

Factly Weekly

Compilation

2026

**For UPSC CSE Prelims
Exam**

2nd Week

May 2026

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Geocell

News: CSIR-CRRI and BPCL received record recognition for constructing the first roadblock section using geocell made from end-of-life plastic waste.

About Geocell



Source – Vocal Media

- **Geocell:** It is a three-dimensional cellular confinement system used in geotechnical engineering to improve soil stability and load-bearing capacity.
- **Structure:**
 - **Cell Design:** Geocells consist of interconnected honeycomb-like cells made from geosynthetic materials such as high-density polyethylene (HDPE) or polyester.
 - **Filling Material:** These cells are expanded on site to form a mattress-like layer and are filled with soil, sand, aggregate, clay, gravel, concrete, or recycled materials for ground stabilization.
- **Working Principle:**
 - **Soil Reinforcement:** Once filled and compacted, the geocell layer integrates with the underlying soil to create a stable and reinforced structure with improved durability and structural integrity.

- **Performance Validation:** Extensive material characterization, performance evaluation, and validation studies were conducted to assess the field applicability of the developed geocell system for road applications.
- **Applications:**
 - **Pavement Load Support:** Geocells reinforce the soil in the subgrade-based interface or within the base course for road construction applications.
 - **Slope and Channel Protection:** Three-dimensional lateral confinement along with anchoring techniques ensures long-term stability of slopes, river channels, and embankments using vegetated topsoil, aggregate, or concrete surfacing.
 - **Earth Retention and Infrastructure:** Geocells are used for constructing steep vertical mechanically stabilized earth structures, airport runways, and urban green infrastructure.

MERCOSUR Grouping

News: Recently, India and Brazil agreed to significantly expand their existing trade agreement with the MERCOSUR regional trade bloc.

About MERCOSUR Grouping



Source - Britannica

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- **MERCOSUR:** MERCOSUR stands for Mercado Común del Sur, which means “Common Market of the South” in Spanish. It is a regional trade bloc of South American countries. **Established:** It was established in 1991 through the signing of the Treaty of Asunción.
- **Aim:** The grouping aims to ensure the free movement of goods, services, capital, and people, and it became a customs union in January 1995.

- **Members:**

- **Founding Members:** Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, and Uruguay were the founding members.
- **Later Members:** Bolivia and Venezuela joined MERCOSUR later, (Venezuela has remained suspended from the grouping since December, 2016.)
- **Associate Members:** Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Guyana, Peru, and Suriname are associate members and participate in activities and meetings of the bloc.
- **Headquarters:** The headquarters is located in Montevideo, Uruguay.

- **Key Aspects:**

- **Integrated Market:** MERCOSUR is the fourth largest integrated market after the European Union (EU), North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), and ASEAN.
- **International Cooperation:** The bloc has signed commercial, political, and cooperation agreements with several countries and organizations across all five continents.
- **Official Languages:** Spanish and Portuguese are the official working languages of the bloc, while Guarani was added as one of its languages in 2006.

- **Governance Structure:**

- **Composition:** The Common Market Council includes foreign and economic ministers of member states.
- **Decision-Making:** The Council takes decisions through consensus among member countries.
- **Rotating Presidency:** The presidency of the bloc rotates every six months among full members.
- **Critical Mineral Resources:** MERCOSUR countries possess critical minerals such as lithium, nickel, and rare earth elements that are important for Europe’s industrial and clean energy ambitions.

Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)

News: The Government has appointed Lieutenant General N S Raja Subramani as the next Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) after General Anil Chauhan completes his tenure on 30 May.

About Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)



Source – The Statesman

- The CDS is the highest-ranking four-star military officer and permanent Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee.
- Genesis: The idea of CDS was recommended in 2001 by the Group of Ministers after studying the Kargil Review Committee report of 1999.
- Creation: The post of CDS was created in 2019 on the recommendations of the committee headed by Lt General DB Shekatkar.
- First CDS: General Bipin Rawat became the first CDS in 2019.
- Precedence: The CDS is placed at 12th in the Table of Precedence.
- Appointed By: The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister appoints the CDS.
- Eligible Officers: Serving or retired Air Marshals, Air Chief Marshals, Army Commanders, Navy Commanders, and equivalent three-star and four-star officers of the tri-services can be appointed as CDS.

- **Age Condition:** Retired officers can be appointed as CDS only if they have not attained the age of 62 years on the date of appointment.
- **Tenure:** The CDS serves up to the age of 65 years and there is no fixed tenure limit.
- **Roles and Responsibilities:**
 - **DMA Head:** The CDS heads the Department of Military Affairs (DMA) and oversees tri-service policy, staffing, training, and reforms.
 - **Military Adviser:** The CDS acts as the principal military adviser to the Defence Minister on joint operational matters.
 - **Tri-Service Coordination:** The CDS promotes operational synergy and reduces inter-service friction among the three armed forces.
 - **Procurement Role:** The CDS prioritises inter-service procurement and capital acquisition proposals.
 - **Nuclear Role:** The CDS performs an advisory role in the Nuclear Command Authority.
 - **Tri-Agency Oversight:** The CDS supervises Cyber, Space, and Special Operations agencies.
 - **Command Reforms:** The CDS facilitates theatre command creation and restructuring of military commands.

Tactical Advanced Range Augmentation (TARA) Weapon

News: DRDO and the IAF successfully conducted the maiden flight-trial of the Tactical Advanced Range Augmentation (TARA) weapon off Odisha coast.



Source- NOA

About The Tactical Advanced Range Augmentation (TARA) Weapon

- TARA is India's first indigenous glide weapon system that converts unguided bombs into precision-guided weapons.
- Developed by: TARA has been designed and developed by the Research Centre Imarat (RCI), Hyderabad, along with other DRDO laboratories.
- Aim: The system aims to improve the lethality, accuracy, and stand-off strike capability of low-cost weapons against ground-based targets.
- Key Features:
 - Indigenous Glide System: TARA is India's first indigenous glide weapon system developed to provide gliding capability to conventional bombs.
 - Modular Design: The system uses a modular range-extension and precision-guidance kit that can be fitted onto existing High-Speed Low Drag (HSLD) and General Purpose (GP) bombs.
 - Precision Guidance: The weapon uses inertial navigation, GPS-assisted guidance, and electro-optical seekers to achieve high targeting accuracy.
 - Extended Strike Capability: TARA-equipped bombs can strike targets at ranges of 150–180 km when released from an altitude of around 5 km at speeds approaching Mach 0.8.
 - Multi-Platform Integration: The system can be integrated with Jaguar, Mirage-2000, Sukhoi Su-30MKI, and Tejas aircraft for stand-off strike capability.
 - Low-Cost Indigenous System: The glide weapon uses state-of-the-art low-cost systems and allows the IAF (Indian Air Force) to utilise existing bomb stockpiles instead of procuring entirely new missile inventories.

Attenboroughnculus Tau

News: Scientists at the Natural History Museum in London, United Kingdom, have discovered a new species of wasp in Chile and named it Attenboroughnculus tau.

About Attenboroughnculus Tau



Source: CNN

- It is a **tiny parasitic wasp** discovered in **Chile**.
- It was collected from **Chile's Valdivia Province in 1983**.
- It has been named after the famed British naturalist and broadcaster **Sir David Attenborough**.
- **Features:**
 - **Size:** It is a small wasp, **measuring about 3.5 millimetres**.
 - It has a **T-shaped marking on its abdomen** that inspired the species name, "**tau**."
 - It has a **unique combination of anatomical features** that make it different from already established genera.
 - It has a **strongly curved abdominal segment, toothlike structures on the ovipositor** (which they use to lay eggs), and **distinctive wing and leg morphology**.

National Technology Day

News: Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi extended greetings on National Technology Day and recalled the successful Pokhran nuclear tests of 1998.

About National Technology Day



Source – PIB

- **National Technology Day:** It is observed on May 11 every year to commemorate India's technological achievements and honour scientists and innovators.
- **Origin:** The day marks the successful nuclear tests conducted at Pokhran on May 11, 1998, which showcased India's scientific excellence and capabilities.
- **Aim:** The celebration aims to encourage innovation, promote indigenous technologies, support research, and honour innovators contributing to national development.
- **Organizing Body:** It is primarily organised by the Technology Development Board, a statutory body under the Department of Science and Technology, Ministry of Science and Technology, Government of India.
- **Theme 2026:** The theme for this year is 'Responsible Innovation for Inclusive Growth'.
- **Key Features:**
 - **Recognition of Scientists:** The day honours scientists and innovators who contributed to India's technological progress and national pride.
 - **Promotion of Indigenous Technology:** The celebrations highlighted cost-effective indigenous technologies that provide solutions suitable for Indian needs.

