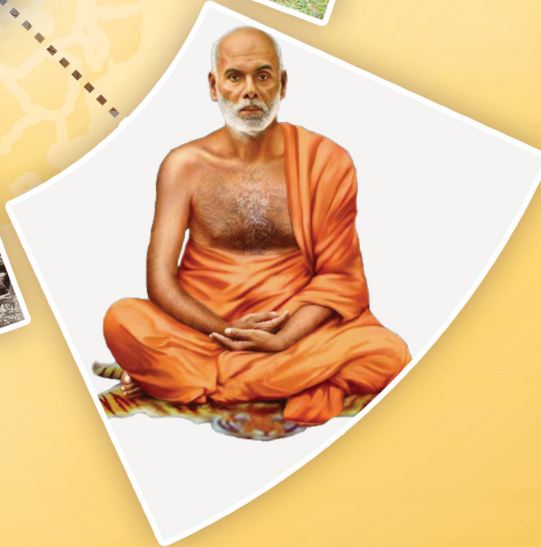


FORTUNE Prelims Precise

August 2026



FORTUNE IAS

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Preface

Fortune IAS Academy presents '**Prelims Precise**', a monthly current affairs magazine through which we make prelims current affairs revision precise and effective.

This magazine is a comprehensive resource that condenses the significant news of each month into distinct sections such as polity and governance, economic development, science & technology, among others.

Each content is organised with the why in news context followed by its explanation.

Fortune Prelims Precise is available to all Prelims cum Mains batch students as part of the course study material. **It can be purchased from Fortune IAS Academy for Rs. 100 per issue.**



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Polity & Governance

Bar Council of India (BCI)

- **BCI withdrew its circular** directing State Bar Councils **not to enrol NALSAR's 2026 graduates** following their protest over inviting **CJI Surya Kant** to the convocation.
- BCI is the **apex statutory body** regulating the legal profession and sets standards for **professional conduct and legal education**, recognises **law degrees/institutions**, **supervises** State Bar Councils, and promotes **legal aid and law reform**.
- Established under **Section 4 of the Advocates Act, 1961**; its members are elected from **State Bar Councils**, with the **Attorney General and Solicitor General** as ex-officio members.
 - Elected BCI members have a **5-year term**.
- Under **Section 6**, State Bar Councils have the power to **admit persons as advocates on their rolls**; **BCI itself does not enrol advocates**.
- A **law graduate enrolls with the State Bar Council** and becomes an **advocate**.
- After enrolment, the advocate can **practise in courts across India** (for the **Supreme Court**, an advocate generally needs to qualify as an **Advocate-on-Record (AOR)** to file and act for a party).
- Recently, the Supreme Court also ruled that the **BCI and State Bar Councils have no disciplinary jurisdiction** over law students before their enrolment as advocates.
 - SC held that **disciplinary matters** concerning students fall under their universities/institutions.

Public Accounts Committee (PAC)

- The first session of the **reconstituted 2026–27 Public Accounts Committee (PAC)** took place under the leadership of Chairman K. C. Venugopal.
- Established in **1921 under the Government of India Act, 1919**, it is the **oldest financial standing committee** of Parliament.

- It is **reconstituted annually** and examines the **Appropriation Accounts and Union Government Finance Accounts**, along with accounts of certain autonomous bodies.
- It has **22 members: 15 from Lok Sabha and 7 from Rajya Sabha**; the **Speaker appoints the Chairman** from among its members.
- It verifies whether **money sanctioned by Parliament was spent for the intended purpose and within authorised limits**.
- It does not examine **Public Sector Undertakings** covered by the **Committee on Public Undertakings (COPU)**.
- Before 1950, the **Finance Minister headed the PAC**; after the Constitution came into force, it became a **Parliamentary Committee under the Lok Sabha Speaker**.

Note: Initially PAC was headed by the Finance Minister, but after the Constitution of India came into force on 26th January 1950, it became a Parliamentary Committee functioning under the control of the Speaker of the Lok Sabha, who appointed a chairman from amongst the Members of the Lower House elected to the committee.

Southern Zonal Council (SZC)

- The **Union Home Minister recently chaired the 31st meeting of the Southern Zonal Council (SZC)** at Mahabalipuram, Tamil Nadu.
- SZC comprises **Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Telangana**, and UTs of **Puducherry, Andaman & Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep**.
- Established under **Sections 15–22 of the States Reorganisation Act, 1956**, the idea was suggested by **PM Jawaharlal Nehru** in 1956.
- **Chairman:** Union Home Minister; **Vice-Chairman:** Chief Ministers of member States by annual rotation.
- **Secretary:** Chief Secretary of the member State by annual rotation; also **ex-officio Chairman of the Standing Committee** comprising all member-State Chief Secretaries.
- Functions: promote **economic/social cooperation**, address **inter-State borders, linguistic minorities and inter-State transport**, share information, coordinate policies, tackle **law-and-order issues**, and manage common challenges like **floods and droughts**.

- There are **five Zonal Councils**: Northern, Central, Eastern, Western and Southern.
- Importantly there is a **North-Eastern Council (NEC)** created under the **North Eastern Council Act, 1971** and is a separate statutory body.

ZONAL COUNCIL	MEMBER STATES & UNION TERRITORIES	HEADQUARTERS
1 Northern North Zone Coordination	Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, Jammu & Kashmir, Delhi (NCT), Chandigarh	New Delhi
2 Central Central Zone Coordination	Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh	Prayagraj (Allahabad)
3 Eastern East Zone Coordination	Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha	Kolkata
4 Western West Zone Coordination	Gujarat, Maharashtra, Goa, Dadra & Nagar Haveli and Daman & Diu	Mumbai
5 Southern South Zone Coordination	Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Puducherry	Chennai

PRAGATI Platform

- The Prime Minister recently chaired the **53rd meeting of PRAGATI**, an Information and Communications Technology (ICT)-enabled, multi-modal platform for **Pro-Active Governance and Timely Implementation**.
- Launched in **2015**, PRAGATI enables **real-time review of projects, schemes and grievances** by the PM with Central Ministries and State governments.
- It promotes **cooperative federalism ("Team India")**, breaks bureaucratic delays and ensures **time-bound implementation and outcome-based monitoring**.
- PRAGATI consolidates data on **projects, schemes and grievances** on a digital platform, enabling the Prime Minister to directly review bottlenecks with Central Ministries and State Chief Secretaries through **video conferencing, geo-spatial data and real-time monitoring**.
- It then fixes **time-bound directions and accountability**, with subsequent progress tracked to ensure timely implementation and resolution.
- PRAGATI was inspired by **SWAGAT (State Wide Attention on Grievances by Application of Technology)**, launched in **Gujarat in April 2003** for technology-enabled grievance redressal.

