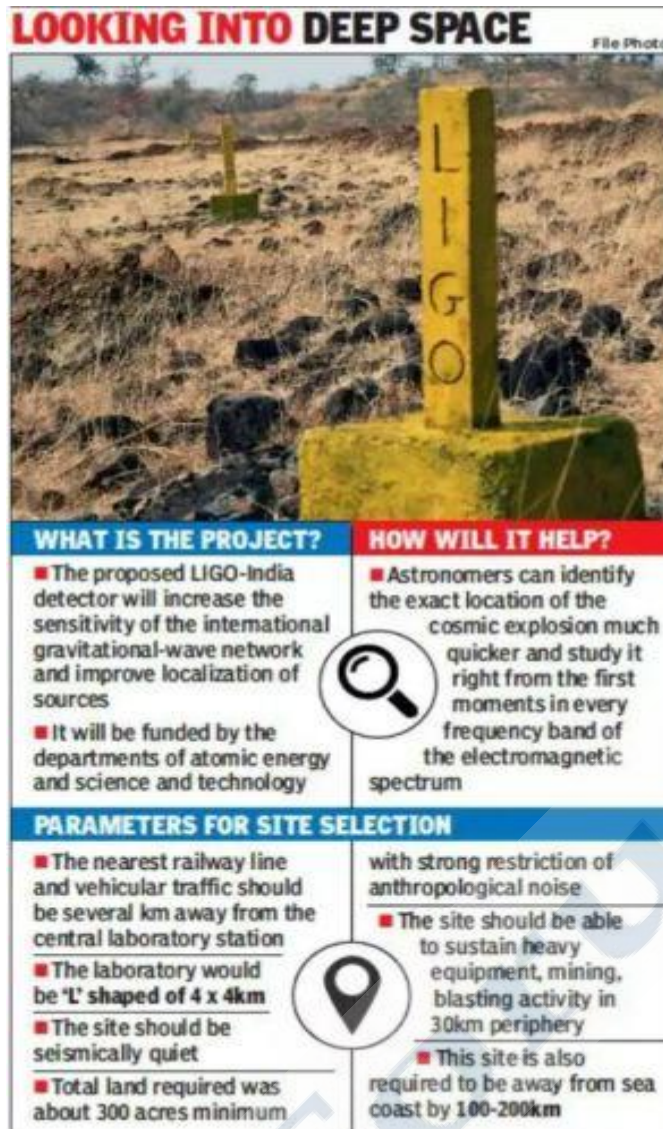


Figure 12. Source – Tol

- The Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory (LIGO) India is a planned gravitational wave observatory that will work as part of the global network studying cosmic ripples in space-time.

- **Location:** The observatory will be built in Aundha area of Hingoli district in Maharashtra.

- **Nodes**

- It will be the third LIGO detector globally after Hanford and Livingston in the United States.

- It will also become the fifth major node in the global network, which includes Virgo (Italy) and KAGRA (Japan).

- **Nodal Agencies:** The project is jointly piloted by the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) and the Department of Science and Technology (DST), which also provide funding for the facilities.

- **International partners:** The project is implemented in collaboration with the National Science Foundation (NSF), USA, and the LIGO Laboratory.

- **Indian Institutions involved:** The project involves Institute for Plasma Research (IPR), Inter-University Centre for Astronomy and Astrophysics (IUCAA), and Raja Ramanna Centre for Advanced Technology (RRCAT).

- **Budget:** The project received financial

approval of ₹2,300 crore from the Government of India.

- **Timeline:** The observatory is expected to be completed by 2030.
- **Key features**
- **Laser interferometry system:** The observatory will use advanced laser interferometry to measure extremely small distortions in space-time.
- **Large L-shaped structure:** The facility will have two 4-km-long vacuum arms placed at 90 degrees with mirrors at their ends.
- **Global scientific network:** The facility will operate in coordination with LIGO detectors in the United States and other international observatories.
- **Precision infrastructure:** The project includes ultra-high vacuum beam tubes, vibration-isolated platforms, control systems, and monitoring equipment.

About Gravitational Waves

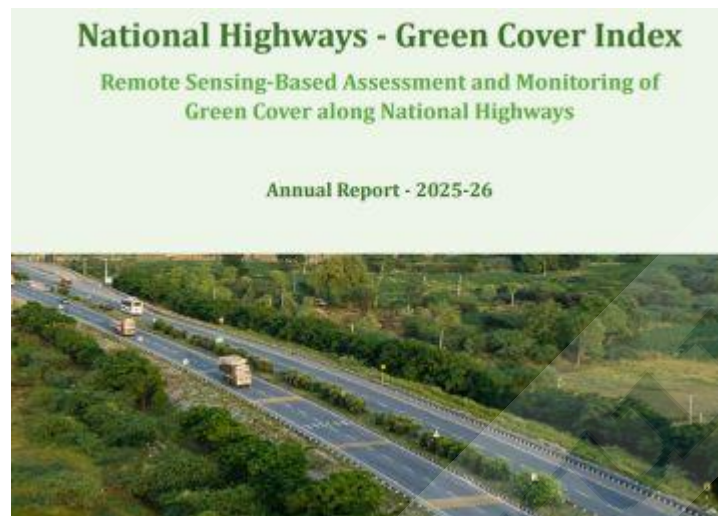
- **Nature:** Gravitational waves are ripples in the fabric of space-time caused by extremely violent cosmic events.

- **Prediction and discovery:** They were predicted by Albert Einstein's General Theory of Relativity and first detected in 2015 by LIGO in the United States.
- **Origin:** They are produced by events such as collisions of black holes or mergers of neutron stars.
- **Properties:** These waves travel at the speed of light and carry information about their cosmic origins and gravity.

National Highways Green Cover Index (NH-GCI) 2025-26

News: The National Highways Authority of India released the first Annual Report on the National Highways Green Cover Index (NH-GCI) 2025-26.

About National Highways Green Cover Index (NH-GCI) 2025-26



Source - NHAI

- It is a scientific and quantitative index that measures the proportion of green cover along the Way of National Highways.
- **Released by:** The report has been released by the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI).
- **Prepared by:** It has been prepared in coordination with the National Remote Sensing Centre (NRSC) of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).
- **Aim:** The initiative aims to provide a scientific and quantitative assessment of green cover along the National Highways by using advanced space-based technologies.
- **Key features**
 - **Technology-based assessment:** The index uses high-resolution satellite sensors to detect chlorophyll content and measure vegetation on the left and right sides of highways.
 - **Measurement method:** NH-GCI is expressed as a percentage that shows the share of land covered by green canopy within each one-kilometre segment of the Right of Way.
 - **Coverage and monitoring:** In the first cycle, around 30,000 km of National Highways across 24 states were assessed for the period July-December 2024.
 - **Data and public access:** The results are published on NRSC's Bhuvan web GIS portal, which provides interactive maps and standardized reports.

Anavaran Portal

News: The Forest Survey of India recently stopped issuing deforestation alerts through the Anavaran-Deforestation Alert System, and the portal's data have not been updated since November 2025.

About Anavaran Portal



Source - IE

- Anavaran Portal is a deforestation alert system that uses satellite data and machine learning to monitor forest cover loss and send alerts to states.
- **Developed by:** The portal has been developed and operated by the Forest Survey of India (FSI).
- **Aim:** The system aims to support near-real-time monitoring of forest cover loss using satellite-based information and digital tools.
- **Objective:** The main objective of the portal is to help the Forest Survey of India monitor deforestation and send alerts to states every 15 days so that targeted field inspections can be carried out.
- **Key features:**
 - **Operational cycle:** Since its inception in January 2024, the portal sent alerts to state forest departments every 15 days to facilitate targeted field inspections.
 - **Technology used:** The alert system is based on the Google Earth Engine (GEE) platform and uses Sentinel-2 satellite images as input data.
 - **High precision:** The Forest Survey of India uses satellite imagery at 10–20 metre spatial resolution, including Sentinel-2B (optical), Sentinel-1 (SAR 5m), Sentinel-2 (visible and NIR 10m), RedEdge and SWIR 20m.

Other Similar Initiative

- Peru started using the Terra-I remote sensing deforestation monitoring system in 2014, which is funded by Global Forest Watch and uses satellite data to generate quarterly alerts later improved to monthly alerts.

[Commercial Banks – Prudential Norms on Declaration of Dividend and Remittance of Profit\) Directions, 2026](#)

News: Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has issued Commercial Banks – Prudential Norms on Declaration of Dividend and Remittance of Profit) Directions 2026 to revise prudential norms for dividend declaration by commercial banks.

About Commercial Banks – Prudential Norms on Declaration of Dividend and Remittance of Profit) Directions 2026



Source – DD News

- **Come into effect:** The new directions will **come into effect from FY 2026–27 (FY27)**.
- **CET1-linked dividend framework:** As per new direction, dividend payouts are linked to **Common Equity Tier-1 (CET1) capital ratios**.
 - The framework introduces **10 capital-ratio buckets** to determine the maximum permissible dividend payout.
 - **Note:** CET1 ratio compares a bank's capital against its **risk-weighted assets** to determine its ability to withstand financial distress.
- **Dividend limits:** As per the new direction:
 - Banks with **CET1 ratio of 8% or below cannot declare dividends**.
 - Banks with **CET1 above 20% may distribute up to 100% of adjusted Profit After Tax (PAT)**.
 - However, **total dividend payout cannot exceed 75% of PAT** regardless of the CET1 bucket.
 - **Local Area Banks and Regional Rural Banks (RRBs) will be allowed to declare dividends up to 80 per cent** of the PAT, subject to compliance with prudential conditions laid down by the RBI.
- **Adjusted Profit After Tax (PAT):** It introduces Adjusted PAT to reduce dividend eligibility for banks with **higher levels of bad loans**.
 - **Note:** Adjusted PAT is calculated as **net profit minus 50% of net Non-Performing Assets (NPAs)** as on March 31 of the relevant financial year.
- **Rules for systemically important banks:** For **Domestic Systemically Important Banks (D-SIBs)**, the **D-SIB capital buffer is added to each bucket thresholds**.
- **Eligibility conditions for dividend declaration:**
 - Banks must meet **regulatory capital requirements before and after dividend payment**.
 - They must have a **positive adjusted PAT**.
 - They should not face any existing **restrictions from RBI on distribution**.
- **Board oversight:** The board of directors must consider **divergence in asset classification and NPA provisioning**, review the **auditors' report**, and assess the **current and projected capital position and long-term growth plans**.
- **Rules for foreign banks:** Foreign banks operating in India through branches may **remit net profits to their head offices without prior RBI approval** if accounts are audited.
 - However, **exceptional income, overstated profits identified by auditors, and unrealised gains on level-3 financial instruments are excluded** from remittable profits.
- **Reporting and compliance:** Banks must **report dividend payments or profit remittances to RBI's Department of Supervision within a fortnight of the declaration**. Non-compliance may attract supervisory or enforcement action.

Dandi March

News: Vice President C.P. Radhakrishnan and Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday paid homage to Mahatma Gandhi and all the brave freedom fighters who took part in the historic march 'Dandi Satyagraha.'

About Dandi March



Source - Wikipedia

- Mahatma Gandhi launched the non-violent **Civil Disobedience Movement** with the **Dandi March**.
- The march began on **12 March 1930** and ended on **6 April 1930**.
- Gandhi and **80 followers** walked about **241 miles** from **Sabarmati Ashram** to **Dandi** in **present-day Gujarat**, where they broke the British salt law by making salt.
- The march saw **large participation of women**.
- The **Salt Satyagraha** was based on Gandhi's principle of **non-violence**.
- **Purpose**
 - The British government had a **monopoly on salt production and sale**.
 - Since salt was essential in daily life, the restrictions were seen as **unjust and oppressive**.
 - The Salt Satyagraha aimed to **unite Indians in the struggle for Swaraj (self-rule)**.
- **Circumstances Leading to the March**
 - Under **British Raj**, salt production and distribution were controlled by the government.
 - Indians were **not allowed to produce or sell salt independently** and had to buy **heavily taxed imported salt**.
 - Poor people could not afford expensive salt, making the tax highly controversial.
 - Gandhi used the march to **protest British exploitation and unfair laws** and to **mobilize people through non-violent resistance**.
- **Aftermath**
 - The **movement spread across the country** with **widespread defiance of salt laws**.
 - **C. Rajagopalachari** led a similar movement in **Tamil Nadu**, and protests also occurred in **West Bengal** and **Andhra Pradesh**.
 - **Jawaharlal Nehru** was arrested on **14 April 1930** for breaking salt laws.
 - **Gandhi was arrested** on the night of **4-5 May 1930**. Leaders like **Sarojini Naidu** continued the **movement** despite police brutality.
 - The Satyagraha continued for about **a year until Gandhi's release from jail**.

Spotted Hyena (Crocuta crocuta)

News: A new study by the University of Sheffield found that spotted hyenas in Ethiopia's Mekelle city reduce waste, carbon emissions, and sanitation risks.

About Spotted Hyena (*Crocuta crocuta*)



Source - Born Free

- The spotted hyena is the largest living member of the Hyaenidae family.
- It is a highly adaptable carnivore.
- **Scientific Name:** The scientific name of the spotted hyena is *Crocuta crocuta*.
- **Habitat:** Spotted hyenas live in savannahs, grasslands, woodlands, semi-deserts, and forest edges.
- **Distribution:** The species is native to sub-Saharan Africa and is one of the most common large carnivores in Africa.
- **Characteristics**
 - **Body structure:** The animal has a strong neck and forequarters, a rounded rump, a wide head with a blunt muzzle, and rounded ears.
 - **Coat and build:** It has short fur with irregular black spots and a robust body with longer forelimbs than hind limbs.
 - **Size and weight:** Adults usually weigh about 40–65 kg and have a body length of about 95–165 cm.
 - **Clan system:** Spotted hyenas live in large clans that can contain up to 80 individuals.
 - **Matriarchal society:** Females are larger and dominate males in the social hierarchy.
 - **Cooperative behaviour:** Clan members often hunt, eat, and rest together.
 - **Vocalisation:** The species is commonly known as the “laughing hyena” because of its distinctive vocal sounds.
- **Ecological Role:** It helps regulate herbivore populations in ecosystems.
- It consumes carrion and organic waste, reducing disease risk and recycling nutrients.
- **IUCN Status:** Least Concern

Note

- **Presence of Hyena family in India:** The spotted hyena is not found in India.
- Instead the [striped hyena](#) (*Hyaena hyaena*), a related species, occurs in Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, and Karnataka.
- **Protection Status:**

- Near Threatened by the IUCN
- Schedule III of the Wildlife Protection Act, 1972

Glass Industry of India

News: Government invoked the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 to regulate natural gas supply, which may affect India's glass manufacturing industry dependent on continuous fuel supply.

About Glass Industry of India



Source - IE

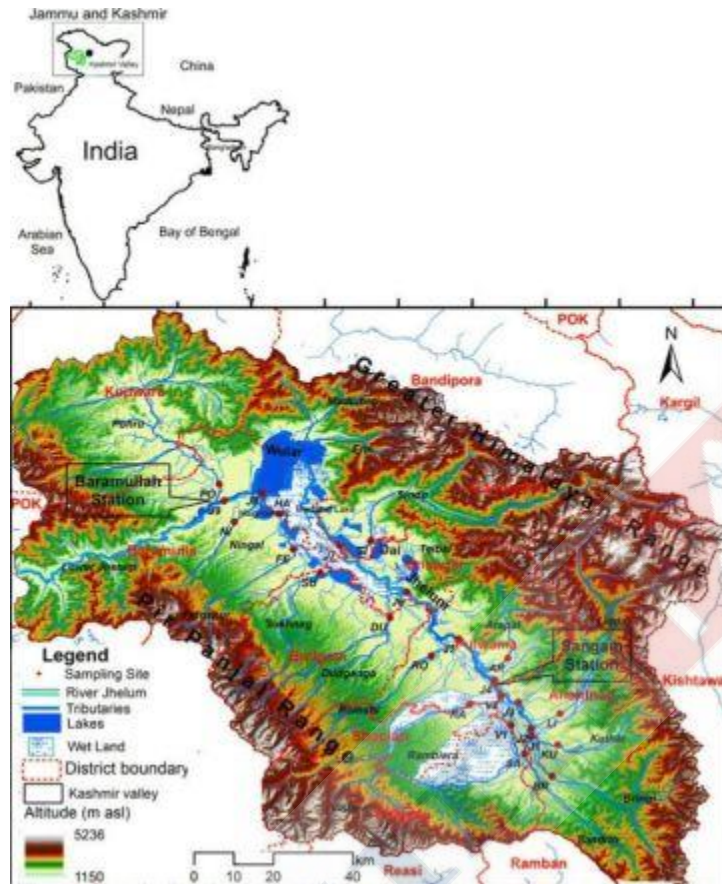
- India's glass manufacturing industry produces glass products used in construction, automotive, packaging, electronics, and pharmaceutical sectors.
- The All India Glass Manufacturers' Federation (AIGMF) represents the interests of the glass manufacturing industry and provides sector related data and policy inputs.
- Historical evolution
 - Ancient references: The Indian epic Mahabharata contains one of the earliest references to glassmaking in India.
 - Archaeological evidence: Glass beads from the Painted Grey Ware civilisation in the Ganges Valley around 1000 BC provide early physical evidence.
 - Early production centres: Archaeological remains show glass industry activity in Brahmapuri and Kolhapur between 2 BC and 2 AD.
 - Medieval development: During the Mughal period, glassware such as hukkas, perfume containers, and decorative glass items became popular.
 - Historically, Firozabad is popularly known as the "Glass City of India", where it started back by 17th century.
 - Modern period
 - Shri Ishwar Das Varshnei is considered the father of the Indian glass industry.
 - He established the United Provinces Glass Works in Bahjoi, Uttar Pradesh, in 1916.
 - He was a key figure in developing blown, pressed, and sheet glass, and was the first President of the Indian Ceramic Society.
 - The first glass plant was set up in august 1908 by Lokmanya Balgangadhar Tilak at Talegaon, Maharashtra.
- Current market scenario
 - The float glass segment was estimated at Rs. 24,000 crore in 2022 and is expected to reach Rs. 40,000 crore within four years.

- **Production capacity:** India's glass manufacturing sector produces around 26,000 tonnes of glass per day.
- **Container glass output:** About 12,500 tonnes of container glass are produced daily.
- **Pharmaceutical glass:** Around 500 tonnes of ampoules, vials, and cartridges are produced daily for medicine storage.
- **Domestic consumption:** Nearly 80% of the glass produced is consumed within the country.
- **Low domestic consumption:** India's per capita float glass consumption is 2.5 kg, which is lower than developed countries.
- **Potential**
 - **Growing construction demand:** The flourishing construction and housing sector is increasing demand for float glass used in windows, mirrors, doors, and solar panels.
 - **Automotive and industrial demand:** Increasing use of glass in the automotive and construction industries is supporting medium-term growth.
 - **Solar energy expansion:** Solar glass demand is expected to rise 23-25% in FY24 due to the government's focus on renewable energy and replacement of imported solar glass.
 - **Large domestic growth scope:** India's per capita float glass consumption is about 2.5 kg, while developed countries consume 7-10 kg, indicating significant room for expansion.
- **Challenges in present context**
 - **Fuel supply constraints:** Curtailment of natural gas and LPG supply is affecting continuous furnace operations.
 - **High restart cost:** Restarting a furnace can take six to twelve months and cost Rs 50-200 crore, making shutdowns extremely costly.
 - **Rising gas prices:** Increasing gas prices due to supply shortages may make glass products commercially unviable.
 - **Technology and skills gap:** The sector requires advanced technologies and skilled workforce for modern production.
- **Geographical distribution & clusters**
 - **Firozabad (Uttar Pradesh):** It is known for glass chandeliers and decorative items.
 - **Saharanpur (Uttar Pradesh):** The city produces glass toys called "panchkora".
 - **Hyderabad:** It is famous for producing high-quality glass bangles called "Churi ka jodas".
 - **Patna (Bihar):** The region produces ornamental glass beads known as "Tikuli".

Jhelum River

News: The Kashmir Valley is experiencing an unusual early spring as the Jhelum River dropped below zero-gauge level amid record high temperatures.

About Jhelum River



Source – ResearchGate

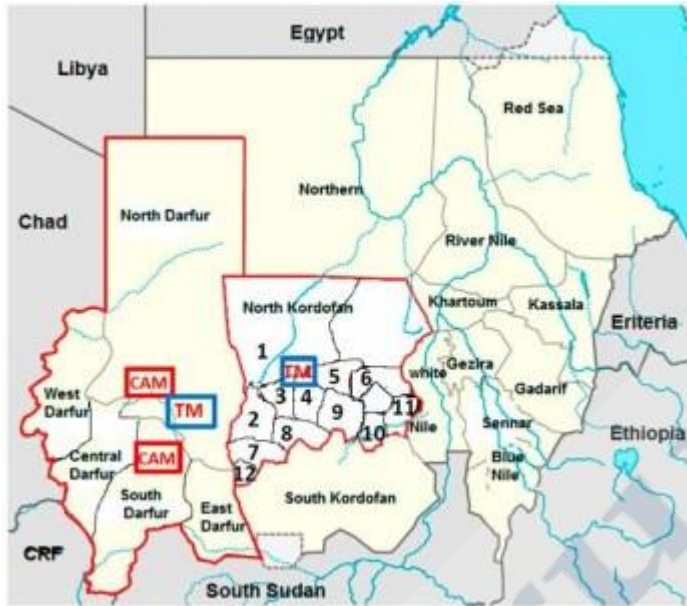
- **Location:** The Jhelum River is a river of northwestern India and northern and eastern Pakistan and is a major tributary of the Indus River.
- **Ancient names:** Known as Vitasta in Sanskrit (Rigveda), Vyeth in Kashmiri, and Hydaspes in Greek.
- **Origin:** The river originates from the Verinag Spring at Anantnag, located at the foot of the Pir Panjal Range in the Kashmir Valley.
- **Course**
 - The river flows northward from the northern slope of the Pir Panjal Range through the Vale of Kashmir.
 - It passes through Wular Lake at Srinagar, which helps regulate its flow.
 - The river then flows through a deep and narrow gorge before entering Pakistan.
 - Finally, it joins the Chenab River near Trimmu in Pakistan.
 - The river has a total length of about 725 km.
- **Major tributary:** The Kishanganga River (known as the Neelum in Pakistan) is its largest tributary, joining it at Muzaffarabad.
- **Other tributaries:**
 - **Right bank:** Lidder, Sind, Kunhar, and Pohru.
 - **Left bank:** Veshaw, Rambiara, Doodh Ganga, and Sukhnag.
- **Fluvial features:** The Jhelum River in the Kashmir Valley is a classic example of a river that exhibits meandering in its youthful stage.
- **Important projects and treaties:** Indus Waters Treaty (1960): Under this treaty, the waters of the Jhelum (along with the Indus and Chenab) are allocated to Pakistan.