- **Technology Awards:** National Awards carrying Rs. 10 lakh and a trophy each are instituted by the Technology Development Board to recognise excellence in commercialization of indigenous technologies.
 - **Category A:** The award is given for successful commercialization of indigenous technology.
 - **Category B:** The award is presented for successful technology commercialization by MSMEs.
 - **Category C:** The award recognises excellence in technology start-ups.

RBI revises capital adequacy norms for banks

News: The Reserve Bank of India has revised guidelines related to the inclusion of quarterly profits in banks' core capital calculations, removing an earlier condition linked to provisioning for non-performing assets (NPAs).

RBI Revises Capital Adequacy Norms for Banks



Source: DD News

- The Reserve Bank of India has **revised the Capital Adequacy Norms for Banks**.
- **Aim:** This aimed at **simplifying the framework used to assess banks' financial strength and capital adequacy**.
- Under the revised guidelines, **the RBI has removed an earlier condition related to provisions for non-performing assets (NPAs) while calculating [Common Equity Tier 1 \(CET1\)](#) capital for the Capital to Risk Weighted Assets Ratio (CRAR)**.

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- **Note:** The Capital Adequacy Ratio (CAR), also known as the **Capital-to-Risk Weighted Assets Ratio (CRAR)**, is a key indicator of a bank's financial health. **It is the ratio of a bank's capital to its Risk-Weighted Assets (RWA).**
- A **higher CAR** means the bank has **more capital buffer** relative to the risk it is taking.
- **Earlier Rule:** Previously, **commercial banks except local area banks and regional rural banks** could include quarterly profits in CRAR calculations **only if the increase in NPA provisioning during any quarter of the previous financial year did not exceed 25%** of the average provisions made across all four quarters.
 - This condition was intended to ensure consistency in **provisioning practices and prevent banks** from overstating profits.
- **Changes made:** As per the **Reserve Bank of India (Commercial Banks – Prudential Norms on Capital Adequacy) Fifth Amendment Directions, 2026**, banks need to ensure that **quarterly financial statements are either fully audited or subjected to a limited review before profits** can be considered for regulatory capital purposes.
 - The RBI has also **prescribed a revised formula for determining “eligible profit”** that can be included in CET1 capital.
- **Impact on Banks:** The Amendment is likely:
 - To provide banks with **greater flexibility** in recognizing interim profits for capital adequacy purposes
 - To ensure that **dividend expectations** and **potential losses** are adequately **factored** into regulatory capital calculations.

Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)

News: India is chairing the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) and maritime security after the West Asia war remains a major agenda.

About Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)



Source - TH

- **Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA):** It is an inter-governmental organisation for regional cooperation in the Indian Ocean region.
- **Origin:** The vision of IORA originated during Nelson Mandela's 1995 visit to India for socio-economic cooperation and peaceful endeavours.
- **Established:** It was established in 1997.
- **Objective:** It aims to facilitate economic cooperation and expand mutually beneficial cooperation among member states.
- **Members:** IORA currently comprises 23 member states, including –
 - India, Australia, Bangladesh, Comoros, France, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Seychelles, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.
- **Dialogue Partners:** It has 12 official Dialogue Partners, including China, Egypt, European Union, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Türkiye, the Republic of Korea, the United Kingdom and the United States of America.
- **Headquarter:** The headquarters is located at Cyber City, Ebène, Mauritius.
- **Key Features:**

- **Six Priority Areas:** IORA works in six priority areas, namely Maritime Safety & Security, Trade & Investment Facilitation, Fisheries Management, Disaster Risk Management, Tourism & Cultural Exchanges, and Academic, Science & Technology.
- **Cross-Cutting Issues:** Blue Economy and Women's Economic Empowerment are recognised as important cross-cutting issues.
- **Institutional Structure:**
 - **Council of Ministers (COM):** The COM is the highest decision-making body of IORA and includes Foreign Ministers of all member states.
 - **Committee of Senior Officials (CSO):** The CSO works under the COM and reviews implementation, coordination, and priorities of cooperation programmes.
 - **TROIKA Mechanism:** TROIKA consists of the current Chair, Vice-Chair, and Previous Chair, and it keeps member states informed on important matters.
 - **IORA Chair and Secretariat:** The Chair coordinates meetings and agendas, while the Secretariat supports the functioning of the organisation from Mauritius.
- **India's Role:** India is the Chair of IORA for the 2025–2027 period and will host several important meetings before the 2027 summit.

National Panchayat Awards 2025

News: Recently, the government has announced the winners of the National Panchayat Awards 2025.

About National Panchayat Awards 2025



Source: news on air

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- The winners of the **National Panchayat Awards 2025** have been announced, with **42 Panchayats from across the country** being selected for the honours.
- **Conferred by:** It has been conferred by the **Ministry of Panchayati Raj**.
- **Frequency:** It is conferred **annually** to recognize and incentivise **best-performing Panchayats** and promote inclusive, participatory, and sustainable development in rural India.
- **Aim:** Its aim is to **encourage Panchayats to improve local governance, service delivery, and progress towards Sustainable Development Goals** through community-led initiatives, reinforcing Panchayats' role in translating national priorities towards Viksit Bharat 2047.
- The awards are being given under the **Incentivization of Panchayats scheme of the Rashtriya Gram Swaraj Abhiyan**.
- **Winner:** **Karnataka** has secured the **highest number of awards** with six Panchayats being selected, followed by **Andhra Pradesh** and **Odisha** with five awards each.
- **Categories:** The awards are being conferred under **two categories** –
 - **Deen Dayal Upadhyay Panchayat Satat Vikas Puraskar:**
 - It recognises outstanding Gram Panchayats for their performance across themes **linked to Sustainable Development Goals, including poverty-free livelihoods, health, water sufficiency, sanitation, women-friendly governance and social justice**.
 - A total of 34 Gram Panchayats from 17 States and Union Territories have been selected under this category.
 - **Nanaji Deshmukh Sarvottam Panchayat Satat Vikas Puraskar:**
 - It will be given to the best-performing Panchayats at the district, block and gram levels.
 - Eight Panchayats have been selected under this category, including **three district Panchayats, two block Panchayats and three Gram Panchayats**.
- **Prize:** The winning Panchayats **will receive financial incentives ranging from 50 lakh rupees to five crore rupees**, depending on the category and tier.

Spiny-tailed Lizards

News: A recent study examined seasonal nutrient intake, dietary adaptations, and foraging behaviour of Spiny-tailed Lizards in the Thar Desert.

About Spiny-tailed Lizards



Source - Mongabay

Introduction

- The Indian Spiny-tailed Lizard (*Saara hardwickii*) is a herbivorous, burrow-dwelling desert reptile adapted to harsh arid environments.
- It is locally known as sanda or sandho.

Habitat

The species inhabits arid and semi-arid sandy plains, rocky hillocks, and open grounds with grasses, shrubs, khejri, and ker trees.

Distribution

- The species is found in the Thar Desert of northwestern India and in parts of Pakistan and Afghanistan.
- In India, it is mainly restricted to the desert regions of northwest India.
- It is locally extinct in Uttar Pradesh, while its population is declining in Madhya Pradesh.

Characteristics

- **Diet:** The species mainly feeds on plants, but it also consumes insects during breeding periods to meet changing nutritional demands.
- **Burrow System:** The lizard lives in colonies with burrows having a single opening and spoon-shaped tunnels for safety and protection.
- **Seasonal Adaptation:** The species feeds actively after hibernation and stores additional fat before winter hibernation during September and October.

- **Territorial Behaviour:** Male lizards protect productive feeding patches and often chase intruding lizards despite living close to each other in colonies.
- **Ecological Role:** The species supports the desert ecosystem through seed dispersal and also serves as prey for several predators.