Centralised Grievance Redress (CPGRAMS)

- The central government said that over 15 lakh public grievances have been received on CPGRAMS this year and the average disposal time for **redressal of grievances on CPGRAMS was 13 days**.
- The **Centralised Public Grievance Redress and Monitoring System (CPGRAMS)** is a 24x7 web-based portal launched to enable citizens to lodge public grievances against Central Ministries, Departments, and State/UT authorities.
- It was launched in **2007** and was designed by **National Informatics Centre (NIC)**, under the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology.
- CPGRAMS operates under the **Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions**, through the Department of Administrative Reforms and Public Grievances (**DARPG**).
- Citizens can **register once, lodge grievances online and track their disposal** through the portal, mobile app/UMANG or **Common Service Centres (CSCs)**.
- Offline grievances received by post are digitised and uploaded** to CPGRAMS for processing and monitoring.
- CPGRAMS Portal Guidelines explicitly mandate that **grievances shall ordinarily be resolved within a time frame of 21 days**.
- It also has a dedicated **feedback call centre** and **Nodal Appellate Authority**, who must resolve the appeal within 30 days.
- CPGRAMS **does not entertain** RTI queries, sub-judice matters, religious issues, or civil service employment disputes.

NITI Aayog

- Senior IAS officer Anurag Jain recently took charge as **CEO of NITI Aayog**, following approval by the **Appointments Committee of the Cabinet**.
- NITI Aayog (National Institution for Transforming India)** serves as the apex public **policy think tank** of the Government of India, providing strategic, directional, and technical advice on national and international development issues.

- Established on **January 1, 2015**, it replaced the old top-down **Planning Commission** with a bottom-up model that engages state governments in economic policy.
- The **Chief Executive Officer (CEO)** of **NITI Aayog** manages the daily operations, administration, and execution of policy plans for India's national policy think tank.
- The Appointments Committee of the Cabinet** is the top body for appointments to senior Central Government, PSU, civil and military posts; chaired by the **Prime Minister** and includes the **Home Minister**.
- It is an extra-constitutional body constituted under the **Transaction of Business Rules, 1961**, with the Department of Personnel and Training's (DoPT) Establishment Officer Division as its secretariat.



Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC)

- The Lok Sabha recently referred the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2026 to a JPC** amid objections from Opposition parties and civil society.
- A **JPC is a temporary parliamentary committee** constituted for a specific purpose, such as detailed scrutiny of a Bill or investigation of an issue, with members from **both Houses and both ruling and Opposition parties**.
- It is constituted when **one House passes a motion and the other agrees**; its membership and size can vary.
- The JPC can **summon persons, examine witnesses and documents**, and submit a report with recommendations; it is **dissolved after completing its task or on expiry of its term**.
- Its recommendations are **not binding on the Government**, though they carry persuasive value.
- Note:** JPC is an **ad hoc committee**, unlike **Department-related Standing Committees**, which are permanent/continuous committees.

Keralam name change

- Parliament recently passed the Kerala (Alteration of Name) Bill, 2026**, renaming Kerala as **Keralam**, following a unanimous State Assembly resolution.
- Under **Article 3**, Parliament can alter the **name, boundaries or area of a State** by law.
- The Bill requires **prior recommendation of the President** and can be introduced in **either House of Parliament**; the President refers it to the concerned State Legislature for its **views**, which are **not binding**.
- It is passed by **simple majority** in both Houses and, after **Presidential assent**, the change takes effect; the **First and Fourth Schedules** are consequently amended.
- This does not need a constitutional amendment since **Article 4** specifically says laws made under Articles 2 and 3 **are not deemed to be amendments of the Constitution for Article 368 purposes**.
- State Legislature's role is consultative, not consent-based**—Parliament can proceed even if the State disagrees.

Tribunals Reforms Act, 2026

- The Tribunals Reforms Act, 2026 was recently passed by Lok Sabha**, replacing the 2021 Act and creating a **National Tribunal Commission (NTC)** to administer 16 tribunals.
- Tribunals** are specialised bodies created by law to settle specific types of disputes, providing **expert and faster justice** and reducing the courts' workload.
- Tribunals are generally **created under laws (Acts) passed by Parliament or State Legislatures**. **Articles 323A and 323B** provide

their constitutional basis.

- **Article 323A:** Parliament can establish tribunals for **service matters** — e.g., **CAT** under the Administrative Tribunals Act, 1985.
- **Article 323B:** Parliament or State Legislatures can establish tribunals for specified matters such as **taxation, labour and land reforms**.
- **L. Chandra Kumar case (1997):** recommended that tribunals should be managed by an **independent body**, not their parent ministries.
- **NTC has 5 members:** 1 Chairperson, 2 judicial members and 2 technical members.
- The **Chairperson and 2 judicial members** are appointed by the Union **in consultation with the CJI**.
- NTC forms a **7-member selection committee** to appoint members of the 16 tribunals. **4 members can vote**—3 linked to NTC and 1 Government Secretary.



- The Court limited this rule to **OBCs**, as economic advancement does not remove the **social stigma and historical discrimination** faced by SCs/STs.
- In the **Davinder Singh case (2024)**, the 7-judge Bench held that **SC/ST sub-classification is constitutionally permissible**.
 - Some judges also expressed **support for identifying a creamy layer** within SC/STs, though it was non-binding on the govt.
- Later, some petitioners approached the Court seeking **exclusion of the creamy layer from SC/ST reservations** and, in some cases, **income/means-based preference within reserved categories**.
- The Government however, argued that **Articles 341 and 342 create Presidential lists of SCs/STs** and do not provide for creamy-layer exclusion.
- It also argues that SC/ST reservation addresses **historical social oppression and inadequate representation**, not merely economic backwardness; an income-based exclusion could also **leave reserved posts/seats vacant**.

Creamy layer for SC/STs

- The Union Government recently opposed applying the “creamy layer” rule to SC/ST reservations, arguing that it currently applies only to OBCs.
- **Creamy layer** means the **relatively better-off and socially advanced sections within a reserved category** who are excluded from reservation benefits so that those benefits reach the **more genuinely disadvantaged members**.
- The **Indra Sawhney case (1992)** introduced the creamy-layer principle, requiring **affluent OBCs to be excluded** from reservation benefits.

Trade Receivables Discounting System (TReDS)

- **RBI recently issued the TReDS Directions, 2026**, updating the framework for financing MSME trade receivables.

A **trade receivable (TR)** is an invoice showing the **amount of money a business is entitled to receive from a customer** after selling goods or services on credit—for example, if an MSME sells ₹10 lakh of goods today with payment due after 60 days, the ₹10 lakh becomes a **trade receivable until the buyer pays**.