- **Historical significance: Battle of the Hydaspes (326 BCE):** A landmark battle where Alexander the Great defeated King Porus on the banks of this river.

Kordofan Region

News: UN spokesperson said that clashes between the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) militia and the Sudanese Armed Forces in South Kordofan have intensified in recent days.

About Kordofan Region



Source: ResearchGate

- It constitutes the central and southern area of Sudan.
- It is located between Darfur on the west and the valley of the White Nile River on the east.
- Area: It covers an area of about 390,000 square km.
- Kordofan is divided into three federal states: North, South, and West Kordofan.
 - North Kordofan is mostly desert with sandy soils and little relief.
 - South Kordofan has clay plains with the Nuba Mountains rising to about 900 m.
 - West Kordofan has a semi-desert climate in the north and a dry savannah climate in the south with increasing rainfall.
- Economy: The Nuba Mountains contain reserves with significant mineral resources such as chromium, copper, gold, iron, manganese, and nickel; industrial minerals like graphite, marble, phosphate rock, and talc; and uranium as an energy resource.
 - The Copper Pit mineral district in southwestern Sudan is also prospective for copper, gold, gemstones, and uranium.
- Most of the people in Kordofan are Arabs.
- Conflict: The region has experienced frequent conflict, particularly during Sudan's civil wars.
- Strategic Importance: It is strategically important because it is near South Sudan and contains major oil resources including the Heglig oil field, the largest and most strategic hub for both Sudan and South Sudan.

Digital Twin Initiative for Port Management

News: V.O. Chidambaranar Port Authority became the first Indian port to launch the Digital Twin initiative for port management.

About Digital Twin initiative for port management



Source- desapex.com

- Digital Twin for port management creates a real-time virtual replica of the port's infrastructure, operational assets, and maritime ecosystem.
- **First major Indian port to launch:** V.O. Chidambaranar Port Authority, located in Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu, became the first Indian port to launch this Digital Twin initiative.
- **Platform inaugurated by:** The platform was inaugurated on 23 February 2026 by Sarbananda Sonowal, Union Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways.
- **Aim:** The initiative aims to enable enhanced operational visibility, predictive analytics, and data-driven decision-making across the port by creating a real-time digital replica of the port ecosystem.
- **Key Features**
 - **Real-Time Operational Monitoring:** The platform provides live visualisation of berth occupancy, vessel movements, crane utilisation, and yard capacity across the port.
 - **Predictive Maintenance System:** AI-based monitoring supports predictive maintenance of cargo handling equipment and helps reduce downtime while improving reliability.
 - **Integrated Smart Technologies:** The system integrates IoT sensors, GPS tracking, LiDAR mapping, drone imaging, and CCTV networks to mirror real-time port conditions.
- **Significance:** The initiative supports smart, efficient, and technology-driven maritime management while strengthening data-driven port operations.

Fiscal Health Index 2026

News: The **second annual edition** of the Fiscal Health Index 2026 was released in New Delhi by NITI Aayog officials.



Source- PIB

About Fiscal Health Index 2026

- It is a data-driven framework that provides a systematic and comparable assessment of the fiscal performance of Indian states.
- **Released By:** The Index was released by NITI Aayog.
- **Categories:** The Index classifies states into four tiers based on their fiscal performance.
 - **Achievers:** These states show strong fiscal discipline, high own-tax revenues, low deficits, and manageable debt levels.
 - **Front Runners:** These states maintain sound finances but fall short of the top tier on some indicators.
 - **Performers:** These states show mixed results across different fiscal indicators.
 - **Aspirational:** These states face significant fiscal stress with persistent deficits, high debt, and limited revenue capacity.
- **Evaluation Pillars:** The Index evaluates state finances on **five key pillars**.
 - **Quality of Expenditure**
 - **Revenue Mobilisation**
 - **Fiscal Prudence**
 - **Debt Index**
 - **Debt Sustainability**

Key Findings:

- **Top Performers:** Odisha remains the top performer under the Achiever category, followed by Goa and Jharkhand.
- **Fiscal Stress:** Punjab, West Bengal, and Kerala show higher non-developmental expenditure and less sustainable fiscal patterns.
- **The latest edition separately evaluates and ranks 10 North-Eastern and Himalayan states, apart from the major states.**
 - **Top Performers:** Arunachal Pradesh (ranked first) and Uttarakhand emerged as leading achievers.
 - **Lowest Performers:** Himachal Pradesh and Manipur, mainly due to weak revenue generation and continuing fiscal stress.

PM-RAHAT Scheme

News: The Union Government launched the **PM-RAHAT scheme** to provide cashless hospital treatment up to Rs.1.5 lakh for road accident victims.



Source- ET

About the PM RAHAT Scheme

- PM-RAHAT is a national cashless emergency treatment scheme that provides hospitalisation **coverage up to Rs. 1.5 lakh for road accident victims.**
- **Launched by:** The scheme was launched by the Prime Minister on **February 13, 2026.**
- **Notified under:** The scheme is notified under **Section 162 of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988.**
- **Initiative By:** The scheme is an initiative of the **Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH).**
- **Aim:** The scheme aims to ensure that no life is lost due to lack of immediate medical assistance after road accidents.

Implementation and Governance

- **Execution:** Implemented nationally by the **National Health Authority (NHA)** in coordination with **State Health Agencies (SHAs).**
- **Oversight:** Implementation is monitored by **District Road Safety Committees, State Road Safety Councils,** and an **inter-ministerial steering committee** at the national level.

Key Features

- **Coverage:** Road accident victims receive **cashless treatment up to Rs. 1.5 lakh per victim.**
- **Duration:** Coverage is provided for **up to seven days from the date of accident.**
- **Applicability:** The scheme applies to **accidents involving motor vehicles on any category of road.**
- **Focused on golden hour:** It focuses on **timely treatment during the “golden hour,”** when early medical care can prevent many road accident deaths.
- **Emergency Care:** Stabilisation treatment is available for **24 hours in non-life-threatening cases and 48 hours in life-threatening cases.**

- **Digital Integration:** The system integrates eDAR (Electronic Detailed Accident Report) accident reporting with TMS 2.0 (Transaction Management System) hospital treatment and claims records, creating an end-to-end digital trail.
- **Funding:** Payments to hospitals are made through the **Motor Vehicle Accident Fund**, financed by **general insurance contributions and government budgetary support for uninsured or hit-and-run cases**.
- **Grievance Redressal:** A **multi-tier grievance mechanism** operates through district committees, escalation to the District Collector and State Road Safety Council, and national-level oversight.

National Shipping Board

News: The government held an interaction with the National Shipping Board to discuss challenges in the shipping sector and ways to strengthen maritime capacity.

About National Shipping Board



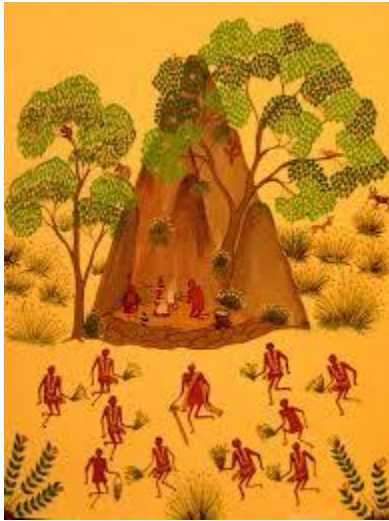
Source: X

- It is a **statutory body** under the **Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Government of India**.
- **Established in:** It was established in 1959 under **Section 4 of the Merchant Shipping Act, 1958**.
- It is the **highest advisory body on matters related to Indian shipping**
- **Function:** Its main function is to **advise the Government of India on shipping matters and maritime development**.
- **Chairman and Tenure:** The **Chairman and other members serve for a period of two years**.
- **Composition of the Board:** **Six members are elected by Parliament: Four from the Lok Sabha and two from the Rajya Sabha**
- The **Central Government can appoint up to sixteen additional members** to represent: **Central Government, Shipowners and Seamen and other related interests** considered important by the government
- **One member is nominated by the Central Government as the Chairman**.
- The Board must include **an equal number of representatives from shipowners and seamen**.

Kurumba Painting

News: Kurumba painting need conservation and revival as it is on the verge of extinction, with fewer than 10 practising artists remaining.

About Kurumba Painting



Source: KURUMBA

- Kurumba art is a **prehistoric art form** originated from the Kurumba tribe in **Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Karnataka**.
- **Note:** The Kurumba tribe primarily **resides in the Nilgiri Hills of Tamil Nadu and Kerala**.
- It is believed to be **3000 years old**.
- **Themes:** The theme of painting centers around **spiritual beliefs, rituals, festivals, and daily activities**.
- **Design:** The art features **simple, linear motifs with dots, lines, and geometric shapes**, depicting huts, animals, and community life.
- **Raw Materials used:** It uses **natural pigments sourced from the forest**.
- **Yellow-brown and black pigments come from Vengai tree resin and green pigments are derived from crushed leaves**.
- Artists use **fine twigs, bamboo sticks, and natural fiber brushes** for application.
- The paintings are **traditionally done on walls, fabric, and handmade paper**, preserving their deep connection to nature and tribal traditions.
- **Process:** It begins with a **ritualistic worship of their guardian deity** before gathering natural pigments from the forest.
- Colours are **applied directly without water to create intricate cultural and spiritual motifs**.
- **The male priests or caretakers of the temple used to practice this art form in the villages and the women of the family used to decorate the doors and windows of the houses**.
- **Significance:** It is an art form that **captures the socio-religious ethos of the Kurumba tribe** and these paintings **only appear on their house walls and floors during festive occasions**.

Karun River

News: Iran is widely discussed in news, and the Karun River gained attention because bull shark attacks have occurred in its waters near Ahvaz.

About Karun River



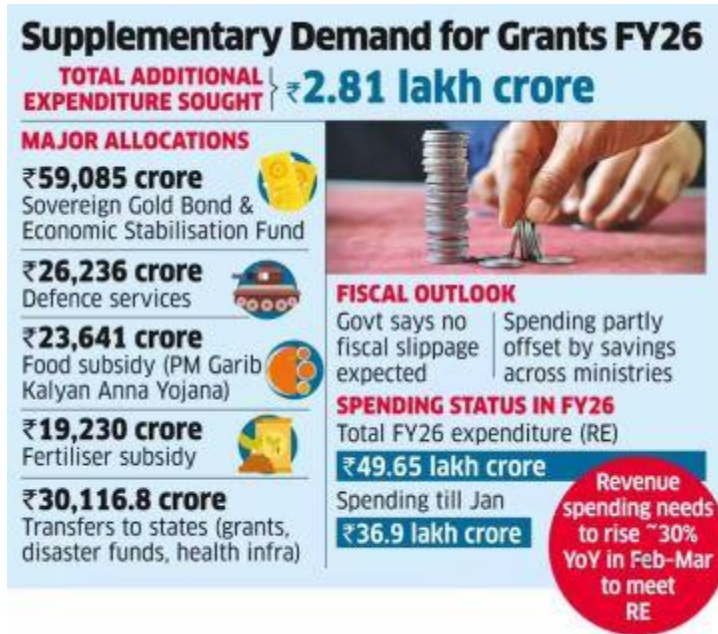
Source – Britannica

- The Karun River is the river with the highest water flow in Iran and it is the country's only navigable river.
- Origin: The river originates in the Zard Kuh Mountains of the Zagros Range in western Iran.
- The Karun River is about 950 km long.
- Major Tributaries: Important tributaries of the river include Dez, Kuhrang, Vanak, Bazoft, and Khersan.
- Outlet: The Karun flows into the Arvand Rud, where its water joins the Tigris and Euphrates, and finally reaches the Persian Gulf.
- Bifurcation: The river divides into two branches, Bahmanshir and Haffar, near its delta.
 - The Island of Abadan lies between these two branches of the river.
 - The port city of Khorramshahr is separated from Abadan Island by the Haffar branch.
- Major Dams: Major dams on the river include Masjed Soleyman Dam, Shahid Abbaspour Dam (Karun-1), Karun-3, Karun-4, and Gotvand Dam.

Supplementary Demands for Grants and Economic Stabilisation Fund

News: Lok Sabha approved the Second Batch of Supplementary Demands for Grants for 2025-26, including allocation for an Economic Stabilisation Fund to address global economic shocks.

About Economic Stabilisation Fund (ESF)



Source - ET

- The Economic Stabilisation Fund (ESF) is a proposed fiscal mechanism to provide financial space for responding to global economic disruptions.
- Proposed by: Finance Ministry.
- Corpus Size: The total proposed outlay for the fund is ₹1 lakh crore, with ₹57,381 crore proposed in the supplementary demands and the rest added through savings of ministries and departments.
- Purpose: The fund aims to provide fiscal headroom for India to respond to global headwinds, recent crises, unanticipated supply chain disruptions, and unexpected shocks to sub-sectors of the economy.
- Managed by: The fund is placed under the reserve funds managed by the Department of Economic Affairs (DEA).
- Impact: The fund will enable India to absorb economic shocks and respond to global crises while maintaining the fiscal consolidation roadmap.

About Supplementary Demands for Grants

- Supplementary Demands for Grants are additional financial approvals sought by the government during a financial year to meet expenditure not provided in the original budget.
- Constitutional back up: Supplementary grants derive authority from Article 115 of the Constitution of India, which deals with additional and excess demands for grants.
- Process
 - Initiation: The concerned ministry identifies additional financial requirements and submits the proposal to the Ministry of Finance.
 - Examination by Ministry of Finance: The Department of Expenditure reviews the proposal and evaluates its financial justification.
 - Preparation of Supplementary Demands: Approved proposals are consolidated and presented to Parliament as Supplementary Demands for Grants.
 - Parliamentary Approval: Lok Sabha discusses and votes on the demands, after which an Appropriation Bill authorises withdrawal from the Consolidated Fund of India.
- Types of Supplementary Grants
 - Supplementary Grant: It is granted when the funds authorised in the original budget are insufficient or when new services need financing during the year.

- **Additional Grant:** It is granted for a new service or project that was not included in the original budget but is introduced during the financial year.
- **Excess Grant:** It is granted when expenditure exceeds the amount authorised for a service in the Appropriation Act of the previous year.
- **Vote on Account:** It is a temporary provision that allows government expenditure in the early part of the financial year until the full budget is passed.
- **Vote of Credit:** It is granted for unexpected and exceptional expenditure such as war when the details cannot be precisely stated in advance.
- **Exceptional Grant:** It is granted for a special purpose that does not form part of the current year's normal services.
- **Key Allocations in FY26**
 - ₹41,430 crore for Defence Services.
 - ₹6,140 crore for the Ex-Servicemen Contributory Health Scheme.
 - ₹37,886 crore for local bodies of states.
 - ₹19,230 crore for fertilizer subsidies.
 - ₹30,000 crore for Viksit Bharat – G RAM-G act.

Joha Rice

News: APEDA facilitated the first export consignment of 25 metric tonnes of GI-tagged Joha rice from Assam to the United Kingdom and Italy on 12 March 2026.

About Joha Rice



Source – IBEF

- **Joha rice** is a short-grain aromatic rice variety known for its distinctive fragrance, soft texture, and traditional cultivation practices.
- **Origin:** It originates from Assam in Northeast India, where it has been cultivated for centuries as part of traditional agricultural systems and local food culture.
- **Cultivation:** The crop is generally cultivated as a short-grain winter paddy during the Sali rice season.
- **Key features**

- **Aromatic rice variety:** Joha rice emits a strong natural fragrance and is valued for its fine grain texture and rich taste.
- **Short-grain winter paddy:** It is mainly cultivated during the Sali or winter rice season in Assam.
- **Nutraceutical properties:** The rice contains essential fatty acids such as omega-3 and omega-6 along with antioxidants, flavonoids, and phenolic compounds.
- **Health-related properties:** Research indicates that Joha rice may help lower blood glucose and prevent diabetes due to bioactive compounds like oryzanol, ferulic acid, and tocotrienol.
- **GI recognition:** The rice received Geographical Indication status in 2017 for its unique origin and traditional cultivation.
- **Significance:** The promotion and export of GI-tagged Joha rice help expand international markets and improve the economic value of traditional agricultural products for farmers.

Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) 2006

News: The war in West Asia is throwing light on the risks faced by commercial sailors, especially Indians, in spite of being covered under the Maritime Labour Convention (MLC), 2006.

About Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) 2006



Source - ILO

- The Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) is an International Labour Organization convention.
- It was established in 2006.
- It came into force on 20 August 2013.
- It is a binding international law.
- It sets out in one place minimum requirements for how a seafarer should be treated.
- Many states that ratify the Convention may have higher standards.
- **Need:** It was introduced in recognition that the global nature of the shipping industry means that seafarers need special protection, especially since you can be exempted from national labour laws.
- The MLC incorporates and builds on 68 existing maritime labour conventions and recommendations, as well as other fundamental principles, to ensure decent working and living conditions for all seafarers.
- **Importance**
- It is considered as the 'bill of rights' for the seafarers.
- It gives the seafarers the right to a safe and secure workplace – where safety standards are complied with; and where they have fair terms of employment, decent living and working conditions, including social protection such as access to medical care, health protection and welfare.
- **Applies to:** It applies to all commercial seagoing ships operating in international waters or between ports of different countries except fishing, naval and traditionally built vessels.

- It covers any seafarer who is employed, engaged or working in any capacity on board one of these vessels.
- The MLC sits alongside International Maritime Organization (IMO) regulations which deal with the vessel and its operation.
- India's status: The convention has been ratified by India on 9th October, 2015.

Litani River

News: Israel expanded its strikes in Lebanon, targeting multiple areas including a bridge over Litani river that had been used by Hezbollah.

About Litani River



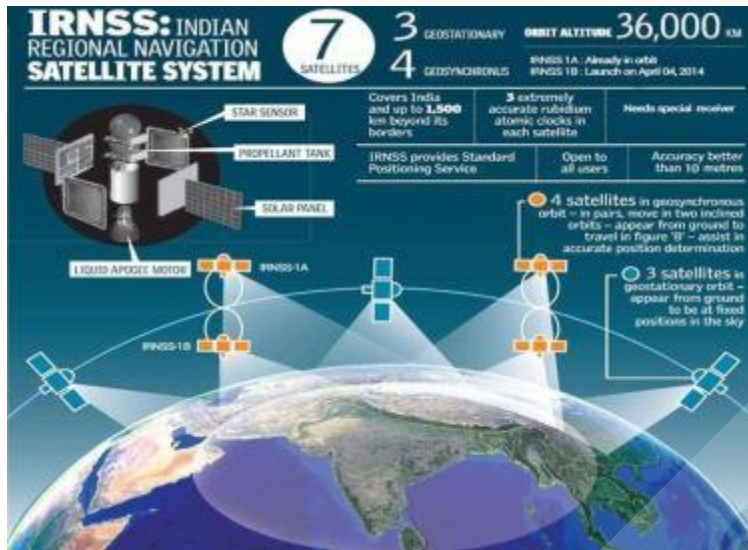
Source - Britannica

- **Location:** It is the longest river that flows entirely in Lebanon.
- It was known as Liṭa in medieval times.
- **Course:** It rises in a low divide west of Baalbek and flowing southwestward through the Bekaa valley between the Lebanon and Anti-Lebanon mountains.
- Near Marjayoun, it bends sharply west and cuts a spectacular gorge up to 900 feet (275 meters) deep through the Lebanon Mountains to the Mediterranean Sea, south of Sidon.
- **Falls into:** It falls into the Mediterranean Sea.
- **Length:** It is about 140 km in length.
- **Wetlands:** The Aammiq wetlands, designated a World Nature Reserve, serves as an important point in global bird migration routes, hosting nearly 250 bird species.
- **Dam:** El Wauroun Dam, Qaraoun Dam, or Albert Naqash Dam
- The Lake Qaraoun is the largest artificial lake in Lebanon.

Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS / NavIC)

News: ISRO informed that the atomic clock of the satellite IRNSS-1F stopped working on March 13, 2026, causing the loss of positioning data from that satellite.

About Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS / NavIC)



Source – Frontier India

- The Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System (IRNSS) is an independent regional navigation satellite system for positioning services.
- It is also called as Navigation with Indian Constellation (NavIC).
- Developed by: It is developed by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO).
- Aim: The system was conceived to remove dependence on the satellite systems of other countries for navigation, especially for strategic sectors.
- Covered Area: It provides accurate position information over India and the region extending up to 1500 km from its boundary, which is its primary service area.
- Consisting of: The system is designed as a constellation of seven satellites supported by a network of ground stations.
 - The system uses three satellites placed in geostationary orbit (GSO) and four satellites placed in inclined geosynchronous orbit (GEO).
 - The ground segment includes a control centre, timing facility, monitoring stations and two-way ranging stations operating continuously.
- Key features
 - Independent navigation system: It is a stand-alone indigenous satellite navigation system under the complete control of India.
 - High accuracy positioning: It provides position accuracy of better than 20 m in the primary service area.
 - Two types of services: It offers Standard Positioning Service (SPS) for all users and Restricted Service (RS) for authorised users.
 - Multi-frequency signals: NavIC satellites transmit positioning signals in L5 and S frequency bands.
- Global Navigation Satellite Systems (GNSS): Major global navigation systems include GPS (United States), GLONASS (Russia), Galileo (European Union), and BeiDou (China).

Samridhh Gram Phygital Services Initiative

News: Union Minister inaugurated the Samridhhi Kendra at Umri village under the Samridhh Gram Phygital Services Pilot Initiative.

About Samridhh Gram Phygital Services Initiative



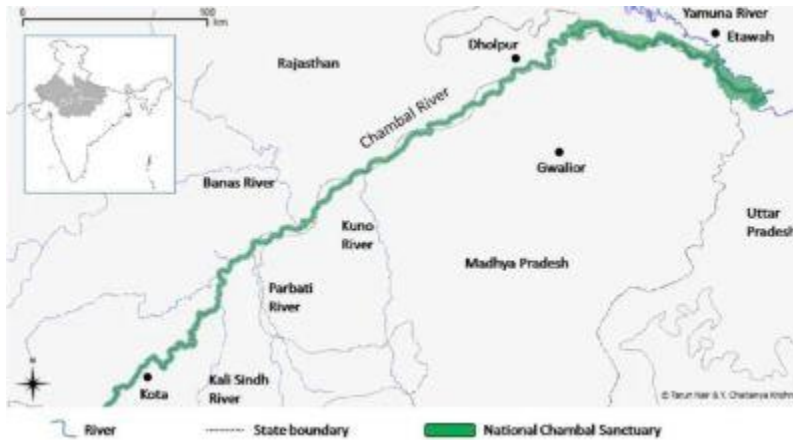
Source - PIB

- **Samridhh Gram Phygital Services Initiative** is a pilot project that integrates physical and digital services to deliver multiple citizen services in rural areas.
- **Implemented by:** The initiative is implemented by the Department of Telecommunications (DoT) with support from the Digital Empowerment Foundation (DEF) for field operations and community mobilisation.
- **Aim:** The initiative aims to demonstrate how BharatNet connectivity can deliver integrated public services at the village level and develop a replicable model for rural digital transformation.
- **Key features**
 - **Phygital Service Delivery Model:** The initiative combines physical service centres with digital platforms to improve access to services in rural areas.
 - **Samridhhi Kendra:** Each village hosts a Samridhhi Kendra located in the Panchayat Bhawan that works as a one-stop integrated digital service centre.
 - **Multi-Sector Service Integration:** The centres provide services related to education and skill development, agriculture advisory, healthcare and telemedicine, e-governance, financial inclusion and e-commerce.
 - **BharatNet Connectivity Backbone:** The initiative uses high-speed BharatNet rural broadband connectivity to ensure efficient digital service delivery.