Threats

- **Illegal wildlife trade**
- **Poaching for meat and oil**
- **Habitat fragmentation**
- **Urbanisation**
- **Agricultural expansion**
- **Canal irrigation**
- **Industrial projects**
- **Climate change**

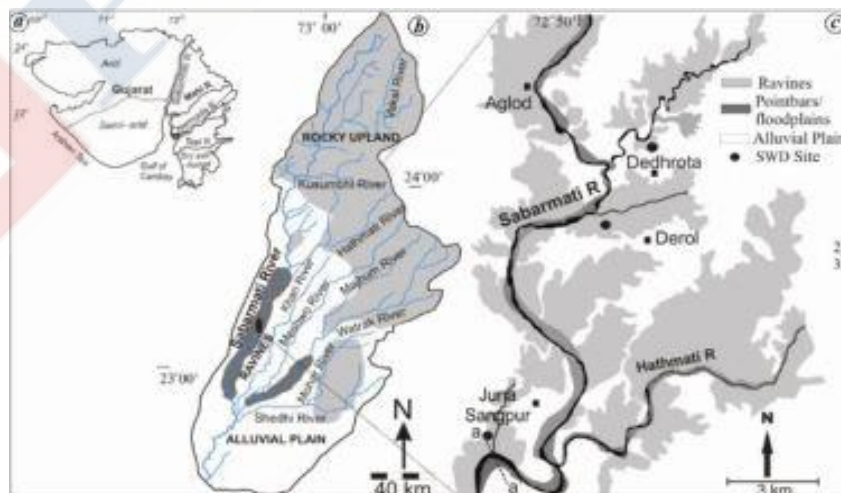
Conservation Status

- **IUCN Status:** Vulnerable
- **CITES Listing:** Appendix II
- **Schedule II of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**

Sabarmati River

News: The Sabarmati River in Ahmedabad remains dry after Vasna barrage repairs halted water flow for bridge and barrage construction works.

About Sabarmati River



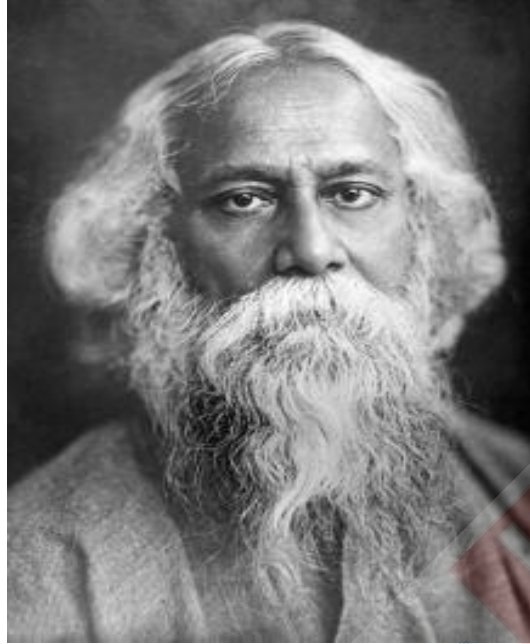
Source – ResearchGate

- It is a major west-flowing and monsoon-fed river flowing through Rajasthan and Gujarat.
- **Origin:** The river originates from the Aravalli hills near village Tepur in Udaipur district of Rajasthan.
- **Boundaries:** The basin is bounded by Aravalli hills on the north and north-east, Rann of Kutch on the west, and Gulf of Khambhat on the south.
- **Course:** The Sabarmati River flows in a south-west direction from Rajasthan into Gujarat, passes through the Dharoi gorge, flows across the plains, and later passes through Ahmedabad city.
- **Falls into:** The river finally falls into the Gulf of Khambhat in the Arabian Sea.
- **Length:** The total length of the river is 371 km, including 48 km in Rajasthan and 323 km in Gujarat.
- **Tributaries:** Left bank tributaries include Wakal, Harnav, Hathmati, and Watrak, while Sei is the major right bank tributary.
- **Ecological Zones:** It has three distinct ecological zones consisting of rocky uplands in Rajasthan, middle alluvial plains, and a lower estuarine zone near the Gulf of Khambhat.
- **Major Water Infrastructure Projects:** Important projects include Dharoi Dam, Vasna Barrage, Hathmati Dam, Harnav Dam, Guhai Dam, Watrak Dam, Meshvo Reservoir, and the planned Kalpasar Project.

Rabindranath Tagore

News: Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Suwendu Adhikari paid tributes on Rabindranath Tagore's 165th birth anniversary on Pochishe Boishakh.

About Rabindranath Tagore



Source - Britannica

Introduction

- **Rabindranath Tagore was a Bengali poet, writer, philosopher, composer, playwright, painter, and social reformer who transformed Indian literature and culture.**
- **Early Life and Education:**
 - **Birth:** Rabindranath Tagore was born on May 7, 1861, in Calcutta.
 - **Influence of Family:** His father, Debendranath Tagore, was a leading figure of the Brahmo Samaj.
 - **Education:** Tagore received education at home and later attended schools and University College London

Key Contributions to Art and Culture

- **Transformation of Bengali Literature:** Tagore introduced new prose and verse forms and used colloquial language in Bengali literature.
- **Contribution to Music:** His songs, including Jana Gana Mana and Amar Shonar Bangla, became the national anthems of India and Bangladesh.
- **Contribution as a Painter:** In the late 1920s, Tagore began painting and created more than 2,500 artworks based on nature, spirituality, and human emotions.
- **Rabindra Sangeet:** He composed more than 2,000 songs, now a distinct genre of music called Rabindra Sangeet, a cornerstone of Bengali culture.

Role in the Freedom Movement

- **Support for Nationalism:** Tagore opposed imperialism and supported the cause of Indian independence through literature and philosophy.
- **Criticism of Narrow Nationalism:** He criticized extreme nationalism and promoted universal human values and global peace.
- **Inspirational Songs:** His works like *Ekla Chalo Re* and *Where the Mind is Without Fear* inspired the freedom movement.
- **Protest Against Jallianwala Bagh Massacre:** In 1919, he renounced his knighthood in protest against the Jallianwala Bagh massacre.

Key Contributions to Literature

- **Nobel Prize Achievement:** Tagore became the first non-European to receive the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1913 for *Gitanjali*.
- **Major Literary Works:** His important literary works include *Gitanjali*, *Manasi*, *Sonar Tari*, *Gora*, *Ghare-Baire*, and many short stories.

Philosophy and Vision

- **Holistic Education:** Tagore believed education should support physical, emotional, and intellectual development together.
- **Educational Reform:** In 1901, he established an experimental school at Shantiniketan based on open-air and creative learning.
- **Global Outlook:** He founded Visva-Bharati University to combine Indian traditions with international values.
- **Universal Humanism:** Tagore promoted humanity, spirituality, cultural confidence, and harmony beyond boundaries of nationality and religion.

Titles

- He was honoured with titles such as *Gurudev*, *Kobiguru*, *Biswokobi*, and the *Bard of Bengal* for his literary and cultural contributions.

Death

- Rabindranath Tagore died on August 7, 1941, in Calcutta.

'One Case One Data' and 'Su Sahay' chatbot

News: Supreme Court launched 'One Case One Data' Initiative and 'Su Sahay' chatbot to strengthen judicial data integration and improving public access to court services.

About 'One Case One Data' Initiative

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Source: The Law Advice

Introduction

- The 'One Case One Data' is a major digital initiative to integrate the judicial administration at every level.
- Aim: It aimed at strengthening judicial data integration and improving public access to court services across the country.

Features

- It will integrate multi-level information from all the high courts, district courts and taluka courts into a unified system.
- The new module would automate data retrieval from the databases of concerned courts and facilitate swift online verification of case-related information.
- Reciprocal access to case information would also be provided to High Courts and government departments whenever required.

Impacts

- The initiative is expected to streamline case management by creating a more comprehensive and interconnected digital database across the country's courts.
- It would also ensure data integrity, improve accuracy, and enhance transparency in the judicial system.

About 'Su Sahay' Chatbot

- It is an Artificial Intelligence-powered assistance chatbot integrated with the Supreme Court website to facilitate easier access to justice and court-related services for litigants.

- **Developed by:** It has been developed by the [National Informatics Centre \(NIC\)](#) in collaboration with the Supreme Court Registry.
- **It will provide a simple and convenient interface for citizens to seek front-end guidelines and guidance in accessing essential services of the Supreme Court.**

India's Successful test of Actively Cooled Full Scale Scramjet Combustor

News: Defence Research & Development Laboratory (DRDL) of DRDO has achieved a path-breaking milestone in the development of Hypersonic Missiles by successfully conducting an extensive long-duration test of its Actively Cooled Full Scale Scramjet Combustor.

About India's Successful test of Actively Cooled Full Scale Scramjet Combustor



Source: PIB

Introduction

- **Conducted by:** The Defence Research and Development Organisation successfully conducted a 1,200-second ground test of an actively cooled scramjet combustor in Hyderabad.
- The [scramjet engine](#) is designed to power [hypersonic cruise missiles](#) capable of travelling at speeds greater than Mach 5.
- **It successfully demonstrated active cooling technology that protects the engine from extreme heat generated during hypersonic flight.**
 - **Scientists achieved stable combustion inside the engine even when air flowed through it at supersonic speed.**

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- India also developed an indigenous liquid hydrocarbon endothermic fuel specially designed for hypersonic propulsion systems.
 - This advanced fuel helps cool the engine and improves ignition performance under extreme conditions.
- Researchers developed special ceramic thermal barrier coatings to withstand temperatures higher than the melting point of steel.
- The successful test validated both the scramjet combustor design and India's advanced hypersonic testing infrastructure.
- This achievement places India among the leading countries working on advanced hypersonic weapon technologies, alongside U.S.A, Russia, and China.