To **convert into immediate cash**, MSME can sell the TR to financiers like banks, which pays the MSME upfront at a **discount** and later collects the full amount from the buyer when the invoice matures

- **TReDS** essentially provides an **organised, electronic marketplace** for this receivable-discounting process.
- **Instead of the MSME separately approaching a bank** to discount TR:
 - MSME uploads invoice in TReDS → buyer confirms it → financiers bid/offer funding → MSME chooses the offer → gets money immediately → financier collects from buyer at maturity.
- TReDS was introduced by RBI in **2014** and requires RBI authorisation under the **Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007**.
- It enables **without-recourse factoring**—if the buyer defaults, the financier (bank) bear the repayment risk and not the MSME.
- **Participants: Sellers** (MSMEs), **Buyers** (corporates, government departments, PSUs, etc.) and **Financiers** (banks, NBFC-Factors and other RBI-permitted institutions).
- The uploaded/created Trade Receivable on the TReDS platform for financing is called **Factoring Unit (FU)**

Gold Exchange-Traded Fund (ETF)

- **Gold exchange-traded funds (ETFs)** came under sharp selling pressure recently, falling as much as 2%, due to strong US economic data making investors shift to US in expectation of higher profits.
- A **Gold ETF** is an **investment fund** that tracks the **domestic price of physical gold**, allowing you to **buy and hold gold in electronic or dematerialized form** rather than as a physical metal.
- Unlike a Gold Bond, the Gold ETF buys and stores physical gold in a secure vault and then issues electronic units (shares) that investors can trade on the stock market.
- An investor can **buy and sell units at real-time market prices** throughout trading hours using a Demat and trading account
- They are regulated by **Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)** and must **invest at least 95%** of its net assets in physical gold and gold-related instruments
- **Compared to physical gold**, which has issues of storage, purity, security, selling and making charges, Gold ETFs provide a **more convenient investment option** by offering easy buying and selling, transparent market-linked prices and gold ownership in Demat form without physically holding the metal.
- Typically, **1 unit of a Gold ETF represents 1 gram (or 0.5 gram, depending on the fund) of 99.5% pure gold** held securely in vaults by the fund house on behalf of investors.

Unified Payments Interface (UPI)

- As per the data released, UPI transactions in **volume terms touched a record of 24.51 billion in August**, according to data released by the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI).
- Transactions by volume were at ₹29.8 lakh crore in August, near the record high of ₹29.9 lakh crore in May and July 2026,
- **Unified Payments Interface (UPI)** is a **real-time, 24/7/365** payment system developed by the **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)**.
- It facilitates **instant peer-to-peer (P2P) and peer-to-merchant (P2M)** fund transfers

directly between bank accounts using smartphones.

- **NPCI acts as the central switch** that validates transaction details, oversees routing between Payment Service Providers (PSPs) and banks, and manages settlement.
- The entire digital payments ecosystem in India operates under the statutory oversight of the **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)**, with its legal authority anchored in the **Payment and Settlement Systems Act, 2007 (PSS Act)**.
- The PSS Act designates and authorizes NPCI as the umbrella organization for operating retail payment and settlement systems.

Structure of UPI vs Closed-Loop Payment Systems

Interoperable Ecosystem of Banks and Payment Providers (for example, UPI)



Example of a Closed-Loop System



Source: IMF

Polymer (Plastic) Currency Notes

- RBI Governor **Sanjay Malhotra** announced that polymer currency notes are expected to enter circulation in India from the **next financial year**.
- Initially, **₹10 and ₹20 denominations** will be introduced, with **100 crore notes of each denomination**, totalling **₹3,000 crore**.
- **Polymers** are long-chain molecules formed by joining many smaller molecules called **monomers** - examples include polyethylene, PVC and nylon.
- Polymer banknotes generally use a thin plastic film based on **polypropylene** that is biaxially oriented (BOPP).
 - ✓ BOPP is a strong, clear plastic film made from **polypropylene that is stretched in two different directions** during manufacturing
- Polymer notes are made by producing a **thin, strong plastic film**, incorporating security features such as **transparent windows and holographic elements**, applying special

coatings, printing the banknote design and finally cutting and inspecting individual notes.

- They can last **2–4 times longer than paper notes** and are more resistant to **water, dirt, tearing and wear**, making them particularly useful for low-denomination notes with high circulation.
- RBI subsidiary **Bharatiya Reserve Bank Note Mudran Pvt. Ltd. (BRBNMPL)**, headquartered in **Bengaluru**, floated a global tender for **3.4 crore polymer sheets** for the project.
- Around **60 countries** use polymer notes, either fully or partially, including **Australia, the UK and Vietnam**.

Sovereign Green Bonds (SGrBs)

- Insurers in India are showing significant interest in sovereign green bonds, aiding in the establishment of a substantial **Greenium**.
- Sovereign Green Bonds are government securities issued **specifically for financing projects that have environmental benefits**.
- Under the Government's **Framework for Sovereign Green Bonds**, proceeds can finance **nine categories**, including renewable energy & energy efficiency, clean transport, climate adaptation, sustainable water & waste management, pollution control, sustainable natural resources & land use, green buildings, and terrestrial & aquatic biodiversity conservation.
- **Green Finance Working Committee (GFWC)**, chaired by the **Chief Economic Adviser**, assists the Finance Ministry in selecting and evaluating eligible projects under the framework.
- Green bonds are **typically offered at lower yields (interest or coupon rate)** than conventional bonds, assuring investors that the proceeds will be used exclusively for green investments.
- The **difference in yield** between a comparable conventional bond and green bond — known as the **green premium, or greenium** — determines the cost advantage of green bonds for issuers, allowing them to raise funds at a lower cost than conventional bonds, with a **higher greenium making green bonds more attractive to issuers**.
- The **Union Budget 2022-23** had announced the issue of SGrBs for the first time and the **current half year target (H1 2026-27)** mobilisation

through SGrBs by the government of India is fixed at **₹15,000 crores**.

- While **globally greeniums** have reached 7-8 basis points, in India it is often at just 2-3 basis points.
- With **higher demand for SGrBs** in the future, **bond prices are expected to rise**, which **lowers their yields** (bond prices and yields move inversely).
 - ➔ This can **widen the greenium**, reducing the government's borrowing cost and making SGrBs more attractive.

Saptadhara

- Addressing the nation on the **80th Independence Day**, the Prime Minister outlined what he called "**Saptadhara**", or seven streams of development.
- **Saptadhara** is a **7-stream development framework for the next 5-7 years**, covering **manufacturing, agriculture & food processing, technology & innovation, infrastructure, defence, green & blue economy, and soft power**.
- It shifts India from **import substitution to export-oriented growth**, aiming for globally competitive Indian goods and services.
- Focuses on **youth skilling**, including AI training and free online coaching for competitive exams.
- **37%** of Class 11-12 students use private coaching, rising to **44.6% in urban areas**.

