

Factly Weekly

Compilation

2026

**For UPSC CSE Prelims
Exam**

3rd Week

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Kishau Multipurpose Project

News: Six states signed a Memorandum of Understanding, to pave the way for the long-pending 422 MW Kishau Multipurpose Project.

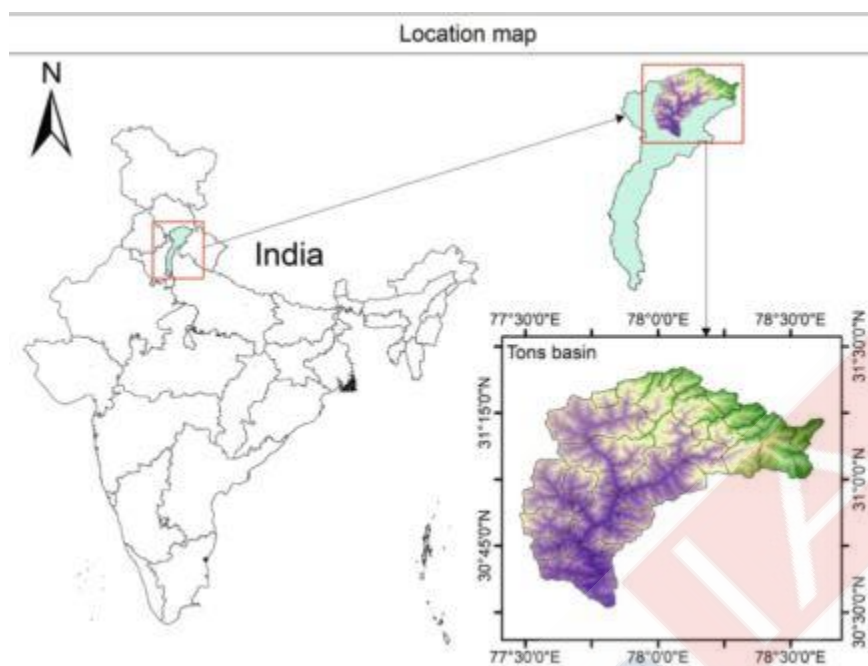
About Kishau Multipurpose Project



Source – Kishau Corp

- The **Kishau Multipurpose Project** is an **inter-state hydropower and water-storage project** on the **Tons River**.
- **Location:** The project site lies on the **border of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand**.
- **Aim:** The project aims to **generate hydropower, create irrigation potential, and provide drinking and industrial water** to the beneficiary states.
- **Participating States:** **Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Haryana, Delhi, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh** are the participating states.
- **Funding Pattern:** The **Central Government** will bear **90% of the water component cost**, while the **remaining 10% will be shared by the six states**.
- **Key Features**
 - **Dam:** The project envisages a **232.6-metre-high concrete gravity dam**.
 - **Power Generation:** It will have an **installed capacity of 422 MW** and is **expected to generate 1,476 million units of clean hydropower**.
 - **Water Storage:** The project will have a **storage capacity of 1,786 MCM**, with **1,324 MCM expected to be actually stored**.
 - **Irrigation and Water Supply:** It is expected to create irrigation potential of about **97,076 hectares** and provide drinking and industrial water to beneficiary states.

About Tons River



Source – ResearchGate

- **Origin:** The Tons river originates from the Bandarpunch Mountain (6,315 m) in Uttarakhand.
- **Natural Boundary:** The Tons forms a natural boundary between Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh in the Jaunsar region.
- **Course:** It flows through the Garhwal region of Uttarakhand, touches Himachal Pradesh.
 - It has a length of about 200 km.
- It is the perennial rivers emerging from the Himalayas.
- **Terrain:** It flows through deep gorges, tranquil valleys and dense forests.
- **Tributaries:** The Pabbar and Asan rivers are its main tributaries.
- **Confluence:** The river joins the Yamuna near Kalsi in Dehradun district, Uttarakhand.

Rungia mastersii

News: Rungia mastersii was rediscovered in Assam's Jatinga Hills after nearly 180 years, having not been seen anywhere during this period.

About Rungia mastersii



Source – Mongabay

- **Rungia mastersii** is a rare shrubby herb endemic to Assam.
- **Family:** It belongs to the **Acanthaceae** family.
- **Genus:** It belongs to the **Rungia** genus, which has 88 accepted species worldwide.
- **Habitat:** It grows in **moist, shaded rock crevices** beside streams in **moist forests** at **900–1,250 m** elevation.
- **Distribution:** The species is **known from Jatinga Hills** in **Dima Hasao district, Assam**.
 - It was **first collected in 1845** from an **unidentified location along the Sundar River**.
- **Key Features:**
 - **Plant size:** It is a **shrubby herb** that grows **60–110 cm** tall.
 - **Flowers:** It has **pale green to whitish flowers** with **delicate purple streaks**.
 - **Concentration:** The known plants **occur in one highly concentrated location**.
- **Threats:** Its highly concentrated population is **vulnerable to landslides and forest fires**, requiring **active monitoring, habitat protection and intensive surveys**.
- **Conservation Status:** The species is currently “**not evaluated**” under **IUCN Red List** criteria.

World Circular Economy Forum 2026

News: India is hosting the World Circular Economy Forum 2026 in Gandhinagar from September 15 to 18, for the first time in South Asia.

About World Circular Economy Forum 2026



Source – NOA

- **World Circular Economy Forum (WCEF)** is an **annual global forum** for **sharing solutions** and **advancing the transition towards a circular economy**.
- **Origin:** It was **launched in 2017** by the **Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra**.
- **Official Partner:** The **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)** is an official partner of WCEF.
- **2026 Edition:** It is the **10th edition** of the **World Circular Economy Forum**.
- **Host:** **India is hosting the 10th edition of the World Circular Economy Forum in Gandhinagar, Gujarat**.
- **Theme:** The theme is “**Circular Economy: Transition for People and Prosperity.**”
- **Organized by:** The forum is jointly organized by the **Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)**, **Finnish Innovation Fund Sitra**, **Government of Finland**, **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change**, **Government of Gujarat** and **Gujarat Pollution Control Board**.
- **Aim:** The forum aims to promote **global cooperation, circular finance, private-sector investment, policy dialogue, cross-sectoral partnerships, and innovation** for sustainable production and consumption.

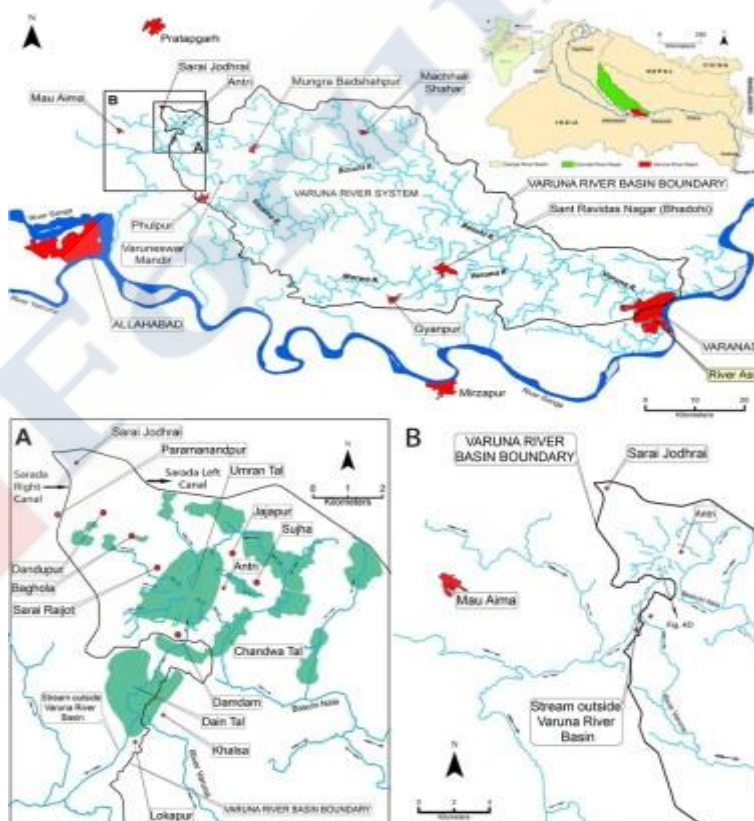
- **Key Features:**

- **Global participation:** More than **2,000 stakeholders** from over **65 countries** will participate.
- **Circular solutions expo:** An international expo with **more than 125 exhibitors** will showcase practical circular economy solutions.
- **Thematic discussions:** The main programme will feature **4 plenary sessions** and **16 parallel thematic sessions**.
 - These sessions **will cover artificial intelligence, employment potential, energy production, finance, governance, sustainable products, industrial solutions, start-up ecosystems and youth leadership.**
- **International cooperation:** WCEF 2026 will feature the **10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns (10 YFP) Board meeting**.
 - **India will co-chair the meeting**, while global collaborators will organise 80 accelerator sessions.