International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO)

News: Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS), the National Standards Body of India, organised the 35th Plenary and Working Groups meetings of the ISO TC 20 / SC 14 'Space Systems and Operations' subcommittee of International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) at New Delhi.

About International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO)

Introduction

- The International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) is an independent non-governmental international organisations that develops and publishes standards across industries to ensure safety, efficiency, and quality of products, services, and systems around the world.
- **Founding year:** It was founded in 1946.
- **Headquarters:** It is headquartered in Geneva.
- **Members:** It has over 172 member countries.
 - India is a member of ISO, represented by Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS).
- It has over 25,000 standards and brings experts from around the world together to agree on the best ways of making products and managing processes.
- **Scope:** It set standards to enhance quality of life by promoting ease, safety, and improvement across various sectors.
 - Their standardisations for compliance serve as benchmarks for best practices, helping organisations meet industry-specific requirements and international regulations.

Activities of ISO

- It develops and publishes international standards for products, materials, and processes.
- It creates standards for many fields such as healthcare, technology, agriculture, and engineering.
- It publishes technical reports, technical specifications, and guides.
- It helps improve the quality, safety, and efficiency of products and services.
- Its standards are used worldwide to ensure consistency and reliability.

About ISO/TC 20/SC 14

- It is a subcommittee of the ISO. It develops international standards for the entire lifecycle of space systems from design and production to launch, operations, and space-based services, ensuring safety, interoperability, and sustainability in global space activities.

About Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS)

- **Established:** It is the national standard body of India established under the BIS Act 2016.
- **Objective:** Its objective is to ensure harmonious development of the activities of standardization, marking and quality certification of goods.
- **Concerned ministry:** Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution.
- **Headquarters-** New Delhi, and its 5 regional Offices (ROs) are at Kolkata (Eastern), Chennai (Southern), Mumbai (Western), Chandigarh (Northern) and Delhi (Central).

Grand Slam

News: Italy's recent dominance in tennis has revived demands to recognise the Italian Open as a fifth Grand Slam tournament.

About Grand Slam



Source – U.S. Open

Introduction

- Grand Slam in tennis refers to winning all four major championships — Australia, France, Britain (Wimbledon) and the United States — in the same calendar season.
- Modern Meaning of Grand Slam: In the modern era, the term Grand Slam is also used to describe each of the four major tennis tournaments individually.

Four Grand Slam Tournaments

- The four Grand Slam tournaments are the Australian Open, French Open (Roland Garros), Wimbledon Championships and the US Open.
 - Australian Open:
 - Location: The Australian Open is held in Melbourne, Australia.
 - Surface: The tournament is played on hard courts.
 - Time of the Year: It is organised annually in January as the first Grand Slam of the year.
 - Organised By: The tournament is organised by Tennis Australia.
 - French Open (Roland Garros):
 - Location: The French Open is held in Paris, France.
 - Surface: It is played on clay courts.
 - Time of the Year: The tournament is organised annually from late May to early June.
 - Organised By: It is organised by the Fédération Française de Tennis (FFT).
 - Important Feature: It is the only Grand Slam played on clay courts and demands stamina, endurance and strategic play.

- **Wimbledon Championships:**
 - **Location:** Wimbledon is held in London, United Kingdom.
 - **Surface:** The matches are played on grass courts.
 - **Time of the Year:** It is held annually from late June to early July.
 - **Organised By:** The championship is organised by the All England Lawn Tennis Club (AELTC).
 - **Important Feature:** Wimbledon is the oldest tennis tournament and is famous for strict traditions and all-white attire.
- **US Open:**
 - **Location:** The US Open is held in New York City, USA.
 - **Surface:** It is played on hard courts using DecoTurf surface.
 - **Time of the Year:** The tournament is organised annually from late August to early September.
 - **Organised By:** It is organised by the United States Tennis Association (USTA).

Achievement of Grand Slam

- **The feat of winning all four major championships in a single calendar season has been achieved six times by five different players. These players are:**
 - **Don Budge (1938, United States)**
 - **Maureen Connolly (1953, United States)**
 - **Rod Laver (1962 and 1969, Australia)**
 - **Margaret Court (1970, Australia)**
 - **Steffi Graf (1988, Germany)**

National Florence Nightingale Awards 2026

News: The President of India, Smt Droupadi Murmu presented the National Florence Nightingale Awards for the year 2026 to the nursing personnel, on the occasion of International Nurses Day, at a function held at Rashtrapati Bhavan.

About National Florence Nightingale Awards 2026



Source: Florence Nightingale Awards

About

- The Florence Nightingale Awards are India's most prestigious recognition for exceptional nurses and healthcare professionals.
- Instituted by: The National Florence Nightingale Awards were instituted in 1973 by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India.
- Frequency: It is held annually on May 12th which is also celebrated as International Nurses Day and Florence Nightingale's birth anniversary.
- It recognise individuals who exemplify the spirit of Florence Nightingale through their selfless service, clinical excellence, and compassionate care.
- It brings together healthcare leaders, policymakers, and the nursing community to honour those who have gone above and beyond in their commitment to patient care and public health.
- Prizes: Each awardee received a certificate of merit, cash reward of Rs 1 lakh and a medal.

Forum of Regulators (FOR)

News: The Forum of Regulators (FOR) conducted its 100th meeting at Bharat Mandapam, New Delhi, completing its 21-year journey.

About Forum of Regulators (FOR)

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Source – PIB

Introduction

- **Forum of Regulators (FOR)** is a statutory platform that coordinates and improves regulatory practices in the power sector.
- **Establishment:** It was constituted in 2005 as per the Electricity Act, 2003.
- **Aim:** The Forum aims to improve coordination, harmonisation of regulations, consumer protection, and efficiency in the power sector.
- **Composition:**
 - It consists of the Chairperson of the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC) and Chairpersons of the State Electricity Regulatory Commissions (SERCs).
 - The Chairperson of CERC acts as the Chairperson of the Forum.
- **Headquarters:** It's headquarters is located at New Delhi.
- **Secretary:** The Secretary to the Central Commission shall be the ex-officio Secretary to the Forum.
- **Finances of the Forum:** The Central Commission may collect financial contributions from State Commissions for Forum activities and maintains separate accounts for these activities.
- **Meetings:** The Forum meets at least twice every year and frames its own business rules.
- **Annual Report:** The Forum prepares an annual report summarizing its activities and submits it to the Central Government.

Key Functions

- **Data Collection and Analysis:** The Forum analyses tariff orders and examines compliance with the Electricity Act, tariff policy, prudent costs, and subsidy accounting.
- **Subsidy Accounting:** The Forum prepares quarterly statements on subsidy demands, payments, and subsidy gaps for distribution licensees.
- **Renewable Purchase Compliance:** The Forum monitors renewable electricity purchase targets of distribution licensees, captive consumers, and open access consumers.
- **Regulatory Coordination:** The Forum promotes harmonisation of regulations, information sharing, research work, and consumer interest protection.

Binsar Wildlife Sanctuary

News: The forest department has started a scientific wildlife census in Binsar Wildlife Sanctuary to study wildlife population and movement patterns.

About Binsar Wildlife Sanctuary



Source - ResearchGate

Location

- Binsar Wildlife Sanctuary is located in the Central Himalayan region in the Almora district of the Kumaon region in Uttarakhand.

Specifications

- **Area:** The sanctuary spreads across about 47.59 sq km in the Kumaon region.
- **Topography:** The sanctuary has rugged ridges and deep gorges, while the altitude ranges from 900 metres to 2,500 metres.

- **Zero Point:** Zero Point or Jhandi Dhaar is the highest point of the sanctuary and offers panoramic views of Nanda Devi, Kedarnath, Trisul, Panchachuli and Shivling peaks.
- **Vegetation:** The sanctuary is dominated by dense oak and deodar forests along with rhododendrons that bloom ruby-red during spring.
- **Flora:** The sanctuary contains about 25 tree species and 24 bush species, which support rich Himalayan biodiversity.
- **Fauna:** The sanctuary is home to leopards, Himalayan gorals, musk deer, Sumatran serow, red foxes and wild boars.
- **Bird Diversity:** The sanctuary is an Important Bird Area with more than 200 bird species, including Himalayan Monal, Kalij pheasant, Koklass pheasant and Eurasian jay.