National Chambal Sanctuary

News: The Supreme Court took suo motu cognisance of illegal sand mining threatening the fragile ecosystem of the National Chambal Sanctuary and its gharial habitat.

About National Chambal Sanctuary



Source – ReserachGate

- **Location:** The sanctuary lies at the tri-junction of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan.
- National Chambal Sanctuary is India's first and only tri-state protected riverine sanctuary.
- The sanctuary is also known as the National Chambal Gharial Wildlife Sanctuary.
- **Establishment:** The Chambal sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh was officially notified on December 20, 1978 as a protected area for wildlife conservation.
- **Topography:** The sanctuary has a rugged landscape that includes ravines, hills, and sandy beaches along the river channel.
- **Major rivers:** The sanctuary extends along a 425 km stretch of the Chambal River, which forms the core riverine habitat of the protected area.
- **Flora:** The vegetation of the sanctuary belongs to the Kathiar–Gir dry deciduous forest ecoregion, which supports the riverine ecosystem.
- **Fauna:** The sanctuary supports rich aquatic and terrestrial biodiversity. It protects the largest population of critically endangered gharial in the wild.
- It is listed as an Important Bird Area (IBA).
- Other species include mugger crocodile, smooth-coated otters, striped hyena, Indian wolves, Gangetic river dolphins, and several freshwater turtles.
- **Threats:** Illegal sand mining has emerged as the biggest threat to the sanctuary's ecology and aquatic life.

Sujal Gaon ID

News: Union Minister of Jal Shakti released the Sujal Gaon ID that enables complete digital mapping of rural piped water supply assets.

About Sujal Gaon ID



States to get Jal Jeevan Mission funds only after they add all schemes on Sujal Gaon ID module: Centre



Source – IE

- Sujal Gaon ID is a unique digital identification system for rural piped water supply schemes.
- Launched by: It was launched by the Ministry of Jal Shakti under the Jal Jeevan Mission.
- It brings rural drinking water infrastructure onto a single digital platform for the first time.
- Aim: It aims to improve accountability in water delivery.
- Each Sujal Gaon ID is a scheme-based unique code that enables authorities to track, monitor and map water supply assets serving villages across the country.
- How it works:
 - The digital identifier system creates a comprehensive record of each water supply scheme.
 - Every Sujal Gaon ID links to a corresponding Sujalam Bharat ID, which combines two elements:
 - Infrastructure ID: Identifies physical assets such as pipes, pumps, and other water supply infrastructure
 - Service Area ID: Identifies the villages and households covered by the scheme.
 - Note: Sujalam Bharat Application integrates water sources, asset inventories, scheme designs, operational records, water quality reports, supply metrics and community feedback into a single digital platform.
 - The system enables real-time monitoring of whether schemes are operational and which areas face supply disruptions.
- So far, 1.64 lakh Sujal Gaon IDs across 31 States/ UTs have been created, linked to 67,000 Sujalam Bharat IDs.

Gajapati Empire

News: Recently, a Telugu medieval inscription associated with the Gajapathi rulers of Odisha has been discovered on a stone pillar of Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Temple at Ramachandrapura Agraharam in Guntur.

About Gajapati Empire



Source - Pragyata

- The Gajapati Empire was a medieval Hindu monarchy in the Indian subcontinent.
- **Reign Period:** It reigned from c.1434 to 1541.
- **Founded by:** It was founded by Kapilendra Deva of the Suryavamsa lineage in the 13th century after the death of the last ruler of the Eastern Ganga, king Bhanu Deva IV.
- **Rulers:** Under the rule of Kapilendra Deva, the Gajapati empire stretched from the lower Ganga in the north to the Kaveri in the south.
- Pratarudra Deva propelled the Gajapati Empire to its zenith during 1497 to 1540.
- He undertook military expeditions, extending the empire into present-day Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, and parts of Bengal.
- **Capital:** Its capital was initially established in Cuttack, but during the reign of Pratarudra Deva, the capital was shifted to Kataka (Present day Konark).
- **Religious patronage:** The Gajapati kings were devout followers of Hinduism and were particularly dedicated to Lord Jagannath.
- They also patronised both Shaiva and Vaishnava traditions across temple establishments in their territories.
- **Literature:** They patronage of the Odia language, literature, and performing arts.
- Epics, such as the Sarala Mahabharata were composed during this period.
- **Architecture:** The architectural style combined the indigenous Odishan (Kalinga) style with influences from other regional traditions.
- The most famous monument of the empire is the Konark Sun Temple, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.
- It was built during the reign of Narasimha Deva I.
- The Jagannath Temple is another major temple associated with the Gajapati rulers.
- Skilled sculptors decorated temple walls, pillars, and doorways with detailed stone carvings during this period.
- A notable example is the Aruna Stambha.
- **Decline:** By the early 16th century, the Gajapatis lost great portions of their southern dominion to Vijayanagar and Golconda.

- The Gajapati Empire gradually declined due to internal conflicts and invasions by regional powers and later came under Mughal Empire rule in the early 17th century.

About the Guntur Inscription

The inscription was found on a **stone pillar of Lakshmi Narasimha Swamy Temple**.

It is engraved on both sides of a stone pillar in the **temple mandapa**.

It refers to **Kumaraguru Mahapatra**, a steward officer serving under the **Gajapathi King Purushottama Deva of 15th Century CE**.

It reflects the **Hari-Hara mode of worship** practiced under the Gajapati rulers.

Captive Generating Plant (CGP)

News: The Government amended Electricity Rules, 2026 to strengthen captive power framework, improve clarity, and support industrial competitiveness and energy transition.

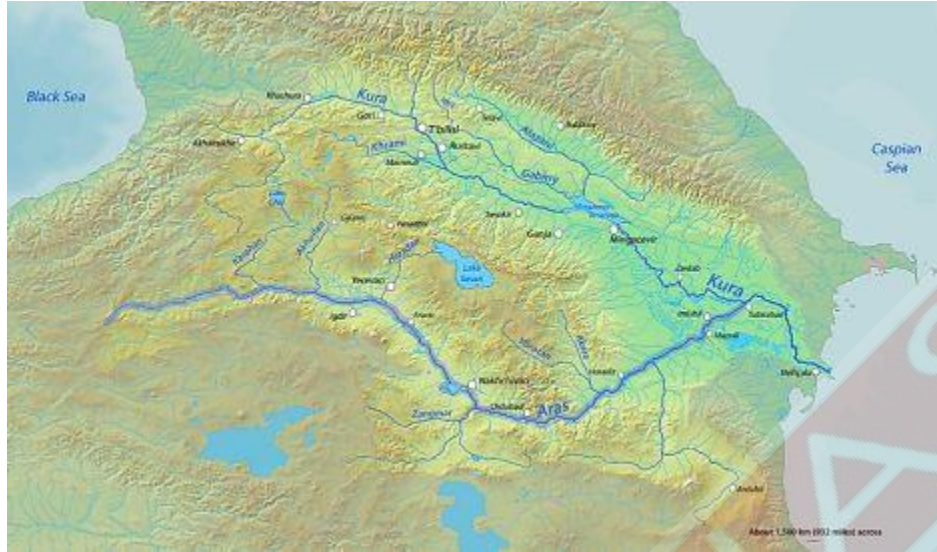
About Captive Generating Plant (CGP)

- A Captive Generating Plant is a power plant set up by persons or companies for generating electricity mainly for their own use.
- **Objective:** The objective is to provide reliable and cost-competitive electricity, reduce dependence on the grid, and support industrial growth and sustainability.
- **Regulatory framework:** It is governed under the Electricity Act, 2003 and the Electricity Rules, 2005, which have been amended through the Electricity (Amendment) Rules, 2026.
- **Ownership criteria:** Minimum 26% aggregate ownership by captive users, including group entities.
- **Consumption criteria:** At least 51% of generated electricity must be consumed by owners, with proportion rules for associations.
- **Recent developments**
 - **Amendments for Clarity and Flexibility:** The Electricity (Amendment) Rules, 2026 clarify ownership definitions by including subsidiaries and group entities, and simplify provisions to reduce ambiguity and disputes.
 - **Amendments in Verification Mechanism:** The Rules introduce a uniform financial year-based verification of captive status and provide for nodal agencies and a grievance redressal mechanism.
 - **Amendments to Improve Ease of Doing Business:** The Rules provide that charges will not be imposed pending verification and align the framework with modern corporate structures and increasing use of non-fossil fuel based captive power.

Aras River

News: The Aras River is strategically located along the borders in the Caucasus and is in focus amid regional geopolitical tensions.

About Aras River



Source: World atlas

- It is a transboundary river in the Caucasus.
 - Caucasus is a region between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea.
- It forms natural boundaries between countries such as Armenia, Azerbaijan, Iran, and Turkey.
- It is one of the longest rivers in the Caucasus.
- Course: It originates near the city of Erzurum in Turkey.
 - It then flows through the country to meet the Akhuryan River southeast of the Turkish district of Digor.
 - It then flows along the border between Armenia and Turkey, and later along the borders between Iran and Armenia, and Iran and Azerbaijan.
 - Finally, the Aras River enters the Kura River in the Azerbaijan city of Sabirabad and drains into the Caspian Sea.
- Tributary of: It is also the largest tributary of the Kura River.
- Total length: Its total length is around 1,072 km.
- Dams on river: The most important Dam on the river is the Aras Dam.
 - It was built in the 20th century by Iran and the Soviet Union.
- The UNESCO World Heritage site Saint Stepanos Monastery is located near the Aras river.
- Two historical bridges called the Khodaafarin Bridges are also located along the Aras River.

Nor'westers

News: A Nor'wester storm in Mayurbhanj caused deaths, injuries, damaged houses, uprooted trees, and disrupted electricity across several districts.

About Nor'westers

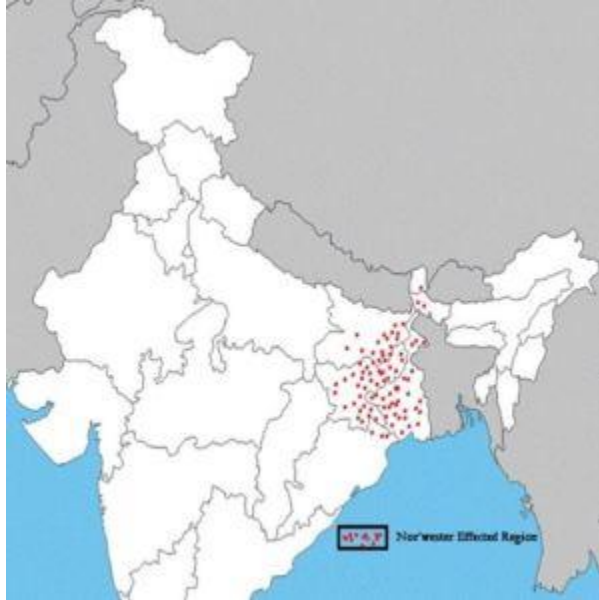


Figure 13. Source – ResearchGate

- Nor'westers are local winds that affect eastern and northeastern India during summer and cause severe thunderstorms with strong weather activity.
- Origin: These storms originate over the Chhotanagpur Plateau between Bihar and Jharkhand and move southeastwards towards Odisha, West Bengal, and Assam.
- Formation: Formation occurs when warm, moist southerly low-level winds from the Bay of Bengal meet cool, dry westerly or northwesterly upper-level winds, creating favourable conditions for the development of Nor'westers.
- Duration: They generally occur from April until the onset of the monsoon, though March events are also observed.
- Intensity: They bring gale-speed winds often exceeding 100 km/h along with heavy rainfall and

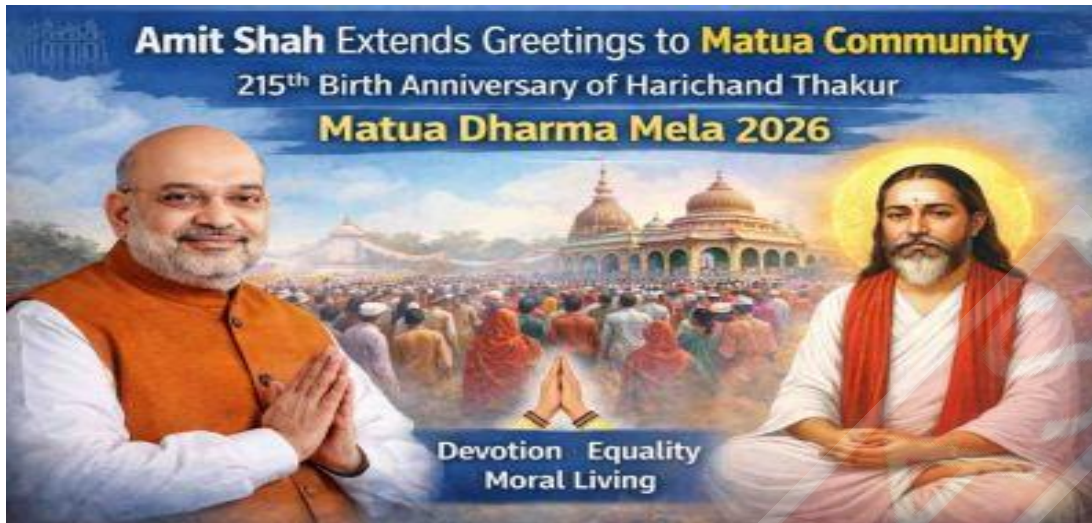
hailstorms.

- Different names
 - In Bengal, it is locally known as “Kalbaishaki” meaning, calamity in the month of Baisakh (the first month in the Bengal calendar).
 - In Assam, they are known as Bordoisila or Bardoli Chheerha.
- Impacts
 - They provide rainfall for dry soils and help crops like jute, paddy, vegetables, and fruits.
 - They cause uprooting of trees, damage to crops, waterlogging, and destruction of property due to strong winds and hailstorms.

Purna Brahma Shree Shree Harichand Thakur and Matua Community

News: Union Home Minister extended greetings to Matua community on Matua Dharma Mela marking 215th birth anniversary of Harichand Thakur.

About Purna Brahma Shree Shree Harichand Thakur



Source - Digital Herald

- **Shree Shree Harichand Thakur** was a social reformer and founder of the Matua sect.
- **Birth :** He was born in Safaladanga village in Gopalgunj in a Vaishnavite Namashudra peasant family of Bengal Presidency.
- **Teachings**
 - **Principle of devotion:** He taught that devotion to God, faith in mankind and love for living beings are essential.
 - **Simple path to salvation:** He said one can attain God through devotion while living a family life without renunciation.
 - **Core values:** His Matua religion was based on Truth, Love, and Sanity.
- **Social reforms**
 - **Equality and dignity:** He promoted equality and asked followers to treat all people with dignity.
 - **Organisation of oppressed:** He established Matua Mahasangha to unite and organize marginalized communities under his religious doctrine..
 - **Rejection of caste oppression:** His movement challenged discrimination faced by lower-caste people.
- **Matua Dharma Mela:** It is a sacred occasion celebrated to mark his birth anniversary and promote his teachings.
- **Belief among followers:** Followers considered him as Param Brahma and an incarnation of Vishnu or Krishna.
- **Twelve instructions:** He gave twelve moral instructions such as always speaking the truth, respecting women as mothers, loving all living beings, avoiding discrimination, controlling desires, being honest, performing duties with devotion, and praying to God regularly.

About Matua Community

- **Social base:** It mainly belongs to the Namashudra Scheduled Caste group.
- **Migration history:** Many migrated to India during partition and after 1971 due to religious persecution.

- **Present Status:** The Matua community forms the second largest Scheduled Caste population in West Bengal, constituting 17.4% of the total SC population, and has been demanding the implementation of the Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019.

Model Code of Conduct

News: The Election Commission of India has directed authorities to ensure strict enforcement of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) during the ongoing general elections and by elections in States/Union Territories.

About Model Code of Conduct (MCC)



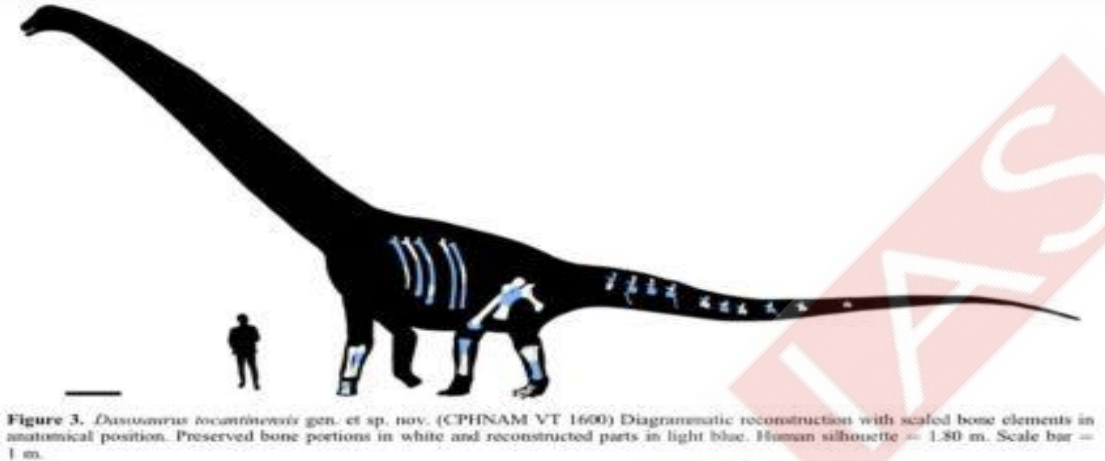
Figure 14. Source: ECI

- **About:** It is a set of guidelines published by the Election Commission of India (ECI) for political parties and candidates to set standards of conduct during the election campaign and polling.
 - It explains how parties can register complaints with the poll panel's observers in case of dispute.
 - It also instructs political leaders in power on how they should conduct themselves.
 - In 2019, a new addition regarding election manifestos was added, instructing parties not to issue promises which were 'repugnant to the ideals of the Constitution'.
- **When it comes into force and ends:** It comes into force immediately when the election commission released the voting schedule.
 - It ends with the commencement of the election when the results are announced.
- **Applicability:** It is applicable to all elections to the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies.
 - It is also applicable to State Legislative Council elections from Local Bodies and from Graduates' and Teachers' Constituencies.
 - It is enforced throughout India in case of General elections, and the State up for polls in case of Legislative Assembly elections.
- **Who comes under MCC:** All organisations, committees, and corporations funded by the state or central government come under MCC.
- **Enforcement:** The poll panel issues guidelines to the government to shift out all officers, including police, who are posted in their home district and have completed/completing three out of four years in that district, to ensure no interference.
 - **Implemented by:** It is implemented by newly appointed officials, and nodal EC officers monitor compliance.
- **Enforceability:** It is not a statutory document and not enforceable by any laws passed by the Parliament.
 - Some offences are listed as 'electoral offences' and 'corrupt practices' under the Indian Penal Code (now known as Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita) and the Representation of the People Act, 1951.

Dasosaurus tocontinensis

News: Brazilian scientists identified a new giant dinosaur species with links to Spain, supporting past land connections among South America, Africa and Europe.

About Dasosaurus Tocantinensis



Source – Planeta

- **Dasosaurus tocontinensis** is a newly identified species of giant, long-necked herbivorous dinosaur discovered in Brazil.
- **Location:** Fossils were unearthed in the Maranhão region of northeastern Brazil, near the Tocantins River, which gives the species its name.
- **Classification:** It is a member of the Somphospondyli, a group of long-necked, long-tailed sauropods that were precursors to the even larger titanosaurs.
- **Size:** Estimated to be approximately 20 meters (66 feet) long, based on a 1.5-meter-long femur (thigh bone).
- **European connection:** Analysis shows it is the closest known relative of *Garumbatitan morellensis*, a dinosaur found in Spain.
 - This suggests this lineage originated in Europe and migrated to South America via North Africa roughly 130 million years ago, providing evidence for ancient land bridges.

Japanese Chum Salmon

News: Research showed that marine conditions in the North Pacific have significantly reduced suitable habitat for Japanese chum salmon over the past 25 years.

About Japanese Chum Salmon



Source: asahi

- Japanese chum salmon is a migratory fish species of Chum salmon. They are commonly known as “shirozake” in Japan.
- **Distribution:** They are the most widely distributed of all the Pacific salmon.
 - They are found throughout the North Pacific Ocean and range from the Arctic coast of Canada and northern coastal regions of North America and Asia.
- **Appearance:** They are recognized by their silvery sides and faint vertical stripes.
- They are anadromous and do not reside in fresh water for an extended period.
 - Anadromous fishes are those that spawn in fresh water, migrate to the ocean to forage and mature, and return to fresh water to spawn and begin the cycle again.
- **Threats:** The main threats to their survival includes ocean warming, reduced zooplankton and marine heatwaves which create stressful and unfavorable conditions.
- **Their poleward shift**
 - They are moving northward expanding into higher-latitude waters toward the Chukchi Sea as they lose suitable habitats along the southern edge of the North Pacific and the Gulf of Alaska.
 - This “poleward shift” suggests that climate change is impacting the marine environment on which they rely on for survival.

Nagoya Protocol

News: India submitted its First National Report on Nagoya Protocol implementation to CBD Secretariat on 27 February 2026, covering progress from 2017–2025.

About Nagoya Protocol

Nagoya Protocol



Source – CBD

- **The Nagoya Protocol is a supplementary agreement to the Convention on Biological Diversity for access and benefit sharing (ABS).**
- **Adoption:** It was adopted on 29 October 2010 in Nagoya, Japan.
- **In force:** It entered into force on 12 October 2014.
- **Goal:** It aims to ensure fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the utilization of genetic resources.
- **It covers**
 - **Genetic resources:** It applies to genetic resources covered under the Convention on Biological Diversity.
 - **Traditional knowledge:** It includes traditional knowledge associated with genetic resources.
 - **Benefits from utilization:** It covers benefits arising from research and commercial use of these resources.
- **Key Principles**
 - **Access :** It requires Prior Informed Consent from the provider before accessing biological resources.
 - **Benefit Sharing :** Benefits must be shared fairly based on Mutually Agreed Terms.
 - **Compliance:** It ensures that resources are used according to agreed conditions.
- **India's Status:** India ratified the Nagoya Protocol in 2012.
- **Implementation in India**
 - India implements it through the Biological Diversity Act, 2002.
 - It follows a three-tier structure: National Biodiversity Authority, State Biodiversity Boards/UT Biodiversity Councils, and Biodiversity Management Committees.

About Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

- **Nature:** It is the most comprehensive binding international agreement in the field of nature conservation and sustainable use of natural resources.
- **Adoption:** It was opened for signing at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro in 1992.
- **Objectives:** It focuses on conservation of biodiversity, sustainable use, and fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from genetic resources.

Tribes Art Fest 2026

News: Tribes Art Fest 2026 was held in New Delhi, showcasing over 1,000 artworks by 75 tribal artists from more than 30 traditions.

About Tribes Art Fest 2026



Source - TH

- A national cultural event showcasing diverse tribal art traditions and promoting indigenous cultural heritage.
- Organised by: It is organised by the Ministry of Tribal Affairs, in collaboration with the National Gallery of Modern Art (NGMA) and FICCI.
- Duration: Held from 3rd to 13th March 2026 at Travancore Palace, New Delhi.
- Aim: The festival aims to provide a platform for tribal art traditions to reach new audiences, gain recognition, and support artists through market linkages.
 - It also promotes indigenous cultural heritage by encouraging learning, mentorship, and interaction with contemporary spaces.
- Key Tribal Arts Displayed
 - Warli Painting (Maharashtra)
 - Community and theme: Warli painting is practised by the Warli tribe and it reflects a deep connection with nature.
 - Origin: It has roots possibly dating to the 10th century AD or even the Neolithic era.
 - Material and medium: Warli artists use white pigment made from rice paste on clay hut walls.
 - Artistic style: It uses simple geometric shapes like circles, triangles, and squares.
 - Cultural depiction: Warli painting depicts farming, hunting, rituals, and Tarpa dance as part of community life.
 - Rabha and Tamang Masks (Assam, North Bengal, Himalayan region)
 - Community and tradition: Mask-making is practised by the Rabha tribe and Tamang communities as part of cultural traditions.
 - Material and design: These masks are made using wood, bamboo, gourd, or clay and are painted in vivid colours.

- **Symbolism:** The masks represent gods, spirits, animals, and mythological figures.
- **Cultural role:** The masks are closely linked with ritual dance and folk theatre practices.
- **Spiritual meaning:** Performers wear these masks to embody deities and connect the human and divine worlds.
- **Gond Painting (Madhya Pradesh)**
 - **Community origin:** Gond painting originates from the Gond community of central India.
 - **Material use:** Gond artists use natural pigments made from clay, stones, flowers, and herbs.
 - **Artistic technique:** Gond painting is known for intricate patterns of dots and lines filling each shape, giving compositions a rhythmic, almost musical quality.
 - **Themes:** Gond paintings represent animals, birds, trees, folklore, and community memory.
 - **Recognition:** Gond painting has received a Geographical Indication (GI) tag for its unique identity.
- **Bhil Painting (Madhya Pradesh)**
 - **Community:** Bhil painting is practised by the Bhil community.
 - **Historical importance:** Bhil painting is considered among the oldest art traditions in India.
 - **Artistic technique:** Bhil paintings are created using thousands of tiny dots, each one representing a seed, a grain, or a pulse of nature's rhythm.
 - **Themes:** Bhil paintings depict animals, deities, forests, and scenes from daily life.
 - **Cultural meaning:** Bhil painting reflects a deep connection with nature and traditional lifestyle.

Exercise Sea Dragon 2026

News: India is participating in the United States Navy-led multinational anti-submarine warfare (ASW) exercise 'Sea Dragon 2026' being held near Guam.

About Exercise Sea Dragon 2026



Figure 15. Source: BS

- **About:** Exercise Sea Dragon 2026 is a multinational anti-submarine warfare (ASW) exercise conducted annually to strengthen maritime security and cooperation among allied nations in the Indo-Pacific region.
- **Hosted by:** It is hosted by U.S.A Navy's 7th Fleet.

- **Location:** The exercise is being conducted at Andersen Air Force Base in Guam.
- **Aim:** It aims to strengthen cooperation among allied maritime forces and enhance anti-submarine warfare capabilities across the Indo-Pacific region
- **Focus:** It focused on improving ASW tactics, interoperability, and multinational coordination in the Indo-Pacific region.
- **First edition:** The exercise was originally a bilateral naval drill between U.S.A and Australia in 2019. India joined the exercise in 2021.
- It is part of a broader series of cooperative defence activities conducted among Indo-Pacific partners to improve maritime security cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region.
- **Participating nations:** The participating nation includes U.S.A, India, Australia, New Zealand and Japan.
 - Indian Navy is participating with its P-8I long-range maritime patrol aircraft.
- **Features**
 - During the exercise, participating crews will engage in ASW operations, including detecting and tracking both simulated and live submarine targets.
 - The drills are designed to test speed, accuracy and coordinated mission execution in high-end maritime scenarios.

Small Hydro Power Development Scheme

News: The Union Cabinet approved the Small Hydro Power Development Scheme for 2026-27 to 2030-31 with ₹2,584.60 crore outlay.

About Small Hydro Power Development Scheme

SMALL HYDRO POWER (SHP) DEVELOPMENT SCHEME

- Cabinet approves **Small Hydro Power (SHP) Development Scheme** for FY 2026-27 to FY 2030-31 with an outlay of **₹ 2584.60 crore** for approx. **1500 MW** capacity
- Scheme to support **small hydro projects (1-25 MW)** across states, especially benefiting hilly and **North Eastern states**
- Central Financial assistance up to **₹ 3.6 crore per MW** or 30% of project cost for **North Eastern states and border districts**, with a cap of **₹ 30 crore** per project
- Central Financial assistance up to **₹ 2.4 crore per MW** or 20% of project cost for **other states**, with a cap of **₹ 20 crore** per project

- It is a scheme to install about 1,500 MW small hydro power capacity across India.
- **Nodal Ministry:** It is under the Ministry of New and Renewable Energy (MNRE), unlike larger projects under the Ministry of Power.
- **Total Outlay:** The total financial outlay of the scheme is ₹2,584.60 crore.
- **Capacity Range:** Supports Small Hydro Power projects with capacities between 1 MW and 25 MW.
- **Duration:** The scheme will be implemented from FY 2026-27 to FY 2030-31.
- **Central Financial Assistance (CFA)**
 - **North East & Border Incentives:** Assistance of ₹3.6 crore per MW or 30% of project cost, capped at ₹30 crore per project.

Figure 16. Source – PIB

- **General State Support:** Assistance of ₹2.4 crore per MW or 20% of project cost, capped at ₹20 crore per project.
- **Key features**
 - **DPR Pipeline:** Allocation of ₹30 crore to support government agencies in preparing Detailed Project Reports (DPRs) for about 200 future projects.
 - **Employment Generation:** Expected to create 51 lakh person-days of employment during construction, plus long-term roles in operations and maintenance.
 - **Indigenous sourcing:** Mandates 100% sourcing of plant and machinery from domestic manufacturers to boost the local industrial base.
- **Significance:** The scheme promotes clean, stable, and decentralised energy while supporting rural development, reducing transmission losses, and boosting employment in remote regions.

Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojna (BHAVYA)

News: The Union Cabinet has approved the Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojna (BHAVYA) for developing 100 plug-and-play industrial parks across the country.

About Bharat Audyogik Vikas Yojna (BHAVYA)



Figure 17. Source: DD News

- It is a scheme for developing 100 plug-and-play industrial parks across the country.
 - **Aim:** It aims to develop world-class industrial infrastructure, unlocking manufacturing potential of the country.
 - It has been developed under the National Industrial Corridor Development Programme (NICDP) framework.
 - **Implementation:** It will be implemented in partnership with states and private sector players.
- **Financial Outlay:** Rs.33,660 crore
 - **Beneficiaries:** The scheme will benefit:
 - **Primary beneficiaries:** Manufacturing units, MSMEs, startups, and global investors seeking ready-to-use industrial infrastructure
 - **Secondary beneficiaries:** Workers, logistics providers, service sector enterprises, and local communities
 - **Features:**
 - It focuses on deregulation and ease of doing business, with streamlined approvals, effective single-window systems, and investor-friendly reforms led by states.
 - Under the scheme, industrial parks ranging from 100 to 1000 acres will be taken up for development.
 - The industrial parks design are aligned with the PM GatiShakti Principles and green energy and sustainable resource use with integrated underground utility corridors.
 - **Project selection method:** Project selection will be undertaken through a challenge mode.
 - **Financial support of up to Rs. One crore per acre will be provided for:**

- Core infrastructure such as internal roads, underground utilities, drainage, common treatment facilities, ICT and administrative systems
- Value-added infrastructure such as ready-built factory sheds, built-to-suit units, testing labs, warehouse
- Social infrastructure such as worker housing and support amenities
- It also extends support for external infrastructure providing up to 25% of the project cost, ensuring seamless connectivity and integration with existing networks.

Hindon River

News: A five-day research survey found zero dissolved oxygen levels at several locations, making the Hindon river uninhabitable for aquatic life.

About Hindon River



Figure 18. Source – SANDRP

River and declared it a 'dead river'.

- It was found to be 'unfit' for bathing in several sections due to extreme pollution levels.

Indian Ocean Ship (IOS) SAGAR initiative

News: Indian Navy has commenced the second edition of the Indian Ocean Ship (IOS) SAGAR initiative from 16th March 2026.

About Indian Ocean Ship (IOS) SAGAR initiative



Source - ETV Bharat

- It is a unique operational engagement programme which enables naval personnel from friendly foreign countries to train and sail together aboard Indian naval ships to foster interoperability and deeper professional understanding.
- It is part of India's broader vision of Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) and aligns with the expanded framework of MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security Across the Regions).
- **Aim:** It aims to strengthen professional linkages among participating nations, encourage the exchange of best practices, and build a shared understanding of regional maritime challenges.
- **Participants:** It includes participation from 16 Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) member nations across the Indian Ocean Region.
- **Note:** The Indian Navy assumed the chair of the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium (IONS) in Feb 2026.
- **Edition:** It is the second edition of IOS SAGAR initiative. The first edition of this initiative was launched on April 5, 2025.
- **Activities:**
 - Naval personnel from partner nations will receive professional training at Indian naval establishments in Kochi, focusing on naval operations, seamanship, and maritime security.
 - They will also embark on an Indian Naval ship for joint deployment at sea and participating in operational activities with Indian Navy personnel.
 - It will also include maritime engagements and port visits for interaction with regional navies and maritime agencies.
- **Significance:** It underscores India's growing role as a key maritime partner and its continued focus on fostering a secure, stable and cooperative maritime environment in the Indian Ocean Region.

"e-CHARAK" mobile application

News: National Medicinal Plants Board (NMPB) has recently launched "e-CHARAK" mobile application designed to facilitate trade and information exchange in the medicinal plants sector.

About "e-CHARAK" mobile application



Source: Ministry of Ayush

- e-CHARAK is a mobile application and web portal for the promotion and marketing of medicinal plants/herbs.
- Objective: It is to provide a platform for the trade of medicinal plants & easy market access.
- Launched by: It has been jointly developed by the National Medicinal Plants Board (NMPB), Ministry of Ayush and Bhaskaracharya National Institute for Space Applications and Geoinformatics (BISAG-N).
- Accessed by: It could be accessed either through an internet browser or the mobile app.
- Features:
 - It is a platform to enable information exchange between various stakeholders mainly farmers involved in the medicinal plants sector across the country.
 - Users can register on the platform to access its services, including posting items for sale or purchase, and managing their listings.
 - It supports different local languages.
 - It also provides a fortnightly market price of 100 MPs from 25 herbal markets across India.
 - It would create vivid transparent, workable trade linkages among the producers & purchasers.

Dimethyl Ether (DME) Technology

News: The West Asia crisis increased LPG prices and import dependence, highlighting the need for indigenous alternatives like DME technology developed by CSIR-NCL.

About Dimethyl Ether (DME) Technology



Source – Swarajya

- **Dimethyl Ether (DME)** is a synthetically produced, clean-burning alternative fuel that can replace both diesel and Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG).
- In India, Dimethyl Ether (DME) is a key component of the Methanol Economy program led by NITI Aayog, aimed at reducing crude oil imports and greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Production method:** It is primarily produced through two main routes –
 - indirect synthesis (dehydrating methanol)
 - direct synthesis (from syngas), with specialized catalyst technology being crucial for optimizing efficiency in both methods
- **Key characteristics and properties**
 - **Chemical nature:** The simplest ether (CH_3OCH_3) is a colourless, non-toxic, and highly flammable gas at ambient conditions.
 - **Physical handling:** Like LPG, it can be liquefied under moderate pressure (approx. 10 bar), making it easy to store and transport in cylinders.
 - **Ignition quality:** It has a very high cetane number (55–60), indicating excellent ignition quality for compression ignition (diesel) engines.
 - **Environmental impact:** DME burns without producing soot or smoke.
 - It significantly reduces emissions of particulate matter (PM), nitrogen oxides (NO_x), and sulphur oxides (SO_x).
- **Production in India**
 - **Feedstock Versatility:** DME can be produced from domestic resources like coal, biomass, municipal solid waste, and even captured carbon dioxide.
 - **Technology Development:** CSIR-NCL has developed a patented catalyst and process to convert methanol to DME.

- Applications:
 - LPG Alternative: Can be blended with LPG for household cooking without requiring major infrastructure changes.
 - For example, The “Aditi Urja Sanch” burner unit, developed by CSIR-NCL, is specifically designed to handle DME-LPG blends efficiently.
 - Diesel Alternative: High cetane number makes it suitable for heavy-duty vehicles and tractor engines, providing low emission alternatives. For example, IIT Kanpur developed India’s first 100% DME-fuelled tractor.

UNIGME Report 2025

News: The UNIGME Report 2025 was recently released, highlighting global and India-specific progress in reducing child mortality rates.

About UNIGME Report 2025

- It is a global report that tracks levels and trends in child mortality.
- Released by: It is released by the United Nations Inter-agency Group for Child Mortality Estimation (UN IGME), led by UNICEF, WHO, the World Bank, and UN DESA.
- Title: The report is titled “Levels and Trends in Child Mortality 2025.”
- Key Findings (Global Trend)
 - Global Burden of Deaths
 - Global under-five deaths were about 9 million in 2024, including 2.3 million newborn deaths.
 - Around 1 million children, adolescents, and youth aged 5–24 years died in 2024.
 - Trend in Mortality Reduction
 - Under-five deaths have declined by more than half since 2000.
 - The pace of reduction has slowed by more than 60% since 2015.
 - Regional distribution: Sub-Saharan Africa accounted for 58% of global under-five deaths in 2024.
 - Causes of Death: Major causes include preterm birth complications, infections, pneumonia, diarrhoea, malaria, and malnutrition.
 - Malnutrition Impact
 - Malnutrition caused about 5% of deaths among children aged 1–59 months in 2024.
 - Countries with the highest direct malnutrition deaths are Pakistan, Somalia, and Sudan.
- Key Findings Related to India
 - Decline in Mortality Rates
 - Under-five mortality declined from 127 in 1990 to 26.6 in 2024, showing a 79% reduction.
 - Infant mortality reduced to 23.3, and neonatal mortality declined to 17 in 2024.
 - Drivers of Improvement: Progress is driven by programmes such as Janani Suraksha Yojana, Universal Immunisation Programme, and Integrated Management of Neonatal and Childhood Illnesses (IMNCI).

- **Regional Contribution:** India has played a key role in reducing child mortality in South Asia through targeted public health interventions.

Defence India Start-up Challenge (DISC-14) and ADITI Challenge under iDEX Framework

News: Raksha Mantri launched DISC-14 and ADITI 4.0 challenges during National Defence Industries Conclave 2026 to promote defence innovation and indigenous capabilities.

About Defence India Start-up Challenge (DISC-14)



Figure 19. Source – IDSA

- **Defence India Start-up Challenge** is a flagship programme supporting startups, MSMEs, and innovators in defence and security.
- **Inception:** It was launched on August 4, 2018 by the Ministry of Defence in partnership with the Atal Innovation Mission (AIM).
- **Current edition:** The 14th edition (DISC-14) was launched in 2026.
- **Operates under:** It operates under the iDEX (Innovations for Defence Excellence) framework.
- **Objective:** It aims to achieve

self-reliance by promoting innovation in defence and aerospace and reducing dependence on imports.

- **Key Highlights of DISC-14**
 - **Scale of Innovation:** DISC-14 includes 82 problem statements from Defence Forces, Indian Coast Guard, and Defence Space Agency.
 - **Focus Areas:** It promotes development of functional prototypes and commercialization across various defence domains.

About ADITI Challenge under iDEX Framework

- **ADITI** is a sub-scheme under iDEX that promotes critical and strategic defence technologies.
- **Inception:** It was launched on March 4, 2024 by Defence Minister during DefConnect 2024.
- **Current edition:** The 4th edition (ADITI 4.0) was launched in 2026.
- **Aim:** It aims to develop advanced technologies, reduce dependence on foreign OEMs, and strengthen national security.
- **Monitored by:** It is monitored by the Defence Innovation Organisation (DIO) Board chaired by Secretary (Defence Production) through partner incubators.
- **Key Features of the ADITI Scheme**
 - **Substantial Funding:** It provides grants up to 50 % of Product Development Budget, with a maximum limit of Rs 25 crore.
 - **Total Budget:** The scheme has an outlay of Rs. 750 crore for three years from 2023–2026.

- Focus Areas: It includes satellite communication, cyber technologies, autonomous systems, nuclear technologies, semiconductors, artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, and underwater surveillance.
- Technology Watch Tool: It is a mechanism to identify gaps between the needs of modern armed forces and available technologies. It helps in tracking progress of technologies, supports policy formation, and ensures that there is no duplication of efforts through technology foresight workshops.

VB-G Ram G Youth Digital Campaign

News: Ministry of Rural Development has launched nationwide 'VB-G Ram G Youth Digital Campaign' to encourage participation of rural youth in development activities.

About VB-G Ram G Youth Digital Campaign



Figure 20. Source: DIC

- It is a campaign to make youth active partners in nation-building through a digital platform to showcase progress and innovation in their villages.
- Launched by: Ministry of Rural Development
- It has been launched in collaboration with the 'MY Bharat' portal.
- Aim: It aims to encourage participation of rural youth in development activities.
- Beneficiaries: All interested youth between the ages of 15 and 29 years can register online through the 'MY Bharat' or 'MyGov' portals.
- Participants can present stories of development work, grassroots-level changes, and local innovations through videos and creative designs.
- Competitions: Several competitions have been organized under the campaign
 - Video Challenge (Reel Competition): Participants are required to create a short video of 30 to 60 seconds highlighting development work or livelihood-related activities in their village and upload it to the 'MY Bharat' portal.
 - Logo Design competition: Participants are required to design a creative logo that reflects the objectives of the campaign. The winner will receive a cash prize of ₹50,000 along with recognition.
 - Online Quiz: Participants can earn a digital certificate by answering 20 questions based on 'Viksit Bharat - G Ram G Act. 2025' and various government welfare schemes.
- Parameters for winner selection: The winners will be selected on the basis of several parameters, including relevance to the theme, creativity, originality, technical quality, overall impact and adherence to the prescribed guidelines.

- It seeks to channel the energy and creativity of young people towards rural development, employment generation, and local livelihood initiatives.

'RELIEF' Scheme

News: The Commerce and Industry Ministry launched 'RELIEF' Scheme to ease pressure on exporters facing trade disruption due to the ongoing war in West Asia.

About 'RELIEF' Scheme



Figure 21. Source: Economic Times

- Resilience & Logistics Intervention for Export Facilitation (RELIEF) scheme is time-bound and targeted measure to support Indian exporters facing disruptions due to the evolving geopolitical situation in West Asia.
- It was initiated under the Export Promotion Mission (EPM).
- Nodal Ministry: Ministry of Commerce and Industry
- Financial outlay: Rs. 497 crore
- Aim: It aimed at mitigating the impact of rising logistics costs, higher insurance premiums, and war-related risks affecting export consignments moving to or through the Gulf region.
- Coverage: The scheme will cover shipments destined for countries including United Arab Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, Kuwait, Bahrain, Iraq, Iran, Israel and Yemen.
 - It covers full container, partial container and refrigerated cargo excluding back-to-town cargo cases.
- Nodal implementing agency: Under the RELIEF framework, Export Credit Guarantee Corporation of India has been designated as the nodal implementing agency.
 - It will be responsible for verification, claim processing, disbursement, and monitoring.
- It will include automatic extension of export obligations, logistical support, and potential financial measures to manage shipping delays
- It will be implemented with a dashboard-based monitoring system to track claims and fund utilization in real time.
- Components: The scheme comprises three key components:
 - Enhanced insurance coverage: Exporters with existing ECGC insurance will receive up to 100% risk coverage for eligible consignments shipped between February 14 and March 15, 2026, without additional cost.
 - Support for upcoming shipments: Exporters planning shipments between March 16 and June 15, 2026, can avail up to 95% risk coverage with government support, helping sustain trade flows.
 - Relief for MSMEs: Small exporters without ECGC cover during the disruption period will be eligible for partial reimbursement of up to 50% of increased freight and insurance costs, subject to a ceiling of ₹50 lakh per exporter.

- Review: The EPM Steering Committee will periodically review the scheme and make adjustments based on evolving geopolitical conditions.

Nd-Fe-B (Neodymium-Iron-Boron) Rare Earth Permanent Magnets

News: A pilot plant for Nd-Fe-B rare earth permanent magnets has been established at ARCI, Hyderabad to strengthen self-reliant manufacturing ecosystem.

About Nd-Fe-B (Neodymium-Iron-Boron) Rare Earth Permanent Magnets



Figure 22. Source – The Business Research

- Nd-Fe-B magnets are the strongest permanent magnets that can maintain high magnetic force without external power.
- Made up of: These magnets are made from Neodymium, Iron, and Boron as core elements.
 - They also include Cobalt, Dysprosium, and Praseodymium in varying amounts.
 - Neodymium provides high magnetic strength, iron provides magnetization, and boron stabilizes the structure.
- Types
 - Sintered NdFeB magnets are widely used and have the largest output.
- Bonded NdFeB magnets are low cost, light, and have good shape flexibility.
- Hot-pressed NdFeB magnets achieve similar magnetic properties without heavy rare earth elements.
- Key features
 - Extreme magnetic strength: These magnets have very strong magnetic force even in small size.
 - High coercivity: These magnets resist demagnetization effectively after being magnetized.
 - Temperature sensitivity: Their performance can reduce at high temperatures unless modified.
 - Corrosion susceptibility: These magnets require protective coating due to high iron content.
- Applications
 - Electric mobility: These magnets are used in high-efficiency motors for electric vehicles.
 - Renewable energy: These magnets are used in generators of wind turbines.
 - Electronics: These magnets are used in mobile phones, hard drives, and earphones.