Varuna River

News: Varuna Elevated Corridor along the Varuna River in Varanas is set to become a key axis of modern urban mobility.

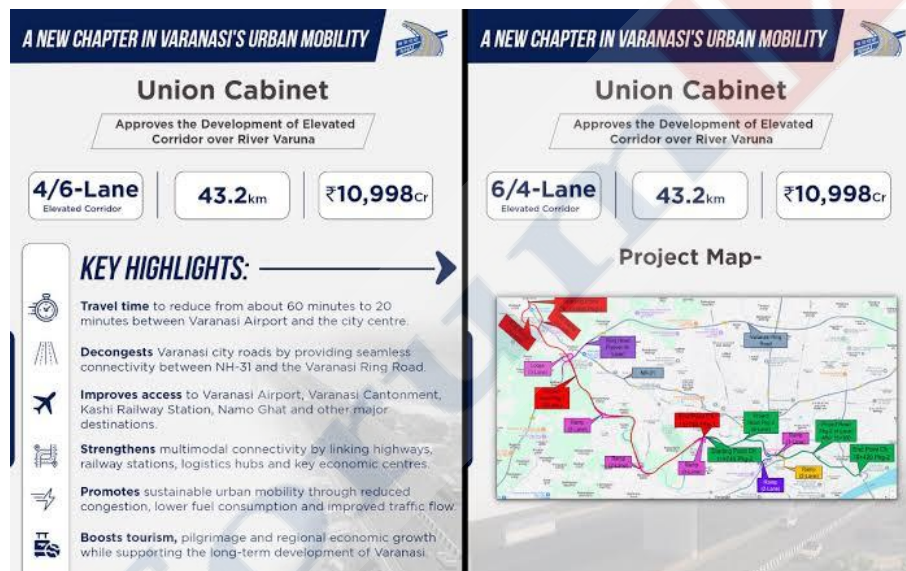
About Varuna River



Source: Research Gate

- **Varuna River** flows through the **Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh**.
The name of the **Varanasi** is believed to be derived from the **two-river bordering the city** i.e. **Varuna & Assi**.
- **Origin:** It originates from **Jhigna Tal (Phulpur Tal)** near Allahabad, Uttar Pradesh.
- **Course of river:** After flowing **towards south east for about 70 km**, it meets two more tributaries of Ganga namely **Morawa river and Basuhi river**.
 - Both tributaries originates near Phulpur (about 100 km North West of Varanasi).Finally **flowing through Varanasi**, the river **meets river Ganga** at Saray Mohana.
- **Sarnath** is situated at the confluence of the rivers Ganga and Varuna river.
- **Tributary of:** It is a tributary of the **Ganga**.
- **National Waterway: National Waterway 108 (52.83 km)** spans the Varuna River in Uttar Pradesh, running from the road bridge near Kuru to the Ganga river **confluence at Saray Mohana in Varanasi**.

About Varuna Elevated Corridor



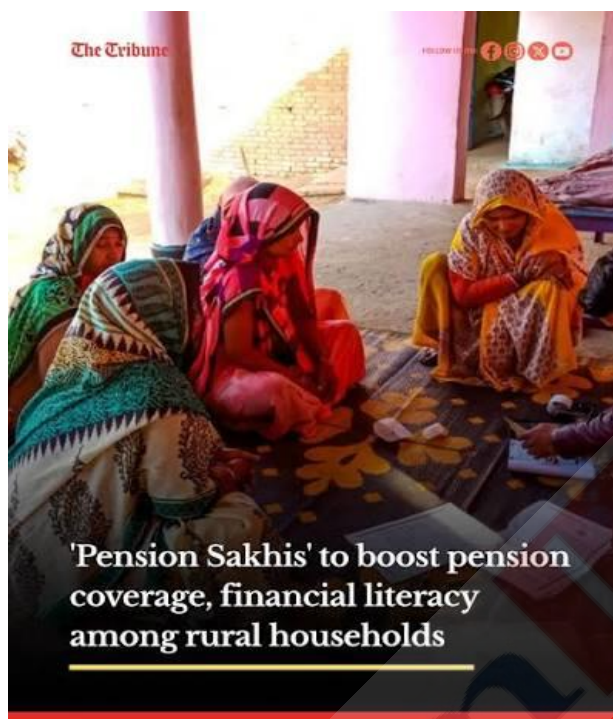
Source: NHAI

- **Varuna Elevated Corridor** is a major infrastructure project along the **Varuna River in Varanasi**.
- **Purpose:** The main purpose of the project is to provide an **alternative high-capacity route** and reduce congestion on the existing urban roads of Varanasi.
- **Length:** It has a total length of **43.218 km**.
- **Features:** The corridor will provide connectivity between **NH-31 and the Varanasi Ring Road**, thereby improving movement **across the city and surrounding areas**.

Pension Sakhis

News: Department of Rural Development (DoRD) and the Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA) signed a MoU to create and support a community-based outreach mechanism of 'Pension Sakhis' across rural India.

About Pension Sakhis



Source: The Tribune

- **Pension Sakhis** are a new **community-based network** which will work as **trusted community-level facilitators** to take **pension awareness and retirement planning** closer to **rural households**, particularly reaching SHG members, rural women, Lakhpati Didis and other rural participants.
- **Nodal Department:** This is an initiative of **Department of Rural Development (DoRD)** and the **Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA)**.
- **Focus:** The focus is on **enrolment, financial awareness** and **informed** decision-making.
- **Features:**
 - **Network Integration:** The initiative seeks to **leverage the extensive community institutional network** created under the [Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana–National Rural Livelihoods Mission \(DAY-NRLM\)](#), including its Banking Correspondent (BC) Sakhis and other trained community resource persons.
 - It will use **women-led SHGs** to help reach households that have **limited access to financial advice and pension-planning services**.
 - It will **support households with information on pension and retirement planning at doorsteps, facilitate enrolment**, and provide assistance in **understanding pension-related services**.
 - It will **improve awareness and adoption** of pension products, including the **National Pension System (NPS)**.
 - **Monitoring and tracking:** **Digital dashboards, mobile and web-based solutions, and unique identifier-based tracking** through **Central Recordkeeping Agencies** will support the monitoring of outreach, enrolment and the performance of Pension Sakhis.

Parang La

News: The NCC's 'Aparajita – Parang La 2026' expedition was flagged-in at Karzok, Ladakh on September 16, 2026.

About Parang La

- **Parang La** is a **high-altitude mountain pass** in the **Trans-Himalayas**.
- **Connects:** It connects the **Spiti Valley of Himachal Pradesh** with the **Changthang region of Ladakh**.
- **Historical Significance:** It was a **traditional trade route between Spiti and Ladakh**.
- **Key Features:**
 - **Terrain:** The trail passes through **glaciers, snowfields, river valleys, deep gorges and arid landscapes**.
 - **Altitude:** It has an **elevation of around 5,600 m**.
 - **Rivers Association:** It serves as the source area of the **Pare Chu River (Parang River)**, which **originates in Himachal Pradesh**.
 - It **flows into Tibet and then re-enters India in Ladakh/Spiti**.

Madurai Meenakshi Temple

News: The Maha Kumbabishekam ceremony of Madurai Meenakshi Temple was held after seventeen years, with thousands of devotees witnessing the event.

About Madurai Meenakshi Temple

- **Meenakshi Sundareswarar Temple** is a **historic Hindu temple**.
- **Location:** It is located in **Madurai, Tamil Nadu**, on the **southern bank of the Vaigai River**.
- **Deities:** The main deities are **Meenakshi (Parvati) and Sundareswarar (Shiva)**.
 - **Alagar, a form of Vishnu**, is also associated with the temple.
- **Architecture Style:** The temple follows the **Dravidian style** and **Nayaka school of architecture**.
- **Builders:** The **Pandya kings built the original temple**.
 - **Vishwanatha Nayaka and Tirumala Nayaka** contributed to its present form during the **16th–17th centuries CE**.
- **Key Features**
 - **Temple Complex:** The temple covers **45 acres** and measures **254 × 237 metres**.
 - **Gopurams:** It has **14 gopurams**, including **four tall outer gopurams**.
 - **Tallest Gopuram:** The **Southern tower rises to over 170 feet** and was **built in 1559**.
 - **Thousand Pillar Hall:** The **Ayirakkal Mandapam** was built around **1569 CE** and contains **985 carved pillars**.
 - **Musical Pillars:** The **Musical Pillars** are **located outside the Thousand Pillar Hall towards the west**, and **each pillar produces a different musical note when struck**.
- **Festival:** **Meenakshi Tirukalyanam** is the **annual festival** celebrated during the **Chithirai festival in April–May**.
 - The **Maha Kumbabishekam ceremony** was held after **seventeen years**.
- **Recognition:** The temple was recognised as “**Best Swachh Iconic Place**” in **2017** and has been **nominated for World Heritage**.