Significance

- **Historical Significance:**
 - Binsar served as the summer capital of the Chand rulers of Kumaon between the 11th and 18th centuries.
 - During the British period, Sir Henry Ramsay established administrative centres in the region.
- **Religious Significance:** Locals believe that Binsar was named after the Bineshwar Mahadev Temple, a 16th century temple dedicated to Lord Shiva.
- **Ecological Significance:** The sanctuary protects the fragile Himalayan ecosystem and provides habitat to several rare and threatened species.

Country Strategic Opportunities Programme (COSOP)

News: The Government of India, in partnership with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) launched a new eight-year Country Strategic Opportunities Programme (COSOP).
About Country Strategic Opportunities Programme (COSOP)



Source: PIB

About

- It is an initiative to empower rural communities, scaling proven development models, and strengthening grassroots institutions.
- Launched by: It has been launched by the Government of India, in partnership with the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).
- It was launched during the IFAD-India Partnership for Rural Prosperity event at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi.

Aim

- It aimed at enhancing rural incomes, strengthening resilience, and scaling sustainable livelihood opportunities across the country.
 - It also seeks to establish India as a global knowledge hub in rural development by sharing successful models of inclusive rural finance, cooperative governance, digital agriculture services, and climate-resilient value chains.
 - Through this initiative, India aims to strengthen partnerships and exchange best practices with countries across Africa, Southeast Asia, and Latin America.
- Duration: It is an eight-year programme for the period 2026-2033.

Features

- It is aligned with the Viksit Bharat@2047 vision and focuses on two major priorities:
 - Enhancing the social, economic and climate resilience of rural communities

- Strengthening knowledge systems to scale successful development models across India and other countries of the Global South.
- It places strong emphasis on strengthening grassroots institutions such as Self-Help Groups (SHGs), Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs), and cooperatives, which serve as key platforms connecting finance, technology, infrastructure, and markets.
- India's Partnership with IFAD:
 - IFAD and NABARD signed a strategic partnership agreement to further strengthen rural finance systems and support innovation in agricultural and allied sectors.
 - India's partnership with IFAD spans nearly five decades, with 35 rural development projects implemented across multiple states, supporting millions of rural households and contributing significantly to inclusive growth.

About International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD)

About

- The International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) is an international financial institution and a specialized agency of the United Nations.
- Establishment: It was established in 1977 and is one of the major outcomes of the 1974 World Food Conference.
- Headquarters: It is headquartered in Rome, Italy.
- Governing body: Member States govern through the Governing Council and the Executive Board. These two bodies make all major decisions, including policy, finance and membership.

Role

- It invests in rural people by empowering them to reduce poverty, increase food security, improve nutrition and strengthen resilience.
 - It provides low-interest loans and grants to developing countries to finance innovative agricultural and rural development programmes and projects.
- Coverage: It spans 4 regions and operates in 92 countries.
- Report: It brings out the Rural Development Report every year.

Membership

- Any country that is a member of the United Nations, its specialised agencies or the International Atomic Energy Agency can become an IFAD Member State.
- It has membership of 180 countries, categorised into three lists:

- Member States on List A are primarily high-income countries that contribute to IFAD's resources.
- Those on List B also contribute to IFAD's resources, with some eligible for IFAD financing and services.
- Those on List C are primarily developing countries that receive IFAD financing and services, and also contribute to IFAD resources.
- India is a founding member of the IFAD.

Sirhind Fateh Divas of Baba Banda Singh Bahadur Ji

News: Union Home Minister Shri Amit Shah extended greetings on the occasion of Baba Banda Singh Bahadur Ji's Sirhind Fateh Divas.

About Sirhind Fateh Divas of Baba Banda Singh Bahadur Ji



Source - PIB

- Sirhind Fateh Divas is observed annually to commemorate the victory of Baba Banda Singh Bahadur over Sirhind on May 14, 1710.
- Baba Banda Singh Bahadur Ji: He was a great Sikh warrior and commander who established the first independent Khalsa rule in Punjab .

- **Origins:** He was born as Lachman Dev in the Rajouri region of present-day Jammu & Kashmir and later became a disciple of Guru Gobind Singh.
- **Key Contributions:**
 - **Military Achievements:** He defeated the Mughals and liberated large parts of North India from oppressive Mughal rule.
 - On May 14, 1710, his forces captured Sirhind and ended the oppressive Mughal regime in the region.
 - **Support for Farmers:** He organized farmers against injustice and promoted more equitable access to resources.
 - **Land Reforms:** He abolished the Zamindari system and granted property rights directly to cultivators.
 - **Economic Measures:** He introduced Nanak Shahi coins as a symbol of Sikh sovereignty.
 - **Message of Courage and Faith:** He was captured by Mughal ruler Farrukhsiyar, but despite severe torture, he refused religious conversion and attained martyrdom at Mehrauli, Delhi.

Global Forest Goals Report 2026

News: The United Nations released the Global Forest Goals Report 2026 during the 21st session of the UN Forum on Forests.

About Global Forest Goals Report 2026



Source – UN

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- It is a UN assessment report on progress under the UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030.
- Released by: The report was released by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) and the UN Forum on Forests Secretariat.
 - UN Forum on Forests: It is an intergovernmental body established in 2000 that includes all UN member states and members of specialised agencies for promoting conservation, sustainable management, and development of all types of forests.
- Key Findings and Trends:
 - Global Forest Cover: Forests cover 4.14 billion hectares, which accounts for nearly 32 per cent of the world's land area and around 0.50 hectare per person.
 - Forest Distribution: Around 45 per cent of forests are located in tropical regions, followed by 28 per cent in boreal regions, 17 per cent in temperate regions, and 11 per cent in subtropical regions.
 - Concentration in Few Countries: Nearly 54 per cent of global forests are concentrated in five countries, including the Russian Federation, Brazil, Canada, the United States of America, and China.
 - Primary Forest Loss: The world lost nearly 16 million hectares of primary forests between 2015 and 2025, while South America recorded the largest decline.
 - Major Drivers of Degradation: Agricultural expansion, rising demand for fuelwood and charcoal, illegal trade, and weak governance continued to increase forest degradation.
 - Climate-linked Pressures: Droughts, heatwaves, wildfires, pests, and diseases accelerated forest degradation in many regions.
 - Restoration and Finance Gap: Although 91 countries pledged to restore 190 million hectares, only 44 million hectares were restored, while sustainable forest finance remained far below the required annual target.
- Recommendations: The report recommends stronger coordination, higher forest financing, deforestation-free supply chains, cleaner energy access, restoration of degraded lands, and stronger forest governance for sustainable management.

About UN Strategic Plan for Forests 2017-2030

- It is a global framework adopted by the UN General Assembly to promote sustainable forest management, stop deforestation, and reverse forest degradation through six voluntary Global Forest Goals and 26 targets to be achieved by 2030.
- Six Global Forest Goals (GFGs):
 - GFGs 1: It focuses on reversing forest loss through sustainable forest management and restoration.
 - GFGs 2: It aims to enhance forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits.
 - GFGs 3: It seeks to increase protected forests and sustainably managed forests worldwide.
 - GFGs 4: It focuses on mobilising financial resources for sustainable forest management.
 - GFGs 5: It aims to promote governance frameworks for sustainable forest management.
 - GFGs 6: It seeks to strengthen cooperation and coordination on forest-related issues.

Polyendocrine Metabolic Ovarian Syndrome (PMOS)

News: The Endocrine Society has renamed Polycystic Ovary Syndrome (PCOS) as Polyendocrine Metabolic Ovarian Syndrome (PMOS) through a global medical consensus.

About Polyendocrine Metabolic Ovarian Syndrome (PMOS)



Source – PMOS org

- **PMOS is a hormonal and metabolic disorder that affects endocrine functions, metabolism, ovulation and overall women's health.**
- **Key Aspects of PMOS:**
 - **Hormonal and Metabolic Disorder:** PMOS affects multiple hormone systems and is strongly linked with insulin resistance, obesity, diabetes risk and metabolic complications.
 - **Major Symptoms:** Common symptoms include irregular or absent periods, excess androgen hormones, acne, facial hair growth, weight gain, difficulty losing weight and fertility challenges.
 - **Broader Health Impact:** PMOS increases long-term risks of Type 2 diabetes, hypertension, heart disease, fatty liver disease, sleep disorders, depression and anxiety.

