

Factly Weekly

Compilation

2026

**For UPSC CSE Prelims
Exam**

1st Week

July 2026

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SHE-LEAPS Platform

News: SHE-LEAPS was launched on June 29, 2026, during the Rashtriya Gramin Vikas Sammelan in New Delhi to support rural women entrepreneurs.

About SHE-LEAPS Platform



Figure 1. Source – PIB

- **Full form:** SHE-LEAPS stands for 'Self-Help Entrepreneur-Livelihoods and Enterprise Application for Prosperity and Sustainability'.
- It is a **digital platform** that **empowers Self-Help Group women** through enterprise creation, livelihood support, and performance tracking.
- **Developed by:** The SHE-LEAPS mobile application has been developed by the **Digital India Corporation**.
- **Implemented under:** The platform is implemented under the **LokOS platform**, which **digitizes the activities of community-based organisations** (operated under **Ministry of Rural Development**).
- **Reach:** SHE-LEAPS will be **implemented across 34 States and Union Territories**.
- **Aim:** The platform **aims to empower rural SHG women**, strengthen women-led enterprises, improve financial inclusion, integrate rural producers with formal value chains, and promote **data-driven rural entrepreneurship**.
- **Key Features:**
 - **Unified Digital Support:** The platform **supports both farm and non-farm enterprises** through enterprise creation and performance tracking.
 - **Real-Time Monitoring:** It **captures real-time enterprise data** and **tracks the complete livelihood journey** from profile creation to enterprise performance.
 - **Better Governance:** It strengthens digital monitoring, improves planning, and supports informed policy decisions through better data.
 - **Support for Lakhpati Didi Mission:** It **provides end-to-end tracking of income growth and enterprise performance** to strengthen the Lakhpati Didi mission.

Project BRAHMANK

News: Project BRAHMANK of the Border Roads Organisation (BRO) celebrated its 16th Raising Day on 29 June 2026 at Ranaghat, Arunachal Pradesh.

About Project BRAHMANK



Figure 2. Source – BRO

Project BRAHMANK is a specialized engineering and infrastructure development unit that builds and maintains strategic infrastructure in frontier areas.

- **Operates under:** It operates under the Border Roads Organisation (BRO).
- **Establishment:** The project was set up in June 2011 at Ranaghat in East Siang district of Arunachal Pradesh and became operational in December 2011.
- **Area of Responsibility:** It develops and maintains strategic road infrastructure across the Siang, East Siang, West Siang, Upper Siang and Shi-Yomi districts of Arunachal Pradesh, along with parts of Dhemaji district in Assam.
- **Infrastructure Portfolio:** It maintains 811 km of strategic roads, around 86 bridges, and also develops helipads to strengthen regional connectivity.

About Border Roads Organisation (BRO)

- The Border Roads Organisation (BRO) is India's leading infrastructure agency for constructing and maintaining roads and other strategic infrastructure in high-altitude, snow-bound and extremely challenging terrains.
- **Institutional Framework:** It functions as an executive force under the Ministry of Defence and operates under the Border Roads Development Board (BRDB).
- **Genesis:** It was established in May 1960 with Project Vartak in the East and Project Beacon in the North.
 - At present, it operates 18 field projects across 11 States and 3 Union Territories.
- **Mandate and Core Functions:** It develops and maintains strategic border infrastructure to ensure all-weather connectivity and strengthen defence preparedness.
 - It also serves as a first responder during disasters.

Plant and Animal Discoveries 2025

News: According to Animal Discoveries 2025, India has recorded 483 species, of which 226 species were recorded for the first time in the country.

About Animal Discoveries 2025



Figure 3. Source – TH

- **Released by:** Animal Discoveries 2025 is an **annual report** released by the [Zoological Survey of India \(ZSI\)](#) detailing the discoveries of fauna.
- **Animal Discoveries 2025:**
 - India has recorded **483 species**, of which **226 species** were recorded for the first time in the country.
 - **709 new faunal (animal) records** were added to the national biodiversity database.
 - **Total faunal biodiversity:** India's total faunal biodiversity now stands at 1,05,953 species, reaffirming its status as one of the world's premier megadiverse nations.
 - Among the animal groups added to the country's fauna, **Hymenoptera contributed the highest number of additions at 106**, followed by **Lepidoptera at 65, Diptera at 64, Arachnida at 64, Coleoptera at 55, and Pisces at 50.**
 - **State performance:** Among the states, **Kerala recorded the highest number of new species at 98**, followed by West Bengal at 76, Karnataka at 67 and Arunachal Pradesh at 65.
- **Plant Discoveries 2025:**
 - **'Plant Discoveries 2025'** is the **nineteenth edition** of the series, which added **353 new plant species** to the Indian Flora during 2025.
 - **First edition:** The first edition of this series was launched in **2007**.
 - **Compiled by:** This has been **compiled jointly by the ZSI and the [Botanical Survey of India \(BSI\)](#).**
 - **Biological classifications:** India added **353 taxa** to its flora, of which **141 are infraspecific taxa.**
 - Of the 353 plant taxa added to the floral database, **221 have been described as new to science, while 132 taxa represent new distributional records for India.**

- It documents **154 angiosperms, three pteridophytes, 13 bryophytes, 62 lichens, 93 fungi, 22 algae, and six microbes.**
 - Among the most notable discoveries are several wild relatives of **economically and ecologically significant plant groups, including Begonia, Impatiens (balsams), legumes, and orchids.**
 - Approximately **43% of the newly described taxa belong to vascular plants.**
- **State performance:** A State-wise analysis of the plant discoveries indicates that **Arunachal Pradesh emerged as the leading contributor with 49 discoveries**, followed by Uttarakhand at 39 and Kerala at 37.

About PaleoIndia Portal

- **Developed by:** Recently, the PaleoIndia Portal was launched. It is a **digital initiative** jointly **developed by ZSI and the National Centre for Sustainable Coastal Management (NCSCM), Chennai**, using geological datasets from the Geological Survey of India (GSI).
- **Features:**
 - It documents **the spatial distribution of fossil fauna across all 28 states and eight Union Territories**, housing over 5,000 specimens spanning Mammalia, Reptilia, Aves, Pisces, Amphibia, Mollusca, Arthropoda, Foraminifera, Echinodermata and Ichnofossils.
 - It **features a real-time data upload system to enable field-based and citizen science contributions** for safeguarding India's paleontological heritage.

FCRA 2.0 Portal and the e-OCI Card

News: Union Home Minister launched the FCRA 2.0 Portal and the e-OCI Card in New Delhi to improve citizen services through digital governance.

About FCRA 2.0 Portal



Source – CSR News

- **The FCRA 2.0 Portal is a fully digital platform that simplifies compliance and strengthens monitoring under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act.**
- **Launched by:** The portal was launched by the **Ministry of Home Affairs**.
- **Legality:** The portal has been **developed under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act** and **incorporates the key provisions of the FCRA Amendment Rules, 2026**.
- **Aim:** It aims to simplify compliance, reduce paperwork, and strengthen the monitoring and enforcement of foreign contributions.
- **Key Features:**
 - **End-to-End Digital Services:** Applications, renewals, annual returns, and other services are now processed through a fully digital system.
 - **Technology Integration:** The portal provides **Aadhaar-based authentication, e-Sign, OCR-based document analysis, and integration with PAN, Aadhaar, OCI, NGO Darpan, ICAI's UDIN system, and banks.**
 - **Secure and Faster Processing:** The portal is **hosted on MeghRaj (Government Cloud)**, which supports secure data management and faster verification.
 - **Improved Governance:** The portal reduces paperwork, saves time, strengthens compliance monitoring, and improves oversight of foreign contributions.

About FCRA

- **The Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act (FCRA):** It regulates foreign contributions to protect national sovereignty, security, and public interest.
- **Origin:** It was first introduced in 1976, replaced by the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act 2010.
- **Legality:** The Ministry of Home Affairs administers and enforces this Act.
- **Aim:** It regulates foreign contributions and prevents foreign influence on India's internal affairs.

About e-OCI Card

- **The e-OCI Card** is a fully digital system that transforms Overseas Citizen of India services for the global Indian diaspora.
- **Launched by:** It was launched by the Ministry of Home Affairs.
- **Legality:** The e-OCI Card has been introduced under the Citizenship (Amendment) Rules, 2026.
- **Aim:** It aims to provide a fully digital, convenient, and secure OCI service for more than 50 lakh OCI cardholders.
- **Key Features:**
 - **End of Physical Re-issuance:** OCI cardholders are no longer required to re-issue the OCI booklet after receiving a new passport after the age of 20 years.
 - **Online Passport Updates:** Cardholders must update their passport-related details online whenever a new passport is issued.
 - **Fully Digital OCI Process:** Applicants can complete the entire OCI process online, from submitting the application and uploading documents to downloading the approved e-OCI Card.
 - **Enhanced Convenience and Security:** The digital card reduces the risk of losing physical documents and enables real-time verification for smoother immigration clearance.