Enhancement of EPFO Wage Ceiling

News: The Union Cabinet has raised the EPFO mandatory coverage wage ceiling from Rs.15,000 to Rs.25,000 per month.

Key Highlights of Enhancement of EPFO Wage Ceiling

- **Implementation:** The **Ministry of Labour & Employment and Employees' Provident Fund Organization (EPFO)** will undertake the necessary statutory and administrative steps for implementation.
- **Changes made**
 - **Higher Coverage:** The revised ceiling will **bring more than 51 lakh additional employees** under mandatory EPFO coverage.
 - **Wage Band:** Employees earning between **₹15,000 and ₹25,000 per month will come within the statutory social security framework.**
 - **Social Security:** The decision will **expand access to provident fund savings, pension protection under EPS and insurance protection under EDLI.**
 - **Ceiling Revision:** The wage ceiling **remained unchanged from 2004 to 2014** before being increased to ₹15,000 in September 2014.
- **Reason for Revision:** The increase **reflects sustained wage growth, rising incomes and continued expansion of formal employment.**
- **Government Outgo:** The annual Government outgo is **estimated at about ₹11,339 crore**, while expenditure over **five years is approximately ₹56,696 crore.**
- **Expected Impact:** The measure is expected to give further **impetus to employment formalisation, worker retention and long-term retirement security.**

Budhabalanga River

News: The National Green Tribunal (NGT) recently examined a case of alleged illegal sand mining in the Budhabalanga River in Mayurbhanj district, Odisha.

About Budhabalanga River

- **Budhabalanga River flows through Odisha.**
- **Origin:** It originates from the **Simlipal Hill**, Mayurbhanj district, **Odisha.**
- **Course of river:** It plunges through **Barehipani falls, the second-highest waterfall in India**, located in [Simlipal National Park](#).
 - It flows through **Baripada and Balasore districts** before it finally empties into the **Bay of Bengal.**
- **Length:** It has with a **length of around 175 km.**
- It has a total **catchment area of 4,840 sq. km.**
- **Tributaries:** Its major tributaries are **Palapala, Sunei, Kalo, Sanjo, Deo, Gangahari and Katra.**

Gegeneophis Chandgadi

News: Scientists have discovered Gegeneophis Chandgadi, a new species of subterranean, legless amphibian from Maharashtra.

About Gegeneophis Chandgadi

- **Gegeneophis chandgadi** is a **newly discovered species of legless amphibian**, known as a **caecilian.**

- **Family and Genus:** The species belongs to the family Grandisoniidae and the genus Gegeneophis, commonly known as **blind caecilians**.
- It is a **group of elusive, limbless amphibians** that spend much of their lives underground.
- It was discovered from **Maharashtra, in the Western Ghats**.
- **Habitat:** It spends most of their lives **underground**.
- **Features:**
 - **Size:** Adult *G. chandgadi* measure approximately 105–185 mm in length.
 - **Appearance:**
 - It has a slender, cylindrical, legless and tailless body.
 - Its upper body is dark brown to dark flesh-coloured, with a pinkish head and belly.
 - It has 132–135 primary annuli, or ring-like grooves, around its body.
- **Conservation status:** Researchers have recommended a **Data Deficient status** until its wider distribution and population are better understood.

Melanoma

News: In August 2026, intismeran, a personalised mRNA vaccine, showed reduced melanoma recurrence when combined with pembrolizumab.

About Melanoma



Source – Cleveland Clinic

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- **Melanoma** is a **type of skin cancer**.
- It **develops from melanocytes**, the **cells that produce melanin**.
- It usually **develops on sun-exposed skin**, including the arms, back, face and legs.
- In India, it **commonly occurs on the soles of the feet or beneath the nails and is called acral lentiginous melanoma**.
- Mucosal melanoma **starts in the mucous membranes** and is highly aggressive, with few early warning signs.
- **Causes:**
 - **UV Exposure:** Most melanomas are **caused by exposure to ultraviolet (UV) light** from sunlight or tanning lamps and beds.
 - **Unclear Cause:** The exact cause of all melanomas is **not clear**.
- **Symptoms:**
 - **Mole Changes:** A **change in an existing mole** can be a warning sign.
 - **New Growth:** A **new pigmented or unusual-looking growth** may **develop on the skin**.
 - **Persistent Lesions:** Any **pigmented lesion that changes or persists** needs investigation.
- **Treatment:**
 - **Surgery:** In early stages, surgery has a high probability of curing melanoma.
 - **Lymphadenectomy:** If melanoma has spread, **nearby lymph nodes may need to be removed**.
 - **Metastasectomy:** It is **used to remove small melanoma growths** from organs.
 - **Immunotherapy:** Immune-checkpoint blockade using **therapies targeting CTLA-4** (Cytotoxic T-Lymphocyte-Associated Protein4) **and PD-1** (Programmed Cell Death Protein 1) can help the immune system attack tumours.
 - **Precision medicine:** Next-generation sequencing (NGS) can **identify tumour mutations**, including **BRAF pathway mutations**, to **guide targeted treatment**.
 - **TIL therapy:** **Tumour-infiltrating lymphocytes (TILs)** are taken from the tumour, expanded in the laboratory and reinfused in larger numbers.
 - **Personalised mRNA vaccine:** In August 2026, **intismeran with pembrolizumab** **significantly reduced** recurrence after surgery, **although survival data remain pending**.

Global Financial Centres Index (GFCI 40)

News: GIFT City climbed nine places to 37th globally and entered the top 15 financial centres in Asia-Pacific in GFCI 40.

About Global Financial Centres Index (GFCI 40)



Source – GIFT City

- **Global Financial Centres Index (GFCI 40):** It provides **rankings and evaluations** of the future competitiveness of financial centres worldwide.
- **Published by:** It is published by **Z/Yen Partners** in collaboration with the **China Development Institute (CDI)**.
- **Started in:** The GFCI has been published since 2007.
- **2026 Edition:** It is the 40th edition, published in September 2026.
- **Frequency:** It is updated and published twice a year, in **March and September**.
- **Evaluation Methodology:** It uses **144 instrumental factors** from **third-party sources**, including the **World Bank, OECD and United Nations**.
 - The index provides rankings for **117 financial centres**.
- **Key Highlights**
 - **Global Leaders:** **New York** leads the index, followed by **London**, while **Hong Kong** ranks third and **Singapore** fourth.
 - **FinTech:** **Hong Kong** leads the **FinTech** ranking, followed by **New York, Shenzhen, Singapore, Shanghai** and **London**.
 - **Global Outlook:** The report identifies **digital infrastructure, cybersecurity, FinTech** and **deeper capital markets** as priority areas.
 - **India's Global Rank:** **GIFT City** improved from **46th to 37th**, gaining **nine places** globally.
 - **India's Asia-Pacific Rank:** **GIFT City** entered the **top 15** financial centres in Asia-Pacific.
 - **India's FinTech Rank:** **GIFT City** ranked **26th** globally in **FinTech**, improving from 29th.
 - **Future Position:** **GIFT City** was among the **15 centres** expected to gain greater significance over the next two to three years.

Stem Cell Therapy

News: The Union Health Ministry has asked States and Union Territories to restrict stem cell therapy for Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) to approved clinical trials.

About Stem Cell Therapy



Source – Revival Clinic

- **Stem Cells:** They are **undifferentiated biological cells** that can **differentiate into specialized cells** and **divide to produce more stem cells**.
 - **Role:** They are **found in almost all tissues** and **help in tissue maintenance and repair**.
 - **Types:** The main **types of stem cells** are **embryonic, adult, induced pluripotent and perinatal stem cells**.
- **Stem Cell Therapy:** It uses **stem cells** to **prevent or treat diseases** and **promote the repair of diseased, dead or injured tissues**.
- **Working Mechanism:**
 - **Extraction:** Stem cells are **taken from a suitable source**, such as **bone marrow**, and **processed in a laboratory**.
 - **Specialisation:** The cells are **manipulated to become specific types**, such as **heart muscle, blood or nerve cells**.
 - **Implantation:** The **specialised cells** are **implanted into the person** and may help repair damaged tissue.
- **Applications:**
 - **Disease Treatment:** Stem cell transplants are **used to treat leukemia, lymphoma and multiple myeloma**.
 - **Tissue Repair:** Stem cells may **help replace damaged neurons, produce insulin and repair cartilage**.
 - **Regenerative Medicine:** Stem cells are **being studied for type 1 diabetes, Parkinson's disease, heart failure and osteoarthritis**.
 - **Research and Drug Testing:** Stem cells can **help researchers understand diseases and test new drugs for safety, effectiveness and toxicity**.
- **Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) in India:** In India, the use of stem cell therapy for ASD is restricted to **duly approved clinical trials**.
 - Available evidence does not support its use as a **standard treatment** for ASD.