- **Reproductive and Psychological Effects:** The condition may lead to ovulatory dysfunction, infertility, pregnancy complications, anxiety, depression and poor quality of life.
- **Diagnosis Challenges:** Experts noted that PMOS is often underdiagnosed because symptoms vary widely and are frequently treated as cosmetic or lifestyle-related concerns.
- **Indian Scenario:** India is witnessing a rise in PMOS cases, especially among adolescents and young urban women, with studies showing prevalence ranging from 3.7% to over 22%.
- **New Name Signifies:**
 - **Earlier Name Was Misleading:** The earlier term “Polycystic Ovary Syndrome” mainly focused on ovarian cysts, even though many women with the condition do not actually develop ovarian cysts.
 - **New Name Reflect:** The new term “Polyendocrine Metabolic Ovarian Syndrome” was introduced to reflect the multisystem nature of the disorder, which affects hormone systems, metabolism, ovulation, reproductive health and long-term overall health.

Lavan Island

News: The United Arab Emirates secretly carried out military strikes on Lavan Island of Iran during the recent Middle East conflict.

About Lavan Island



Source: ScienceDirect

- **Location:** It is an Iranian island in the Persian Gulf, near the Strait of Hormuz.
- It is strategically located 18 km south of Bandar Mogham (Hormozgan Province) in the Persian Gulf.
- It is also known as the *Hidden Pearl Island*, which has long been home to pearl fishing.
- **Area:** It is 25 kilometres in length and 5 kilometres in width.
- **Climate:** It has hot and humid weather.
- **Rainfall:** The average annual rainfall on this island is about 114 millimetres.
- **Economy:** The main occupation of the people of Lavan port is working in the oil and fishing industry.
- **Strategic importance:** It is now one of the most important oil export terminals in Iran.
 - It is the operating base for three offshore fields of Iran, namely, Salman, Resalat and Reshadat.
 - **Infrastructure:** The Iranian Offshore Oil Company operates processing facilities, storage tanks, and a jetty on the island that handles crude oil exports. These facilities make the island an important hub for petroleum logistics and offshore oil operations.
 - Also, Salman Field, located 144 kilometres south of Lavan Island, has one of the largest offshore installations in the Persian Gulf.

Scheme for Promotion of Surface Coal/Lignite Gasification Projects

News: The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi has approved a Scheme for Promotion of Surface Coal/Lignite Gasification Projects.

About Scheme for Promotion of Surface Coal/Lignite Gasification Projects

Cabinet Approves

कोयला मंत्रालय
Ministry of Coal
भारत सरकार

Scheme for promotion of Surface Coal/Lignite
Gasification Projects

Key Features

- Total Outlay: **₹37,500 crore**
- Reducing dependence on imports of Key products like LNG, Urea, Ammonia and Methanol
- Advancing towards the target of 100 MT Coal Gasification by 2030
- Providing long-term policy certainty for investment

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Source: Ministry of Coal

- It is a scheme to promote coal and lignite gasification projects.
- It is a major step towards cleaner coal utilisation, energy security and import substitution.
- **Aim:** The scheme aims to accelerate the conversion of coal and lignite into synthesis gas, or syngas, which can be used for power generation, fertilisers, chemicals and other downstream industrial products.
- **Nodal ministry:** The Ministry of Coal is the nodal ministry implementing it.
- **Budget outlay:** It has a budget outlay of Rs. 37,500 crore.
- **Features:**
 - **Incentivisation:** It is to incentivise new surface coal/lignite gasification projects for the production of syngas and its downstream products, targeting gasification of approximately 75 million tonnes of coal/lignite.
 - **Financial incentive provided at a maximum of 20% of the cost of Plant and Machinery.**

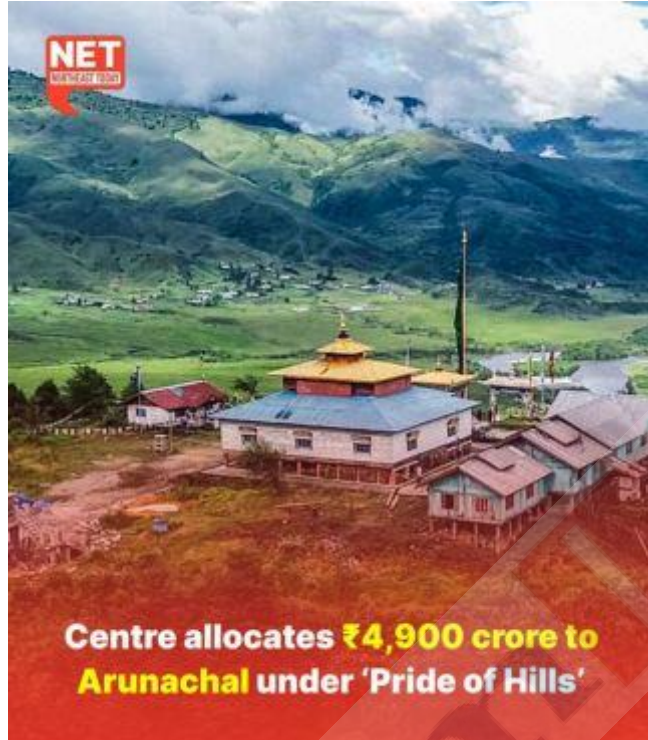
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- Disbursement method: Incentive disbursed in four equal instalments, linked to project milestones.
- Capped financing: Financial incentive for:
 - Any single project capped at Rs. 5,000 crore
 - For any single product (except Synthetic Natural Gas and Urea) is capped at Rs. 9,000 crore
 - Any single entity group is capped at Rs. 12,000 crore across all projects.
- Incentive under this Scheme is in addition to, and does not restrict access to, incentives under the commercial coal mining regime or schemes of other Central/State Government ministries.
- Selection: Selection through a transparent and competitive bidding process, with an evaluation framework benchmarking project cost, coal input, and syngas output.
- Technology adoption: The Scheme is technology-agnostic and encourages the adoption of indigenous technologies.

Pride of Hills: Special Development Assistance for Hill States Scheme

News: The Centre allocated ₹4,900 crore to Arunachal Pradesh under the newly launched “Pride of Hills” initiative for 2026-27.

About Pride of Hills: Special Development Assistance for Hill States” Scheme



Source – NET

- **“Pride of Hills: Special Development Assistance for Hill States”** is a special initiative launched under the Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI) framework for 2026-27 to address infrastructure and development gaps in hill and Himalayan states.
- **Total Outlay:** The scheme has a total outlay of ₹25,000 crore for nine hill and Himalayan states.
- **Objective:** The scheme aims to address structural and geographical disadvantages such as difficult terrain, weak connectivity, sparse population, high infrastructure costs, weaker fiscal indicators, and limited revenue-generation capacity.
- **Beneficiary States:** The nine beneficiary states are Arunachal Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Uttarakhand, Tripura, Manipur, Meghalaya, Sikkim, and Mizoram.
- **Permissible Utilization of Funds:** The funds allocated under this scheme may be utilized by the States for the following purposes:
 - **Repayment of Loans:** Repayment of the principal amount of loans availed from the Government of India, banks, and other agencies, including loans for Externally Aided Projects (EAPs).

- Funds released under this part will not impact the Gross Borrowing Ceiling of the State as determined under the Borrowing Guidelines for 2026-27.
- State Share of Projects and Schemes: Meeting the State share of Centrally Sponsored Schemes (CSS) and the State share of infrastructure projects of Central agencies such as Railways, highways, etc.
- Counterpart funding for Externally Aided Projects (EAPs)

About Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI) Framework

- **Ministry Involved:** The SASCI framework is implemented by the Department of Expenditure under the Ministry of Finance.
- **Financial Support:** The SASCI framework provides 50-year interest-free loans to States and Union Territories for capital investment projects.
- **Objective:** The framework aims to increase capital expenditure, improve productive capacity, and support economic growth through infrastructure development.

Peacock Tarantula

News: A conservation survey of the critically endangered Peacock Tarantula has been launched in the Nagarjunasagar-Srisailem Tiger Reserve.

About Peacock Tarantula



Source - Mongabay

- **The Peacock Tarantula (Poecilotheria metallica) is a rare arboreal spider famous for its metallic blue colour and ornamental patterns.**

- **Taxonomy:** The species belongs to the Theraphosidae family and is classified as a tarantula species under the genus Poecilotheria.
- **Alternate names:** The species is also known as the Gooty Ornamental Sapphire Tarantula and Gooty Sapphire Ornamental Tarantula.
- **Habitat:** The species prefers dry deciduous forests with large mature trees and lives in tree holes, bark crevices and elevated surfaces.
- **Distribution:** The species is endemic to India.
 - It is mainly found in the Nandyal and Giddalur forest divisions and parts of the Seshachalam hills in Andhra Pradesh.