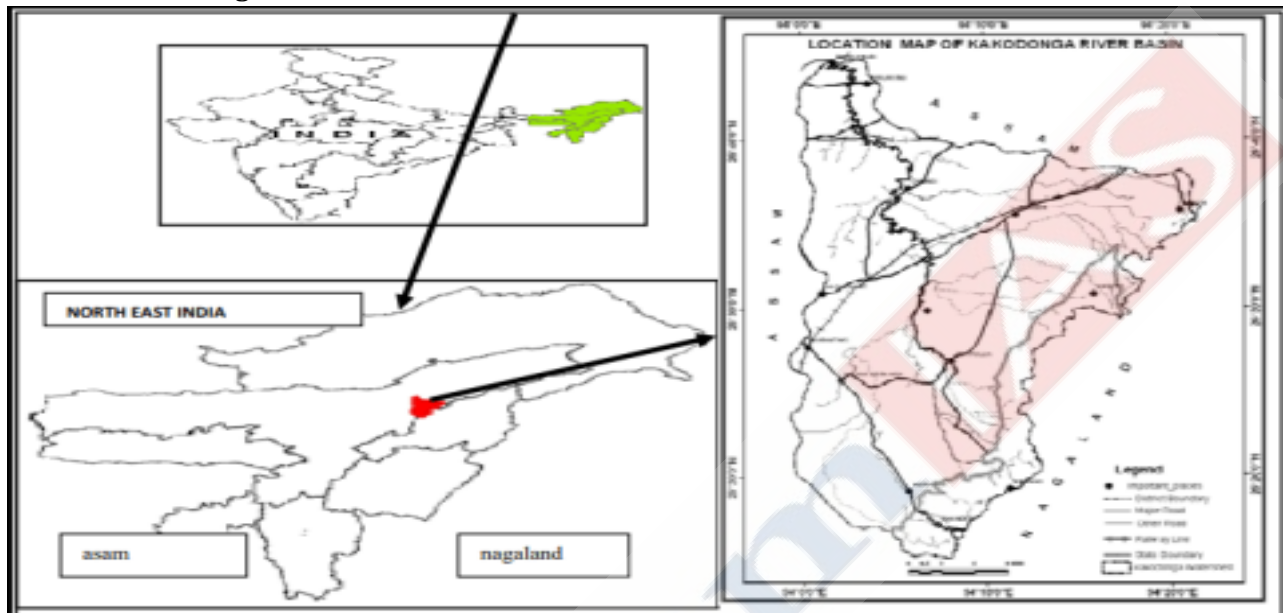
About Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) scheme

- **The Overseas Citizen of India (OCI) scheme** grants certain privileges to foreign nationals of Indian origin.
- **Legality:** It was introduced in 2005 through an amendment to the Citizenship Act, 1955.
- **Aim:** It strengthens India's engagement with the global Indian diaspora.

Kekaidong River

News: Recently, a juvenile [gharial](#) was sighted in the Kekaidong River in West Karbi Anglong, which indicates an important sign of improving river health and successful biodiversity conservation efforts in Assam.

About Kekaidong River



Source: Research Gate

- The **Kekaidong River** flows **through the state of Assam**.
- **Origin:** It originates in the **Naga Hills of Nagaland** and enters the Assam plains near Kulajan.
 - It flows through hilly and vast plain regions before **joining the Gelabil River**.
 - **Gelabil River** ultimately drains into the **Brahmaputra River**.
 - It marks the **border between Golaghat and Jorhat districts of Assam**.
- **Length:** Its length is **70 km**.
- **Basin area:** Its basin covers an area of about **1,112.86 sq. km**.
 - The majority of the watershed is **covered by agricultural land, mainly tea gardens and paddy fields**.
- **Tributaries:** Its major tributaries are **Bojalkata, Chereli, Soraipani, Kasojan, Dholi, Doijan, Chelcheli, Ghiladhari and Khar Jan**.
- **Tributary of:** It is one of the **important southern sub-tributaries of the [Brahmaputra River](#)**.
- **Historical Background:** It was also known as **Delsiri River** in ancient times.

Lavender Cultivation

News: The Union Government and Nagaland discussed expanding lavender cultivation and agri-entrepreneurship under the CSIR Aroma Mission across the State.

About Lavender Cultivation



Source – BL

- **Lavender** is a **small, perennial aromatic herb shrub** of the **mint family (Lamiaceae)**, that is mainly grown for its flowers and essential oil.
 - It was **introduced in the temperate regions of Jammu & Kashmir** under the **CSIR Aroma Mission**.
- **Key Aspects:**
 - **Climate:** Lavender grows in **temperate areas** and is a **drought-resistant crop**.
 - **Life Cycle:** A single lavender **plant bears flowers for up to 15 years**, requires minimal maintenance, and can be **harvested from the second year onward**.
 - **Propagation:** Lavender can be **propagated through seeds, rooted cuttings, tissue culture, and layering**.
- **Applications:** Lavender is used for **food and flavouring, pharmaceutical and therapeutic, cosmetic, and industrial purposes**.
- **Distribution in India**
 - Lavender cultivation is practiced in almost **all the 20 districts of Jammu & Kashmir**.
 - The successful model has also **expanded to Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, and Nagaland** through the CSIR Aroma Mission.

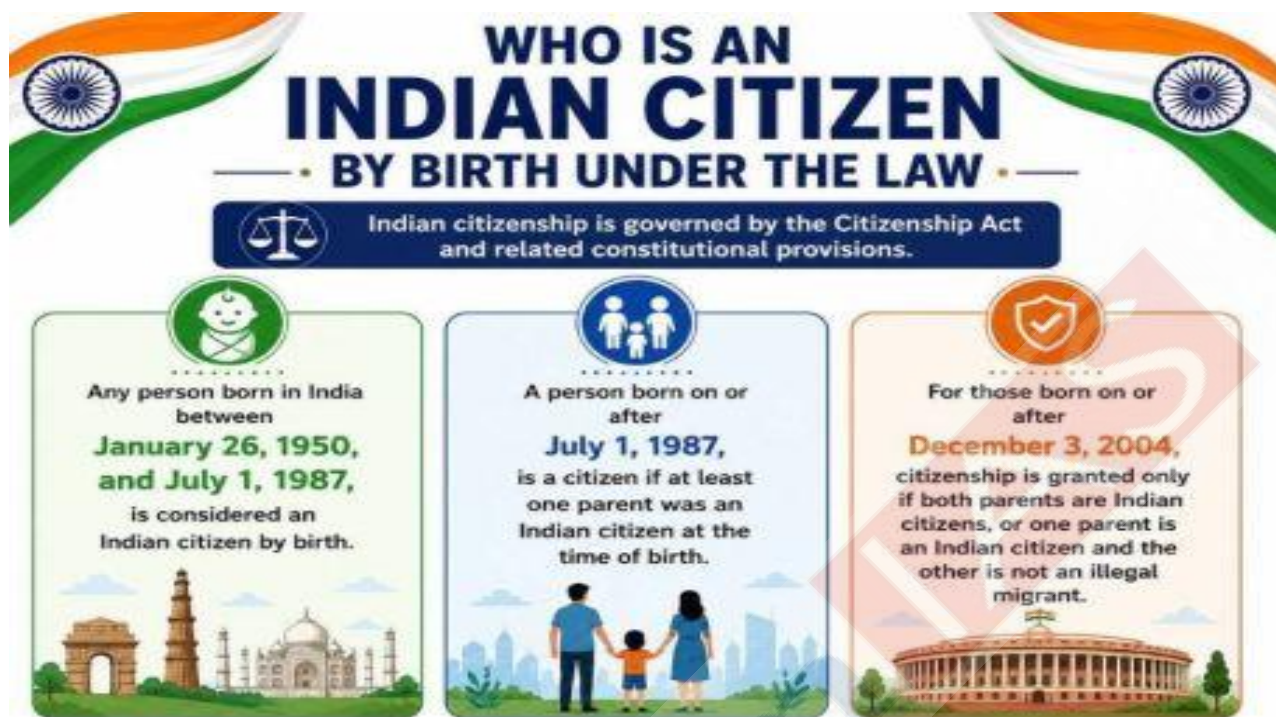
About Aroma Mission

- **Launched by:** The Union Ministry of Science & Technology launched the **Purple or Lavender Revolution in 2016** through the **CSIR Aroma Mission**.
- **Led by:** The mission is led by the **Council of Scientific & Industrial Research (CSIR)**, with **CSIR-Central Institute of Medicinal and Aromatic Plants (CSIR-CIMAP)**, Lucknow, as the nodal laboratory.
- **Also Known As:** The initiative is also known as the **Purple or Lavender Revolution**.
- **Aim:** The mission aims to **support a domestic aromatic crop-based agro economy** by promoting homegrown aromatic oils and transforming the aroma sector through agriculture, processing and product development.
- **Key Features:**
 - **Farmer Support:** The mission provides **free quality lavender planting material to first-time farmers and supports** the cultivation of aromatic crops.
 - **Value Chain Development:** The mission **promotes agriculture, processing, product development, technology support, skill development, and market linkages** to strengthen the aroma sector and rural employment.
 - **Phased Implementation:** The mission has been implemented in **two phases—Phase-I and Phase-II**, with Phase-II launched on 9 February 2021.

Birthright Citizenship

News: The US Supreme Court declared the Trump administration's executive order ending birthright citizenship unconstitutional and reaffirmed citizenship under the Fourteenth Amendment.