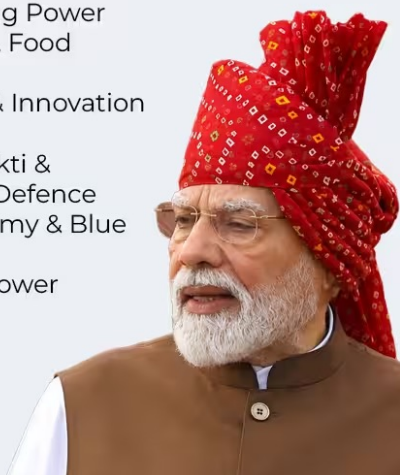


TOI

"I call upon the nation to harness the Sapta Dhara...the seven streams of strength"

1. Manufacturing Power
2. Agriculture & Food Processing
3. Technology & Innovation
4. Gati Shakti
5. Defence Shakti & Aatmanirbhar Defence
6. Green Economy & Blue Economy
7. India's Soft Power

PM
**Narendra
Modi**



Mobile Phone Manufacturing Scheme (MPMS)

- The **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY)** has launched the ₹62,500-crore **Mobile Phone Manufacturing Scheme (MPMS)**
- It will **replace** the **Production Linked Incentive Scheme** for Large Scale Electronics Manufacturing (PLI-LSEM) and run from FY 2026-27 to FY 2030-31.
- It has **two segments: TS1** – general mobile manufacturing and **TS2** – Indian-owned mobile brands, design and R&D.
- MPMS will provide to **mobile phone manufacturers** in India, including registered **Electronics Manufacturing Services (EMS) providers** and Indian mobile brands **incentives** of 2.25-5% on eligible sales, plus additional incentives for domestic sourcing (up to 1.5%) and Indian IP/R&D (3% on eligible sales).
- It aims to **increase domestic value addition**, develop **Indian mobile brands** and technology, and strengthen India as a global mobile-manufacturing hub.
- India is the **world's 2nd-largest mobile phone manufacturer**, with 99.2% of mobile phones used in India made domestically.
- Smartphone's emerged as **India's single largest exported product category in 2025**.

External Commercial Borrowings (ECBs)

- Indian companies registered a **27% growth over the previous month** in raising money through external commercial borrowings (ECB), according to RBI.
- **External Commercial Borrowings (ECB)** are means **borrowing money for business/economic purposes on market-based terms** by eligible Indian entities from recognised non-resident lenders.
- It can be through instruments such as foreign bank loans, buyers'/suppliers' credit, bonds and notes.
- Under the RBI framework, the **minimum average maturity period is generally 3 years**, though certain ECBs have specific exceptions or different maturity requirements.
- **Convertible preference shares** (special

corporate stocks that pay a fixed dividend and can later change into regular equity (common shares) may **also qualify** subject to prescribed ECB conditions.

- ECBs are regulated by the RBI **as per the The Foreign Exchange Management Act (FEMA) guidelines**.
- ECBs offer businesses access to global capital markets, often at a lower interest rate than their domestic borrowing options.
- RBI has introduced two separate routes for accessing ECBs:
 - **Automatic Route:** Eligible entities are allowed to raise ECBs **without having to seek prior approval** from the RBI within a limit, generally USD 750 million.
 - **Approval Route:** High-value (beyond the limit) external commercial borrowings are always required to be approved by the RBI. These include borrowing for restricted purposes, and raising funds through innovative instruments like Foreign Currency Convertible Bonds (FCCBs) or Foreign Currency Exchangeable Bonds (FCEBs).

National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA)

- **The National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA)** completed its outreach programme to reach out to small and medium auditors to improve audit quality in India.
- NFRA is an **independent audit regulator**, established in **2018** under **Section 132 of the Companies Act, 2013**, with headquarters in **New Delhi**.
- It regulates the **auditing profession** and promotes compliance with **accounting and auditing standards** to improve financial reporting, transparency and investor protection.
- Under **NFRA Rules, 2018**, NFRA can inspect audit files, investigate auditors, review audit quality and take disciplinary action.
- It can also **conduct investigations into professional misconduct** by auditors/audit firms.
- Note: **CAG (Comptroller and Auditor General)** and NFRA are separate institutions. CAG is the **constitutional (Article 148) auditor** of public finances, whereas NFRA is the **statutory regulator** of corporate financial reporting and auditing.

USD-INR forex swap

- RBI introduced a special **USD-INR swap facility** to boost dollar inflows, stabilize the weakening rupee, and protect foreign exchange reserves.
- In a **USD-INR swap**, the bank **sells dollars to the RBI and receives rupees**, while agreeing to reverse the transaction on a future date at a pre-agreed rate.
 - ➔ **Spot Buy:** The commercial bank sells US Dollars (USD) to the RBI at the current market spot rate and receives Indian Rupees (INR), thus helping build liquidity.
 - ➔ **Forward Sell:** Simultaneously, the bank and RBI agree to reverse the trade at a predetermined future date at a forward (future) exchange rate (where the RBI will return the USD back to the bank and take back INR).
- The **special swap facility** offers banks an **attractive/concessional swap rate**, encouraging them to mobilise foreign-currency funds via foreign currency deposits, like **FCNR(B)** and Overseas Foreign Currency Borrowings (OFCB).
- For RBI, the swap brings **foreign currency into its reserves temporarily**, providing additional liquidity and helping manage **rupee pressure**.

FCNR(B) (Foreign Currency Non-Resident (Bank)) is a bank deposit account for NRIs in which money is held in a **foreign currency rather than Indian rupees**. It is generally a **term deposit**, with the principal and interest **fully repatriable** and interest generally **tax-free in India**. Since the deposit remains in foreign currency, it protects the NRI from **rupee depreciation risk**.

Overseas Foreign Currency Borrowings (OFCB) are foreign currency funds raised by authorized Indian banks (**Authorised Dealer (AD) Category-I**) from international markets to bolster liquidity and foreign exchange reserves. They are typically required to have a **minimum maturity of three years** under special central bank frameworks.

MSME Development (Amendment) Bill, 2026

- Parliament passed the **MSME Development (Amendment) Bill, 2026**, 20 years after the **MSMED Act, 2006**.

- The amendment retains **investment+turnover** as criteria (below) for MSME classification, but grants the Central Government **executive flexibility to notify and update investment and turnover limits via rules** without needing periodic statutory amendments.
- The amendment makes **Udyam Registration** permanently free and voluntary.
- Udyam Registration** is a **free, paperless online system** for officially registering MSMEs and providing them formal recognition. It **replaced Udyog Aadhaar in July 2020** and provides a unique **Udyam Registration Number and digital certificate**.
- MSMEs often **face delayed payments** from buyers, especially large companies and government entities.
- For Micro and Small enterprises such disputes are settled via **State-level bodies** called **MSEFCs (Micro and Small Enterprises Facilitation Councils)** set up by the original 2006 Act.
- The amendment brings strict timelines for dispute resolution by MSEFCs with mediation to be concluded within **90 days** and arbitration if mediation fails, initiated in **30 days** and awarded within **90 days**.
- The amendment allows the Central Government to establish an **Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) mechanism**.
- Section 15A** now requires all Central Public Sector Enterprises (CPSEs) to handle and settle payment invoices for MSME procurement through the **Trade Receivables Discounting System (TReDS)**
- The amendments also **decriminalised certain minor offences** (eg, minor errors in MSME registration) with graded civil penalties for repeated violations.