- Advanced manufacturing and medical technology: These magnets are used in robotics, automation, and MRI machines.

National Dental Commission

News: The National Dental Commission (NDC) has been constituted recently to improve the quality of dental education and align it with global standards.

About National Dental Commission



Figure 23. Source: DD News

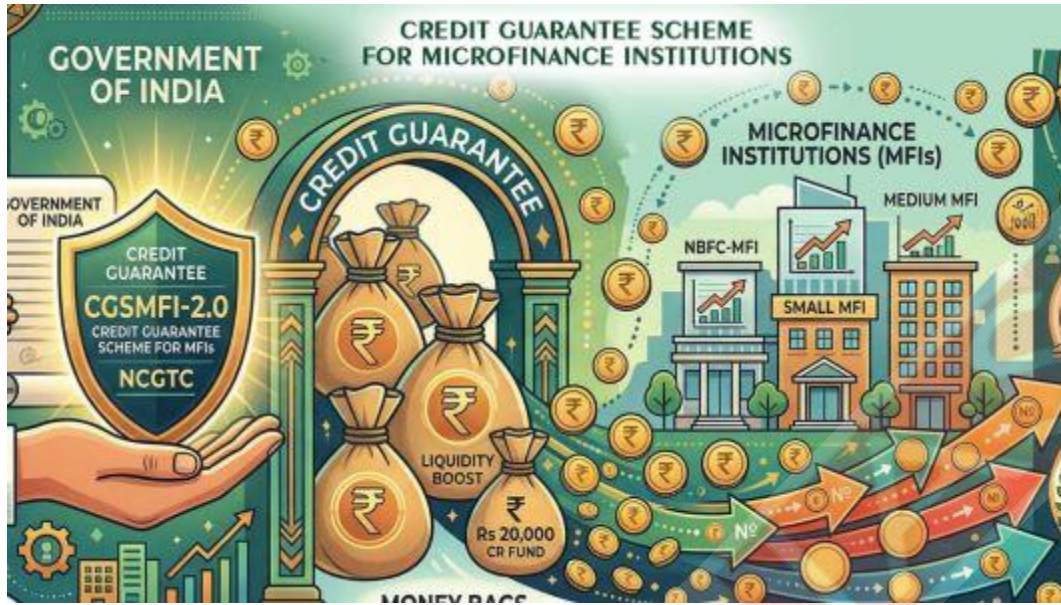
- It is a statutory and apex body responsible for regulating dental education, professional conduct, and institutional standards across the country.
- Constitution: It has been constituted under National Dental Commission (NDC) Act, 2026.
- It will replace the Dental Council of India (DCI).
- It will introduce essential and regulatory reforms in dental education and enhance access to affordable oral healthcare across the country.

- **Members:** It includes the chairperson and a part-time member.
- **Autonomous Board:** Three autonomous bodies have been constituted to support the functioning of the Commission:
 - Undergraduate and Postgraduate Dental Education Board to oversee dental education.
 - Dental Assessment and Rating Board to regulate accreditation and institutional assessment.
 - Ethics and Dental Registration Board to govern professional conduct and registration of dentists.
- **Function:** Key functions of the National Dental Commission include:
 - It will frame regulations to implement the provisions of the NDC Act, 2026.
 - It will conduct rating and assessment of dental institutions
 - It will evaluate human resources and promote dental research
 - It will also frame guidelines for fee regulation in private dental colleges
 - It will establish standards for community dental care, education, research, and professional ethics.

Credit Guarantee Scheme for Microfinance Institutions-2.0 (CGSMFI-2.0)

News: The Government of India has introduced CGSMFI-2.0 to increase credit flow to microfinance institutions and support small borrowers.

About Credit Guarantee Scheme for Microfinance Institutions-2.0 (CGSMFI-2.0)



Source – KNN India

- **CGSMFI-2.0** is a credit guarantee scheme that provides cover to banks against losses on loans given to MFIs for small borrowers.
- **Launched in:** The scheme was launched in March 2026.
- **Nodal department:** The scheme is under the Department of Financial Services.
- **Managed by:** The scheme is managed by National Credit Guarantee Trustee Company Limited (NCGTC).
- **Aim:** The scheme aims to strengthen lending to MFIs and ensure continuous credit flow to small borrowers, supporting financial inclusion.
- **Key Features**
 - **Eligibility:** The scheme covers existing or new small borrowers within the regulatory definition of microfinance as prescribed by RBI.
 - **Guarantee coverage:** The scheme provides 80% coverage for small, 75% for medium, and 70% for large MFIs on defaulted amount.
 - **Interest rate cap:** Loans to MFIs are capped at EBLR or MCLR plus 2%, and lending to borrowers is capped below recent average rates.
 - **Low guarantee fee:** A fee of 0.50% per annum is charged on sanctioned amount in the first year and on outstanding amount thereafter.
 - **Defined limit and duration:** The scheme is valid till 30 June 2026 or until ₹20,000 crore of loans are guaranteed.

Income Tax Rules, 2026

News: The government has notified the Income Tax Rules, 2026, marking a major overhaul of procedural and compliance systems under direct taxation.

About Income Tax Rules 2026



Figure 24. Source: ET

- Income Tax Rules 2026 have been introduced to implement provisions of the Income-tax Act, 2025.
- Effective from: It will come into effect from April 1, 2026.
- Aim: The aim is to enhance transparency, digitization, and standardization.
- Focus: The focus is on stronger data reporting, clearer cross-border taxation, and improved regulatory frameworks to reduce disputes and strengthen enforcement.
- Key features:
 - Compliance Framework: The new rules introduce updated definitions, revised compliance structures, and new reporting mechanisms.
 - Dividend Declaration: Dividend declaration provisions have been tightened. Companies must maintain share registers, hold general meetings, and pay dividends only within India.
 - Stock Exchange Compliance: Stock exchanges must maintain audit trails for seven years, prevent deletion of transaction records, and submit monthly reports on modified transactions.
 - Capital Gains Classification: Clear guidelines have been introduced for debenture conversions, income disclosure schemes relating to assets, and cross-border restructuring to bring clarity in capital gains classification.
 - For converted securities such as shares or debentures, the holding period will now include the time during which the original instrument such as bonds or deposit certificates which was held before conversion.
 - House Rent Allowance (HRA): Enhanced tax benefits have been provided for salaried individuals claiming HRA.
 - Under the new rules, Mumbai, Kolkata, Delhi, Chennai, Hyderabad, Pune, Ahmedabad, and Bengaluru will qualify for a higher exemption limit of 50 per cent of salary, while all other locations will continue at 40 per cent.
 - Disclosure of the landlord-tenant relationship has been made mandatory to claim deductions.
 - Employer-Provided Accommodation: Exemptions for employer-provided accommodation will be determined based on city population, salary level, and ownership or lease status of accommodation.
 - Zero Coupon Bond Framework: A new approval framework has been introduced requiring applications three months before issuance, investment-grade ratings from two agencies, and defined fund utilization timelines to strengthen regulatory oversight.
 - Cross-Border Taxation Powers: Additional powers have been given to tax authorities.
 - In cases of non-resident income attrition, income may be estimated using percentage-based methods, global profit ratios, or other reasonable methods.

- **Digital and Remote Business Taxation:** The threshold for significant economic presence has been fixed at ₹2 crore transactions or 3 lakh users.
- **Valuation and Fair Market Value Rules:** Standardized formula-based valuation and fair market value rules apply to listed and unlisted shares, foreign entities, and partnership interests.
- **Offshore Transactions Linked to Indian Assets:** A formula has been prescribed to calculate income linked to Indian assets in offshore deals to reduce ambiguity.
- **Expense Exemptions:** A simplified capped approach has been introduced for exemptions under expenses. It includes direct expenses and one percent of investment value.

Veerangana Rani Avantibai Lodhi

News: Union Home Minister Amit Shah paid tribute to Veerangana Rani Avantibai Lodhi on her martyrdom day, highlighting her courage and sacrifice.

About Veerangana Rani Avantibai Lodhi

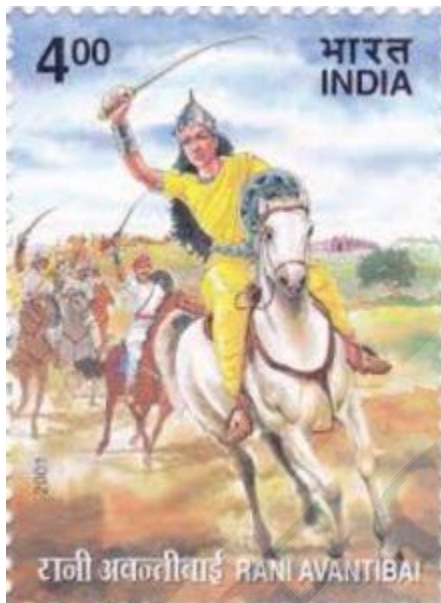


Figure 25. Source – Indain Post

- **Birth:** Rani Avantibai Lodhi was born on August 16, 1831, in Mankehni village in present-day Madhya Pradesh.
- **Early life:** She was married to Vikramaditya Singh Lodhi, son of Raja Laxman Singh of Ramgarh.
- **After the death of Laxman Singh,** she assumed control of Ramgarh state.
- **Role in 1857 Revolt:** She emerged as a prominent leader during the Revolt of 1857 and actively fought against British rule.
- **Cause of rebellion:** She strongly opposed Lord Dalhousie's Doctrine of Lapse, which sought to annex Ramgarh.
- **Military leadership:** She was skilled in sword-fighting and horse-riding. She successfully expelled British administrators from Ramgarh.
- **Key battle:** She led her forces in the Battle of Kheri in 1857, where British troops were defeated.
- **Martyrdom:** In March 1858, she sacrificed her life on the battlefield and chose martyrdom instead of surrender.
- **Commemoration:** The Government of India issued a postal stamp in her honor in 1988, and many memorials stand in her name in Madhya Pradesh.

Guru Hargobind Sahib

News: Union Home Minister paid tributes to Guru Hargobind Sahib on the occasion of his Jyoti-Jyot Diwas, remembering his contributions to strengthening Sikhism and promoting the protection of humanity.

About Guru Hargobind Sahib



Source: DD News

- **Guru Hargobind Sahib was the Sixth Guru of the Sikhs.**
- **Born:** He was born on 9 June 1595 at a village Guru Ki Wadali near Amritsar.
 - He was born to Guru Arjan Dev ji, the fifth Guru of the Sikhs.
- He succeeded Guru Arjan Sahib in 1606, at the age of eleven years.
- He took the title of Sachcha Padshah (True Emperor).
- **Battles fought:** He fought five battles with Mughal forces (Jahangir and Shah Jahan) and remained victorious.
 - Important battles - Rohilla (1621), Amritsar (1634), Mehraj and Lahira, Kartarpur (1635) and Palahi near Phagwara.
- **Philosophy:**
 - Guru Sahib wore two swords: Piri (spiritual power) and Miri (temporal/military power).
 - He inspired Sikhs to become Saint-Soldiers (spiritually strong and physically brave) and encouraged them to take military training and learn martial arts.
- **Administration:** He maintained a force of about 700 cavalry and 60 artillerymen and a group of Pathan soldiers was led by Painsa Khan.
 - Martial songs (Vars) were sung daily by Dhad players in the court of Guru Sahib to inspire bravery.
 - He established Akal Takht Sahib (1609) in front of Harmandir Sahib as the centre of Sikh authority.
 - At Akal Takht, he delivered sermons, resolved disputes, and promoted martial activities.
 - He built a protective wall around Amritsar and constructed Lohgarh Fort for defence.
 - He was imprisoned by Jahangir at Gwalior Fort (1609–1612).
 - Religious leaders like Mian Mir helped secure his release.
 - Guru Sahib requested the release of 52 imprisoned princes along with himself.
 - After their release, he was honoured with the title Bandi Chhor Baba.

- His return to Amritsar was celebrated on Diwali, now observed as Bandi Chhor Diwas by Sikhs.
- Legacy: He passed away in 1644 at Kiratpur Sahib.
 - Death anniversary of Sikh Gurus is observed as Jyoti-Jyot Diwas.
 - Sri Guru Tegh Bahadur, his son become Ninth Sikh Guru in 1664.

Smog-Eating Photocatalytic Coatings

News: Delhi government and IIT Madras began a six-month study on “smog-eating” photocatalytic coatings to test reduction of NO₂ and volatile organic compounds (VOC) pollutants.

About Smog-Eating Photocatalytic Coatings

ROAD TO CLEANER AIR?

What is Photocatalytic Coating
"Smog-eating" photocatalytic coatings are applied on roads, concrete and tiles to reduce nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and harmful hydrocarbons
These coatings utilise a photocatalyst, predominantly titanium dioxide (TiO₂), which breaks down pollutants—mainly nitrogen oxides (NO_x) and some volatile organic compounds (VOCs)—when exposed to sunlight

DELHI IS MULLING ITS USE, BUT IT'S NOT FIRST TO DO SO

The Netherlands Field trials with TiO ₂ -treated paving blocks in part of Hengelo city showed substantial NO _x reductions in test stretches		Italy Tests were conducted on building facades and pavements in Milan		Denmark A study was conducted on photocatalytic-treated asphalt roads in Copenhagen for urban NO _x removal	
Mexico A hospital building facade was made with tiles coated with titanium dioxide		US Pavements with titanium dioxide coatings exist on some stretches			

JURY IS OUT ON ITS EFFICACY

- > Street environments with variable wind, dust deposition, traffic, shading and humidity reduce effectiveness
- > Photocatalysis targets gaseous pollutants; evidence of particulate matter reduction is weak
- > Photocatalytic activity declines over time

Source – ToI

- It is a coating using titanium dioxide that neutralizes harmful gases like nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and volatile organic compounds (VOCs).
- Mechanism
 - Photocatalytic activity uses light energy to break down harmful substances and organic waste into less toxic or harmless matter.
 - When exposed to sunlight, titanium dioxide acts as a catalyst and generates surface electrons.
 - These electrons react with pollutants such as nitrogen dioxide and volatile organic compounds and dismantle them.
 - This process helps in making air and water cleaner.

- **Technology used:** Titanium dioxide is used as it is low-cost, chemically stable and compatible with construction materials.
- **Targeted pollutants:** It targets nitrogen dioxide and volatile organic compounds and prevents secondary particulate matter and ground-level ozone formation.
- **Applications:** It is applied on roads, pavements, buildings, and tiles, where it works as a passive air-cleaning system.
- **Limitation:** Its efficiency reduces due to low sunlight, dust accumulation, and wind conditions, and it may cause nitrate runoff leading to eutrophication in water bodies like Yamuna.

AI Skilling Initiative, MyWAVES, Advanced EPG & In-built Satellite Tuner in Television Sets

News: Union Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw recently launched three new initiatives, AI Skilling Initiative, MyWAVES, Advanced EPG & In-built Satellite Tuner in Television Sets to promote the “orange economy”.

About AI Skilling Initiative, MyWAVES, Advanced EPG & In-built Satellite Tuner in Television Sets

Source: AIR

- **Aim:** The initiatives aimed at promoting the ‘Orange Economy’, strengthening public broadcasting, and building an AI skilled workforce in the media and entertainment sector.
- **Nodal Ministry for initiatives:** Ministry of Information and Broadcasting

About AI Skilling Initiative

- **Launched by:** It has been launched by Ministry of Information and Broadcasting in partnership with Google and YouTube.
- **Implementing agency:** It is being implemented through the Indian Institute of Creative Technologies (IICT).
- **Aim:** It aims to strengthen AI capabilities in areas such as animation, visual effects, gaming, comics (AVGC) and media technology.
- **Features:** It will support creators, media professionals, students and developers in building future-ready skills and contribute to India’s emergence as a global hub for digital content and innovation.
- **The AI skilling programme will be conducted in two phases:**
 - **Phase I:** It will start from March 23 to June 30 2026.
 - It focuses on foundational AI learning at scale through Google Career Certificates and Google Cloud Generative AI learning paths.
 - **Courses offered:** Participants will undergo courses such as AI Essentials, Prompting Essentials, Introduction to Generative AI and Generative AI Leader Path.
 - Successful completion of this phase will be mandatory for progression to the next stage.
 - **Phase II:** It will start from July to December 2026.
 - The second phase will involve advanced, hands-on and project-based specialisation for the creative industry.
 - **Curriculum:** It includes modules on the art of storytelling, YouTube best practices, and advanced training using AI tools.
- **Coverage:** The training will be conducted in major cities across the country.
- **Target:** Under the initiative, about 15,000 youth will be trained without levying any fee.

About MyWAVES

- It is a citizen creator platform on WAVES OTT that along with Doordarshan's Creators' Corner initiative, enables creators to create, upload, and share content, strengthening India's digital ecosystem.
- Features: It is designed as a structured platform for user-generated content (UGC) that will support participation in national digital initiatives.
 - It will support multiple formats (short videos, vertical videos and episodic content) and offer a multilingual interface across Indian languages.
 - It will also serve as a platform for emerging creators and storytellers from across the country.

About Advanced EPG & In-built Satellite Tuner in Television Sets

- The Ministry of Information & Broadcasting has introduced TVs with in-built satellite tuners to make television viewing easier.
- Features: Viewers can watch DD Free Dish channels without a separate set-top box. This helps reduce extra costs, wiring, and multiple remote controls.
 - The new advanced programme guide will allow users to easily browse channels and programme schedules in one place through a simple and intuitive interface.

Switch Auction by RBI

News: The RBI conducted a switch auction where the government bought back ₹6,309 crore of G-Secs and issued ₹6,431.797 crore of bonds.

About Switch Auction by RBI



Figure 26. Source – CNBC

- A Switch Auction (or Conversion Auction) is a debt management tool used by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on behalf of the Government of India to manage its repayment burden by replacing short-term debt with long-term debt.
- Objective: The objective is to ease redemption pressure, smoothen maturity profile and manage repayment obligations more effectively.
- Mechanism
 - Swap: The government repurchases "source" securities (bonds nearing maturity) and simultaneously issues new "destination" securities (longer-dated bonds) of equivalent market value.
 - No new debt: This process changes the timing of repayments without increasing the government's overall borrowing target or requiring immediate cash outgo.
- Significance: It helps the government manage debt efficiently by spreading repayments over a longer period while maintaining borrowing plans.

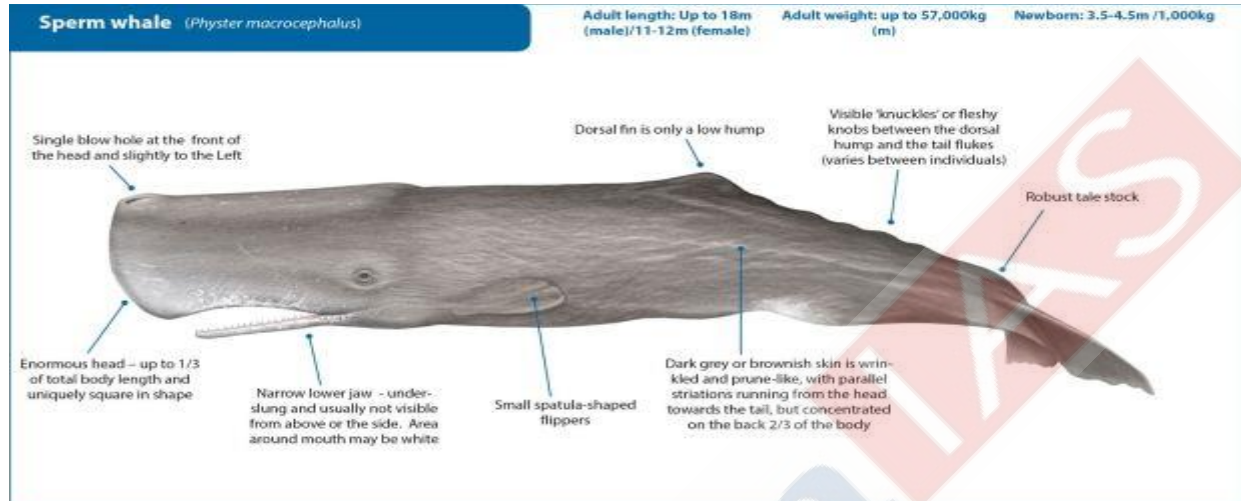
About Government Securities (G-Secs)

- Government securities are low-risk debt instruments issued by the government that offer fixed returns and are backed by a sovereign guarantee.

Sperm Whales

News: Sperm whales have been caught headbutting on camera for the first time, confirming behaviour described by 19th century whaling ships.

About Sperm Whales



Source – IWC

- Sperm whales are the largest toothed whales, easily recognized by their enormous square head and narrow lower jaw.
- **Scientific Name:** The scientific name of sperm whale is *Physeter macrocephalus*.
- **Naming:** They are named after spermaceti, a waxy substance found in their heads.
- **Habitat:** They live in deep marine waters, generally at depths greater than 1000 m.
- **Distribution:** They have one of the widest global distributions and are found in all deep oceans from equator to polar regions.
- **Characteristics**
 - **Body colour:** The whale is dark blue-grey or brownish with white patches on the belly.
 - **Body structure:** It has small paddle-like flippers and rounded humps on its back.
 - **Size:** It has the largest head and brain of any animal.
 - **Lifespan:** It can live up to 60 – 70 years.
 - **Spermaceti organ:** The spermaceti is an oil sac that helps whales focus sound.
 - **Communication:** They communicate using clicks called codas, where each coda has a distinct purpose.
 - **Ambergris:** Ambergris is a waxy substance formed in the intestines around undigested matter and is used in perfumes.
- **Threats**
 - Fishing activities
 - Marine pollution
- **Conservation status**
 - **IUCN Red List:** Vulnerable
 - **CITES:** Appendix I of CITES
 - **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972:** Schedule I of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972.

- International Whaling Commission (IWC): It is protected by the IWC under a global moratorium on commercial whaling.

Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950

News: The Supreme Court held that a person converting to Christianity cannot claim Scheduled Caste protections, upholding the Andhra Pradesh High Court order.