About Birthright Citizenship



Source – Inshorts

- **Birthright citizenship** is the **legal right to citizenship** acquired automatically **by birth within a country's territory or through one's parents**.
- **Core Principles of Citizenship:**
 - **Jus Soli (Right of the Soil):** Citizenship is granted because a person is born within a country's territory.
 - **Jus Sanguinis (Right of Blood):** Citizenship is granted based on the citizenship of one or both parents.
- **The US System:**
 - **Constitutional Basis:** The **14 Amendment** grants citizenship to all persons born or **naturalised** in the United States and subject to its jurisdiction.
 - **Supreme Court Ruling:** The Court held that **children born in the US** are citizens even if **their parents are in the country unlawfully or temporarily**.
 - **Exceptions:** Birthright citizenship does **not apply to children of foreign diplomats or enemies** present during hostile occupation.
 - **The Legal Conflict:**

- **Government's Argument:** The government argued that **such children were not fully subject to US jurisdiction** because their parents owed primary allegiance to another country.
- **Court's Decision:** The Court rejected this argument and **ruled that everyone physically present in the US is subject to its laws, regardless of immigration status.**

Indian Laws Regarding Citizenship

- **Constitutional Provisions :** Part II of the Indian Constitution (Articles 5-11) deals with **citizenship** at the commencement of the Constitution.
 - **Article 11** gives Parliament the exclusive power to make laws on citizenship.
- **Nature of Citizenship:** India follows **single citizenship** and a single domicile.
- **Legality:** The **Citizenship Act, 1955** is the main law that governs citizenship in India.
- **Citizenship Framework:** India's **citizenship framework has gradually shifted from an open Jus Soli (Right of the Soil) system to a stricter Jus Sanguinis (Right of Blood) system.**
 - Under **Section 3 of the Citizenship Act, 1955**, **citizenship by birth is governed by different conditions for different time periods.**
- **Modes of Acquiring Citizenship (Citizenship Act, 1955):** The Citizenship Act, 1955 provides **four legal methods through which a person can acquire Indian citizenship.**
 - **By Birth:** A person can acquire citizenship by birth under Section 3, subject to the conditions applicable during different time periods.
 - **By Descent:** A person born outside India can acquire citizenship through Indian parent(s). Births after 3 December 2004 require mandatory consular registration.
 - **By Registration:** Eligible Persons of Indian Origin (PIOs), spouses of Indian citizens, and other eligible persons can **acquire citizenship through registration.**
 - **By Naturalisation:** Eligible foreign nationals can **acquire citizenship after fulfilling the prescribed residency requirement, which is generally 12 years.**
- **Amendments:**
 - **1986 Amendment:** It **ended unrestricted birthright citizenship** by requiring **at least one parent to be an Indian citizen** for children born after the amendment came into force.

- **2003 Amendment:** It further restricted citizenship by birth by providing that a **child would not become a citizen if one parent was an illegal immigrant at the time of birth.**
- **Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019:** It **reduced the residency requirement for specified persecuted minorities** belonging to **Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain, Parsi, and Christian** communities from **Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Afghanistan** who entered India on or before 31 December 2014.

India's First Private Point-in-Space (PinS) Instrument Approach Procedure

News: The Ministry of Civil Aviation approved India's first Private Point-in-Space (PinS) Instrument Approach Procedure for helicopter operations at Undavalli Heliport.

About India's First Private Point-in-Space (PinS) Instrument Approach Procedure



Figure 4. Source – TV9

- **Private Point-in-Space (PinS)** is India's first private satellite-based instrument approach procedure that **enables safe and precise helicopter operations at heliports** without conventional landing infrastructure.
- **Operations at:** It has been approved for helicopter operations at **Undavalli Heliport, Andhra Pradesh.**
- **Developed by:** It was developed by the **Airports Authority of India (AAI)** and approved by the **Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA).**
- **Key Features:**
 - **Satellite-Based Navigation:** It uses **advanced satellite-based navigation technology** to help helicopters land safely and accurately.
 - **Support for Heliports:** It enables **safe helicopter landings at heliports that do not have conventional instrument landing infrastructure.**
 - **All-Weather Operations:** It supports **safe operations during adverse weather conditions** and in areas without ground-based navigation aids.

- **Wider Benefits:** It improves **flight safety, operational efficiency, and all-weather accessibility** while supporting emergency medical services, disaster relief, tourism, offshore activities, pilgrimage services, corporate aviation, and regional connectivity.

World Bank's Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP)

News: Following criticism from the U.S.A., the World Bank Group has announced the withdrawal of its climate finance targets under the World Bank's Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP).

About the World Bank's Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP)



Source: World Bank

- It is an **institutional strategy** designed to **integrate climate action** into its development programmes and support countries in addressing climate change.
- It was established by the [World Bank](#) in 2021.
- **Implementation period:** It was for a duration of **over 5 years (2021-2025)**.
- **Aim:** It aims to **increase climate finance** to reduce emissions, strengthen climate change adaptation, and align financial flows with the goals of the Paris Agreement.
- **Actions:** It translates the **Green, Resilient, and Inclusive Development (GRID)** framework into practice through **three strategic action areas**:

- **Aligning Climate and Development:** It integrates climate goals into national development planning and policies. It aligns its activities with the Paris Agreement and expands climate finance to increase the impact of investments.
- **Prioritising Key Systems Transitions:** It focuses on key sectors, including energy, agriculture, cities, transport, and manufacturing. These sectors are prioritised to support low-carbon, climate-resilient, and sustainable development:
- **Financing to Support the Transitions:** It strengthens domestic public financing, mobilises private investment, and provides concessional finance to support climate action, particularly in developing countries.
- **It enabled the World Bank to significantly expand climate finance**, reaching \$42.6 billion in FY2024, and to increase its climate finance target to 45% of total annual financing.
 - Now, the **World Bank Group (WBG)** has decided to **remove its climate finance targets** after criticism from the **U.S.A** which is its largest shareholder.
 - It will now focus on the **actual development outcomes and results** achieved, instead of focusing on how much money is spent on climate projects.

'VIJAY' Vision For a Technology-Driven Future Force

News: General Dhiraj Seth takes over as the 31st Chief of the Army Staff and unveils the 'VIJAY' vision aimed at building a technologically advanced and future-ready force.

About 'VIJAY' Vision For a Technology-Driven Future Force



Source: Directorate of Indian Army Veterans

- ‘VIJAY’ is an acronym that defines the key priorities that will guide the Army’s future transformation.
- The acronym represents ‘V’ for vigilance, ‘I’ for innovation, ‘J’ for jointness and integration, ‘A’ for Aatmanirbharta and ‘Y’ for ‘Yodha first’.
 - ‘V’ – for Vigilance and Readiness: This highlights that the army will maintain constant vigilance regarding our borders and emerging threats and uphold a high level of operational readiness to effectively counter any challenge to national security.
 - ‘I’ stands for Innovation and Transformation: This defines the focus on both doctrinal and technological solutions. Innovation will be an integral part of the army’s mindset, operational methods, and capability development. This also includes transformations necessary to adapt to the evolving battlefield.
 - ‘J’ stands for Jointness and Integration: Army will adopt an integrated approach to maintain synergy, complete coordination and alignment with the Air Force and the Navy to enhance the Indian Army’s operational effectiveness.

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- **'A' stands for Aatmanirbharta:** The Army will build a **self-reliant Army** by leveraging indigenous capabilities and technologies developed within the country, we .
- **'Y' stands for 'Yoddha First' (Soldier First):** This will act as a **guiding principle** for the forces. The welfare, empowerment and professional growth of every soldier will remain an enduring commitment.

National SC-ST Hub (NSSH) Scheme

News: The National SC-ST Hub (NSSH) Scheme is strengthening entrepreneurship among SC/ST communities through capacity building, mentorship, market access, and business accelerator programmes.

About National SC-ST Hub (NSSH) Scheme



Source – MSME

- **The National SC-ST Hub (NSSH) Scheme** promotes entrepreneurship and strengthens the capacity of SC/ST entrepreneurs.
- **Initiative By:** The scheme is a **flagship initiative of the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME)**.
- **Implemented by:** The scheme is **implemented by the National Small Industries Corporation (NSIC)**, under the Ministry of MSME.

- **Aim:** The scheme aims to enhance the capacity of SC/ST entrepreneurs, promote entrepreneurship, and support their participation in public procurement to achieve the mandated 4% procurement target.
- **Details of the Programs:** There are two separate programs for wards (aspiring) and existing entrepreneurs.
 - **Business Accelerator Programme:** This programme supports existing SC/ST entrepreneurs with more than six months of business experience through mentorship, business strategy, market opportunities, and scaling support.
 - **Entrepreneurship Programme:** This programme helps aspiring entrepreneurs by providing mentoring and training to convert business ideas into prototypes that can be presented for early-stage financing.
- **Key Features:**
 - **Capacity Building:** The scheme provides training in financial management, tender participation, pricing strategies, and regulatory compliance to improve business readiness.
 - **Business Support:** It offers financial assistance, market linkages, credit support, Udyam registration, GeM onboarding, and exhibition participation.
 - **Entrepreneurship Promotion:** The scheme develops self-employment opportunities, strengthens business networks, and supports technology upgradation.
 - **Inclusive Growth:** The scheme encourages greater participation of SC/ST enterprises in government procurement and strengthens the MSME ecosystem.

Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) Scheme 2026

News: The Ministry of Labour and Employment has notified the New EPF Scheme, 2026 under the Code on Social Security, 2020, effective from June 29.

About Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) Scheme, 2026



Source – ToI

- The Employees' Provident Fund (EPF) Scheme, 2026 is India's new statutory provident fund framework replacing the Employees' Provident Funds Scheme, 1952.
- **Notified under:** The EPF Scheme, 2026 has been notified under the Code on Social Security, 2020.
- **Ministry involved:** The scheme is administered by the Ministry of Labour and Employment.
- **Executive Authority:** The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) is the executive authority.
- **Aim:** The scheme aims to provide financial security and retirement savings while implementing the Code on Social Security, 2020 through a modernized provident fund framework.
- **Key Features:**
 - **Contribution Provisions:** Employer and employee contributions continue at 12% of wages, while certain notified establishments continue with a 10% contribution rate.
 - **Mandatory contributions apply only up to the statutory wage ceiling.**
 - **Voluntary Higher Contributions:** Employees may voluntarily contribute on wages above the statutory wage ceiling or at a rate higher than 12%.
 - **Simplified Withdrawal Rules:** The earlier 13 withdrawal categories have been consolidated into three categories—essential needs, housing needs, and special circumstances—to simplify partial withdrawals.

- **Withdrawal and Minimum Balance:** Members can **withdraw funds for illness, education, marriage, and housing** after **completing 12 months** of membership, **subject to the prescribed withdrawal limits** and while **maintaining a minimum balance of 25% of total contributions**.
- **Protection for Contract Workers:** The scheme introduces the **concept of the principal employer**.
 - **Even if a contractor makes the provident fund payment, the principal employer remains ultimately responsible** for ensuring provident fund contributions are deposited.
- **Greater Digitalization:** The scheme formally recognizes digital systems such as **online filing of employer returns, digital member accounts, electronic claim processing, electronic records, and electronic annual statements** to improve provident fund administration.
 - The scheme gives **greater emphasis to Aadhaar-linked UAN and digital compliance**.

About EPFO

- The **Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO)** is a **statutory body** that **administers social security schemes for employees**.
- **Establishment:** It was established **under the Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions Act, 1952**.
- **Objective:** It aims to provide retirement security, pension benefits, insurance protection, and financial support during emergencies.
- **Structure:** EPFO functions **under the Ministry of Labour and Employment** and is **administered by the Central Board of Trustees** with representatives of government, employers, and employees.
- **Schemes:** EPFO administers the **Employees' Provident Fund Scheme, Employees' Pension Scheme, and Employees' Deposit Linked Insurance Scheme**.

Rung Community

News: The Rung community opposed the installation of a three-tonne artificial Shivling near Om Parvat, stating that it violated their tradition of nature worship.

About Rung Community



Figure 5. Source – Uttarakhand Govt.

- The Rung (Rang or Shauka) community is an indigenous trans-Himalayan tribal community that follows nature worship and has a distinct Himalayan cultural identity.
- **Distribution:** The community lives in the India–Nepal–Tibet border region of the Kumaon Himalayas.
- **Settlement Area:** They inhabit the high-altitude valleys of Vyans, Darma, Chaudans, and Johar in Pithoragarh district, Uttarakhand.
- **Indigenous Identity:** The Rung are a Tibeto-Burman ethnic group with a distinct Himalayan tribal culture.
- **Language:** The Rung community speaks Runglo (Rangkas) and other distinct dialects such as Vyansi, Chaudangsi, and Darma.
- **Status:** The community is legally recognised as a Scheduled Tribe (ST) in India.
- **Key Aspects:**
 - **Nature Worship:** The community worships Lord Shiva through mountains, rivers, forests, and other sacred natural landscapes.
 - **Traditional Livelihood:** They traditionally practised trans-Himalayan trade, pastoralism, agriculture, animal husbandry, seasonal migration, and collected medicinal herbs such as Yartsa Gumbu, Kutki, and Gandrayan.
 - **Traditional Seed Bank:** The community preserves seeds in underground pits before migrating to lower altitudes during winter and retrieves them for the next sowing season.
 - **Festival:** The community celebrates the Kandali Festival once every 12 years during the flowering of the Kandali plant, and the festival is dedicated to Lord Shiva.
 - **Traditional Governance:** Gram Sabhas and traditional tribal institutions regulate community affairs and natural resource use.

Bharat Life Sciences Award 2026

News: Applications are invited for the Bharat Life Sciences Award (BLSA) 2026 to recognise excellence in scientific research, innovation, and public health impact across India's life sciences ecosystem.

About Bharat Life Sciences Award 2026



Source: Business Standard

About	● It is an award to recognise excellence in scientific research, innovation, and public health impact across India's life sciences ecosystem. ● The inaugural edition of the Award will be held on 1 October 2026 in New Delhi,
Organized by	● It is organized by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI). ● It is supported by the Office of the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government of India, Department of Pharmaceuticals, Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC) & Invest India.
Aim	It aims to honour outstanding contributions and enable the advancement of impactful research and innovation in the country.
Eligibility	● It is open to eligible researchers, interdisciplinary teams, academic and research institutions, hospitals, startups, industry R&D organisations, public health institutions, and ecosystem leaders working in the life sciences and healthcare ecosystem.

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	● Government officials and public servants may participate in the Award, subject to applicable conflict-of-interest and anti-corruption requirements. ○ They are not eligible to receive any Grant under the grant-eligible categories. ● The Award is open only to Indian citizens and organisations registered in India, subject to the eligibility criteria of the respective Award categories.
Categories of the Awards	● The Award includes categories for both individuals and organisations. ● The Award comprises six honours across five categories, covering: ○ Ramanujan Arogya Udaan Samman in the category of Individual Excellence – Young Scientist Award ○ Charaka Arogya Samman in the category of Collaborative Innovation – Innovation for Unmet Patient Needs ○ Sushruta Arogya Samman in the category of Collaborative Innovation – Translational and Clinical Advancement ○ Nalanda Arogya Vigyan Samman in the category of Institute of Scientific Excellence ○ Jivaka Arogya Navpravartan Gaurav in the category of Startups Innovator in Healthcare/Life Sciences ○ Sarabhai Arogya Drishti Gaurav in the category of Promoting Scientific Ecosystem in India ● While four categories carry grant support, two categories, Startups Innovator in Healthcare/Life Sciences and Promoting Scientific Ecosystem in India, recognise outstanding contributions to innovation and ecosystem building. ● Applicants may apply under multiple categories, subject to meeting the eligibility requirements of each category and submitting separate applications for each category.

Governed by	- It is governed by an independent, trans-sectoral jury comprising eminent leaders from science, healthcare, academia, policy, and industry. Grant Thornton Bharat serves as the independent Process Advisor to ensure transparency and adherence to robust evaluation standards.
Grant for the winner	The award is backed by Rs. 7 crore in grant support.

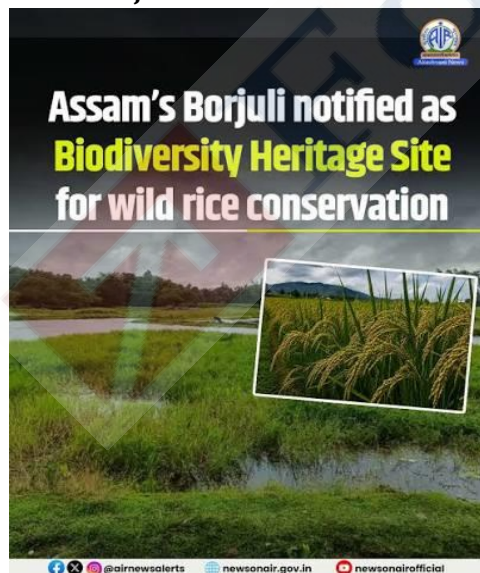
About the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry

- FICCI is the **largest and oldest apex business organisation** in India.
- Establishment:** It is a **non-government, not-for-profit organisation** established in **1927**.
- Members:** It involves **private and public sector companies, multinational firms, and regional chambers of commerce across India**, reaching over 250,000 companies.
- FICCI provides a platform for **networking and consensus building** within and across sectors and is the **first port of call** for Indian industry, policy makers and the international business community.

Borjuli Wetland and Oryza Rufipogon and Biodiversity Heritage Site

News: The Borjuli wetland in Assam, known for harbouring a Oryza Rufipogon variety of wild rice, has been notified as a Biodiversity Heritage Site (BHS).

About Borjuli Wetland



- Location:** The Borjuli wetland is located in **Assam**.
- Area:** It has spread across an **area of 0.41 hectares**.
- Feature:**
 - It is known for harbouring a **disease- and pest-resistant variety of wild rice** known as **Oryza rufipogon**.
 - Recently, it has been designated as a **Biodiversity Heritage Site (BHS)** under the '**In-situ Conservation and Management of Wild Rice (Oryza rufipogon)**' Project.

Figure 6. Source: News on Air

- The recognition is an important step **towards conserving India's rich wild rice diversity and promoting climate-resilient agriculture.**

About *Oryza Rufipogon*



Figure 7. Source: Science Direct

Oryza rufipogon is a **perennial plant and a wild progenitor** of cultivated rice, *Oryza sativa*.