Gold Monetisation Scheme (GMS)

- The Centre is considering a **revamped Gold Monetisation Scheme** that would allow jewellers to participate as collection partners for the first time.
- The Gold Monetisation Scheme (GMS)** was launched by the Centre in 2015 to **mobilise idle gold held by households** and institutions and channel it into productive use, thereby reducing India's dependence on imported bullion.
- The **scheme combined** the earlier Gold Deposit Scheme and Gold Metal Loan Scheme into a single framework.
- Under the original framework, **depositors could submit gold jewellery** (after removing stones), coins or bars at **authorised Collection and Purity Testing Centres (CPTCs)**.
- After purity testing and refining, the **equivalent quantity of 995-purity gold** was credited to a Gold Deposit Account with a designated bank.
- Depositors earned interest and, at maturity, **could opt to receive either the equivalent quantity of gold or its rupee value**, depending on the applicable scheme.
- However, the **scheme struggled**, mobilising only ~39 tonnes of gold by November 2025 against India's estimated household holdings of 25,000–30,000 tonnes.

Payment and Settlement Systems Amendment

- Taxation and other Laws (Amendment) Act** was passed that amended the Payment and Settlement Systems (PSS) Act, 2007.
- The PSS Act provides the **legal framework for regulating and supervising payment and settlement** systems in India, including electronic and digital payment systems.
- Section 10A** was added in 2019 to the PSS Act that **prohibited charging MDR (Merchant Discount Rate)** for banks and payment service providers (PSPs), preventing them from levying charges on notified electronic payment modes.

New MSME Classification Criteria as per Union Budget 2025



ENTERPRISE CATEGORY	CURRENT INVESTMENT LIMIT	REVISED INVESTMENT LIMIT	CURRENT TURNOVER LIMIT	REVISED TURNOVER LIMIT
MICRO ENTERPRISE	₹1 crore	₹2.5 crore	₹5 crore	₹10 crore
SMALL ENTERPRISE	₹10 crore	₹25 crore	₹50 crore	₹100 crore
MEDIUM ENTERPRISE	₹50 crore	₹125 crore	₹250 crore	₹500 crore

MDR (Merchant Discount Rate) is a fee charged to a **merchant** (supplier of goods or services) **by the bank** for providing the payment service when a customer pays digitally via physical cards, or online.

- Accordingly, a **2019 notification** by the government made MDR and other charges could not be imposed on RuPay debit card, BHIM-UPI and BHIM-UPI QR..
- This **2026 amendment to the PSS Act** changes section 10A from a prohibiting provision to an **enabling provision** that gives the Central Government the power to notify which electronic payment modes must remain free of charges.
- This means the **UPI and Services Steering Committee headed by NPCI** that oversees the development and functioning of UPI and related payment services, will decide on the future MDR, if any.
- But the **government has clarified** that there will be **no charges for users** using the UPI, as well as all **Person-to-Person (P2P) transactions** will continue to be free of charge.
- As and when MDR charges are introduced, they will **apply only to a limited set of merchant transactions**, above a certain threshold, at a nominal rate, far lower than debit or credit card MDRs.



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International Relations

Makkah Joint Defence Agreement (MJDA)

- Saudi Arabia, Türkiye and Pakistan** signed the MJDA on **August 7, 2026**, agreeing that an **armed attack on one would be treated as an attack on all three**.
- It establishes a **trilateral framework for defence and security cooperation**, with a collective-defence provision comparable to **NATO's Article 5**.
- The agreement aims to strengthen **collective deterrence** and defence coordination amid the changing security environment in **West Asia**.
- It is described as **defensive in nature**, is not directed against any specific country and **does not replace existing defence agreements** of the three countries.
- The pact promotes **regional defence coordination** and a more **regionally driven security architecture**.
- Makkah** (also known as Mecca) is the **holiest city in Islam**, located in the Hejaz region of western **Saudi Arabia**

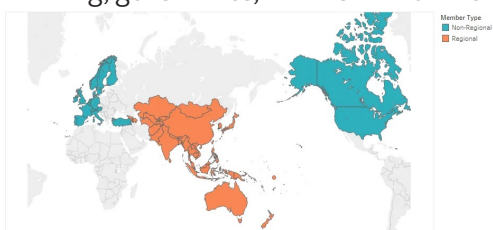
Iran and New Development Bank

- As per reports, **Iran will soon join the NDB**, the development bank established by BRICS.
- NDB was established in **2015** to finance **infrastructure and sustainable development** in emerging and developing countries.
- The **NDB currently has 10 member countries**—the five founding BRICS members **Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa**, along with **Bangladesh, UAE, Egypt, Algeria and Uzbekistan**.
- It is **headquartered in Shanghai, China**, with **USD 100 billion authorised capital** and **USD 50 billion initial subscribed capital**, equally contributed by the five founding members.
- Currently, the **five founding members each hold 18.98%**, while Bangladesh holds **1.76%**, Egypt **2.24%**, UAE **1.04%**, Algeria **1.15%** and Uzbekistan **0.23%**.

- **Membership is open to all UN members** and has expanded beyond the founding BRICS countries, for example Bangladesh is a member of NDB but not BRICS.
- NDB provides **loans, guarantees, equity participation and other financial instruments** for infrastructure and sustainable-development projects.
- **BRICS is an intergovernmental grouping of 11 countries:** Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Indonesia, Iran, Saudi Arabia (status ambiguous) and UAE.
- It seeks to promote **economic and political cooperation, reform global financial institutions and strengthen the voice of the Global South..**

Asian Development Bank (ADB)

- The Government of India and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) signed a **\$230 million loan agreement for the Chennai Climate-Resilient Water Security** and Sewerage Project to modernize Chennai's water supply and wastewater infrastructure.
- Asian Development Bank (ADB) is a **multilateral development bank** supporting **sustainable, inclusive and resilient growth across Asia and the Pacific.**
- It was **founded in 1966** and is owned by **69 members**, including 50 from the Asia-Pacific region and is headquartered in **Mandaluyong City, Metro Manila, Philippines**
- It **supports development projects in its developing member countries** through public and private sector operations, advisory services and knowledge support.
- Its **membership is open to other regional countries and non-regional developed countries that are members of the U.N.** or of any of its specialized agencies.
- It **provides loans and grants to member countries** for development projects in infrastructure, social sectors, and environmental sustainability and **offers technical assistance and advisory services** to improve policy-making, governance, and institutional capacity.



International Criminal Court (ICC)

- The International Criminal Court (ICC) has been in the news after **Venezuela announced its decision to withdraw** from the tribunal, accusing it of geographical bias against countries of the Global South.
- The ICC is a **permanent international criminal court** headquartered in **The Hague, Netherlands**, established under the **Rome Statute**, which was adopted in 1998 and entered into force on 1 July 2002.
- It **prosecutes individuals, not states**, for four serious international crimes: **genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and the crime of aggression** and this distinguishes it from the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which deals with disputes between states.
- It **follows the principle of complementarity**, meaning that it acts when national judicial systems are unwilling or genuinely unable to investigate or prosecute serious international crimes.
- Also **ICC is independent of the United Nations and is not a UN organ**, although the UN Security Council can refer situations to the ICC and **India is not a party to the Rome Statute**, along with countries such as China and the United States.