Ramjak Mountain

News: A four-member team from Keralam recently scaled Ramjak, a 6,318-metre peak in the remote Lahaul region of Himachal Pradesh.

About Ramjak Mountain



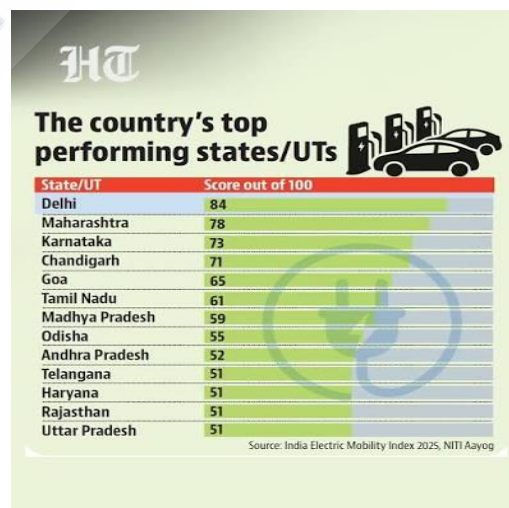
Source – ResearchGate

- The **Ramjak mountain** is a **high-altitude mountain peak** located in the **Lahaul region of Himachal Pradesh**.
 - The peak is **located near Shingo La**, which is a popular trek route from **Himachal to Zaskar**.
- **Height:** It rises to **around 6,318 m (20,728 ft)**.
- **Temperature:** The temperature on the mountain hovers between **-35 degree celsius and minus -40 degree celsius**.
- **First Ascent:** The **first successful ascent** was **achieved in 2002** by an expedition of the **Indian Mountaineering Foundation (IMF)**, led by **Sangay Dorjee Sherpa**.
- It has **glacier terrain, steep summit slopes, and rapid altitude**.

India Electric Mobility Index (IEMI) 2025

News: Delhi has topped NITI Aayog's India Electric Mobility Index (IEMI) 2025 for the development of the e-mobility ecosystem and the adoption of electric vehicles (EVs) on Indian roads.

About India Electric Mobility Index (IEMI) 2025



Source: HT

- **IEMI** is a **composite Index**, which assesses **the policy framework and implementation outcomes** for e-mobility at the state-level.
- **Developed by:** **NITI Aayog** developed the index in collaboration with **WRI India**.
- **Themes:** The report covers **three themes**:
 - **transport electrification progress (50%)**
 - **charging infrastructure readiness (30%)**
 - **EV research and innovation status (20%)**
- **Scores:** According to the index, the **composite scores on performance across all 36 States and Union Territories (UTs)** ranges from **10 to 84**, and a **median score of 40**.
- **Performance:** **Delhi has topped** the NITI Aayog's India Electric Mobility Index (IEMI) 2025.
 - **Maharashtra and Karnataka secured the second and third positions**, with scores of 78 and 73 respectively.
 - **Chandigarh and Goa** secured the fourth and fifth positions, with scores of 71 and 65 respectively.
 - **Goa improved significantly by climbing ten positions** and secured the fifth position.
 - **Madhya Pradesh recorded a major improvement**, rising from **23rd position in 2024 to seventh position in 2025**.
- **Performance of Large States**
 - Eight large states, namely **Tamil Nadu, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh**, were classified as **frontrunners**, with scores between 50 and 64.
 - Seven large states, namely **Chhattisgarh, West Bengal, Bihar, Kerala, Jharkhand, Punjab and Gujarat**, were classified as **emerging performers**, with scores between 35 and 49.
- **Themewise performance:**
 - **Transport Electrification:** This category measures **EV adoption, market absorption, consumer acceptance and demand-side momentum**.
 - **Delhi, Chandigarh and Maharashtra** were the only States and UTs to qualify as top performers in transport electrification progress.
 - **Charging Infrastructure:** This category assesses factors such as the **charger-to-vehicle ratio, subsidies for charging infrastructure, building bye-laws for EV charging and power availability**.
 - **Karnataka recorded the highest national score of 97** in charging infrastructure readiness.
 - **Goa and Maharashtra** followed with scores of **92 and 91**, respectively.
 - **EV Research and Innovation:** This category considers the presence of **EV startups, research and development initiatives, and patents** related to electric mobility.
 - **Delhi achieved the highest score of 94** in EV research and innovation status.

Global Business Climate Survey 2026

News: India has been ranked first in business climate among 40-plus global markets in the Global Business Climate Survey 2026.

About Global Business Climate Survey 2026

- The **Global Business Climate Survey** presents **Swedish companies' views** on doing business across **41 global markets**.
- **Produced by:** It is jointly produced by **Business Sweden, Swedish Chambers of Commerce (SCI), and Sweden's embassies and consulates**.
- **Origin:** The survey was **first conducted in 2020**.
- **Aim:** It compares **economic performance, outlook, and operating conditions** and **identifies challenges and opportunities** in key Swedish export markets.
- **Methodology:** More than 2,250 C-level representatives of Swedish companies **answered 18 standard questions** about the business climate in their main markets.
 - The **responses were weighted by region**.
- **Key Highlights:**
 - **Regional outlook:** **Asia-Pacific (APAC)** remains the **most optimistic region**, while the Middle East and Africa show more cautious sentiment.
 - **India's business climate:** India ranks **first in business climate** among the surveyed markets.
 - **India's growth outlook:** Market-level growth projections are **highest in India, Philippines and Poland**.
 - **India's investment position:** India is among the **top investment markets in APAC**, along with the Philippines.

Himalayan Monal

News: Two studies by Hemvathi Nandan Bahuguna University researchers highlighted the effects of human-made noise and climate change on the Himalayan monal.

About Himalayan Monal

- The **Himalayan monal** is a large, ground-dwelling pheasant.
 - **Scientific Name:** Its scientific name is **Lophophorus impejanus**.
 - **Family:** It belongs to the **pheasant family, Phasianidae**.
 - **Local Name:** It is called **Danfe** in the **Nepali language**.
- **Cultural importance:** It is the **national bird of Nepal** and the **state bird of Uttarakhand**.
- **Habitat:** It lives in **upper temperate conifer and oak forests with open grasslands** at about **2,400–4,500 m**.
- **Distribution:** It is found **from eastern Afghanistan through the Himalayas to China**, including **India, Nepal, Bhutan, Pakistan and Myanmar**.
- **Key Features:**
 - **Appearance:** It shows high **sexual dimorphism**.
 - **Males** have **multi-coloured plumage** and a **long green metallic crest**,
 - while **females** have a **pale blue eye patch, white throat and streaky brown body**.
 - **Feeding:** It **digs into the ground and snow** for leaves, shoots, tubers, seeds and insects.
 - **Altitudinal Movement:** It **moves to higher elevations in summer for breeding** and **moves down in winter during heavy snowfall**.
 - **Courtship:** **Males** perform **dance-like courtship displays** and show their **colourful plumage** and **bright white back patch**.
 - **Communication:** It has a **range of calls** used for purposes such as **raising an alarm** and **calling potential mates**.

- **Threats:**
 - Habitat loss
 - Hunting
 - Pollution
 - Human-made noise
 - Climate change
- **Conservation Status**
 - **IUCN Status: Least Concern (LC)**
 - **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972: Schedule-I**

Perim Island

News: Iran-backed Houthi rebels have seized Yemen's Perim Island, a strategic point in the Bab el-Mandeb Strait.

About Perim Island

- **Perim Island** is a **small volcanic island** belonging to **Yemen**.
 - It is also known as **Mayun Island**.
- **Location:** It is located in the **Bab el-Mandeb Strait**, at the **southern entrance of the Red Sea**.
- **Channel Division:** The Perim Island **divides the Bab el-Mandeb Strait into two channels**.
 - **Eastern Channel:** It is called **Alexander's Strait**.
 - **Western Channel:** It is called the **Dact-el-Mayun Channel**.
- **Key Features:**
 - **Size and Height:** The rocky island **covers about 13 sq. km and rises up to 65 m**.
 - **Strategic location:** Its importance increased after the **Suez Canal connected the Mediterranean Sea with the Arabian Sea through the Red Sea**.
 - **Political Status:** It remained **part of the British Empire from 1857 to 1967 and became part of independent Yemen in 1967**.
 - **Facilities:** It has a **deep natural harbor on the southwestern side** and a **military airfield in the north**.
- **Current Crisis:**
 - **Houthi Capture:** In September 2026, **Iran-backed Houthi rebels captured Perim Island**.
 - **Trade Concerns:** The **Bab el-Mandeb Strait handles nearly 10% of global trade and about 5% of global oil and petroleum shipments daily**.
 - A disrupted route could force vessels to **reroute via Africa, adding nearly 14 days to delivery schedules**.

Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) 2.0

News: The Ministry of Rural Development will commence DDU-GKY 2.0 training batches across most States and Union Territories from October 2026.

About Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) 2.0

- The **DDU-GKY 2.0** provides **placement-linked skill training to poor rural youth**.
- **Origin:** **DDU-GKY** was launched in **2014** by the **Ministry of Rural Development**.
 - DDU-GKY 2.0 is its second edition.
- **Type of Scheme:** It is a **Centrally Sponsored Scheme**.

- **Part of:** It is part of the **National Rural Livelihood Mission (NRLM)**.
- **Eligibility:** Rural youth aged **15–35 years** are eligible.
 - While Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST), women, Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) and Persons with Disabilities (PwDs) can be covered up to **45 years**.
- **Social Coverage:** The scheme mandates coverage of **50% SC/ST, 15% minorities and 33% women**.
- **Training Duration:** The duration of skill training ranges from **3 to 12 months**, depending on the course.
- **Key Features of DDU-GKY 2.0**
 - Targets have been allocated to **all 31 participating States and Union Territories** for the 2026–28 period.
 - **5.6 lakh rural youth targets across more than 1,200 projects** have been allocated by **24 States and Union Territories**, while other States are at advanced stages of allocation.
 - **Digital Portal:** The integrated portal supports the **end-to-end project lifecycle, digital monitoring, transparency and greater efficiency**.
 - **Online Payments:** Integration with **State Treasury Portals** will facilitate online payments through the **Grameen Kaushal Portal**.
 - **Regional Workshops:** Hybrid workshops will be organised at **Shillong, Vijayawada, Mumbai and Dharamshala** during October 2026 to familiarise Project Implementing Agencies with the digital platform.

Sankh River

News: Tragedy struck in Sundargarh district, Odisha when three minor girls drowned in the Sankh River while making preparations for the Karma Puja.

About Sankh River

- The **Sankh River** flows across **Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh and Odisha**.
- It is part of **Brahmani River system**.
- **Origin:** It starts from **Gumla district in Jharkhand** and flows **67.5 km in the state** before entering **Chhattisgarh**.
- **Course of river:** It runs a distance of **about 50 km in Chhattisgarh** and enters **Jharkhand again** to flow for another **78 km**.
 - It finally enters **Odisha** and merges with the **Koel river**.
 - **Sankh and the Koel river join** at **Vedavyasa near Rourkela in Sundargarh district of Odisha** to form a major river called the **Brahmani**.
- **Total length:** Its total length is about **240 km**.
- **Waterfall:** The **Sadni falls (60 m)** falls on **Sankh River at the edge of Ranchi plateau**.

About Koel River

- **Koel River** flows through the **Jharkhand and Odisha**.
- **Origin:** It originates from the **Palamau Tiger Reserve, Jharkhand**, and flows in the **western part of Palamu District**.
- **Course of river:** It further divides into two, the **North Koel River and the South Koel River**.
 - **North Koel River** finally joins with the **Son River**.

- **South Koel River** flows across Orissa near Rourkela, before merging with the **Brahmani River**.
- It is part of the **larger Damodar Valley region**.
- **Dams situated on river:** The **North Koel Dam (Mandal Dam)** is situated on the North Koel River in Jharkhand to generate hydroelectric power and supply water for irrigation.

Giant African Snail

News: Kerala Agricultural University has launched a special project to eradicate African snails in Idukki following a request from the Agriculture department.

About Giant African Snail



Source – TNIE

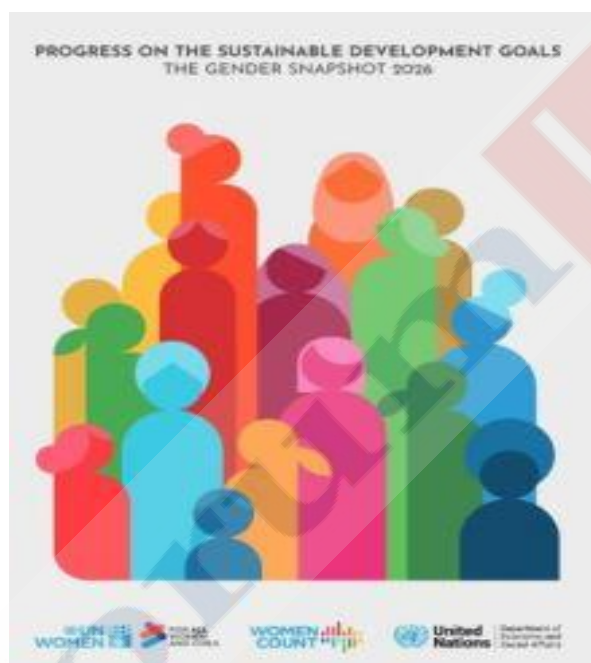
- **Giant African Snail** is the **common name for several large African land snail species**.
- It is also known as the **Lissachatina fulica**.
- **Habitat:** It thrives in **warm tropical and subtropical areas with mild temperatures and high humidity**.
 - It is found in **agricultural areas, coastal areas, wetlands, forests, riparian zones, scrublands, shrublands and urban zones**.
- **Distribution:** It is **native to East Africa**.
 - It has been **widely introduced to other parts of the world** through the pet trade, as a food resource and accidental introduction.
- **Characteristics:**
 - **Size:** An adult is usually **3–4 inches long**, but it can reach **8 inches in length and 5 inches in diameter**.
 - **Shell:** It has a **brownish, cone-shaped shell** with nearly vertical lighter-brown stripes.
 - **Body:** Its body can be **grayish-brown or milky-white**.
 - **Reproduction:** It is a **hermaphrodite** and can self-reproduce, allowing one snail to start a population.
 - **Diet:** It can feed on **more than 500 types of crops and ornamental plants**.
 - **Health Impact:** It can carry the **rat lungworm parasite (Angiostrongylus cantonensis)**, which can cause eosinophilic meningitis in humans.

- **Threats:** It is one of the world's worst invasive species and threatens agriculture, animals and people.
- **Conservation Status:** The IUCN Red List lists it as Not Evaluated.
 - The IUCN Global Invasive Species Database lists it as a major agricultural and ecological threat.

Gender Snapshot 2026 Report

News: The Gender Snapshot 2026 reports that progress on gender equality is stalling or reversing, with no SDG 5 target on track for 2030.

About Gender Snapshot 2026 Report



Source – UN Women

- **Gender Snapshot 2026 Report** tracks global progress on gender equality and women and girls across all 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).
- **Released by:** It is released by **UN Women and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA)** in September 2026.
- **Origin:** The report is **linked to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development** and anchors the **Beijing+30 Action Agenda**.
- **Methodology used:** It draws on **more than 100 data sources** to assess progress for women and girls across all 17 SDGs.
- **Key Highlights**
 - **Gender equality gap:** At current rates of progress, gender equality remains 171 years away.
 - **Funding cuts:** Gender-equality funding fell to its lowest level since 2021.
 - Funding for **women's rights organisations** fell 28% between 2023 and 2024.
 - **Political representation:** Six in seven countries are led by men.

- **Women hold 27.4%** of national parliamentary seats in 2026.
- **Judicial representation:** Women lead **fewer than 20%** of the highest courts globally.
- **Food and economic insecurity:** **9.9%** of women lived in extreme poverty in 2024, compared with 9.5% of men.
 - At the current pace, **1.1 billion women and girls** could remain food insecure by **2030**.
- **Domestic and care burden:** Women spend **2.5 times more hours** than men on unpaid domestic and care work.
- **Violence against women:** Nearly **one in three women** globally has experienced partner or sexual violence in her lifetime.
- **Global AI workforce:** Women account for about **22%** of AI professionals and **fewer than 14%** of senior AI leadership positions globally.
- **Global climate exposure:** **2.9 billion women and girls** live in countries highly or very highly exposed to climate change and geophysical hazards.

Tulu Language

News: The Karnataka government announced “Tulu” as the state’s second additional administrative language alongside Kannada.

About Tulu Language



Source – Udayavani

- **Tulu is a Dravidian language.**
- It is mainly spoken in **two coastal districts, Dakshina Kannada and Udupi of Karnataka and Kasaragod district of Kerala.**
- **Kasaragod district** is called the ‘**Sapta bhasha Samgama Bhumi (the confluence of seven languages)**’ and **Tulu is one among the seven.**
- This region is informally known as **Tulu Nadu.**
- It has **borrowed many words from the Kannada language** but they are not closely related.
- The **Tulu script** is also **known as the Tigalari script** and it has **resemblance with Malayalam script.**
- The **Tulu speakers** are known as **Tuluvas.**
- The **oldest available inscriptions in Tulu** are from the **period between 14th to 15th centuries AD.**

- Tulu has a **rich oral literature tradition** with folk-song forms like paddana and traditional folk theatre yakshagana.
- It also has an **active tradition of cinema**, with around 5 to 7 Tulu language movies produced a year.
 - Moreover, Tulu films are **screened every day in Mangalore and Udupi** in at least one theater.
- **Recognition:** Karnataka has officially recognized Tulu as an additional administrative language in the **Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts**.
- There has been **rising demand to include Tulu language in 8th Schedule**.