- **Habitat:** It is commonly found in **marshes and other aquatic habitats** across eastern and southern Asia.

- **Features:**

- It is **photosensitive in nature** and **flowers during short days** in November and December.
- Its **seeds have a tendency to shatter** as soon as they **mature**.
- It is **resistant to pests and diseases** and can **tolerate flooding and saline conditions**, making it a valuable genetic resource for developing climate-resilient crop varieties.

About Biodiversity Heritage Site

- **Biodiversity Heritage Site (BHS)** refers to a **unique and fragile ecosystem** that can include **marine ecosystems, coastal and inland waters, or terrestrial areas**.
- **Criteria:**
 - Richness of wild as well as domesticated species or intra-specific categories.
 - High endemism.
 - Presence of rare and threatened species, keystone species, species of evolutionary significance.
 - Wild ancestors of domestic/cultivated species or their varieties.
 - Past pre-eminence of biological components represented by fossil beds and having significant cultural, ethical or aesthetic values are important for the maintenance of cultural diversity with or without a long history of human association with them.
- **Notified by:** Under Section-37 of the Biological Diversity Act, 2002, the State Government, in **consultation with local bodies**, may notify areas of **biodiversity importance** as Biodiversity Heritage Sites(BHS).

- **First notified BHS:** India's **first** notified Biodiversity Heritage Site (BHS) is the **Nallur Tamarind Grove in Bengaluru, Karnataka**, which was declared in **2007**.
- **Latest site:** The **Borjuli wetland is located in Assam** has been latest notified as BHS.
- **Total numbers:** India has **55** Biodiversity Heritage Sites (BHS) as of July 3rd, 2026.

7th National Water Awards

News: The Department of Water Resources has launched the 7th National Water Awards on the Rashtriya Puraskar portal, with applications open until 28th August, 2026.

About 7th National Water Awards



Figure 8. Source – MoJS

- The 7th National Water Awards **recognize and encourage outstanding work in water conservation and water resource management across India.**
- **Launched By:** The Department of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation under the Ministry of Jal Shakti launched the awards.
- **First Edition:** The **first** National Water Awards were introduced in **2018**.
- **Aim:** The awards **aim to support Jal Samridh Bharat, promote water conservation, and encourage better water usage practices.**
- **Objective:** The awards **encourage stakeholders to adopt a holistic approach to water resource management** because surface water and groundwater are important in the water cycle.
- **Prizes:** Each winner receives a **Trophy along with a Citation.**
- **Process:** A **Screening Committee** scrutinises applications,
 - the **Jury Committee** recommends winners, and
 - the **Minister of Jal Shakti** approves the final list.

- **Conferral:** The **President of India** or the **Vice President of India** confers the awards during the award ceremony.
- **Eligibility for the Awards:** **States, Districts, Urban Local Bodies, Dam Owner Agencies,** and **Industries** that have done good work in water conservation and management are eligible.
- **Portal:** Applications are accepted only through the **Rashtriya Puraskar portal**.

Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD)

News: Delhi received the southwest monsoon on July 2 after a delayed onset, while June rainfall deficit renewed focus on the Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD).

About Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD)

The Indian Ocean Dipole

The IOD phenomenon is the difference in sea-surface temperatures in opposite parts of the Indian Ocean. It can shift moisture away from Australia (positive phase) or towards it (negative phase)

IOD has been known to precondition major wildfires in southeast Australia, where months-long bushfire crisis has been exacerbated by climate change and prolonged drought

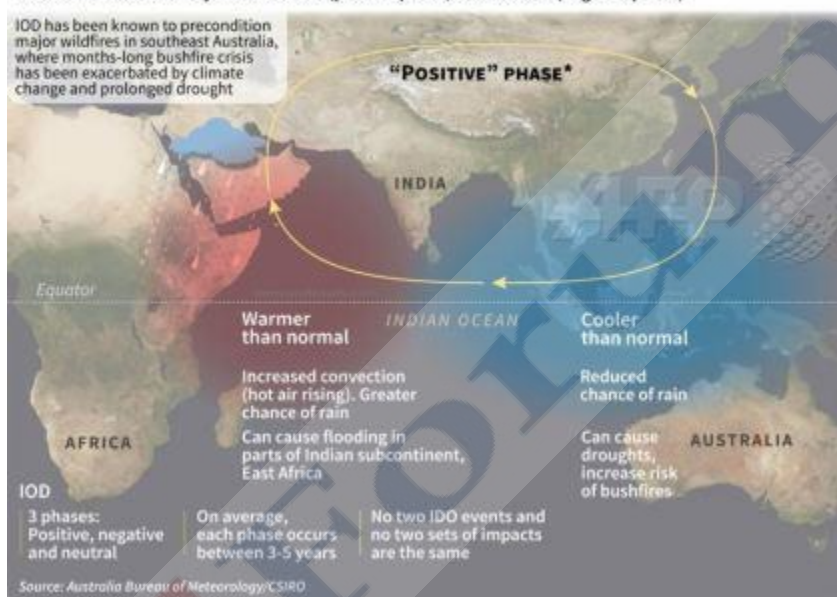


Figure 9. Source – AFP

- **Indian Ocean Dipole (IOD)** is an **atmosphere-ocean coupled phenomenon** characterized by **differences in sea-surface temperatures across the Indian Ocean**.

- **Mechanism:** The IOD develops when a **difference in sea-surface temperatures emerges between the eastern and western Indian Ocean**.

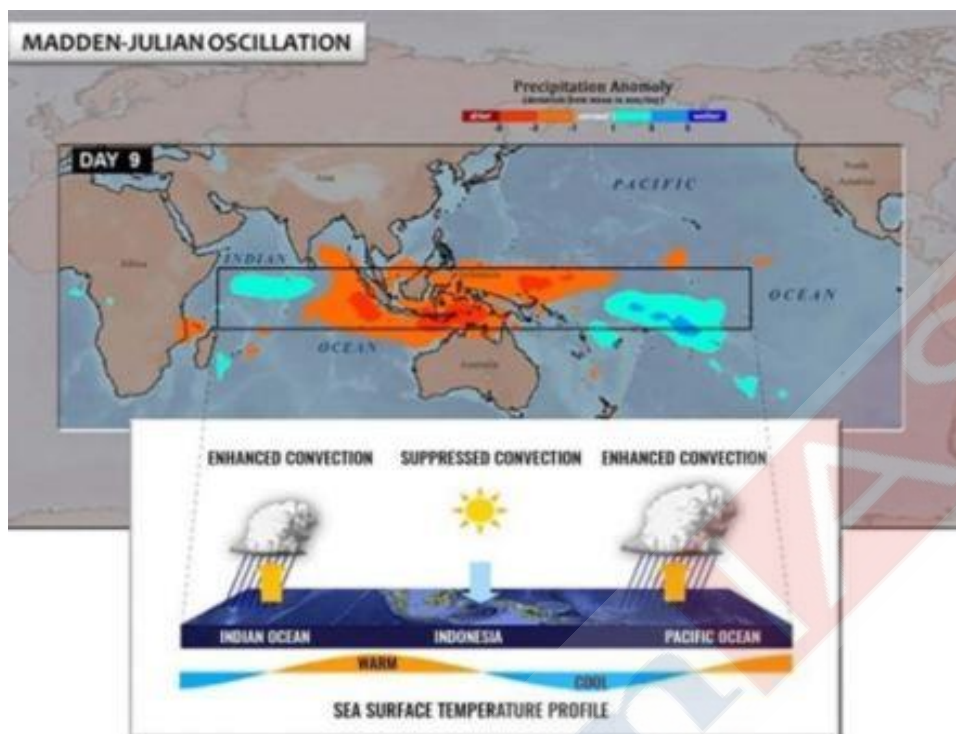
○ This **temperature difference** creates **pressure differences** that **change wind movement**, which **influences moisture, clouds, and rainfall** over surrounding regions.

- **Key Characteristics of IOD:**

- **Temperature Difference:** The IOD is measured by the difference in sea-surface temperatures between the **eastern Indian Ocean and the western Indian Ocean**.

- **Air-Sea Coupling:** Temperature differences change wind patterns, and these winds further change ocean temperatures, creating a continuous interaction that drives the IOD.
- **Development Pattern:** The IOD develops in the equatorial Indian Ocean from April to May and generally peaks during September to November or October.
- **Three Phases:** The IOD occurs in positive, negative, and neutral phases depending on the temperature difference between the eastern and western Indian Ocean.
 - **Positive IOD:** A positive IOD occurs when the western Indian Ocean is warmer than the eastern Indian Ocean.
 - **Negative IOD:** A negative IOD occurs when the eastern Indian Ocean is warmer than the western Indian Ocean.
 - **Neutral IOD:** A neutral IOD occurs when there is no significant sea-surface temperature difference between the eastern and western Indian Ocean.
- **ENSO Link:** El Niño, a climate phenomenon in which the central and eastern Pacific Ocean becomes warmer than usual, often precedes or strengthens a positive IOD.
 - However, the IOD can also develop independently because of local atmospheric variability.
- **Regional Impact:** A positive IOD increases rainfall over East Africa and the Indian subcontinent while reducing rainfall over Indonesia and Australia, whereas a negative IOD produces the opposite pattern.