ISRAEL'S WAR ON GAZA

Differences between the ICJ and the ICC

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the International Criminal Court (ICC) are two courts with different functions within the international legal system.

	 ICJ International Court of Justice	 ICC International Criminal Court
Established	1945	2002
UN-relationship	Highest court of the UN	Not part of the UN
Location	The Hague, the Netherlands	The Hague, the Netherlands
Jurisdiction	UN member-states	Individuals
Types of cases	Legal disputes between states and requests for advisory opinions on legal questions	Prosecutes individuals for the most serious crimes as per the Rome Statute
Appeals	No	Yes
Enforcement power	None - relies on the UN Security Council to uphold judgements, with permanent members having veto power	None - relies on cooperation from member states to enforce its decisions



Source: International Court of Justice, International Criminal Court | January 10, 2024

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South African Customs Union

- India and the five-member Southern African Customs Union (SACU) recently signed the Terms of Reference (ToR) to start negotiations for a **Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA)**, with an aim to conclude the trade talks within a year.
- Southern African Customs Union (SACU) is an **African regional economic organisation** and the **world's oldest functioning customs union**, formally established in **1910**, subsequently re-established through **2002 SACU Agreement**.
- It **has five member countries: Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Namibia and South Africa** and all five are also members of the **Southern African Development Community (SADC)**.
- It **operates as a common customs territory** where goods can move freely among member states without internal customs tariffs, while a **Common External Tariff (CET)** is imposed on goods imported from outside the Union.
- Its **Secretariat is headquartered in Windhoek, Namibia**.



Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA)

- Maritime security experts recently emphasized the need to **accelerate the Indo-Pacific Partnership for Maritime Domain Awareness (IPMDA)** to ensure **unimpeded global trade and freedom of navigation** amid rising geopolitical tensions.
- Maritime Domain Awareness means having **effective awareness and understanding of everything happening at sea** that could affect maritime security, safety, economy or the environment.
- IPMDA is a Quad initiative** launched at the **2022 Quad Leaders' Summit in Tokyo** by

India, Australia, Japan and the US to enhance maritime domain awareness in the Indo-Pacific.

- It is a **technology-and-training initiative, not a military alliance**, providing participating countries with **near-real-time maritime information** using technologies such as commercial satellite data.
- It covers the **Indian Ocean, Southeast Asia and Pacific Islands** and works with regional partners and information-fusion centres to create a **shared maritime picture**.
- It aims to counter **Illegal, Unreported, and Unregulated (IUU) fishing and other illicit maritime activities** and supports responses to **natural disasters, climate-related events and humanitarian crises**.
- Quad** is an informal strategic forum comprising **India, US, Japan and Australia** that promotes a **free, open, secure and prosperous Indo-Pacific**.

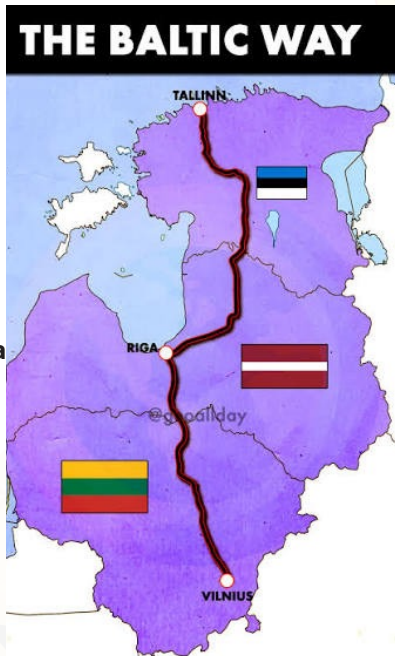
India's Oil imports: Russia and Venezuela

- India's Russian crude imports fell **26.3% in August 2026**, from their historic highs in the previous month.
- Despite this, Russia remains **India's largest crude supplier**, accounting for about 45% of India's total crude basket, followed by UAE.
- Reasons for decline:** Lower Russian export availability due to **Ukrainian attacks on Black Sea oil infrastructure**, higher shipping costs due to risks, and increased **domestic demand for Russian crude** due to war.
- China Factor:** With the disrupted Strait of Hormuz route, **China's increased purchases of Russian crude** via the more attractive **Northern Sea Route** created stronger competition for the limited available supply.
- Venezuelan Oil:** US sanctions on Venezuela in **2019** had caused India to **stop imports from Venezuela**
- After the **US eased the sanctions** in March on Venezuelan oil recently, India's imports from the nation have restarted and **now has overtaken Saudi Arabia**, for the 3rd place
- India **is diversifying its oil basket**, increasing purchases from the UAE and Angola while also sourcing crude from the US, Iraq, Nigeria and Brazil amid supply disruptions and geopolitical risks.

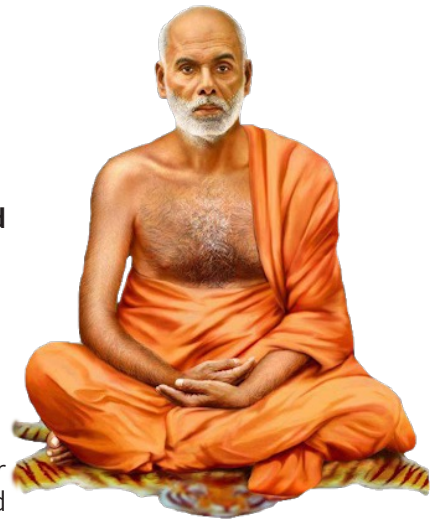
History & Culture

Baltic Way

- **August 23, 2026** marked the **37th anniversary of the Baltic Way**, the peaceful protest through which people of **Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania** demanded freedom from Soviet rule.
- **Baltic Way** was a peaceful mass mobilisation held on **23 August 1989** in **Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania**, where around **2 million people** formed a **600-km human chain** linking **Tallinn, Riga and Vilnius**.
- It was organised on the **50th anniversary of the Molotov–Ribbentrop Pact (1939)** to protest its **secret protocols** that placed the Baltic States under the Soviet sphere of influence and demand restoration of independence.
- It became a major example of **non-violent civil resistance**, drawing inspiration from **non-violence, civil resistance, non-cooperation and mass mobilisation**.
- The movement demonstrated **unity among the three Baltic States**, strengthened their independence movements and contributed to their **restoration of independence in the early 1990s**.



- He opposed **caste discrimination and social inequality** and propagated **“One Caste, One Religion, One God for All.”** In 1888, he consecrated a **Shiva temple at Aruvippuram**, challenging caste-based restrictions.