About Constitution (Scheduled Castes) Order, 1950

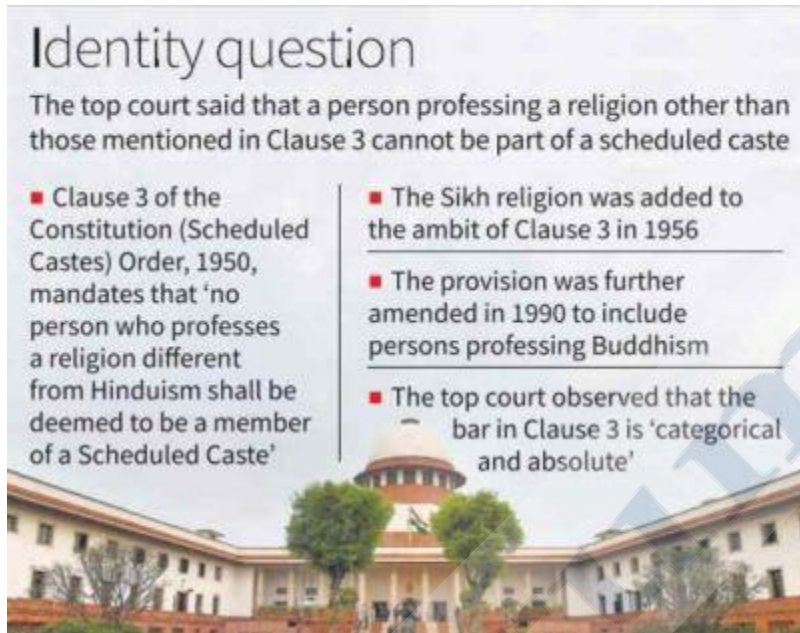


Figure 27. Source – TH

- It defines Scheduled Castes (SCs) and restricts their status based on specific religions under Article 341.

- Constitutional basis: It was issued by the President to provide protection against social disability arising from untouchability.

- Religious criteria: It initially restricted SC status to Hindus, later extended to Sikhs (1956) and Buddhists (1990), and now

applies only to these three religions.

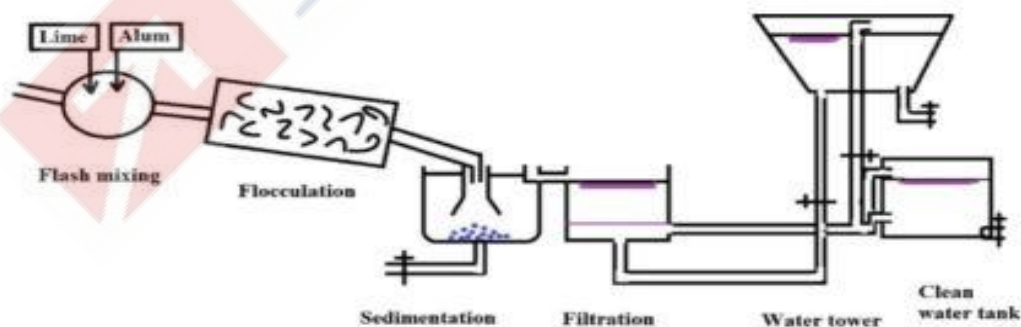
- Clause 3 (religious restriction): Paragraph 3 clearly states that no person professing a religion other than Hinduism, Sikhism, or Buddhism shall be deemed a Scheduled Caste member.
- Territorial Nature: A caste recognised as SC in one State may not be recognised in another State or Union Territory.
- Relevant Constitutional Articles
 - Article 341(1): It empowers the President to notify the list of Scheduled Castes.
 - Article 341(2): It allows only Parliament to include or exclude any caste from the list.
 - Article 366(24): It defines Scheduled Castes as those notified under Article 341.
 - Articles 15(4) and 17: These provisions support advancement of Scheduled Castes and abolish untouchability.

- About SC Status after Supreme Court Ruling (2026)
 - Background of the case: The case arose from a complaint filed in 2021 by a Christian pastor who alleged caste-based abuse and invoked provisions of the SC/ST Act.
 - The accused argued that since he had converted to Christianity and was functioning as a pastor, he could not claim Scheduled Caste status.
 - The Andhra Pradesh High Court in April 2025 accepted this argument and quashed the case.
 - Supreme Court ruling (2026): Supreme Court upheld the High Court's decision and held that a person who converts to Christianity cannot continue to claim Scheduled Caste status or related protections.
 - Loss of status and mutual exclusivity: Conversion to non-specified religions leads to immediate loss of Scheduled Caste status, and such persons cannot simultaneously claim Scheduled Caste identity.
 - Reconversion and proof requirement: The Court stated that to regain Scheduled Caste status after reconversion, a person must provide clear and credible proof of returning to the original religion and acceptance by the caste community, and mere self-declaration is not sufficient.

Nalgonda Technique

News: The Government of India has commissioned a study to reassess fluoride removal technologies as existing standards based on the Nalgonda technique lag behind advancements.

About Nalgonda Technique



Source – Research Gate

- The Nalgonda technique is a simple and cost-effective method used for removing excess fluoride from drinking water.
- Developed by: It was developed by the National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI), Nagpur, in 1974.
- Chemicals used: The technique involves the sequential addition of three primary chemicals –
 - Alum (aluminium sulphate): Acts as a coagulant that reacts with fluoride ions to form “flocs”.
 - Lime (calcium oxide): Added to maintain the pH of the water and ensure proper flocculation.
 - Bleaching powder: Used for disinfection to remove pathogens.
- Process: The process follows four main sequential steps –
 - Rapid mixing: Chemicals (alum, lime, and bleaching powder) are added to the raw water and mixed vigorously, usually for 1–2 minutes, to ensure they are properly dispersed.
 - Flocculation: The mixture is stirred gently for a longer duration, typically 10–20 minutes. This allows the formation of large, settleable “flocs” as the chemicals react, which trap the fluoride ions.
 - Sedimentation: The water is allowed to remain undisturbed for about 1–2 hours. During this phase, the flocs formed in the previous step settle to the bottom due to gravity.
 - Filtration: The clear, treated supernatant water is separated from the settled sludge by passing it through filters, such as a rapid gravity sand filter.
- Limitations: It produces high amounts of sludge, requires daily chemical addition and is less effective in water with high total dissolved solids or hardness.
- Significance : It provides an affordable and practical solution for safe drinking water in fluoride-affected regions.

Beavers – Animal Kingdom’s Engineers

News: A new international study found that beavers reshape river systems and help store carbon, reducing its release into the atmosphere.

About Beavers – Animal Kingdom’s Engineers



Source – PBS

- Beavers are semiaquatic rodents known for building dams that transform landscapes and create wetlands.
- **Habitat:** They live in freshwater ecosystems such as rivers, streams, lakes, ponds, and marshes, usually in slow-moving water areas.
- **Distribution :** Beavers are native to North America, Europe, and Asia.
 - The Manipur beaver (*Trogontherium cuvieri*) is recorded to have existed in India until approximately 1905, which marks the last known record of its population.
- **Characteristics**
 - **Body structure:** Beavers have stout bodies, large heads, and flat, scaly tails with webbed hind feet for swimming.

- **Size:** They are the second-largest rodents in the world and can weigh up to 50 kg.
- **Teeth adaptation:** They possess strong chisel-like incisors that grow continuously and help in cutting wood.
- **Aquatic adaptation:** Their eyes, ears, and nostrils are positioned to stay above water, with special valves for underwater protection.
- **Diet:** They are herbivorous and feed on tree bark, aquatic plants, grasses, and sedges.
- **Movement ability:** They are efficient swimmers and can carry materials while walking on their hind legs.
- **Ecological roles**
 - **Ecosystem engineer:** Beavers change their habitat by moving mud, stones, and logs to build dams and lodges, which reshape landscapes.
 - **Keystone species:** Their activities create wetland ecosystems that support fish, birds, and amphibians, and their removal can degrade the ecosystem.
 - **“Nature’s kidneys”:** Beaver dams trap sediment and filter pollutants like nitrates and phosphates, which improves water quality downstream.
 - **Carbon sequestration:** Beaver-created wetlands trap organic matter and help store carbon, which reduces its release into the atmosphere.
- **Conservation status**
 - **American Beaver (Castor canadensis):** It is classified as Least Concern under the IUCN Red List.
 - **Eurasian Beaver (Castor fiber):** It is also classified as Least Concern under the IUCN Red List.

Hudsonian godwit (*Limosa haemastica*)

News: The Hudsonian godwit (*Limosa haemastica*) population has plunged 95% in four decades due to a complex mix of environmental changes across multiple countries.

About Hudsonian godwit (*Limosa haemastica*)



Source: TH

- They are large shorebird belongs to sandpiper family, Scolopacidae.
- **Scientific name:** Their scientific name is *Limosa haemastica*.
- **Habitat:** They breed in wetland habitats such as sedge meadows and muskeg in the sub-Arctic and Boreal regions.
- **Distribution:** They are long -distance migratory species that breed at remote sites in northern Canada and winter in southern South America.
 - They migrate to South America and the Caribbean.
 - They are occasionally recorded as vagrants in Europe, Australia, and South Africa.
- **Characteristics**
 - Adults have long dark legs and a long pink bill with a slight upward curve and dark at the tip.
 - Their upper parts are mottled brown and the underparts are chestnut.
 - Their tail is black and the rump is white.
 - They show black wing linings in flight.
 - Their legs and feet are bluish-grey.
- **Diet:** They forage by probing in shallow water. They mainly eat insects and crustaceans.
- **Conservation status**

- IUCN: Vulnerable
- They are one of 42 species proposed for international protection at a meeting of parties to the UN Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS).

World Air Quality Report, 2025

News: IQAir recently released its 8th World Air Quality Report (2025) highlighting global air pollution trends, health risks, and monitoring gaps.

About World Air Quality Report, 2025

INDIA 6th AMONG 143 COUNTRIES

> No. of cities analysed: 9,446 in 143 countries	> Kolkata rank among 259 Indian cities: 49th	$\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$)
> India's global rank: 6th most polluted country	> Kolkata PM2.5 level: 51 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$	> Cities meeting WHO guideline: Only 14% globally
> Top polluted countries: Pakistan, Bangladesh, Tajikistan	> WHO safe limit: 5 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$	> Key concerns: Rising pollution linked to climate change, wildfires, and emissions
> Most polluted Indian city: Loni in UP (112.5 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$)		

 In 2025, familiar culprits, like industrial agriculture, wildfires and fossil fuels, left their mark... This open, transparent data is an essential tool for holding polluters accountable and securing a healthy environment for everyone — **Aidan Farrow** | SR SCIENTIST, GREENPEACE INT'L

Source: TOI

- World Air Quality Report evaluates pollution levels, based on annual average PM2.5.
- Released by: It is published by Swiss air quality technology company IQAir.
- Edition: This is the eighth edition of the report.
 - The first edition of this Report was released in 2018.
- The report analyzed data from monitoring stations across 9,446 cities in 143 countries, regions and territories.
- Findings of the report related to India:
 - India ranked as the sixth most polluted country in the world based on annual average PM2.5 concentration levels.
 - Loni in Uttar Pradesh was identified as the most polluted city in the world and Delhi ranked fourth globally in terms of PM2.5 pollution levels.

Factly Compilation March 2026

- Loni recorded an annual average PM2.5 concentration of 112.5 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, which was nearly 23 percent higher than in 2024 and more than 22 times higher than the guideline level recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO).
- Kolkata has been placed 49th in pollution ranks among 259 cities in India.
- Among the ten most polluted cities in the world, five cities were from India, namely Loni, Byrnihat, Delhi, Ghaziabad, and Ula.
- **Findings of the report related to World:**
 - Pakistan ranked as the most polluted country, followed by Bangladesh, Tajikistan, Chad, and Congo.
 - The top 25 most polluted cities in the world were located in India, Pakistan, and China, with India being home to three of the four most polluted cities globally.
 - 54 countries experienced an increase and 75 countries recorded a decrease in annual average PM2.5 levels, two countries remained unchanged, and 12 countries were newly represented in the dataset.
 - Only 13 countries and territories globally met the WHO annual PM2.5 guideline. India is not one among them.
- **Sources of pollution:** The report highlighted that wildfires intensified by climate change played a major role in worsening global air quality in 2025.
 - Record biomass emissions from Europe and Canada contributed approximately 1,380 megatons of carbon, which significantly affected atmospheric pollution levels.
- **Suggestions**
 - The report emphasized that expanding access to real-time air quality monitoring data is essential for protecting public health and enabling communities to take informed action.
 - The report also highlighted that reducing emissions and addressing climate change are necessary steps to achieve long-term improvements in global air quality.

Globe Network

News: India hosted the 12th Steering Committee Meeting of the Global Operational Network of Anti-Corruption Law Enforcement Authorities (Globe Network) in New Delhi.

About GlobE Network

GLOBE Network

Source: GlobE Network

- **Global Operational Network of Anti-Corruption Law Enforcement Authorities (GlobE Network)** is a global platform of specialised anti-corruption law enforcement authorities.
- **Established in:** It was established in 2021 under the Riyadh Initiative during Saudi Arabia's G20 Presidency.
- **Members:** All UN member states and state parties to the UN Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) are part of GlobE Network.
 - It consists of 135 member countries and 250 member authorities, as well as 18 observers, including EUROPOL, the World Bank, and the International Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities.
 - **India's membership:** India joined the GlobE Network in 2022, with the Central Bureau of Investigation and the Directorate of Enforcement as its two designated member agencies.
 - India is currently member of GlobE Steering Committee.
- **Structure:** The organizational structure of the GlobE Network comprises three bodies:
 - **Plenary:** It is the governing body responsible for making decisions relevant to the functioning of the GlobE Network.
 - **Steering committee:** It is the managing body of the GlobE Network.
 - **Permanent Secretariat:** It is responsible for supporting the effective functioning of the day-to-day activities of the Network.

- It is supported by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) which provides the Network's secretariat.
- **Function:** It enables law enforcement authorities to work together across borders to detect, investigate, and prosecute corruption offenses.
 - These authorities include anti-corruption agencies, police forces, prosecutor's offices and offices of the attorney general, asset recovery offices and financial investigation units.
 - GlobE Secure Communications Platform (SCP) is a highly effective platform for encrypted, real-time information exchange among member authorities.

About United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC)

- The United Nations Convention against Corruption (UNCAC) is the only legally binding universal anti-corruption instrument.
- **Adopted:** It was adopted in 2003 by the General Assembly of the United Nations, New York.
- **Entered into force:** 14 December 2005
- **Status:** It has 140 signatories and 192 Parties (as of 25 September 2025). India is a Party to the Convention
- The Convention adopts comprehensive approach to tackle corruption, emphasize the importance of preventive measures, criminalization and law enforcement, international cooperation and asset recovery.

Thane Creek Flamingo Sanctuary

News: Water samples from key flamingo habitats near Thane Creek Flamingo Sanctuary (TCFS) showed rising toxicity, raising long-term ecological concerns.

About Thane Creek Flamingo Sanctuary



Source: TOI

- **Location:** It is located along the western bank of the Thane creek.
- It is the first flamingo sanctuary in India.
- **Established:** It was declared a flamingo sanctuary in 2015.
- **Status:** It was declared a Ramsar site by the International Wetlands Convention in 2022.
 - It has been categorized as an Important Bird Area (IBA).
- **Area:** It covers an area of 16.9 sq km covered with water, mangroves and inter-tidal marshy zone.
- **River associated:** The creek gets the largest source of fresh water from Ulhas River and numerous drainage channels. It receives saline water from Arabian sea.
- **Flora:** It hosts 12 species of mangroves and associates including *Avicennia marina*, *Acanthus illicifolius* and *Salvadora persica* etc.
- **Fauna:**
 - It has more than 200 species of resident and migratory birds including Lesser Flamingos, Greater Flamingos, Pied Avocet, Western Reef Heron, Black-headed Ibis, Common Redshank, Marsh Sandpiper, etc are found here.
 - It also includes diversity of birds, reptiles, mammals, and invertebrates like butterflies, moths, honeybees, wasps, spiders, and benthic organisms.

Blue Zones

News: The concept of Blue Zones highlights regions with exceptional longevity, offering lessons on healthy lifestyles amid rising stress, poor diet, and inactivity.

About Blue Zones



Source – CBS News

- Blue Zones are specific geographic regions where people live significantly longer, healthier lives (often passing 100) due to lifestyle, diet, and social factors rather than genetics alone.
- Introduced by: The concept was introduced by Dan Buettner, a National Geographic explorer.
- Major regions: The major Blue Zones identified are Ikaria in Greece, Ogliastra in Sardinia (Italy), Okinawa in Japan, Nicoya Peninsula in Costa Rica, and Loma Linda in California (USA).
- Characteristics
 - Plant-based diet: People mostly consume plant-based food, with nearly 95% of their diet coming from vegetables, beans, whole grains, nuts, and fruits.
 - Limited meat and sugar intake: Meat is eaten sparingly, about five times a month, while sugar is rarely consumed and desserts are occasional.
 - Natural and local food habits: Food is fresh, local, and seasonal, with minimal use of processed or packaged items.
 - Moderate eating practice: People follow the “80% Rule,” which means they stop eating when they feel about 80% full.

- Daily physical activity: Physical activity is part of daily life through walking, farming, and household work rather than structured exercise.
- Strong sense of purpose: Concepts like Ikigai and Plan de Vida provide meaning to life and support mental wellbeing.
- Strong social connections: Close family ties and social groups like “moais” provide emotional and social support, reducing stress.

India's Nationally Determined Contribution (2031-2035)

News: The Union Cabinet, has approved India's Nationally Determined Contribution for 2031-2035 period.

About India's Nationally Determined Contribution (2031-2035)



Figure 28. Source – TH

- India's Nationally Determined Contribution for 2031-2035 is a set of updated climate commitments to strengthen action under global climate framework.
- Aim: The aim of India's NDC for 2031-2035 is to build a prosperous and climate-resilient Bharat while ensuring sustainable development and climate justice.
- Aligned with: India's NDC is aligned with the vision of Viksit Bharat and the long-term goal of achieving net-zero emissions by 2070.
- Key Targets of India's NDC (2031-2035)
 - Emissions intensity: India aims to reduce emissions intensity of GDP to 47% by 2035, strengthening the previous 45% target for 2030.
 - Non-fossil capacity: India aims to achieve 60% share of non-fossil fuel-based energy in installed electric power capacity by 2035.

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- Carbon sink: India aims to create 5–4.0 billion tonnes of CO₂ equivalent carbon sink through forest and tree cover by 2035.
- India's earlier NDC (2015): India's earlier NDC (2015) targeted a 33–35% reduction in emissions intensity of GDP from 2005 levels by 2030 and 40% non-fossil capacity.
 - These were achieved ahead of time, with emissions intensity reduced by 36% during 2005–2020, showing strong climate performance.
- Approach to NDC (2031–2035)
 - Global framework alignment: The approach considers Global Stocktake outcomes, Common But Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities (CBDR-RC) principle, and equity while balancing development priorities and energy security.
 - Consultative process: The targets are based on consultations involving ministries, experts, industry, and civil society through NITI Aayog working groups.
 - Integrated governance approach: The approach ensures a whole-of-government and whole-of-society strategy aligned with national priorities and domestic capabilities.

Helium and Helium Crisis

News: The disruption in global helium supply due to the Middle East war and restrictions in the Gulf of Hormuz has raised concerns in India's healthcare sector.

About Helium and Helium Crisis



Source - TH

- Helium is a non-renewable inert gas.
- Discovered by: It was discovered in 1868 by Jules Janssen and Norman Lockyer.
- Naming: It was named after the Greek word "Helios", meaning Sun.

- **Properties of helium**
 - **Nature:** Helium is a chemical element with symbol 'He' and atomic number 2 and it belongs to the noble gas group.
 - **Physical characteristics:** It is a colourless, odourless, tasteless, non-toxic, and inert gas that exists in monatomic form.
 - **Lightness:** Helium is the second lightest element after hydrogen.
 - **Boiling Point:** It has the lowest boiling point among all elements at about -268.9°C and becomes liquid at extremely low temperatures.
 - **Solidification condition:** It cannot be solidified at normal atmospheric pressure and requires a pressure of about 25 atmospheres at around 1 K (-272°C) to become solid.
 - **Thermal properties:** The boiling and freezing points of helium are lower than those of any other known substance.
- **Applications**
 - **MRI:** Helium is used in MRI machines as a coolant for superconducting magnets.
 - **Cryogenics:** Helium is used in cryogenics as a coolant because it is the coldest substance.
 - **Rocket propulsion:** It is used to pressurize fuel tanks, especially for liquid hydrogen systems.
 - **Meteorology:** It is used as a lifting gas for weather balloons carrying instruments.
 - **Welding and breathing:** It is used as an inert gas in welding and in high-pressure breathing mixtures.
- **Global Reserve:** The largest global reserves of helium are found in the United States, Algeria, and Russia.
- **Reserve in India:** India's Rajmahal Volcanic Basin in Jharkhand is a significant helium reservoir.

About Helium Crisis

- **The helium crisis** refers to supply disruptions and rising prices due to geopolitical tensions and supply-demand imbalance.
- **West Asia tensions:** The war in the Middle East and restrictions in the Gulf of Hormuz have disrupted helium supply chains, especially from Qatar, increasing prices significantly.

- **Infrastructure disruptions:** Damage to critical hubs like Qatar's Ras Laffan LNG facility has further constricted supply.
- **Impact on India**
 - **Rising costs:** The price of helium has nearly doubled, increasing the cost burden on healthcare facilities, especially for smaller operators.
 - **MRI Installation and Operational Challenges:** New MRI installations may be postponed due to high initial helium requirements, and older machines that require large volumes face higher disruption risks.

Immigration, Visa, Foreigners Registration & Tracking (IVFRT) Scheme

News: The Union Cabinet approved continuation of the Immigration, Visa, Foreigners Registration & Tracking (IVFRT) Scheme from April 2026 to March 2031.

About Immigration, Visa, Foreigners Registration & Tracking (IVFRT) Scheme



Figure 29. Source – PIB

- The IVFRT is a mission-mode project that creates a secure, integrated, and service-oriented framework for managing the entire lifecycle of travellers.
- **Launched in:** The project was originally approved on 13 May 2010.
- **Timespan:** The scheme will be in operation for a period of five years from 01 April 2026 to 31 March 2031.
- **Legal basis:** It is launched in the backdrop of the recently enacted Immigration and Foreigners Act, 2025.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Home Affairs
- **Objective:** The objective is to modernize and interlink immigration, visa issuance, and foreigner registration functions to

facilitate legitimate travellers while strengthening national security and curbing illegal migration.

- **Key Features**

- **Interlinked digital ecosystem:** The system connects 117 Immigration Check Posts, 15 FROs, and 854 FROs into a single integrated database.
- **Contactless and faceless services:** The scheme enables a fully online visa process with automated appointments and payments, with over 91% of e-visas cleared within 72 hours.
- **Fast Track Immigration Programme:** Automated e-gates at 13 major airports reduce clearance time from 3 minutes to 30 seconds for trusted travellers.
- **Technological innovation and biometrics:** The system uses self-service kiosks, mobile-based services, and biometric integration to ensure secure and seamless passenger movement.