Khejadli Sacrifice Day and Amrita Devi Bishnoi

News: On Khejadli Sacrifice Day, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla paid tribute to Amrita Devi Bishnoi and all the martyrs who laid down their lives for the protection of Khejri trees in Khejadli village of Rajasthan.

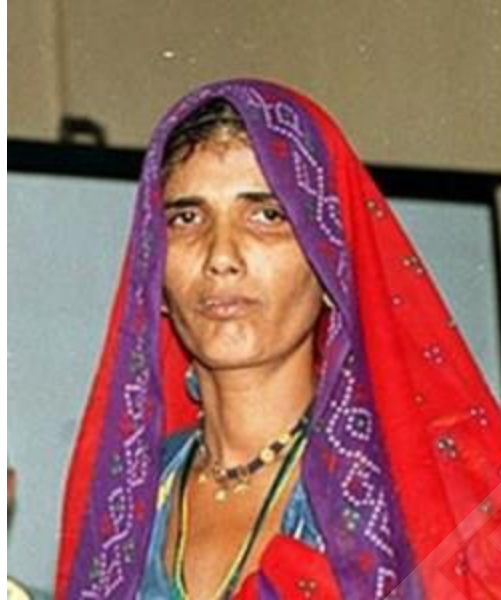
About Khejadli Sacrifice Day

- **Khejarli Sacrifice Day** is commemorated every year on **September 11**.
 - It is also observed as **National Forest Martyrs Day**.
- It commemorates **the historic event that took place in 1730 in Rajasthan where 363 members of the Bishnoi community**, led by Amrita Devi, sacrificed their lives to **protect sacred Khejri trees**.
- **About the event:**
 - **Maharaja Abhai Singh of the Marwar Kingdom** gave the **order to cut down Khejri trees**, which are **revered by the Bishnoi community**.
 - **Amrita Devi Bishnoi and her three daughters sacrificed their lives** while protecting the sacred Khejri trees.
 - Inspired by their courage, **363 Bishnois gave their lives** by embracing the trees to prevent them from being felled.
 - Their sacrifice later inspired the **Chipko Movement of the 1970s**.

Khejri tree

Note: Khejri tree (*Prosopis cineraria*) holds great importance in Rajasthan, especially among the Bishnoi community. It is considered as sacred as Tulsi and has strong religious significance.

About Amrita Devi Bishnoi



Source: Deccan Herald

- **Amrita Devi Bishnoi** was a **legendary environmental protector** and an **early symbol of ecological conservation in India**.
 - She is popularly known as **Mata Amrita Devi Bishnoi**.
- **Birth:** She was **born in the 17th century in Rajasthan** and belonged to the **Bishnoi community**.
- **Activities undertaken:**
 - She is **remembered for her supreme sacrifice** during the historic **Khejarli incident of 1730** in present-day Jodhpur district, Rajasthan.
 - When the **ruler of Jodhpur ordered the cutting of Khejri trees**, she strongly opposed this act, as the **Bishnoi faith considers the protection of trees and nature as sacred**.
 - **She was killed by the soldiers**.
 - Following her sacrifice, **363 Bishnois men, women and children also gave their lives while protecting the trees**.
 - Shocked by this mass sacrifice, **the ruler ordered an immediate halt to tree-felling and issued a royal decree** protecting trees and wildlife in Bishnoi areas.
- **Legacy:** Her sacrifice later inspired environmental movements such as the **Chipko Movement**.
- **Awards:** Today, the **Amrita Devi Bishnoi Wildlife Protection Award** is given by the Government of India in her honour.

Exercise Yudh Abhyas 2026

News: Four Indian Army dogs are participating in Yudh Abhyas 2026 and demonstrating their role in specialized military operations.

About Exercise Yudh Abhyas 2026



Source – PIB

- **Yudh Abhyas 2026** is an **annual bilateral army exercise** between **India and the United States**.
- **Origin:** The exercise **began in 2004** and is **held alternately in India and the US**.
- **2026 Edition:** Yudh Abhyas 2026 is the **22nd edition** of the exercise.
- **Hosted by:** This edition is being **hosted by India at Auli in Uttarakhand** and **Mahajan Field Firing Range in Rajasthan**.
- **Key Features**
 - **Integrated Battle Groups:** It focuses on **infantry-dominated operations** in **mountainous and semi-mountainous terrain**.
 - **Technology and Drones:** Training includes **drones, autonomous systems, surveillance, reconnaissance and counter-drone capabilities**.
 - **MLIDS Deployment:** For the **first time**, the **US Army's Mobile Low, Slow, Small Unmanned Aircraft Integrated Defeat System (MLIDS)** is being deployed in India to counter unmanned aerial threats.
 - **Training Exercises:** The drills include a **Command Post Exercise (CPX)** and a **Field Training Exercise (FTX)**.
 - **Operation Pathways:** The exercise is **conducted under the Operation Pathways framework** to strengthen **information sharing, interoperability and joint operational preparedness**.

Other Exercises Between India and US

- **Vajra Prahar:** Special Forces exercise.
- **SALVEX:** Naval exercise.
- **Cope India:** Air Force exercise.
- **Malabar:** Quad naval exercise involving **India, the US, Japan and Australia**.

Subic Bay

News: Indian Naval Ships Sahyadri and Kulish arrived at Subic Bay, Philippines to participate in the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM)-Plus Joint Cooperation Activity (JCA).

About Subic Bay



Source: Britannica

- Subic Bay is an **embayment of the South China Sea**.
- It is located on the **southwestern coast of Luzon Island in the Philippines**.
 - It is **situated 35 miles northwest of Manila Bay and extends into the Luzon coastline**.
- The **city of Olongapo** is located near the **head of Subic Bay**.
- **Historical background:** From 1901 to 1992, the United States operated a major naval base at **Subic Bay** in the Philippines.
 - During **World War II**, Japan captured the base in 1942, and Allied forces recaptured it in 1944.
 - Its strategic location made it important for **U.S. operations during the Vietnam War and the Cold War**.
 - In 1992, the U.S. handed over the base to the Philippines, which developed it into a **free port, industrial and tourism zone**.
- In 2012, the Philippines allowed limited access to U.S. warships at the Subic Bay port.

About ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM)-Plus Joint Cooperation Activity (JCA)

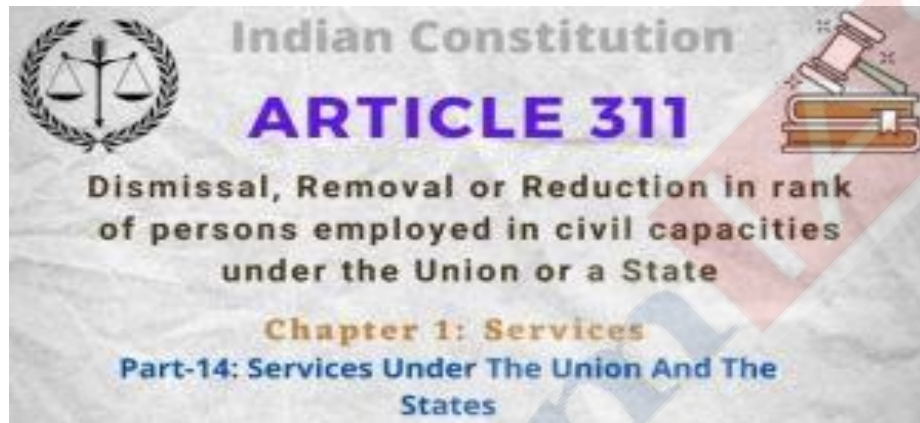
- The ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting (ADMM)-Plus Joint Cooperation Activity (JCA) brings together maritime forces **from ASEAN Member States and eight Plus countries** for professional and operational engagements.
- It aimed at **enhancing interoperability, fostering mutual understanding and strengthening cooperation** in the maritime domain.
- Participation of Indian Naval Ships in ADMM-Plus JCA aligns with India's **Act East Policy and MAHASAGAR vision**.

- The deployment will facilitate **professional and operational interactions with participating maritime forces, enhancing understanding of shared maritime challenges.**

Article 311 of the Indian Constitution

News: The Jammu and Kashmir Lieutenant-Governor recently invoked Article 311 of the Constitution and terminated the services of government employees.