Madden-Julian Oscillation (MJO)



Source – ResearchGate

- **The Madden-Julian Oscillation (MJO)** is an eastward-moving atmospheric disturbance of clouds, rainfall, winds, and pressure near the equator that circles the globe every 30–60 days.
- **Nature:** It is the primary driver of intra-seasonal variability in tropical weather and directly influences the active and break phases of the Indian monsoon.
- **Rainfall Influence:** The MJO acts as a travelling pulse of rain-bearing clouds and winds, strengthening or suppressing rainfall depending on its location.
- **Geographical Phases:** Its movement is monitored in eight geographical phases, covering the Western Hemisphere and Africa, the Indian Ocean, Indonesia, the eastern Indian Ocean, and the Western and Central Pacific.

Pashujanya Yudh Abhyas (PYA)

News: The Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying (DAHD), Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying, successfully conducted Pashujanya Yudh Abhyas (PYA).

About Pashujanya Yudh Abhyas (PYA)



Source: Principal Scientific Adviser

- Pashujanya Yudh Abhyas (PYA) is the **third national-level mock drill** under the [National One Health Mission](#) to strengthen India's preparedness for animal health emergencies and zoonotic disease outbreaks.
- **Aim:** It aimed to test and validate the country's preparedness, coordination mechanisms, and emergency response capabilities for managing animal health emergencies arising from zoonotic disease outbreaks.
- **Conducted by:** It has been conducted by the **Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying (DAHD), Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying.**
- **Duration:** It is a **5-day-long exercise** held at **Khari village, Vidisha District, Madhya Pradesh, from 29th June to 3rd July 2026.**
- **Participants:**
 - It involved the **Department of Animal Husbandry & Dairying (DAHD), ICAR, NCDC, ICMR, the Office of the Principal Scientific Advisor, laboratories under the National BSL-3 Network and the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC).**
 - It also included State and District Animal Husbandry, Health, and Forest Departments, and the administration of Madhya Pradesh.
- **Features:**

- It brought together stakeholders from the **animal health, human health, wildlife, food safety, laboratory and district administration**.
- It was designed to **assess operational readiness, intersectoral coordination and communication, and mechanisms** for managing a zoonotic disease outbreak from first alert to containment.
- The exercise simulated an **Influenza A (H1N1) outbreak in animals** with the potential to spread to humans and wildlife. It **tested the complete outbreak response system**, including **surveillance, early detection, investigation, laboratory testing, risk assessment, containment measures, movement control, and public communication**.
- **Significance:** The exercise provided **valuable insights to inform future strategies for strengthening India's preparedness and response to zoonotic disease outbreaks**.

Polygraph and Narcoanalysis tests

News: Pune Police sought court permission to conduct polygraph tests on Siya Goyal and her co-accused in the Ketan Agarwal murder case.

About Deception Detection Tests (DDTs)

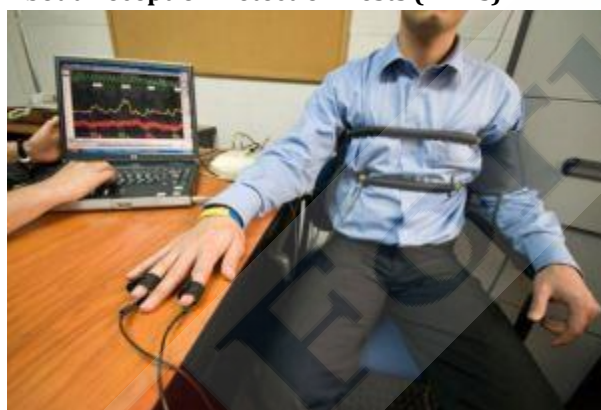


Figure 10. Source – Telangana Today

- **Deception Detection Tests (DDTs)** include **polygraph, narcoanalysis, and brain mapping**.
- These tests are **used to obtain concealed information** related to crime and have important clinical, scientific, ethical, and legal implications.

About Polygraph Test

- A **polygraph test** attempts to **detect deception** by **measuring physiological responses** while a person answers questions.

- **Mechanism:** Instruments such as **cardio-cuffs and sensitive electrodes** measure **physiological responses during questioning**, and numerical values are assigned to determine truth, deception, or uncertainty.
- **Parameters Tracked:** The test records **blood pressure, pulse, respiration, sweat gland activity, and blood flow**.
- **Evaluation:** The scientific community **considers the test unreliable** because it has **not shown 100% accuracy**, and experts say **people can use countermeasures to mislead the results**.

About Narcoanalysis Test

- **Narcoanalysis** attempts to **obtain information by placing a person in a sedated or hypnotic state.**
- **Mechanism:** Drugs such as **sodium pentothal, scopolamine, and sodium amytal** are administered intravenously **to induce a hypnotic state** in which the **subject is expected to reveal information.**
- **Evaluation:** The method has **not been scientifically proven** to be completely reliable and **remains controversial in the medical field.**

Legal Position in India

- **D.K. Basu v. State of West Bengal (1997):** The Supreme Court ruled that **involuntary administration of polygraph and narcoanalysis tests amounts to cruel, inhuman, and degrading treatment under Article 21.**
- **Selvi v. State of Karnataka & Anr. (2010):**
 - **Consent Requirement:** The Supreme Court in Selvi v. State of Karnataka (2010) held that **these tests can be conducted only with voluntary consent.**
 - **Fundamental Rights:** Involuntary tests **violate the right against self-incrimination under Article 20(3)** and **amount to intrusion into mental privacy.**
 - **Admissibility:** **Test results are not confessions**, but any information or material subsequently discovered through a voluntarily **administered test may be admitted under Section 27 of the Indian Evidence Act, 1872 (now Bharatiya Sakshya Adhiniyam).**
 - **Refusal:** Refusal to undergo these tests **cannot be treated as evidence of guilt.**
- **NHRC Guidelines (2000):** The Supreme Court in Selvi case **directed that the National Human Rights Commission's Guidelines for the Administration of Polygraph Test on an Accused (2000)** must be strictly followed while conducting such tests.
 - **NHRC Guidelines:**
 - **Voluntary Consent:** The accused must willingly agree and may refuse the test.
 - **Informed Consent:** Police and the lawyer must explain the purpose, procedure, and legal consequences before consent.
 - **Recorded Consent:** Consent must be recorded before a Judicial Magistrate.
 - **Documentation:** Police must produce proof before the court that the accused voluntarily consented to the test.

- **Clarification:** Statements made during the test are treated as police statements and not as confessions.

About Brain Mapping

- **Brain mapping** is a **deception detection test** that **measures electrical activity in the brain** to **identify concealed information related to a crime**.
 - **Mechanism:** **Electrodes** are placed on the **scalp and connected to a recording system** to **measure the brain's electrical field potentials** while the **subject listens to words or stimuli**.
 - The **recorded brain responses are analyzed** to determine whether the subject recognizes information related to the crime.
 - **Parameters Tracked:** The **test records event-related potentials generated when the brain encounters a familiar stimulus**.
 - The commonly used method in India is the **Brain Electrical Activation Profile (BEAP)**, also known as the **P300 Waves Test**.
 - **Purpose:** The test is **used to detect concealed information related to a crime without requiring the subject to give oral answers**.
 - **Evaluation:** Brain mapping **only assists the investigation by indicating whether the subject has knowledge related to the crime**.
 - It **cannot identify the exact lie or the information** stored in the person's brain, and its results **do not have legal sanctity**.

INS Trikand

News: Indian Naval Ship INS Trikand will participate in the 58th National Day celebrations of Mauritius.

About INS Trikand



Figure 11. Source: NDTV

- INS Trikand is a **stealth frigate** of the Indian Navy.
- It is the last of the **three "Follow-On Talwar Class" frigates**.
- **Built by:** It was **built in the Russian Federation**.
- **Commission year:** It was **commissioned into the Indian Navy in 2013**.
- **Features:**

- **Combat Suite:** It is equipped with a **state-of-the-art combat suite** featuring the **supersonic BRAHMOS missile system**, **Shtil Surface-to-Air missiles**, the **upgraded A190 medium-range gun**, and an **Electro-Optical 30 mm Close-in Weapon System**.
- It also carries **advanced anti-submarine weapons**, including **torpedoes and rockets**, along with a sophisticated **Electronic Warfare system**.
- **Combat Management System:** The weapons and sensors are **integrated through a Combat Management System 'Trebovanie-M'**, which enables the ship to **simultaneously neutralise multiple surface, sub-surface and air threats**.
- **Stealth Feature:** It also **incorporates innovative features to reduce radar, magnetic and acoustic signatures**, which have earned this class of ships the sobriquet of 'Stealth' frigates.
- **Speed:** It is powered by **four gas turbines and is capable of speeds in excess of 30 knots**.
- It can **carry an integrated Kamov 31 helicopter**, which is best suited for **airborne early warning roles**.
- **Other ships of Talwar-class frigates:**
 - INS Talwar
 - INS Trishul
 - [INS Tabar](#)
 - INS Teg
 - INS Tarkash
 - INS Trikand
 - [INS Tushil](#)
 - [INS Tamal](#)
 - INS Triput
 - [INS Tushil](#)

ICMR-MINDS Project

News: ICMR-MINDS received the Gold Award at the National Awards for e-Governance 2026 for its AI-based citizen-centric mental healthcare platform.