Characteristics

- **Appearance:** The spider has a bright metallic blue body with yellow and white markings forming geometric patterns on its legs and abdomen.
- **Nature:** The species is purely arboreal and lives mainly on trees across hill slopes, valleys, and plains.
- **Behaviour:** It is a nocturnal and fast-moving predator that captures insects and small animals using speed and venom instead of webs.
- **Size and Lifespan:** It can grow up to 6–8 inches in size, while females can live up to 15 years.

Threats

- **Illegal pet trade**
- **Logging**
- **Deforestation**
- **Habitat loss**

Conservation Status

- **IUCN Red List: Critically Endangered**

Common Criteria Development Board (CCDB)

News: India was nominated to serve as the Chair of the Common Criteria Development Board from April 2026 to April 2028.

About Common Criteria Development Board (CCDB)



Source - CC Lab

- **The Common Criteria Development Board is the technical body that manages international standards for IT security evaluation under the Common Criteria framework.**
- **Operates under:** The CCDB operates under the Common Criteria Recognition Arrangement (CCRA).
- **Aim:** The main aim of the CCDB is to develop and maintain the Common Criteria (CC) and the Common Methodology for IT Security Evaluation (CEM) for secure IT products.
- **Key Aspects of CCDB**
 - **Technical Core of CCRA:** The CCDB manages the international work programme for the Common Criteria (CC) and the Common Methodology for Information Technology Security Evaluation (CEM).
 - **Focus on Security Standards:** The board develops technical standards and evaluation criteria for secure global IT products.
 - **Portal Management:** It maintains the Common Criteria Portal, which is the authoritative global repository for certified secure IT products.
 - **Global Security Evaluation:** The board ensures that IT security standards remain robust, consistent, and capable of addressing emerging cyber threats.
- **India's Status:** India has been a Certificate Authorizing Nation since 2013.
 - **India participates through the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).**
 - **The Standardisation Testing and Quality Certification Directorate (STQC) acts as India's official Certification Body.**

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About Common Criteria Recognition Arrangement (CCRA)

- **International Framework:** The CCRA is an international arrangement for mutual recognition of IT security certificates among member countries.
- **Mutual Recognition System:** Certificates issued by member countries are accepted without re-certification, which supports seamless international trade in secure IT products.
- **Member Countries:** The CCRA includes 20 certificate-authorizing nations and 18 certificate-consuming nations.

Agalega Islands

News: Agalega Island is becoming a key part of India's strategy to strengthen its naval presence and monitor important trade routes in the Indian Ocean.

About Agalega Islands



Source: IE

- The Agalega Islands are two islands situated in the Indian Ocean.
- It is surrounded by the Seychelles to the north, the Maldives, the US base Diego Garcia and Chagos Island to the east, and Madagascar, the Mozambique Channel, and the entire eastern coast of Africa to the west.
- It lies approximately 1,050 km north of Mauritius and about 3,400 km southwest of India's southern tip.
- **Composition:** The archipelago comprises two low-lying coral islands –

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- North Island, the main inhabited island, and South Island.
- North Agalega houses the capital Vingt Cinq and the island's airstrip and Ste Rita is the only village in South Agalega.
- The two islands are connected by a natural sandbank that can be crossed on foot during low tide.
- Total area: It has a total area of 26 sq. km.
- Administration: Administratively, it is part of the territories and dependencies of the Republic of Mauritius.
- Population: The islands are home to a small population of around 300 residents, whose daily lives revolve around fishing, coconut cultivation.
- Flora and fauna: The endemic plant is the coconut and Agalega Island Day Gecko is a native species.
- **Strategic significance for India:** This chain of islands is emerging as one of India's biggest strategic projects in the Indian Ocean region.
 - The infrastructure developed there over the past few years is giving India a stronger military and maritime position across a large stretch of the ocean.
 - Strategically, it also gives India direct access to monitoring activity around the Mozambique Channel, an important sea route through which a large volume of trade moves between Asia, Europe and Africa.

About Mozambique Channel



Source: World Atlas

- The Mozambique Channel is a part of the Indian Ocean in the west.
- It lies between Mozambique and Madagascar.
- The channel separates Madagascar from mainland Africa.
- It shares land borders with five countries, namely Tanzania, Madagascar, Comoros, Mozambique, and France (through its territories).
- Length: It is about 1,600 km long.
- It is an important sea route through which a large volume of trade moves between Asia, Europe and Africa.

IP Catalyst and Digital Platform

News: The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has launched the IP Catalyst initiative and its accompanying digital platform.

About IP Catalyst and Digital Platform



Source: PIB

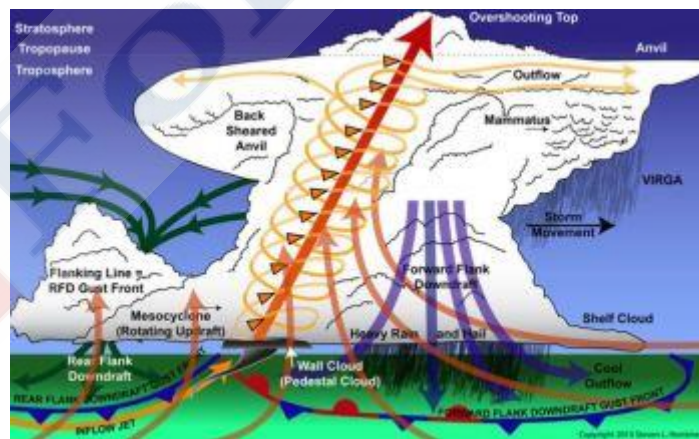
- **Launched by:** The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has launched the IP Catalyst initiative and a digital platform to accelerate intellectual property commercialization and strengthen India's innovation ecosystem in Electronics and IT.
- **Aim:** It aims to enable a comprehensive digital ecosystem supporting the complete innovation lifecycle from research and IP creation to technology transfer, commercialization, and market deployment.
 - It also aims to bridge the gap between publicly funded R&D and industry adoption.
- **Implemented by:** It is being implemented by CDAC Pune and supported by the MeitY.
- **Key features:**
 - It offers financial support for intellectual property (IP) filing to organisations under the MeitY and its grantee institutions.
 - It also provides assistance for international patent filing to startups and Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs).
 - It enables unified digital access to technology commercialization and IP support services, making it easier for innovators to manage and protect their intellectual property.
 - It offers prior-art search facilities and expert IP advisory services.
 - It supports technology readiness and maturity assessments to evaluate how close a technology is to commercialization.

- It also provides IP valuation and commercialization support, helping innovators understand the market value of their technologies and identify commercialization opportunities.
- It further facilitates technology transfer and licensing processes.
- It promotes collaboration among industry, academia, and startups to strengthen the innovation ecosystem and accelerate research translation into market-ready solutions.
- **About Digital Platform**
 - The digital platform, cipie.in, will function as a unified online gateway for IP and commercialization support services.
 - It will also serve as a national digital repository of technologies developed through MeitY-supported R&D initiatives.
 - This will enable startups, MSMEs, and the industry to identify deployable indigenous technologies and explore collaboration opportunities.

Thunderstorms

News: At least 111 people died after a powerful storm and heavy rain hit several districts of Uttar Pradesh recently.

About Thunderstorms



Source - Weatherdotgov

- Thunderstorms are common weather events that form when warm moist air rises, cools, and condenses into towering cumulonimbus clouds.

- **Formation:** According to the National Weather Service, three conditions must exist together for a thunderstorm to develop:
 - **Moisture:** Moisture is necessary for cloud formation and heavy precipitation.
 - **Instability:** Warm air near the surface keeps rising rapidly because it remains warmer than the surrounding upper atmosphere.
 - **Lift:** A lifting mechanism such as solar heating, mountains, or cold and warm fronts pushes the air upward.
- **Life Cycle:** A thunderstorm generally passes through three stages and usually lasts from 30 minutes to one hour.
 - **Developing Stage:** Warm moist air rises continuously and forms towering cumulus clouds.
 - Strong updrafts dominate this stage, but rainfall is very limited.
 - Occasional lightning flashes may occur.
 - **Mature Stage:** Water droplets become too heavy for the updrafts to hold, and precipitation begins to fall.
 - Cool downdrafts spread along the ground and form gust fronts.
 - This stage is the most dangerous because it can produce heavy rain, hail, lightning, strong winds, tornadoes, and frequent thunder.
 - **Dissipating Stage:** The cool downdraft weakens the rising warm air and cuts off the storm's supply of moisture.
 - Rainfall gradually decreases, although lightning may still remain dangerous until the storm completely ends.
- **Structural Classification:** Thunderstorms are classified into four main types based on their structure, intensity, and duration.
 - **Single-Cell:** These are small and short-lived storms that generally last for 20–30 minutes and mainly produce light to moderate rainfall.
 - **Multi-Cell:** These storms contain several storm cells at different stages of development, allowing them to continue for many hours with heavy rain, gusty winds, and occasional hail.