IIED Food Security Index

News: A new study by International Institute for Environment and Development shows India faces worsening food insecurity under rising global temperature scenarios.

About IIED Food Security Index



Figure 30. Source – IIED

- **Key features**

- **Four pillars:** The index evaluates availability, accessibility, utilisation, and sustainability of food systems.
- **Scoring system:** Countries are ranked on a scale of 1 to 10, with a global average of 6.74.

- **The IIED Food Security Index measures countries' ability to ensure adequate, accessible, nutritious, and resilient food systems.**
- **Developed by:** It was developed by the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED).

- **Climate sensitivity:** It examines how food security changes under 1.5°C and 2°C warming scenarios.
- **Economic link:** It relates food security with GDP, showing limited impact on sustainability.
- **Global findings**
 - About 56 billion people (59%) live below the global average score of 6.74.
 - At 2°C warming, an additional 291 million people may fall below this level.
 - Lower-income countries will face serious dietary instability at 1.5°C warming.
 - Food insecurity gaps between rich and poor countries will widen, especially in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.
- **India-Specific Data**
 - India's baseline score is 31, which is significantly below the global average of 6.74.
 - India is ranked behind Brazil (6.72), Mexico (6.36), and Indonesia (5.87) in the index.
 - India's food security score is projected to decline to 96 at 1.5°C warming.
 - The score is further expected to fall to 52 at 2°C, showing a steady worsening trend.

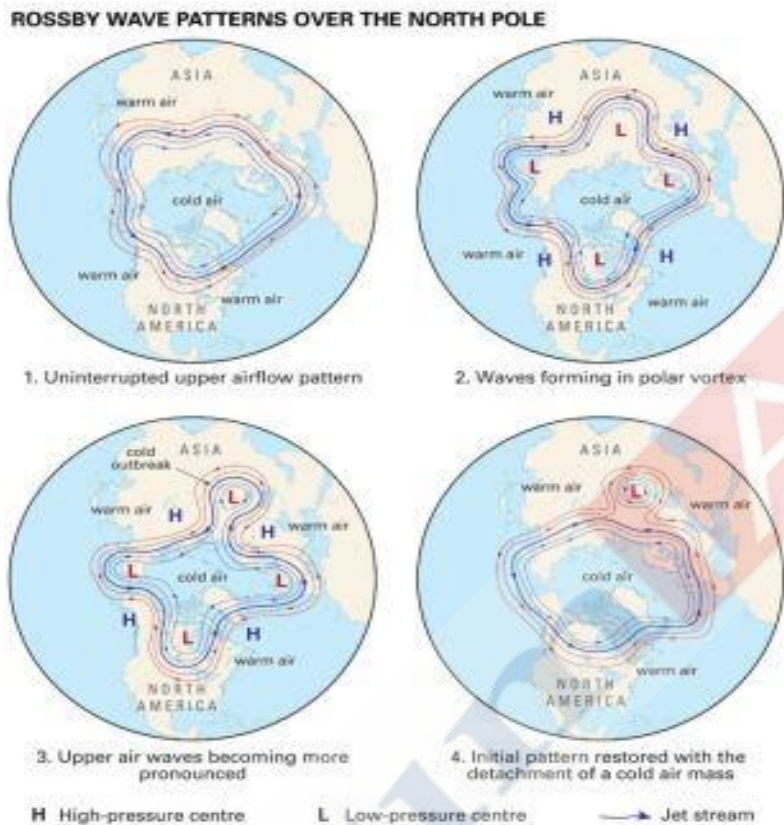
About International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED)

- **The IIED is an independent, non-profit policy and action research organisation that specializes in linking local priorities to global challenges to promote sustainable development.**
- **Origin:** Established in 1971 as the International Institute for Environmental Affairs (IIEA), it became the IIED in 1973.
- **Headquarters:** Its headquarter is in London.
- **Mission:** Its mission is to build a fairer, more sustainable world using evidence, action, and influence in partnership with others.
- **Key contributions:** IIED helped pioneer the concept of sustainable development.
 - It has influenced major global bodies like the IPCC, the World Bank, and various UN conventions.

Rosby Waves and Wet Bulb Temperature

News: A recent study links warming oceans with rising humid heatwaves, highlighting atmospheric processes like Rossby waves influencing large-scale heat extremes.

About Rossby Waves



Source - Britannica

- Rossby waves are large horizontal atmospheric undulations that move westward and influence global weather and climate patterns.
- Mechanism
 - Role of coriolis effect: The Rossby waves form due to the variation of the Coriolis effect with latitude, which affects moving air and water.
 - Deflection of moving air: When air moves toward the poles, it gets deflected and then curves back to conserve its potential vorticity.
 - Formation of wave pattern: This repeated deflection creates a large oscillating wave pattern that propagates westward.
 - Heat transfer function: These waves help in transferring heat between the tropics and the poles, maintaining earth's energy balance.
- Key types and characteristics
 - Atmospheric rossby waves

Nature and occurrence: These appear as large undulations in the jet stream and influence weather patterns over wide regions.

Ridges and troughs: They create ridges, which bring warm, dry, and high-pressure conditions and troughs, which bring cold, wet, and low-pressure systems such as cyclones.

○ **Oceanic rossby waves**

Movement and location: These move slowly across ocean basins along the thermocline, which lies between warm surface water and colder deep water.

Impact on deep water: Although surface changes are small, they cause significant shifts in deeper water layers over long time periods.

Topographic rossby waves

- **Formation:** These are formed when physical barriers like mountains or ocean ridges disturb the normal flow of air or water.
- **Effect of physical features:** Such disturbances force the flow to adjust its path, leading to the development of wave patterns.

About Wet Bulb Temperature

- **Wet bulb temperature** is the lowest temperature that can be reached by air through evaporation of water under given conditions.
- **Basis:** It is the temperature of air cooled to saturation (100% humidity) by evaporation, with heat supplied by the air parcel itself.
- **Human impact and threshold:** Wet-bulb temperatures above about 31°C–31.5°C can prevent the human body from cooling through sweating and increase mortality risk.
- **Measurement:** It is measured using a thermometer covered with a wet cloth, where evaporation cools the reading below dry temperature.

Global Initiative on the Taking of Migratory Species (GTI)

News: To address the illegal and unsustainable taking of wildlife, the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) officially launches the Global Initiative on the Taking of

Migratory Species (GTI) during a special event here at its 15th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP15).

About Global Initiative on the Taking of Migratory Species (GTI)



Source – SOU News

- It is a collaborative global effort under Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) to address the drivers of illegal and unsustainable taking.
- **Launched at:** It is launched in March, 2026 during the 15th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) in Campo Grande, Brazil.
- **Aim:** The GTI aims to provide coordinated support to CMS parties and fill longstanding gaps in global conservation efforts, and is expected to equip countries with the tools, partnerships and knowledge required to safeguard migratory species from this growing threat.
- **Objectives and focus areas:** It will focus on four key areas of work –
 - Improve data and monitoring
 - Strengthen legal and policy frameworks
 - Enhance community engagement
 - Raise awareness.
- **Meaning of Illegal and/or Unsustainable Taking:** Illegal and/or unsustainable taking refers to the removal of wild animals from nature in ways that are prohibited under the Convention and/or exceed the level of taking that can be sustained by species populations.

- Taking for domestic motivations can include hunting, fishing, trapping, or capturing migratory species for food, domestic sale, sport, medicine, rituals, or retaliation in human-wildlife conflict.
- This form of taking is a major direct driver of biodiversity loss globally.
- **Launching partners:** The initiative is being launched together with partner organizations whose work is directly relevant to addressing these challenges – the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), BirdLife International, the Global Initiative to End Wildlife Crime, Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) and TRAFFIC etc.
 - The Governments of Uzbekistan, the United Kingdom, and France are among the CMS Parties participating in this new initiative and provided financial support.

Partnership for Indo-Pacific Industrial Resilience (PIPIR)

News: The U.S.-led Partnership for Indo-Pacific Industrial Resilience (PIPIR) has agreed to assess funding for a new ammunition assembly and production line in the Philippines.

About Partnership for Indo-Pacific Industrial Resilience (PIPIR)



Source – US Defence News

- It is a multilateral initiative aimed at strengthening supply chains and industrial resilience in the Indo-Pacific region.
- **Lunched in:** It was launched in May 2024.
 - It is launched under the framework of the [Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity \(IPEF\)](#).

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- Objectives
 - Reduce over-dependence on a single country for critical goods.
 - Promote trusted and transparent supply chains.
 - Strengthen industrial cooperation and crisis response mechanisms.
 - Encourage investment and capacity building in partner countries.
- It is creating a trusted ecosystem of information exchange, technical cooperation, supply chain resilience, and co-production and co-sustainment
- Member countries: It comprises of 16 Indo-Pacific and Euro-Atlantic partners. The countries are –
 - United States, Australia, Japan, Republic of Korea, Philippines, Singapore, New Zealand, Thailand.
 - Canada, Germany, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, United Kingdom.
 - Taiwan participates in an advisory
 - India is not a formal member but is frequently referenced in US statements for potential bilateral or project-based cooperation.

RBI's Payments Vision 2028

News: The Reserve Bank of India released Payments Vision 2028 outlining new initiatives to strengthen and expand India's digital payment ecosystem.

About RBI's Payments Vision 2028



Source – ET

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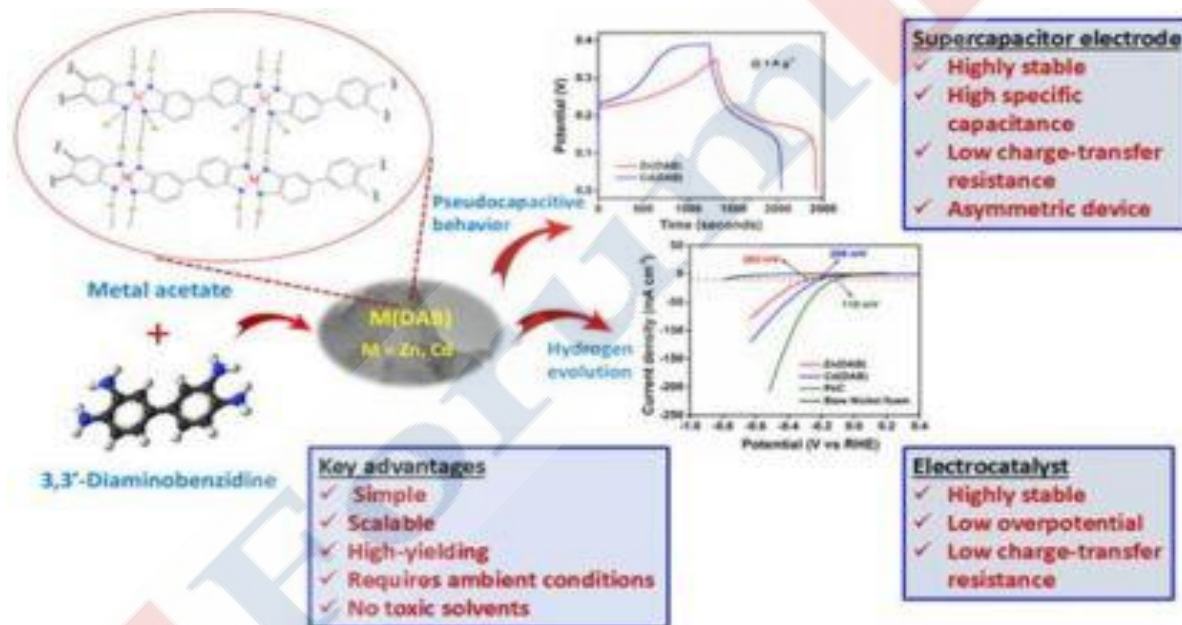
- It is a comprehensive policy roadmap guiding the evolution of India's payment systems towards a secure, interoperable, and resilient ecosystem, consisting of 15 specific initiatives.
- Theme: "Shaping India's Payment Frontier"
- Aim: The primary aim is to empower users while providing strong safeguards against fraud and improving efficiency in payment systems.
- Duration: The Vision document charts a roadmap for the next three years, extending up to December 2028.
- Focus Area: It focuses on user empowerment, fraud prevention, cross-border payment efficiency, interoperability, and ease of doing business.
- Features
 - Switch On/Off Facility: It proposes extending the existing card-based facility to all digital payment modes, including domestic and international transactions, to provide users greater control and reduce fraud risks.
 - Payments Switching Service (PaSS): It introduces a centralised service to enable seamless migration of both incoming and outgoing payment instructions during bank switching or mergers.
 - Centralised Payment Control: It allows customers to view all payment flows linked to their accounts and initiate full or partial switching with proper authorisation.
 - Shared Responsibility Framework: It proposes joint liability of issuer and beneficiary banks for unauthorised transactions, replacing the earlier framework where liability was only on the issuer.
 - Strengthened Fraud Safeguards: It encourages banks to adopt robust fraud detection systems and improve coordination for timely intervention.
 - TReDS (Trade Receivables Discounting System) Interoperability and Expansion: It aims to integrate platforms, introduce factoring with recourse, and enable receivables discounting for export MSMEs to improve financing access.
 - Cheque System Review: It plans a comprehensive review of cheque design and security features to enhance uniformity and prevent fraud.
 - Electronic Cheques: It explores introducing electronic cheques to combine the reliability of paper instruments with digital efficiency.

- Cross-Border Payment Efficiency: It focuses on improving cross-border payment frameworks and simplifying authorisation processes.
- Ease of Doing Business: It promotes smoother payment processes and supports a more efficient financial ecosystem.
- Significance: It strengthens India's position as a global leader in digital payments while enhancing security, efficiency, and accessibility of the ecosystem.

Coordination Polymers—Zn(DAB) and Cd(DAB)

News: Indian scientists developed coordination polymers Zn(DAB) and Cd(DAB) showing strong performance in energy storage and green hydrogen production.

About Coordination Polymers - Zn(DAB) and Cd(DAB)



Source - PIB

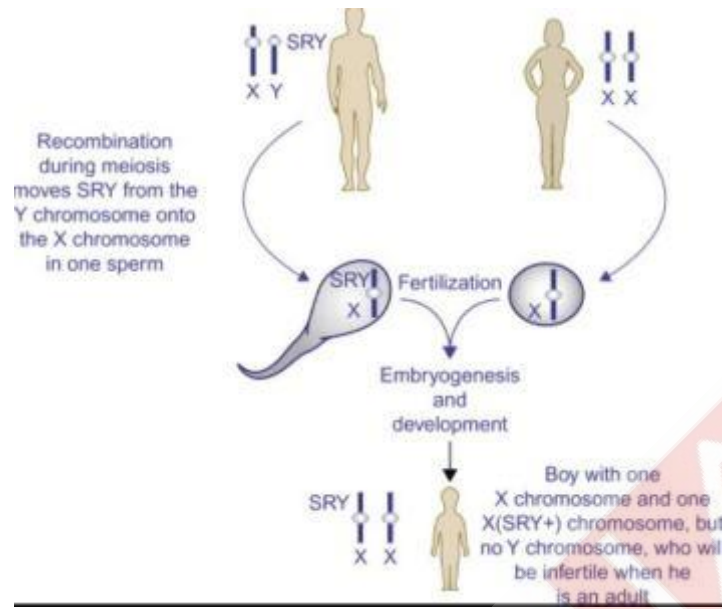
- Zn(DAB) and Cd(DAB) are coordination polymers made of zinc (Zn²⁺) or cadmium (Cd²⁺) metal ions and organic molecules of 3,3'-diaminobenzidine (DAB) naturally assemble to form layered frameworks with strong structures.
- Developed by: These materials were developed by scientists from the Centre for Nano and Soft Matter Sciences (CeNS) under the Department of Science and Technology, in collaboration with CHRIST (Deemed to be University), Bengaluru.

- **Synthesis:** They are synthesized using a simple room-temperature process without complex equipment or high temperature, which allows large-scale production.
- **Structure:** The materials consist of zinc (Zn^{2+}) or cadmium (Cd^{2+}) ions combined with organic DAB molecules to form strong layered frameworks.
- **Characteristics**
 - **Energy storage (Supercapacitors):** Both materials show strong energy storage performance when tested in a standard three-electrode setup, which is used to evaluate materials individually.
 - **Zn(DAB):** Achieved 4 farads per gram (F/g).
 - **Cd(DAB):** Achieved 6 farads per gram (F/g).
 - **Performance in practical devices:** Under device-like conditions using asymmetric supercapacitors, Zn(DAB) reached 785.3 farads per gram (F/g), while Cd(DAB) reached 428.5 farads per gram (F/g).
 - **Green hydrogen production:** Both materials act as electro-catalysts for electro-catalytic water splitting, which is used to produce hydrogen fuel.
 - **Low energy requirement (Overpotential):** They require low energy input, with 263 millivolts (mV) for Zn(DAB) and 209 millivolts (mV) for Cd(DAB).
 - **Durability and stability:** Both materials retained a significant amount of their energy capacity after 5000 charge-discharge cycles, showing strong long-term stability.
- **Significance:** These materials show dual functionality in energy storage and hydrogen production, making them useful for clean and accessible energy solutions.

SRY Gene Test Screening

News: The International Olympic Committee mandated SRY gene screening and banned transgender women and DSD athletes from female categories to ensure fairness and safety.

About SRY Gene Test Screening



Source – ResearchGate

- Sex-determining Region Y (SRY) gene test screening is a DNA-based test that detects the presence of the sex-determining region Y gene.
- The SRY gene is a segment of DNA that is almost always on the Y chromosome, signalling the presence of testes/testicles and initiating male sex development by the production of testosterone.
- Developed by: The SRY gene was first discovered in 1990 by Andrew Sinclair.
- Objective: The objective is to protect the female category in elite sports by ensuring that athletes do not have physiological advantages linked to male development.
- Function: The test works by collecting a saliva sample, analyzing DNA for the SRY gene.
- Duration: The analysis process typically takes about one week for the results to be issued and submitted to the relevant international sports body.
- Key features
 - Once-in-a-Lifetime Test: The screening is required only once because the SRY gene remains fixed throughout life.
 - Indicator of biological development: The SRY gene is treated as a reliable sign of whether an athlete has experienced or will experience male sex development.
 - Limited scope of application: It applies only to elite international athletes and not to grassroots or leisure sports.

- Exceptions for rare conditions: Athletes with Complete Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome (CAIS) and other rare XY DSD (Differences in Sex Development) that do not benefit from the anabolic and/or performance-enhancing effects of testosterone would be eligible to compete in female category.

Gruh Sugam Portal

News: The National Housing Bank (NHB) has launched the Gruh Sugam Portal to revolutionize housing finance accessibility.

About Gruh Sugam Portal



Figure 31. Source – PIB

discover the most suitable loan offers.

- It provides seamless digital integration between NHB and lending institutions to ensure smoother operations.
- It improves loan processing efficiency through a structured digital system.
- It includes a grievance redressal mechanism and consumer protection support. It offers an online chat facility for quick resolution of queries.

- It is a digital initiative to streamline the home loan process for Defence / Government personnel.
- Launched by: National Housing Bank (NHB)
- It promotes digital lending adoption and strengthens financial inclusion by improving access to housing loans.
- Features of the portal:
 - Who can apply: Defence Personnel, Members of Paramilitary Forces, Government Employees (State and Central) can apply for housing loans digitally through their respective administrative units.
 - It gives access to Unified Digital Marketplace that improves transparency and helps applicants

About National Housing Bank (NHB)

- It is the apex agency to promote cost effective housing finance system in India.
- Set up: It was set up by an Act of Parliament in 1987.
- Nodal Ministry: It operates under the Ministry of Finance.
- Objective: To promote a sound, healthy, viable and cost effective housing finance system to cater to all segments of the population and to integrate the housing finance system with the overall financial system.
- Head office: Its head office is at New Delhi.

India's First Port of Refuge (PoR)

News: Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd (APSEZ) has operationalised India's first Port of Refuge (PoR) to handle maritime emergencies and support vessels in distress.

About India's First Port of Refuge (PoR)



Figure 32. Source: NDTV

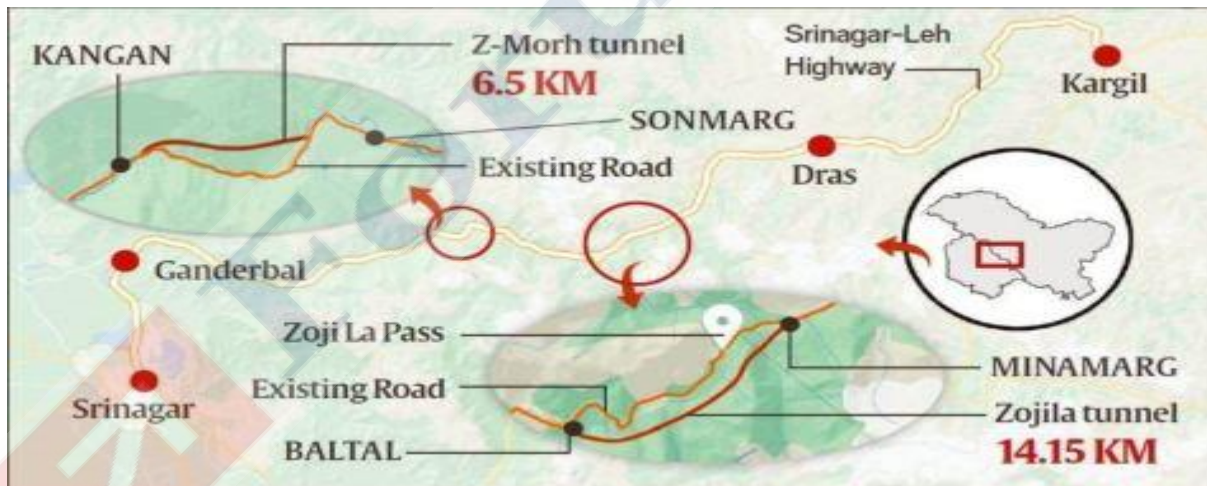
- India's first Port of Refuge (PoR) has been launched to create a structured and formal mechanism to handle maritime emergencies and vessels in distress.
 - PoR: A PoR is a designated location where ships can seek shelter to stabilise conditions, protect life, and limit environmental damage.
- Operationalised by: It is being operationalised by Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Ltd (APSEZ).
- It is backed by a tripartite memorandum of understanding (MoU) with SMIT Salvage, the salvage and emergency response division of Royal Boskalis Westminster NV (Boskalis) and the [Maritime Emergency Response Centre \(MERC\)](#), bringing global expertise and coordinated response capability.
 - It will also support vessels insured under the International Group of Protection and Indemnity (P&I) Clubs.