- He was a major proponent and re-evaluator of **Advaita Vedanta**, emphasising the **oneness of humanity**.
- In **1903**, he established **Sree Narayana Dharma Paripalana Yogam (SNDP)** and promoted **education, cleanliness, agriculture, handicrafts, trade and technical training**.
- He provided impetus to the **Vaikom Agitation** against caste-based restrictions on **temple roads and entry** in Travancore.
- He died on **20 September 1928**, observed as **Sree Narayana Guru Samadhi** in Kerala.

Shompen Tribe



- **Tribal leaders recently accused the Andaman and Nicobar administration of seeking to push the Shompen towards a “modern lifestyle”.**
- **Shompen** are a **PVTG** primarily inhabiting the **rainforests of Great Nicobar Island** and are among the world’s most isolated indigenous communities.
- They traditionally follow a **nomadic hunter-gatherer lifestyle**, depending heavily on the rainforest and hunting animals such as **wild pigs, monkeys, lizards and crocodiles**.

Sree Narayana Guru

- India paid tributes to **Sree Narayana Guru** on his **birth anniversary**.
- **Sree Narayana Guru** was born on **22 August 1856** at **Chempazhanthy, Kerala**, to **Madan Asan and Kuttijamma**, and belonged to the **Ezhava community**.

- They are highly vulnerable to **infectious diseases** due to limited immunity arising from prolonged isolation.
- The **Great Nicobar Island Development Project** has raised concerns over its impact on the **Shompen, rainforest habitat and traditional way of life**.
- Other important tribes of the Andaman & Nicobar Islands:
- **Great Andamanese** – Indigenous tribes of the **Andaman Islands** - PVTG .
- **Jarawa** – **Hunter-gatherers** of the Andaman Islands - PVTG .
- **Sentinelese** – Inhabit **North Sentinel Island**; known for **rejecting outside contact**- PVTG.
- **Onge** – Inhabit **Little Andaman Island**; traditionally hunter-gatherers - PVTG.
- **Nicobarese** – Indigenous people of the **Nicobar Islands**; traditionally practice **horticulture and fishing** - not a PVTG.

Phulkari

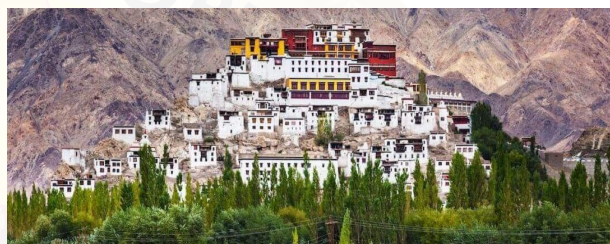


- **Phulkari**, the traditional embroidery of Punjab, continues to face livelihood and recognition challenges despite receiving a GI tag.
- **Phulkari** means “flower work” and is a traditional embroidery art of **Punjab**, closely associated with Punjabi culture.
- It is traditionally done on **khaddar** using lustrous **silk threads** called **pat**, with small stitches arranged vertically, horizontally or diagonally.
- Common motifs include **flowers, geometric patterns, peacocks, elephants, birds and camels**; it is especially associated with **weddings and important life events**.
- **GI tag: 2010**, recognising its distinctive regional and cultural identity.

Other important GI-tagged embroidery traditions in India:

- **Kasuti Embroidery — Karnataka:** known for **geometric patterns**, often depicting temples, chariots, lamps, flowers and other motifs; received its GI registration in **2006**.
- **Kutch Embroidery — Gujarat:** characterised by **colourful threads, intricate stitches and mirror work**; received GI registration in **2008**.
- **Sujani Embroidery Work — Bihar:** traditional **quilt embroidery** with narrative and figurative designs; received GI registration in **2017**.
- **Gujarat Suf Embroidery — Gujarat:** based on **counted-thread geometric designs**, traditionally worked from the reverse side of the fabric; received GI registration in **2024**.

Thiksey Monastery

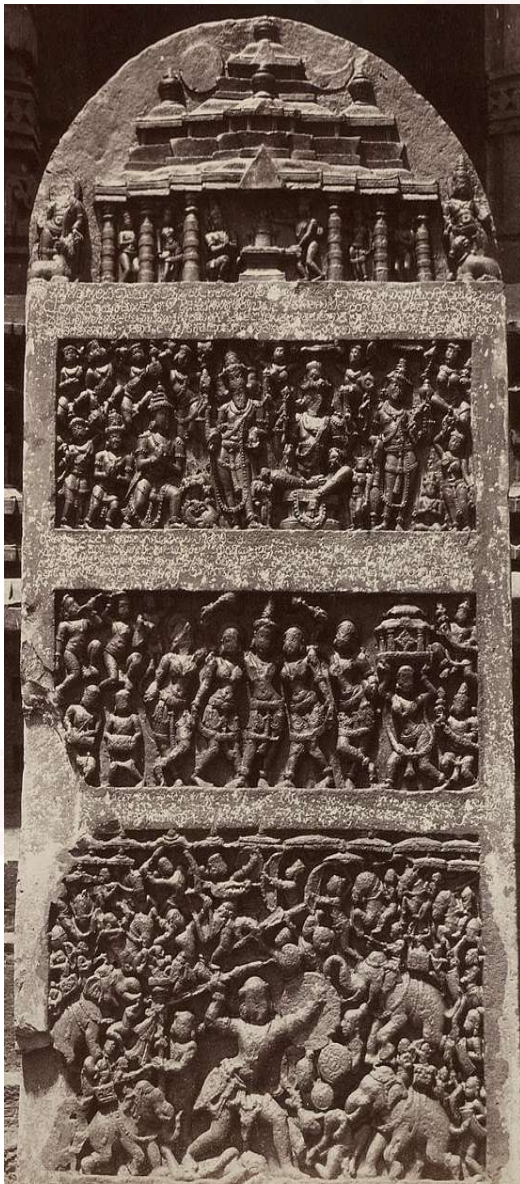


- **US Ambassador to India Sergio Gor** recently visited **Thiksey Monastery in Ladakh** during his official tour of the Union Territory.
- **Thiksey Monastery**, located about **19 km from Leh**, is a **Tibetan Buddhist monastery of the Gelugpa sect**, overlooking the Indus Valley.
- Founded in **1433**, it is one of the **largest and most prominent monasteries of central Ladakh**, containing ancient **stupas, images, thangka paintings and wall paintings**.
- It is a **12-storey complex** and is popularly compared to the **Potala Palace of Lhasa, Tibet**.
- It houses a **15-metre-high Maitreya Buddha statue**, installed in the **1980s**, and is known for its **morning prayers and panoramic views of the Indus Valley**.

Note: Other important monasteries include Hemis Monastery (Ladakh) – Drukpa lineage; Alchi Monastery (Ladakh) – famous for ancient Buddhist paintings and sculptures; Tawang Monastery (Arunachal Pradesh) – one of the largest Buddhist monasteries in India and associated with the Gelug school.