About ICMR-MINDS Project



Source – PIB

- **ICMR-MINDS** stands for **ICMR's Multistate Implementation Research Study on Integration of Screening and Management of Mental and Substance Use Disorders with other Non-Communicable Diseases (ICMR-MINDS)**.
- **Initiative of:** It is a flagship **digital mental healthcare initiative** of the Indian Council of Medical Research (**ICMR**).
- **Implemented across:** The initiative is being implemented across **seven states** through **AIIMS Guwahati, Gujarat Institute of Mental Health, AIIMS New Delhi, St. John's Medical College, AIIMS Bhopal, AIIMS Bhubaneswar and PGIMER Chandigarh**.
- **Aim:** The project aims to **integrate the screening and management of mental and substance use disorders with the treatment of other non-communicable diseases**.
- **Key Features :**
 - **AI-enabled Clinical Decision Support System:** It enables trained frontline healthcare workers to **provide standardized screening, assessment, follow-up care and routine management** with evidence-based digital guidance.
 - **Digital Features:** The platform provides **standardized digital screening workflows, role-based clinical guidance, multilingual interfaces, offline functionality, gamified features and real-time** administrative dashboards.

- **Continuity of Care:** The platform supports structured referrals and **two-way back-referral mechanisms** to improve follow-up care and optimise specialist resources.
- **Healthcare Delivery:** The approach improves treatment adherence, **reduces patient dropout** and eases the burden on tertiary healthcare institutions.

About National Awards for e-Governance (NAeG)

- The National Awards for e-Governance (NAeG) are presented every year to recognize and promote excellence in the implementation of e-Governance initiatives.
- **Edition:** The year 2026 marks the 29th edition of the National Awards for e-Governance..
- **Presented by:** It is presented by the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (DARPG) under the Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions.
- **Categories:** The awards are presented in seven categories, covering digital transformation, AI innovation, cyber security, district-level initiatives, Gram Panchayat initiatives, project replication and scaling, and data analytics.
- **Prize detail:** Gold Awardees receive a trophy, certificate and ₹10 lakh.
 - Silver Awardees receive a trophy, certificate and ₹5 lakh for implementing projects or programmes or bridging resource gaps in public welfare.
- **Awards in 2026:** A total of 16 awards are being conferred under NAeG 2026, including 10 Gold Awards and 6 Silver Awards.

'Joint Sea-2026' Exercise

News: Chinese and Russian navies are conducting the "Joint Sea-2026" naval exercise near Qingdao in July under their annual military cooperation plan.

About 'Joint Sea-2026' Exercise

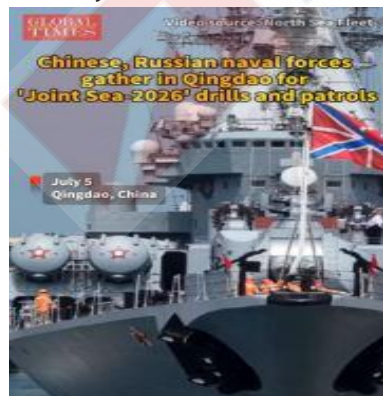


Figure 12. Source – Global Times

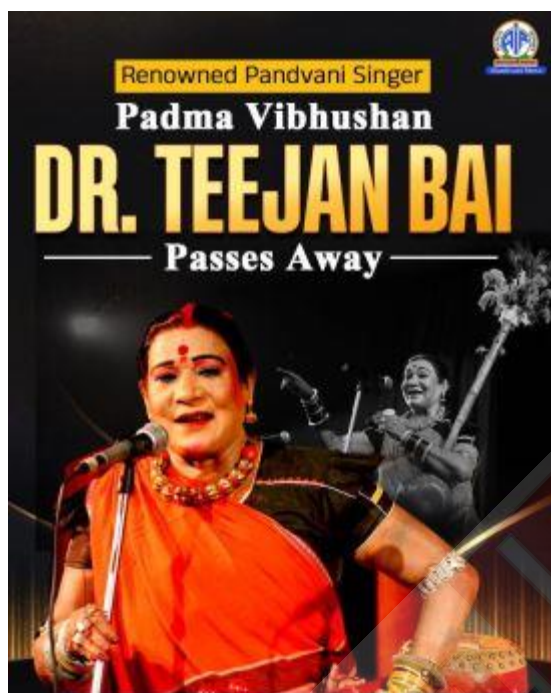
- **Joint Sea-2026** is an annual China-Russia bilateral naval exercise to strengthen cooperation in responding to maritime security challenges.
- **Location:** The exercise is being conducted in the waters and airspace near Qingdao in Shandong Province, East China.
- **Theme (2026):** The exercise is based on the theme "joint response to maritime security threats."

- **Aim:** The exercise aims to **demonstrate both navies' capability and determination to jointly address maritime security challenges, safeguard regional and international peace and stability, and deepen their comprehensive strategic partnership.**
- **Frequency:** The exercise is **conducted on an annual rotating basis between China and Russia.**
- **Key Features:**
 - **Three-Phase Exercise:** The exercise is conducted in **three phases – force assembly, port planning and coordination, and at-sea operations.**
 - **Force Assembly:** The first phase **focuses on assembling the participating forces** from both countries.
 - **Port Planning and Coordination:** This phase includes **courtesy meetings, joint operational planning, professional seminars, ship visits, and friendly interaction activities.**
 - **At-Sea Operations:** This phase **includes joint reconnaissance, air and missile defence, and maritime strike operations.**
 - **Joint Maritime Patrol:** After the exercise, both sides will conduct a **joint maritime patrol in relevant areas of the Pacific Ocean.**
 - **Comprehensive Naval Participation:** Both countries have **deployed major naval assets, submarines, shipborne helicopters, and marine personnel for the exercise.**
- **Historical Background:** The Joint Sea exercise **began as symbolic bilateral drills in 2012 and has gradually developed into an annual operational framework.**

Pandavani

News: Teejan Bai, the renowned Pandavani artist, passed away on July 5, 2026, after taking the Chhattisgarhi folk tradition to global audiences.

About Pandavani



Source – AIR

- **Pandavani** is a **traditional folk-narrative and musical performance art** from **Chhattisgarh** based on the **Mahabharata**.
- **Origin:** Pandavani originated from the **rural oral traditions of Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Odisha** to help common people **understand the moral teachings of the Mahabharata**.
- **Naming:** The word '**Pandavani**' is derived from "**Pandava**" and "**Vani**," which together mean "**the voice or narration of the Pandavas**."
- **Core Theme:** Pandavani presents **episodes from the Mahabharata** through **storytelling, music, acting, and improvisation**.
- **Key Elements of a Performance:**
 - **Narrator (Gayak):** The main performer **sings, narrates, and enacts different characters** through **voice, expressions, and gestures**.
 - **Musical Accompaniment:** Instruments such as the **tambura, tabla, harmonium, manjira, and kartal** provide rhythm and melody during the performance.
 - **Improvisation:** The performer adds **local humour, contemporary references, or social commentary** to connect with the audience.
 - **Language and Expression:** The narration uses the **Chhattisgarhi dialect** with expressive facial expressions, body movements, and hand gestures.

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- **Performance Styles:**
 - **Vedamati Style:** The performer sits and narrates the story in a composed and devotional manner.
 - This style gives **greater importance to storytelling than dramatization.**
 - **Kapalik Style:** The performer stands, moves around, and enacts different characters in a lively manner.
 - This style is **highly theatrical, interactive, and was popularised by Teejan Bai.**
- **Notable Artists:** Teejan Bai, Ritu Verma and Jhaduram Devangan are renowned artists who have contributed significantly to the popularity of Pandavani.

Himalayan Pangolin (*Manis aurita*)

News: Researchers have revalidated and concluded that the Himalayan pangolin (*Manis aurita*) is a distinct extant species, separate from the Chinese pangolin (*Manis pentadactyla*).

About Himalayan Pangolin (*Manis aurita*)



Source: DTE

- It is a **species** of Asian [Pangolin](#).
- **Earlier**, it was considered as a **subspecies** of Chinese pangolin (*Manis pentadactyla*).
- **Scientific name:** Its scientific name is **Manis aurita**.
- **Distribution:** Its distribution is **restricted to the southern Himalayan foothills, with confirmed populations in Nepal, South Tibet, and Northeast India, including the state of Assam.**
 - It experienced a **demographic contraction around the 14th century**, coinciding with the **onset of the Little Ice Age in the Himalayan region.**

- **Features:**

- Compared to the Chinese pangolin, the Himalayan pangolin **has a bigger body and skull, a longer tail and smaller ears.**
- **Size:** It is **larger on average (95.2 cm in size)** compared to **71.2 cm** for the Chinese pangolin.

- **Threat:**

- It is facing a threat from the **illegal wildlife trade.**
 - The products from species have **infiltrated regulated traditional medicine markets.**
- It also faces an **internal threat of inbreeding.**

- **Protection status:** It has been called for the same level of protection to be given to the **species under the CITES Appendix I.**

'Viksit UDAN' Scheme

News: Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently launched the next phase of the regional air connectivity scheme, 'Viksit UDAN'.