- **Squall Line:** These storms form long organized lines, usually along cold fronts, and produce strong winds, heavy rainfall, and sometimes tornadoes over large areas.
- **Supercell:** These are the most severe thunderstorms with a rotating updraft called a mesocyclone, capable of producing large hail, destructive winds, flash floods, and tornadoes.

Ginger

News: The Centre launched the ₹189.79-crore Mizoram Ginger Mission to promote GI-certified pharma-grade ginger through processing, branding and exports.

About Ginger



Source - The Better India

- **Ginger is an herbaceous perennial plant belonging to the Zingiberaceae family, which also includes turmeric and cardamom.**
- **Economic Part:** The rhizome of ginger is the main economic part.
- **Key Components:**
 - **Gingerol:** It is the most abundant compound in fresh ginger, especially [6]-gingerol, and acts as a strong anti-inflammatory and antioxidant agent.
 - **Shogaol:** It is formed when ginger is dried or heated, and it is more pungent with enhanced therapeutic properties.
 - **Zingerone:** It is produced during cooking and provides a milder and sweeter spiciness.
 - **Paradol:** It develops through the transformation of shogaols over time and contributes to the spice profile of aged ginger.
- **Climatic & Soil Requirements:**

- **Climate:** Ginger requires a warm and humid climate and can grow up to an altitude of 1500 m.
- **Temperature:** The crop performs well in a temperature range of 19°C to 28°C.
- **Rainfall:** It requires moderate to high rainfall of about 1,500–2,500 mm annually or reliable irrigation, but it does not tolerate frost or prolonged drought.
- **Soil:** Ginger grows best in loose, fertile, well-drained loam or sandy-loam soils rich in organic matter.
- **Uses:** Ginger is widely used as a spice for flavouring and also for medicinal purposes.
 - It is used in food preparations, confectionery, beverages, and in making ginger candy and preserves.
- **Significance:** Ginger contains a large amount of antioxidant compounds that help treat inflammatory conditions.
 - Ginger supplementation also reduces fasting blood sugar, hemoglobin A1c, and apolipoprotein B levels.
- **Other Aspects:**
 - **Global Position:** India contributes 30.48% of global ginger production, making it the world's largest producer, consumer, and exporter of ginger.
 - **Major Producing States:** Karnataka, Orissa, Gujarat, Assam, Meghalaya, and Arunachal Pradesh together contribute 65% of India's total ginger production.
 - **Mizoram's Recognition:** NITI Aayog declared Mizoram as the "Ginger Capital of India" due to its high-quality organic ginger production.

Advance Authorisation Scheme

News: Recently, the government has imposed a limit of 100 kg on gold imports under the Advance Authorisation Scheme.

About Advance Authorisation Scheme



Source: PIB

- The **Advance Authorisation Scheme** allows **duty-free import of inputs, which are physically incorporated in an export product.**
- In addition to any inputs, **packaging material, fuel, oil, and catalyst that are consumed/utilized in the process of production of export product,** are also allowed.
 - The inputs imported are **exempt from duties like** Basic Customs Duty, Additional Customs Duty, Education Cess, Anti-dumping duty, Safeguard Duty and Transition Product-Specific Safeguard duty, Integrated tax, and Compensation Cess, wherever applicable, subject to certain conditions.
- **Implemented by:** It is implemented by the **Directorate General of Foreign Trade (DGFT).**
- **Coverage:** It covers **manufacturer exporters or merchant exporters tied to supporting manufacturers.**
- **Issued for:** It shall be issued for:
 - **Physical export (including export to SEZ)**
 - **Intermediate supply**
 - Supply of goods to the categories **specified in the categories of deemed exports.**
 - Supply of stores on **board a foreign-going vessel/aircraft,** subject to the condition that there are specific Standard Input Output Norms in respect of the item supplied.
- **Validity:** It is **valid for 12 months from the date of issue** of such Authorisation.
- **About Advance Authorisation Scheme in the jewellery sector:**

- In this sector, **the scheme enables exporters to import gold duty-free for manufacturing export products.**
- The government has **now imposed a limit of 100 kilograms on gold imports under the scheme.**
- **Advance Authorisation for gold imports** will be issued only up to a maximum permissible quantity of 100 kilograms.
- The DGFT has also made **physical inspection of manufacturing facilities mandatory for all first-time applicants** to verify their operational status and production capacity.
- Further, any additional **Advance Authorisation for gold imports will be granted only after the exporter fulfils at least 50 per cent of the export obligation** under the earlier authorisation.
- The DGFT has directed **the concerned regional authorities to submit monthly reports containing details of all Advance Authorisations** issued for gold imports.
- **Note: Earlier**, there was **no restriction on the quantity of gold** that could be imported under the Advance Authorisation Scheme.

Withholding Tax

News: India's foreign exchange reserves have fallen by nearly \$38 billion since March due to capital outflows linked to the West Asia conflict. To attract overseas investments, the government is reportedly considering reducing the withholding tax rate from 20% to 5%.

About Withholding Tax



Source: IE

- Withholding tax is **paid by foreign investors on the interest they earn on their holding of Indian bonds.**
- It is **tax collected at the source of income.**
- Instead of waiting for an investor or foreign company to pay taxes at the end of the financial year, **the government requires the payer to deduct a portion of the income before it is remitted** to the recipient.
 - The deducted amount is then **directly deposited** with the government
- It applies **to income earned through employment, investments, royalties, and other sources**, ensuring advance tax collection.
- **Impacts of Withholding Tax on Foreign Portfolio Investors (FPIs):**
 - It reduces **foreign portfolio investors' (FPIs) effective yields and overall investment returns** because it is deducted at the source before interest, dividends or other investment income is remitted to them.
 - This **compresses investors' post-tax returns, weakens the power of long-term compounding and limits the amount of capital available** for immediate reinvestment.
 - For large global investors operating across multiple jurisdictions, such deductions **can also create short-term liquidity constraints by locking up funds** until tax credits or refunds are processed.
 - FPIs often face significant administrative and compliance burdens in claiming relief **under Double Taxation Avoidance Agreements (DTAAs).**
 - Higher withholding taxes may **reduce the attractiveness of a market** by increasing transaction costs, lowering risk-adjusted returns and creating regulatory friction for overseas investors.
- **Withholding tax impact on India:** A high withholding tax is seen as a **major deterrent for foreign capital inflows at a time when India is grappling with rising external pressures**, including a sharp surge in crude oil prices.
 - Reducing Withholding tax is needed as the government has already proposed several measures **to curb outflows and manage the external account**, including cuts in

expenditure and restrictions on foreign travel, gold imports and other non-essential spending.

- Lowering the withholding tax could **improve post-tax returns for foreign investors**, make Indian debt and other financial assets more attractive, and help stabilize forex reserves amid heightened global uncertainty.

Neanderthals

News: A new study suggests Neanderthals performed a sophisticated dental procedure around 59,000 years ago using stone tools.

About Neanderthals



Source – IE

- Neanderthals were extinct relatives of modern humans who lived across Europe and parts of Asia.
- **Species:** The scientific name of Neanderthals was *Homo neanderthalensis*.
- **Naming:** The name Neanderthal came from the Neander Valley in Germany, where their fossils were first discovered.
- **Genetic Legacy & Evolution:**
 - **Related Species:** Neanderthals were closely related to another extinct human group called the Denisovans.
 - **Genetic Legacy:** Fossil and DNA evidence suggest that the Neanderthal genes still exist in modern human DNA.
- **Physical Characteristics:**

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- **Physical Features:** Neanderthals had large facial structures, angled cheek bones, and a huge nose suited for cold and dry climates.
- **Body Structure:** Their bodies were shorter, stockier, and highly muscular, which helped them survive in cold environments.
- **Brain Size:** Their brains were as large as, and often larger than, those of modern humans.
- **Culture and Intelligence:**
 - **Stone Technology:** Around 300,000 years ago, they developed the innovative Levallois technique for making stone tools.
 - **Diet and Hunting:** They hunted large animals, ate plant foods, and used sophisticated tools.
 - **Art:** They occasionally created symbolic or ornamental objects and marked graves with offerings like flowers.
 - **Community Care:** Evidence suggests they cared for injured and sick members and even performed difficult dental treatment.
- **Theories of Extinction:** Neanderthals are believed to have disappeared roughly 40,000 years ago after modern humans migrated deeper into Europe.