About Article 311 of the Indian Constitution



Source – The Indian Constitution

- **Article 311** outlines the **procedures and safeguards** to be followed before a **government employee can be dismissed, removed, or reduced in rank.**
- It acts as a **shield against arbitrary actions** by the government and upholds the principles of natural justice.
- **Key Provisions**
 - **Opportunity to Defend:** No government employee can be dismissed, removed, or reduced in rank except after an inquiry in which they have been informed of the charges against them and given a reasonable opportunity to defend themselves.
 - **Authority for Action:** A civil servant can only be removed from their services by the authority who appointed them or by someone with the same authority or rank as the appointing authority.
 - **Grounds for Dismissal:**
 - An employee's performance or conduct must be found unsatisfactory or detrimental to the efficient functioning of the government.
 - An employee involved in corruption, bribery, fraud, or any other offense involving moral turpitude can be dismissed.
- **Procedure for Disciplinary Action**
 - The competent authority must clearly state the allegations and grounds for disciplinary action.
 - The employee must be given a reasonable opportunity to respond to the charges and present their defense.
 - An impartial inquiry should be conducted by a competent authority, allowing the employee to present their case and cross-examine witnesses or evidence.

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- A report should be prepared after the inquiry, taking into account all evidence and submissions made during the inquiry.
- The competent authority should make a reasoned decision based on the inquiry report and communicate it to the employee. The decision must be reasonable, fair, and in accordance with the principles of natural justice.
- **Exceptions to Article 311**
 - **Security of the State:** If the employee's activities are deemed prejudicial to the security of the State, the President or the Governor can dispense with the inquiry and take immediate action.
 - **Efficiency in Public Service:** If the President or the Governor believes it is in the interest of security or efficiency of public service, they can dispense with the inquiry and take appropriate action.
 - **Probationary Employees:** Probationary employees, who have not yet acquired the right to hold a permanent position, can be dismissed or removed without an inquiry.
 - **Judicial Review:** Article 311 provides for judicial review of decisions made under its provisions. Remedies may include reinstatement, back wages, or any other relief deemed appropriate by the court.

UPI Tap and Pay

News: RBI announced UPI Tap and Pay, MyUPI and multicurrency foreign exchange facilities at the Global Fintech Fest 2026.

About UPI Tap and Pay



Source – Zee Business

- **UPI Tap and Pay is a contactless payment facility.**
 - It allows users to **make UPI payments by tapping** an **NFC-enabled smartphone** on a **compatible Point-of-Sale (PoS) terminal**.
- **Technology used:** It uses **Near-Field Communication (NFC) technology**, which **enables nearby devices to exchange information wirelessly**.
- **Working mechanism:**
 - **Device requirement:** Users **need an NFC-enabled smartphone** and a **compatible PoS terminal at the merchant outlet**.
 - **Payment process:** Users **unlock their smartphone** and **tap it on the PoS terminal**, after which the **payment is processed through the terminal's internet connection**.

- **PIN requirement:** Payments up to ₹5,000 can be made without entering a UPI PIN, while higher-value payments require a UPI PIN.
- **Key features of UPI Tap and Pay:**
 - **QR-free payment:** Users can make payments without scanning a QR code or entering payment details manually.
 - **No mobile data requirement:** The user's phone does not necessarily need an active mobile data connection during the transaction.
 - **Multiple account support:** The facility supports regular UPI-linked accounts and RuPay credit cards linked to UPI.
 - **Contactless experience:** It provides a payment experience similar to contactless card transactions.
 - **NFC dependency:** Both the smartphone and merchant's PoS terminal must support NFC and the new payment functionality.

About MyUPI

- **MyUPI is an AI-powered platform.**
 - It provides users with a single view of their UPI transactions and AutoPay mandates.
- **Developed by:** It has been developed by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).
- **Powered by:** It is powered by the Finance Model for India (FiMI) small language model.
- **Aim:** It aims to provide greater control and security over UPI payments.
- **Key features of MyUPI:**
 - **Safety Switch:** It allows users to request rejection of UPI debit transactions if they suspect their account has been compromised.
 - **UPI Number Delink:** It allows users to stop receiving UPI payments through their mobile number.
 - **Beneficiary information:** It provides contextual information about beneficiaries before eligible payments.
 - **Transaction Replay:** It allows users to recall and repeat an earlier transaction through any UPI app.

About Bharat Connect

- **Multicurrency facility:** RBI has introduced a multicurrency facility for foreign exchange services on Bharat Connect.
 - It is being launched initially under a controlled user group (CUG).
- **Supported currencies:** The facility will support the euro, British pound, Canadian dollar, Swiss franc and UAE dirham, expanding forex services beyond the US dollar.
- **Bharat Connect operator:** NPCI Bharat BillPay Ltd operates Bharat Connect.
- **Forex integration:** The forex facility is integrated with FX-Retail, which is operated by Clearcorp Dealing Systems (India) Ltd.
- **Future expansion:** After assessment of the CUG phase, the multicurrency facility is proposed to be extended to more Bharat Connect channels and participating banks.

Lord Howe Island and Tasman Sea

News: A 16-year study found a sharp rise in plastic ingestion by fledgling sable shearwaters on Lord Howe Island between 2010 and 2026.

About Lord Howe Island



Source – Naturalworldheritage

- **Lord Howe Island** is a **volcanic, crescent-shaped island** and part of the Lord Howe Island Group.
- **Location:** It lies in the **Tasman Sea**, about **650 km** off Australia's east coast.
- **Origin:** The island is **volcanic** in origin and developed from submarine volcanic activity.
- **Discovered by:** The island was **named after Admiral Lord Howe** by **Lieutenant Henry Lidgbird Ball**, who discovered it in 1788.
- **Geographical Features**
 - **Two Peaks:** The island has **two major peaks – Mount Gower and Mount Lidgbird**, both rising above **760 m**.
 - **Coral Reef:** It has the **world's most southerly true coral reef**.
- **Biodiversity:** The island has **rare vegetation** and **diverse endemic fauna**, including the **Lord Howe Woodhen** and **Lord Howe Island Phasmid**.
 - The islands provide important **breeding grounds for large colonies of seabirds**, including **Providence Petrels** and **Red-tailed Tropicbirds**.
- **Recognition:** The **Lord Howe Island Group** was designated a **UNESCO World Heritage site** in **1982**.
- **Major Threats:** **Plastic pollution** is a growing **threat to the island's seabirds**, with a sharp rise in **plastic ingestion by fledgling sooty shearwaters**.

About Tasman Sea



Source – Britannica

- **Tasman Sea** is a large section of the **southwestern Pacific Ocean**.
- **Location:** It lies between the **southeastern coast of Australia** and **Tasmania and New Zealand**.
- **Boundaries:** It merges with the **Coral Sea** to the **north**, while **Bass Strait** and **Cook Strait** connect it towards the **Indian and Pacific oceans**.
- **Naming:** It was named after **Dutch navigator Abel Tasman**, who navigated it in 1642.
- **Nickname:** The Tasman Sea is informally called “**The Ditch**” by Australians and New Zealanders.
- **Climate:** The **southern** part is generally **temperate**, while the **northern part** is **subtropical**.
 - It lies in the **belt of westerly winds** known as the “**roaring forties**.”
- **Key Features of Tasman Sea**
 - **Size:** It covers about **2.3 million sq. km**.
 - **Depth:** Its **maximum depth** exceeds **5,200 metres**.
 - **Ocean currents:** The sea is **influenced by the East Australian Current** and **colder southern waters**.
 - **Economic resources:** Its resources include **fisheries and petroleum deposits**.
 - **Shipping:** It contains **important shipping lanes** between **New Zealand, southeastern Australia and Tasmania**.

Exercise NOMADIC ELEPHANT 2026

News: The 18th edition of Exercise NOMADIC ELEPHANT commenced at Pithoragarh, Uttarakhand, on 21 September 2026.

About Exercise NOMADIC ELEPHANT 2026



Source – PIB

- **Exercise NOMADIC ELEPHANT** is a **bilateral platoon-level military exercise** between **India and Mongolia**.
- **Started in:** The exercise has **been conducted since 2006**.
- **Frequency:** It is conducted **annually and alternately** in India and Mongolia.
- **Edition:** The 2026 edition is the 18th edition.
 - **Previous edition** was held at **Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia**, in May–June 2025.
- **Aim:** It aims to enhance **joint military capability and interoperability** for Counter-Insurgency Operations in **semi-urban and mountainous terrain** under the **United Nations Mandate**.
- **Key Features of Exercise NOMADIC ELEPHANT 2026:**
 - **Participation:** The exercise involves **45 personnel each** from the Indian Army and Mongolian Armed Forces.
 - **Tactical Training:** It focuses on **tactical-level operations**, exchange of best practices and refinement of operational drills.
 - **Counter-Insurgency Drills:** Training includes **Cordon and Search Operations and Room Intervention Drills**.
 - **Special Operations:** The curriculum includes **Special Heliborne Operations and Cyber Security Training**.
 - **Drone Operations:** Troops train in the **employment of drones and counter-drone systems**.
 - **Realistic Training:** Both armies train together in **realistic operational scenarios to strengthen interoperability and joint operations**.