About 'Viksit UDAN' Scheme

- It is a **revamped UDAN scheme** launched to **accelerate regional aviation and support the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.**
- **Budget Outlay:** It has a budget outlay of **nearly ₹29,000 crore over the next 10 years.**
- **Major components:**
 - Under the scheme, **the government plans to develop 100 aerodromes** from existing unserved airstrips with an investment of ₹12,159 crore.
 - The plan allocates **₹2,577 crore** for the operation and maintenance of regional airports.
 - An additional **₹3,661 crore** has been earmarked for the construction of **200 modern helipads.**
 - To support the sustainability of regional air services, **₹10,043 crore** has been set aside as **Viability Gap Funding (VGF).**
 - It will **encourage the deployment of indigenous aircraft and helicopters, including HAL Dhruv and Dornier platforms,** in underserved and remote regions.

Underwater Fiber Optic Sensing System (UFOSS)

News: DRDO has invited industry partners to develop and deploy the Underwater Fiber Optic Sensing System (UFOSS) for continuous submarine surveillance.

About Underwater Fiber Optic Sensing System (UFOSS)

- **Underwater Fiber Optic Sensing System (UFOSS):** It is a **fixed network of undersea sensors** that provides **round-the-clock monitoring of underwater submarine activity**.
- **Developed by:** It is **being developed by the Naval Physical and Oceanographic Laboratory (NPOL)**, the **Defence Research and Development Organisation's (DRDO)** premier underwater warfare laboratory.
- **Objective:** The system aims to **strengthen underwater surveillance by continuously detecting submarine activity** and **supporting the Navy's anti-submarine warfare network**.
- **Working Mechanism:**
 - **Seabed Sensor Network:** The system uses **seabed sensor array nodes** connected through **subsea fibre-optic cables to collect underwater data**.
 - **Data Transmission:** The collected **data is transmitted through a beach manhole to a shore station**, where it is **received, monitored, and analysed**.
 - **Continuous Monitoring:** Unlike ships and aircraft that patrol only periodically, the **system continuously monitors underwater activity and guides anti-submarine warfare assets** towards potential contacts.
- **Key Features:**
 - **Robust Underwater Design:** The system uses durable underwater components, including **sensor array nodes, junction boxes, and branching units**, which are designed to withstand high pressure and seawater corrosion.
 - **Specialised Cable Deployment:** The **fibre-optic network will be deployed using Remotely Operated Vehicles (ROVs) and cable burial ploughs**, along with dedicated cable-laying ships, to install and protect the undersea infrastructure.
 - **Long Operational Life:** The system is **designed to operate continuously for 20 years** by using reliable underwater components that can function without routine maintenance.

- **Consortium-Based Development:** The project allows the lead system integrator to **partner with up to five specialised engineering** firms so that expertise in subsea cable manufacturing, marine surveys, and system integration can be brought together.

Perungulam Tank

News: Environmentalists have demanded conservation of Perungulam Tank due to illegal lotus cultivation, highlighting its rich avian biodiversity and ecological significance.

About Perungulam Tank



Source – TH

- **Perungulam Tank** is a **biodiversity-rich wetland** and an **important irrigation waterbody** that supports **rich bird biodiversity**.
- **Location:** It is located in the **Thoothukudi district, Tamil Nadu**.
- **Key Features:**
 - **Large Irrigation Tank:** The tank **spreads across about 850 to 900 acres** and serves as an important **source of irrigation and domestic water** in the region.
 - **Hydrological Significance:** The tank is the last in a chain of irrigation tanks and receives water from the historic **Thamirabarani River** and both **southwest and northeast monsoons**.
 - **Rich Bird Habitat:** The tank supports over 5,000 birds every year and provides an **important feeding and roosting site for resident and migratory birds throughout the year**.
 - **Unique natural landscape:** The tank is **bisected by the Ucham Parambu mound**, which shelters various native trees and thorny bushes.

- **Heritage significance:** The tank has the over 1,000-year-old Sivaite Thiruvazhutheswarar Temple and Vaishnavite Maya Koothar Perumal Temple near its northeast corner.
- **Threats:** Illegal lotus cultivation, high-tension power lines across the tank, and manmade structures have raised concerns for bird conservation and habitat protection.
- **Status:** It is currently being considered by environmentalists and the Tamil Nadu Forest Department for inclusion under the Ramsar Convention or as a Wetland Conservation Reserve.

Specialised Investment Funds (SIFs)

News: The newly introduced Specialised Investment Funds (SIFs) have crossed ₹13,814 crore in assets under management (AUM) after the framework was introduced.

About Specialised Investment Funds (SIFs)



Source – ICICI

- **Specialised Investment Funds (SIFs)** are pooled investment products that provide greater flexibility for managing advanced investment strategies.
- **Introduced by:** It is introduced by Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI), through a circular dated February 27, 2025.
- **Legality:** It operate under the SEBI (Mutual Funds) Regulations, 1996.

- **Effective from:** The SIF framework became **effective from April 1, 2025**.
- **Objective:** SIFs were introduced to **bridge the gap between traditional Mutual Funds (MFs) and Portfolio Management Services (PMS)** by providing **greater investment flexibility** with **regulatory safeguards for sophisticated investors**.
- **Eligibility criteria:**
 - **Investor eligibility:** Investors must **invest at least ₹10 lakhs per PAN** across all strategies of a particular **Asset Management Companies (AMC)**, while **accredited investors are exempted** from this requirement.
 - **AMC eligibility:** **Only SEBI-registered Asset Management Companies (AMCs)** can launch **SIFs** through either the sound track record route or the alternate route, subject to the prescribed experience, AUM, and regulatory conditions.
- **Categories of Investment:**
 - **Long-short strategy:** SIFs allow directional long-short equity exposure.
 - **Derivative strategy:** They permit derivative strategy **exposure up to 25% of NAV**.
 - **Multi-asset strategy:** They allow **multi-asset or hybrid allocations** combined with derivative exposure.
- **Key features:**
 - **Transparency:** Every scheme **provides an Investment Strategy Information Document (ISID)**, risk band from 1 to 5, and scenario analysis of expected losses.
 - **Risk controls:** **SIFs limit sector exposure to 25% of NAV** and prescribe **issuer-wise and derivative exposure limits**.
 - **Liquidity:** SIFs **can be offered as open-ended or closed-ended investment products**.
 - **Distribution:** SIFs require distinct branding, and distributors **must possess SEBI-mandated National Institute of Securities Markets (NISM) certification**.

Designated Repository under Biological Diversity Act, 2002

News: The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has designated the Natural History Museum (NHM), Mizoram University, Aizawl, as a Designated Repository under Section 39 of the Biological Diversity Act, 2002.

About Designated Repository under Biological Diversity Act, 2002



Source: Natural History Museum (NHM)

- The **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change** has **designated** the **Natural History Museum (NHM), Mizoram University, Aizawl**, as a Designated Repository.
- **About Designated Repository (DR):** It is a **safe deposit** of **holotypes or isotypes or paratypes of new taxa discovered in India** and **samples of biological resources accessed by foreign citizens or entities** for research or sent/carried abroad by Indian citizens/institutions for research.
- **Designated by:** Under **Section 39 of the Biological Diversity Act, 2002**, the **[National Biodiversity Authority \(NBA\)](#)** is authorized to **designate institutions as repositories** for biological resources, in consultation with the Central Government.
- **Total Designated Repositories:** India has **21 Designated Repositories**.

About Natural History Museum (NHM), Mizoram

- **Establish year:** It was **established in 2022** under the **aegis of Mizoram University**.
- It is uniquely positioned **because of its location within the Indo-Burma Biodiversity Hotspot** and its **specialized taxonomic expertise**.
- **Importance of designation:** The designation advances **National Biodiversity Target 4 of India's National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan (2024-2030)** by strengthening ex situ conservation and the conservation of genetic diversity, **in line with Target 4 of the [Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework](#)**.

Matcha Tea

News: An Assam tea estate sold India's first commercially-produced matcha tea, marking a significant shift from conventional teas.

About Matcha Tea



Figure 13. Source: Research Gate

- Matcha is a **bright green powder** made from ground, shade-grown green tea leaves.
- It is an **important part of Japanese culture** and is commonly used during traditional ceremonies.
- **Production:** It is primarily manufactured in **Japan, China, and Vietnam**.
 - In India, it is commercially produced in **Tinsukia district of eastern Assam**.
- **Process of making:**
 - It is made after shading **Camellia sinensis** tea leaves for **three to four weeks** before harvest.
 - The **tea plants** are grown under the **shade of bamboo mats** before harvesting.
 - **Blocking 90% of sunlight** from the leaves **boosts their chlorophyll** and **amino acid levels** and gives them a **distinct colour and flavour**.
 - It is made by **finely grinding the shade-grown tea leaves** into a vibrant green powder.
 - Unlike regular green tea, **where the leaves are steeped and discarded, matcha is whisked into water and consumed entirely**, providing higher levels of antioxidants, amino acids, and natural caffeine
 - It contains **much higher levels of caffeine than other forms of green tea**, generally **settling out at around 19-44mg of caffeine per gram**.
- **Health Benefits:** Matcha is **rich in antioxidants, phytochemicals, and the amino acid L-theanine**, which may help improve concentration and alertness.