- It is aligned with international maritime conventions, enhancing safety, environmental protection and India's role in global shipping corridors.
- Features:
 - Two ports have been identified as PoR:
 - Dighi Port on the west coast, supporting traffic across the Arabian Sea and routes to the Persian Gulf.
 - Gopalpur Port on the east coast, serving vessels in the Bay of Bengal and routes towards the Malacca Strait, one of the world's busiest maritime trade corridors.
 - The facilities will provide salvage and wreck removal, firefighting, pollution containment and emergency coordination services through specialized equipment and trained response teams.

Zojila Pass

News: An avalanche at Zojila Pass on March 28, 2026 caused seven deaths, raising concerns over traffic regulation and safety measures.

About Zojila Pass



Source - IE

- Zojila Pass is a high mountain pass in Ladakh, known as the "Mountain Pass of Blizzards."
- Location: It is situated at about 3,580 m on the Srinagar-Leh Highway.
 - It lies between Ganderbal district (Jammu and Kashmir) and Kargil district (Ladakh).
 - It lies in the Greater Himalayan Range.
- Connecting: It connects Sonmarg in Kashmir with Dras, Suru valleys, and further to Leh.

- It serves as the only surface link between Kashmir Valley and Ladakh.
- **Strategic importance:** It acts as a crucial supply route for Indian forces in sensitive areas like Siachen Glacier and LAC.
 - It supports transport of essential goods for Ladakh and maintains civilian life.
- **Climate:** It faces very harsh winters and heavy snowfall that disrupt mobility.
- **Geological sensitivity:** It is highly avalanche-prone and unstable due to melting snow.
- **Seasonal closure:** It remains closed for almost half of the year due to snow.
- **Historical significance**
 - **1947–48 Indo-Pak war:** It was a major battleground during the 1947–48 Indo-Pak war.
 - It was initially seized by Pakistan-backed forces in 1948.
 - **Operation Bison:** It was recaptured by the Indian Army on 1 November 1948 under Operation Bison using tanks.
- **Tunnels Passing Through Zojila Pass**
 - **The Zojila Tunnel:** It is a 14 km long tunnel under construction on the Srinagar–Leh highway.
 - It will reduce travel time across the pass from 3.5 hours to about 15 minutes.
 - It will be the longest bidirectional tunnel in Asia.
 - **Nilgrar Tunnels (1 & 2):** These tunnels are important components of the Zojila Tunnel Project in Jammu and Kashmir.
 - They are located on the Srinagar–Leh highway near Sonamarg and Baltal.
 - Nilgrar-1 is 435 m long and Nilgrar-2 is 1,950 m long.
 - They provide all-weather connectivity by bypassing snow-prone areas and ensuring year-round access.
 - **Z-Morh Tunnel (Sonamarg Tunnel):** It is a 5 km long two-lane tunnel between Gagangir and Sonamarg at an altitude of 8,650 feet.
 - It became fully operational in January 2025.

Jungle Cats (*Felis chaus*)

News: A new study published in Scientific Reports provides baseline data on jungle cat population, habitat preference, and conservation needs in India.

About Jungle Cats (*Felis chaus*)



Source – Wild Cat Family

- The jungle cat is a medium-sized wild cat found in diverse habitats across Asia.
- Scientific name: The scientific name of the jungle cat is *Felis chaus*.
- Naming: Its name comes from the Caucasus Mountains, where it was first discovered, and it is also called Swamp Cat or Reed Cat.
- Habitats: They inhabit grasslands, wetlands, and deserts, while avoiding dense forests and heavily modified landscapes, and preferring agro-pastoral and open habitats.
- Distribution : Jungle cats are found across Asia, including Egypt, southwest Asia, southeast Asia, Central Asia, and southern China.
 - In India : India supports large populations, with highest numbers in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Odisha across 21 States.
- Characteristics
 - Appearance: The jungle cat has a white muzzle, yellow irises, and large ears ending in black tufts.
 - It has long legs and faint stripes on its body, which give it a distinct look among small cats.
 - Adaptability: It can survive in areas with moderate human presence, but it avoids places with high population density and intense disturbance.
 - Diet: It is a carnivorous animal that mainly feeds on rodents.

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- It also eats lizards, frogs, snakes, and sometimes livestock depending on availability.
- **Social behaviour:** It is not nocturnal in nature and carries out most of its hunting activities during the early morning and late afternoon periods.
- **Ecological role:** Jungle cats help control rodent populations in agricultural areas, which reduces crop damage and supports farming systems in agro-pastoral landscapes.
- **Threats**
 - **Habitat fragmentation**
 - **Urbanisation, roads, poaching, stray dogs**
 - **Possible hybridisation with domestic cats**
- **Conservation status**
 - **IUCN Red List:** It is classified as Least Concern.
 - **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972:** It is listed under Schedule II.

CALM-Brain

News: CALM-Brain was launched on March 25, 2026 as India's first digital repository on psychiatric disorders to advance research, diagnosis, and treatment.

About CALM-Brain



Source – TH

- **CALM-Brain is a first-of-its-kind open-source digital repository on brain structure and function in psychiatric disorders.**

- **Developed by:** It has been developed by the National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS) and the National Centre for Biological Sciences (NCBS) – TIFR under the Rohini Nilekani Centre for Brain and Mind (CBM).
- **Objective:** The main objective is to identify biomarkers, understand disease progression, and study treatment responses for better clinical outcomes.
- **Features**
 - **Comprehensive data coverage:** The repository integrates clinical, neuro-imaging, behavioural, and genetic datasets.
 - It covers major disorders such as addiction, bipolar disorder, dementia, obsessive compulsive disorder, and schizophrenia.
 - **Large dataset base:** It includes data from over 2,000 individuals across 900 families.
 - This enables comparison between affected and unaffected individuals for better analysis.
 - **Biorepository linkage:** The repository is linked with a stem cell biobank.
 - This supports research on the biological basis and origins of psychiatric disorders.
 - **Open-source platform:** The database will be available as an open-source platform for clinicians and researchers.
 - It helps in studying disease onset, progression, and underlying biological changes.

Balirajgarh Site

News: The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has begun excavation at Bihar's historic Balirajgarh site, which is believed to be the gateway to ancient Mithila.

About Balirajgarh Site



Source: Bihar Tourism

- Balirajgarh site is an **archaeological site** located at **Madhubani district, Bihar**.
- It was **declared a site of national importance in 1938**.
- **Findings:** The site has shown evidence of a **fivefold cultural period- Northern Black Pottery Ware, Sunga, Kushana, Gupta, followed by Pala Period**.
 - **Other findings also** included **remains of a rampart in three different phases, structural remains of burnt bricks laid in mud mortar, and some other structures of residential building**.
 - Among the antiquities are **terracotta objects** like animal and human figurines, **beads, semiprecious stones beads, sealings, bone tools, copper objects, punch-marked coins, etc.**
 - The excavation also indicated a **massive brick fortification spanning approximately 176 acres**. According to some scholars, **the Balirajgarh fort was built by the last King of the Janaka Dynasty in Mithila**.
- **Historical and Cultural significance:** The local folklore identifies it as the **capital of the legendary King Bali**.
 - Some scholars also believe that it **served as a major administrative hub** of the **ancient Videha Kingdom**.

Persian Leopard

News: The Persian leopard is the last remaining Panthera species in Iran after the extinction of the Asiatic lion Panthera leo persica and the Caspian tiger Panthera tigris virgata.

About Persian Leopard



Source: Geographical Magazine

- The Persian leopard is also known as the **Anatolian or Caucasian leopard**.
- **Scientific name:** Panthera pardus tulliana
- **Habitat:** They are most commonly found in **mountainous regions** covered with forests, woodlands, and scrublands, with rocky outcrops and precipitous slopes.
- **Distribution:** They are a **subspecies** of leopard native to **Western and Central Asia**.
 - Historically, their range extended from **modern-day Turkey and the Caucasus across Iran into parts of Central Asia**.
 - Today, their distribution has **shrunk greatly and become fragmented**, with **over 70% of its original range lost**.
 - The **largest remaining population (about 500–700 individuals)** is found in **Iran**.
 - **Turkmenistan** has the **second-largest population**, with **up to 100 individuals** remaining.
 - They are currently present in countries across **Southwest and Central Asia, including Iran, Afghanistan, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Iraq (Kurdistan), Kazakhstan, Pakistan, Russia (North Caucasus), Turkiye, and Turkmenistan**.
- **Characteristics**
 - **Appearance:** They have **grayish, slightly reddish fur** with large rosettes on the flanks and back, smaller ones on the shoulder and upper legs, and **spots on the head and neck**.

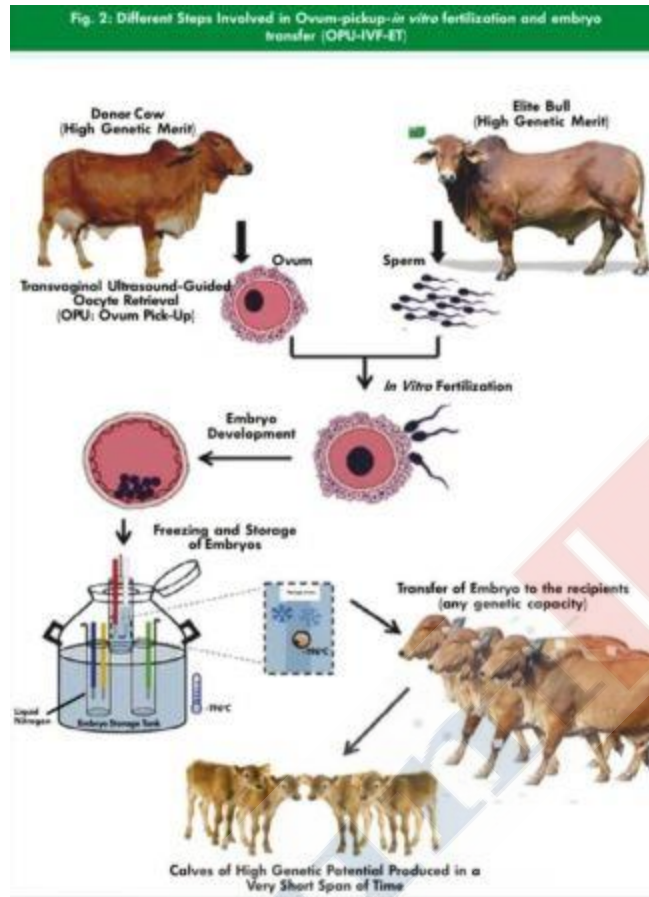
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- **Weight:** Males can weigh up to 90 kg, while the slenderer females weigh up to 60 kg.
- **Behaviour:** They are **wide-ranging predator**, with male individuals typically occupying large territories.
 - They are **solitary and mostly active at night**.
 - **Both sexes mark their territories** with scrapes on ridgetop trails and trees, scent markings, and droppings.
- **Diet:** They are **carnivores** and their diet varies depending on their habitat.
- **Ecological Role:** They play a very **important role in their native ecosystem** because they **control the numbers and health of the populations of their prey species**.
- **Threats**
 - Habitat fragmentation
 - Poaching
 - Loss of natural prey
 - Conflict with humans
- **Conservation status**
 - **IUCN Red List: Endangered**

OPU-IVF-ET technology and Cattle Breeds

News: The Indian Veterinary Research Institute, Bareilly, has successfully produced five healthy Sahiwal calves, including a female, through test-tube embryo transfer (OPU-IVF-ET) technology.

About OPU-IVF-ET technology



Source - ICAR

- The 'OPU-IVF-ET' technology stands for 'Ovum Pick-Up (OPU) and In Vitro Fertilization (IVF) and Embryo Transfer.
- Mechanism of technology
 - In this process, mature eggs are collected from animals using ultrasound-based techniques and fertilized with sperm in the lab.
 - The embryos can also be stored and used as needed.
 - These lab-developed embryos are then implanted into the uterus of surrogate cows or buffaloes, often those with lower milk yield, helping spread better genetic traits more widely.
 - These "test-tube" offspring are likely to produce milk similar to the original animal, helping improve breeds and increase overall milk production.
- Advantages: Under normal breeding, cows and buffaloes can become pregnant only once a year.

- However, with the OPU-IVF technique, around 10 calves can be produced from a buffalo and about 20 from a cow annually.

About OPU-IVF-ET Programme

- The OPU-IVF-ET programme was initiated during 2022-23.
- Launched by: ICAR-Indian Veterinary Research Institute, Izatnagar, Bareilly
- Aim: It is aimed at strengthening the genetic improvement of indigenous bovine breeds, targeting the three major dairy breeds.
- The breeds targeted are – Sahiwal, Murrah and Tharparkar.

About Cattle Breeds

- Sahiwal



Figure 33. Source – ICAR

The Sahiwal breed originates from the Sahiwal district in the Punjab region of Pakistan.

- It is found in the Punjab provinces of both Pakistan and India, particularly in Haryana, Punjab, and Rajasthan.
- This breed otherwise known as Lola (loose skin), Lambi Bar, Montgomery, Multani, Teli.
- The best indigenous dairy breed.
- The colour is reddish dun or pale red, sometimes flashed with white patches.
- Heavy breed with symmetrical body having loose skin.

- The average milk yield of this breed is between 1400 and 2500 kg per lactation.
- Age at first calving ranges from 37 to 48 months and the calving interval is 430 to 580 days.

Tharparkar



Source – ICAR

- Originated in Tharparkar district (Pakistan) of undivided India and also found in Rajasthan.
- Otherwise known as White Sindhi, Gray Sindhi and Thari.
- They are medium sized, compact and have lyre-shaped horn.
- Body colour is white or light grey.
- The bullocks are quite suitable for ploughing and casting and the cows yield 1800 to 2600 kg of milk per lactation.
- Age at first calving ranges from 38 to 42 months and inter calving period from 430 to 460 days.

Murrah



- It is the most important breed of buffaloes whose home is Rohtak, Hisar and Jind of Haryana and Nabha and Patiala districts of Punjab.
- Synonyms: Delhi, Kundi, Kali
- The colour is usually jet black with white markings on tail and face.

Figure 34. Source – ICAR

- The tightly curved horn is an important character of this breed.
- The body size is massive, neck and head are comparatively long.
- Head of females is short, fine and clear cut.
- Hips are broad and fore and hind quarters are drooping.
- The buffalo cows of this breed are one of the most efficient milk and butter fat producers in India.
- Butter fat content is 7% Average lactation yield is vary from 1500-2500 kg the average milk yield is 8 kg/day.
- While a few individual animals yield much as 19.1 kg/day.
- Age at first calving is 45-50 months and inter calving period is 450-500 days.

Myntdu River

News: The Liar Pamkam and Mynkrem tributaries of the Myntdu river have been severely damaged by rampant debris dumping during the construction of the Jowai bypass road.

About Myntdu River

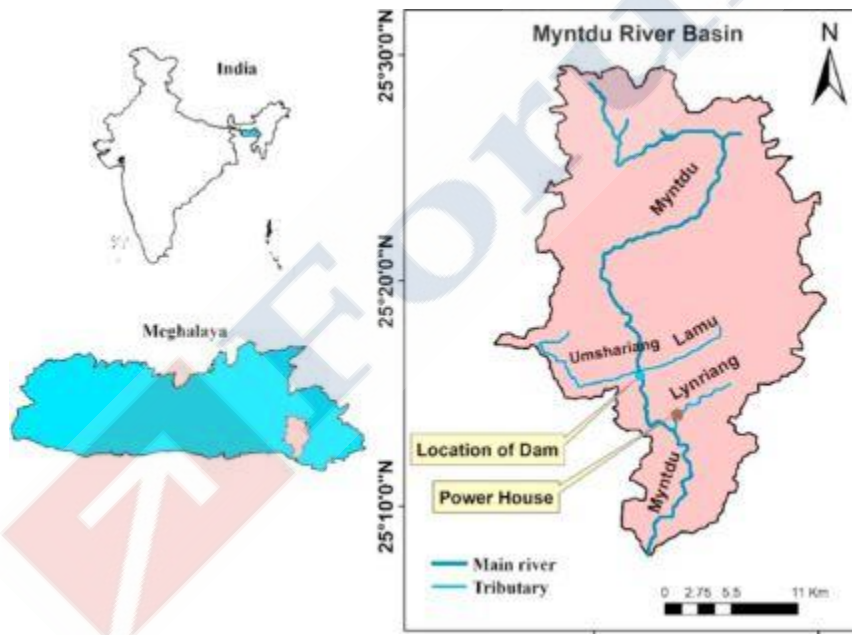


Figure 35. Source – ScienceDirect

- Origin: The Myntdu River originates in the Jaintia Hills District of Meghalaya, near the village of Mihmyntdu, approximately 2 km from the district headquarters of Jowai.
- This river encircles Jowai on three sides excluding the northern part of town.
- It is locally known as 'ka Tawiar ka Takan' (Our Guardian Angel) in the Pnar

dialect.

- It is often described as the guardian and protector of the inhabitants of Jowai region.

- **Course:** The river flows across Jowai, and then through Leshka, to reach the village Borghat, within Jaintia Hills, before finally entering Bangladesh, where it is locally called 'Shari' (or 'Hari').
 - It ultimately joins the Surma-Meghna river system.
- **Tributaries:** The chief tributaries of the Myntdu River are Umshariang, Lamu and Lynriang River.
 - The Umshariang coming from the west and Lamu coming from the east unite with the Myntdu River and form a tri-junction of three tributaries named as Leshka.
 - The Myntdu River after flowing southwards from Leshka joins its major tributary of the Lynriang River at a height of 335 m.
- **Geology:** The river traverses the denudational high and low hills of the Jaintia Hills, dominated by the Shella Formation of the Jaintia Group, which features alternating layers of sandstone and limestone.
- **Project:** The prominent Myntdu Leshka Hydroelectric Project (Stage I) is a 126 MW (3 × 42 MW) run-of-the-river dam located at Leshka.

e-Commerce Moratorium

News: The e-Commerce Moratorium is to be reconsidered for extension at the 14th Ministerial Conference in Yaounde, Cameroon.

About e-Commerce Moratorium



Source: WTO

- The **e-commerce moratorium** is a **global agreement among World Trade Organization members** which **bans customs duties being applied to electronic transmissions** such as digital downloads and streaming.
- **First adopted in:** It was **first adopted in 1998 at the WTO's Second Ministerial Conference in Geneva** as part of a **declaration to encourage early digital trade growth**.
- **Coverage:** It covers **cross-border transmissions** such as **software downloads, e-books, music and movie streaming and video games**.
- **Extension of moratorium:** **Originally**, it was planned to be **temporary**, but the tariff moratorium has been **renewed roughly every two years at each WTO ministerial conference**.
 - It was **most recently extended at the 13th Ministerial Conference (2024)**.
 - It is to be reconsidered at the 14th Ministerial Conference in Yaounde, Cameroon.
- **India's stand on extension:** India believes that its extension would **deprive it of tariff revenue to fund infrastructure and close the digital divide**.

Zambezi River and Kariba Dam

News: A 500MW Floating Solar Plant is being designed to be installed at Kariba Dam to boost power supply in Zimbabwe.

About Zambezi River and Kariba Dam



Figure 36. Source: koamnewsnow

About Zambezi River

- The Zambezi River is the **fourth-longest river in Africa** (after Nile, Congo, Niger).
- **Origin:** It starts off in a **shallow depression in Angola's southern highlands**, at the source of a river called the **Lungwebungu**.
- **Length:** It has a total length of **3,421 km**.
- **Drains into:** It drains into the **Indian Ocean** via a 100-km-wide delta.
- **Countries covered:** It flows through **Angola, Zambia, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, and Mozambique**.

- **Tributaries:** The main tributaries of the Zambezi River include the **Shire, Kafue, Luangwa, Kabompo, and Cuando (Kwando) rivers.**
- **Waterfalls:** The river is known for several notable waterfalls, including **Victoria Falls, one of the world's largest waterfalls,** and the **Chavuma Falls on the Zambia-Angola border.**
- **Famous Dams:** Cohara Bassa and **Kariba Dams**

About Kariba Dam

- **Location:** The Kariba dam is a **double curvature concrete arch dam** in the **Kariba gorge** of the **Zambezi river basin** between **Zambia and Zimbabwe.**
- **Size:** It stands about **128 m tall** and stretches around **617 m in length.**
- It was **constructed between 1956 and 1959.**
- It has **created Lake Kariba, the largest man-made lake in the world by reservoir storage capacity,** holding 181 cubic kilometers of water.
- It can **generate around 1,700 MW of electricity for Zambia and Zimbabwe.**
 - Each country has its **own power station,** one on the north bank and one on the south bank of the dam.

Extracellular RNA (exRNA)

News: In a study, scientists reported that extracellular RNA (exRNA) from bacteria can persist in disinfected drinking water.

About Extracellular RNA (exRNA)

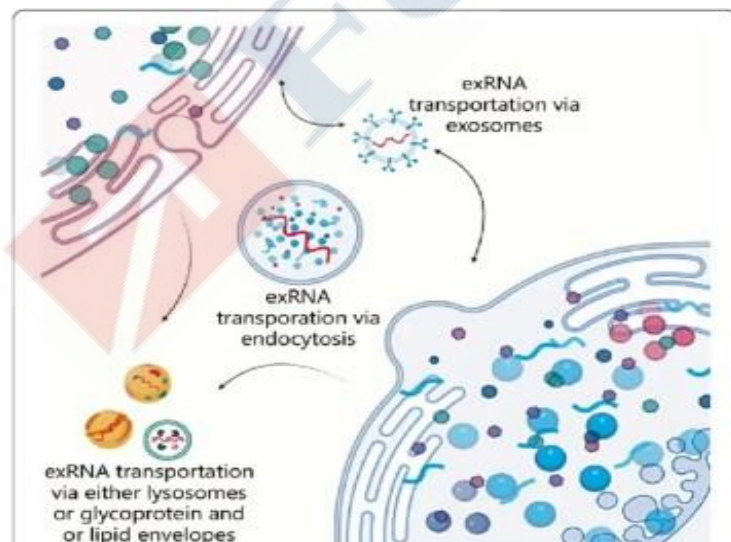


Figure 37. Source: ResearchGate

- Extracellular RNA (exRNA) are RNA that exists outside cells.
- They are found in body fluids such as blood, saliva, urine, and cerebrospinal fluid.
- They are heterogeneous populations including small (e.g., miRNA) and long non-coding RNAs and coding RNAs (e.g., mRNA).

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- They can exist in a free form or associate with carriers range from lipo- and ribo-proteins to extracellular vesicles such as exosomes in the extracellular fluids.
- To survive outside the cell, exRNA travels in its own molecular containers that prevent enzymes from breaking it down before it reaches its destination.
- **Functioning:** They are part of a sophisticated long-distance cell-to-cell communication system.
 - A cell releases RNA to deliver instructions to another cell elsewhere in the body, changing how it behaves or which genes it activates.
 - This process helps coordinate responses in the immune system, tissue repair, and development.
- **Applications:** The exRNAs have been widely studied as a biomarker for cancer and other diseases.