Other Exercises Between India and Mongolia

- **Exercise Khaan Quest:** Multinational **peacekeeping exercise** organised by **Mongolia**.

Dermatophytosis

News: A recent study highlighted rising concerns over fungal infections and the growing ability of some fungal pathogens to resist antifungal drugs.

About Dermatophytosis

- **Dermatophytosis** refers to **infections of the skin, hair and nails** caused by **dermatophytes**.
- **Causative Agent:** Dermatophytes are fungi that **grow by using keratin present in the skin, hair and nails**.
- **Mechanism:** These **fungi colonise keratin-containing tissues** and **produce lesions on the affected body surfaces**.
- **Transmission:**
 - **Direct transmission:** Some dermatophytes spread **from one person to another**.
 - **Animal and soil transmission:** Some **species reach humans from animal hosts or soil**.
 - **Indirect transmission:** Infection can also occur through **contaminated objects such as upholstery, hairbrushes and hats**.
- **Key Features:**
 - **Highly contagious:** Dermatophyte infections can **spread easily between individuals**.
 - **Affected tissues:** They can **infect the skin, hair and nails**, causing different types of disease.
 - **Environmental factors:** **Tropical climates and overcrowding increase** the prevalence of these infections.
 - **Lifestyle factors:** **Occlusive footwear, community showers and sports participation** are linked with higher prevalence of some infections.
 - **Antifungal Resistance:** Fungi can **resist antifungal medicines through genetic mutations** and additional copies of protective genes.
- **Treatment:** **Antifungal drugs such as azoles, polyenes and echinocandins** are used, while susceptibility testing helps determine their effectiveness.

National Formulary of India

News: The Union Minister of State for Health launched the 7th Edition of the National Formulary of India (NFI) 2026 during the 6th National Pharmacovigilance Week.

About National Formulary of India (NFI)

- The **National Formulary of India (NFI)** is a **guidance document** for **healthcare professionals** that **promotes the rational and safe use of medicines**.
- **Published by:** The **Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission (IPC)** publishes the **NFI** on behalf of the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**.
 - The **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare** assigned the responsibility of **publishing the NFI to the IPC in 2008**.
 - **IPC** has **published it periodically since 2009**.
- **Origin:** The **first, second and third editions** of **NFI** were **published in 1960, 1966 and 1979**, respectively, **by the Ministry of Health, Government of India**.
- **2026 Edition:** The **7th Edition** was **launched in 2026**.
- **Key Highlights of NFI 2026:**
 - **Drug coverage:** It contains **34 chapters, 20 appendices and 653 drugs**, including **42 fixed-dose combinations and 30 immunologicals**.

- **Updated monographs:** Drug monographs have been revised to align with the **National List of Essential Medicines (NLEM)** and **National Health Programmes**.
- **Digital access:** It is available through **NFI Online**, with links to **health programmes, immunisation schedules and Jan Aushadhi**.
- **Safe medicine use:** It provides **guidance for the prescribing, dispensing and administering of medicines**.

About Indian Pharmacopoeia Commission (IPC)

- IPC is a **dedicated autonomous institution** under the **Ministry of Health and Family Welfare**.
- **Core mandate:** It publishes the **Indian Pharmacopoeia and National Formulary of India** regularly.
- **Standards:** It specifies **standards of identity, purity and strength of drugs**.
- **Operational status:** IPC became **fully operational as an autonomous body on 1 January 2009** and
- **Funding:** It is **fully financed by the Central Government**.

Visegrád Group

News: The Visegrad Group backed India's inclusion as a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council.

About Visegrád Group

- The **Visegrád Group**, also called the **Visegrad Four (V4)**.
- It is an **informal intergovernmental forum** and a **cultural and political alliance**.
- **Member Countries:** The group consists of **Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia**.
- **Origin:** The group was **created in 1991** when **Polish, Czechoslovakian and Hungarian** leaders met in **Visegrád, Hungary** to **promote cooperation after the Warsaw Pact**.
 - In **1993**, **Czechoslovakia** separated into the **Czech Republic and Slovakia**.
 - The group then **became the Visegrad Four (V4)**.
- **Aim:** It aims to **promote cooperation in military, economic, cultural and energy affairs** and **strengthen stability and cooperation in Central Europe**.
- **Governance:** It takes **decisions by consensus** and has **no permanent structures**.
- **Key Features:**
 - **Regular Meetings:** It conducts **meetings among Heads of State, Prime Ministers, Foreign Ministers and other ministers and officials**.
 - **Rotating Presidency:** The **presidency changes every year**, and the **presidency sets the agenda for meetings**.
 - **V4+ Format:** The group **can cooperate with EU and non-EU countries** through formats known as **"V4+"**.
 - **Areas of Cooperation:** Its cooperation **covers culture, education, science and information exchange**, along with **wider economic, security and energy cooperation**.

Project Rhino and World Rhino Day

News: On World Rhino Day, PM Modi highlighted rhino conservation through Project Rhino, which supports protection, habitat management and population studies.

About Project Rhino

- **Project Rhino** was launched on **World Rhino Day, September 22, 2026**.

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- **Aim:** It is a dedicated programme aimed at **providing financial and technical support to states** that host the **greater one-horned rhinoceros**.
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
- **Focus:** It will focus on **strengthening protection, managing habitats, improving genetic diversity, and scientifically understanding** rhino population trends.
- **Components:**
 - It will **strengthen anti-poaching measures** and support **habitat management**, including grasslands and movement corridors.
 - It will also assess **rhino genetics** to monitor genetic diversity, reduce inbreeding risks and ensure long-term population health.
 - It will promote **scientific population monitoring** to track growth, reproduction, mortality and other demographic trends for better conservation planning.

About World Rhino Day

- **World Rhino Day** is celebrated globally **every year on September 22**.
 - It is being celebrated **since 2011**.
- It is celebrated **to raise awareness about protecting the five remaining rhinoceros species**.
- **Theme:** 2026's theme is **"Keep the Five Alive."**
 - It calls for stronger efforts **to protect rhino habitats, prevent poaching and curb the illegal trade** in rhino horn.

IMEI Tampering

News: The Government has reiterated that tampering with IMEI numbers is punishable under the Telecommunications Act, 2023.

About IMEI Tampering

- **International Mobile Equipment Identity (IMEI):**
 - **Unique Identity:** IMEI is a **15-digit number** used to **identify a mobile device on a mobile network**.
 - The **first eight digits form the Type Allocation Code (TAC)**, which **identifies the device model or type**.
 - A dual-SIM phone **generally has two IMEI numbers**, one for each SIM slot.
 - **Function :** It helps **verify a device** when users make calls or use the Internet through mobile networks.
 - **TAC Allocation:** The global allocation of TAC is managed by the **GSMA (Global System for Mobile Communications Association)**.
- **IMEI Tampering:** It involves **intentionally removing, changing or altering the unique identification number** of a mobile device or using equipment configured for such alteration.
- **Tracking Mechanism:**
 - **Central Equipment Identity Register (CIER):** The CIER categorises **devices into white, grey and black lists** based on their IMEI status.
 - **White List:** Devices permitted for **normal network use**.
 - **Grey List:** Devices that **do not conform to standards but may connect under supervision**.
 - **Black List:** Devices reported **lost or stolen and denied network access**.

- **Sanchar Saathi:** Citizens can verify IMEI details, including the brand, model and manufacturer, through the Sanchar Saathi platform.
- **Threat of IMEI Tampering:**
 - **Financial Fraud:** Cloned IMEIs can mask the identity of bad actors, enabling cyber fraud, phishing and parallel banking rackets.
 - **Disrupting Law Enforcement:** Altered IMEIs can make it difficult for police and intelligence agencies to track stolen devices and criminal networks.
 - **Enabling SIM Boxing:** Criminal syndicates can use SIM boxes with tampered or configurable IMEIs to reroute international calls as local traffic.
 - This can bypass official gateways and cause revenue loss to the government.

IMEI Regulatory Framework

- **Telecommunications Act, 2023:** Section 42(3)(c) prohibits tampering with telecommunication identifiers, including IMEI numbers.
 - **Punishment:** Violation may attract up to three years' imprisonment, a fine up to ₹50 lakh, or both.
 - Such offences are cognizable and non-bailable.
- **Telecom Cyber Security Rules, 2024:** Manufacturers must register IMEIs of devices made in India before sale, testing, research or other use.
 - **Importers:** They must register IMEIs before importing devices into India.
 - **Registration:** The process is completed through the Device Setu-ICDR portal.
- **Telecom Cyber Security Amendment Rules, 2025:** The Centre can direct manufacturers not to reassign IMEIs already active in Indian telecom networks.
 - **Network Blocking:** Telecom operators may be directed to block devices with tampered IMEIs.
 - **Second-hand Devices:** Sellers must verify IMEIs through the central database of blacklisted or tampered devices.