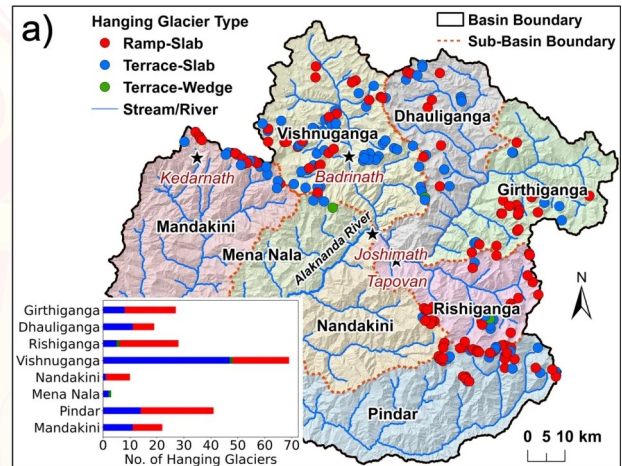
Veeragallu (Hero Stone)

- A **12th-century Veeragallu** was recently unearthed at **Neeragunda village, Arsikere taluk, Karnataka**, during temple restoration.
- Hero stones are memorial stones honouring **warriors who died heroically**, especially while defending **cattle, women, territory or their community**.
- Common in **South India**, especially Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra; prominent under the **Chalukyas, Rashtrakutas, Gangas, Kadambas and Hoysalas**.
- Typically, the **lower panel shows battle/death**, the **middle panel the hero's ascent to heaven**, and the **upper panel his worship of a deity**.
- Inscriptions record the **hero, conflict and ruling period**; Sun and Moon symbols often signify **eternal fame**.



Geography

Hanging Glaciers

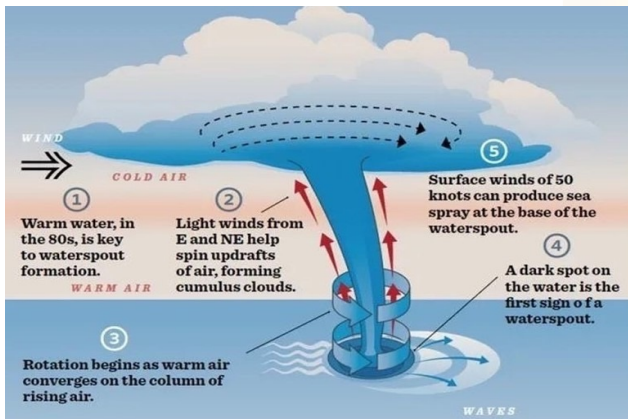


- A **Nature study** identified **219 hanging glaciers** in the **Alaknanda Basin of the Garhwal Himalayas**.
- Hanging glaciers are **ice masses perched on steep mountain slopes**, rather than broad valley floors, making them potentially unstable.
- **Rapid warming and changing precipitation** can alter ice movement and glacier geometry, increasing instability.
- Their detachment can cause **large ice avalanches** and trigger secondary hazards such as **Glacial Lake Outburst Floods (GLOFs)**.
- The 219 glaciers cover **71.7 ± 3.5 sq km** and contain an estimated **2.39 ± 0.42 km³ of ice**; nearly **one-third of unstable ice** is concentrated in the **Upper Alaknanda Basin**.
- **GLOF**: A sudden flood caused by failure of a **moraine or ice dam** holding a glacial lake, releasing large amounts of **water, mud and debris** downstream.

Waterspout

- Recently, a **rare weather phenomenon resembling a waterspout** was observed over the **Brahmaputra River in Assam's Barpeta district**.
- A **waterspout** is a **column of rotating, cloud-filled wind** that descends from a cloud to a **water body**. It is **not a column of water rising from the surface**.

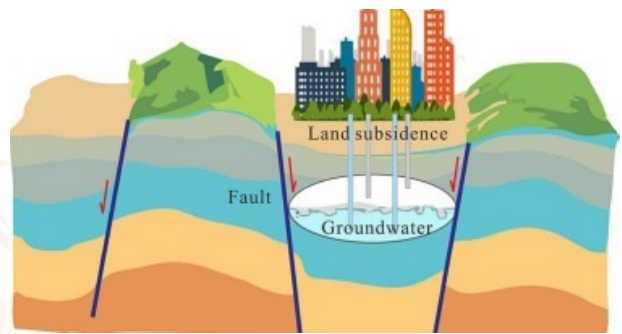
- Waterspouts require **high humidity** and **relatively warm water compared with the overlying air** and are commonly associated with **tropical and subtropical waters**.
- There are **two major types**: **tornadic waterspouts**, which begin as tornadoes and are generally more powerful, and **fair-weather waterspouts**, which are more common and generally less dangerous.
- They typically develop through **five stages**: **dark spot** → **spiral pattern** → **spray ring** → **mature vortex** → **decay**. During the **mature stage**, the rotating column extends visibly from the **water surface to the cloud**.



Barrier Lakes and Nepal Floods

- A **barrier lake in Tibet** holding **2–5 million m³ of water** began overflowing and breaching, triggering the **Bhotekoshi floods in Nepal** and threatening downstream regions.
- A barrier lake forms when **landslides, rock avalanches, debris flows or glacial collapses block a river**, causing water to accumulate upstream.
- Earthquakes, cloudbursts, intense monsoons and glacial collapses** can trigger such blockages in mountainous areas.
- Unlike engineered dams, natural barriers consist of **loose boulders, gravel, mud and ice**, making them unstable and permeable.
- Failure through **overtopping or piping** can suddenly release water and debris, causing a **Landslide Lake Outburst Flood (LLOF)** downstream.
- They can cause **upstream inundation and catastrophic downstream flooding**, threatening settlements, bridges and hydropower projects; **satellite monitoring, early warnings and controlled drainage** can reduce risks.

Land Subsidence



- In Uttarakhand's Bageshwar district, rampant **underground and open-cast soapstone mining** has **triggered** severe land subsidence, widening ground fissures and damaging hundreds of homes across vulnerable villages.
- Land subsidence** is the **gradual sinking or sudden downward collapse of the Earth's surface** due to the movement, compaction or removal of subsurface materials.
- Excessive groundwater extraction** is a major cause, i.e. Withdrawal of groundwater reduces **pore-water pressure**, causing fine-grained sediments to **compact**, which results in surface sinking.
- Other causes include **Mining, oil and gas extraction, tunnelling, dissolution of soluble rocks, thawing permafrost and natural tectonic processes**.
- Subsidence can produce **ground cracks and differential settlement**, damaging **buildings, roads, railways and underground pipelines**.

Vanashakti case & Environmental Clearance

- The Supreme Court delivered a **final judgment in Vanashakti (NGO) v. Union of India case**, ruling that **prior environmental clearance is strictly mandatory** before commencing any project under the EIA Notification of 2006.
- Environmental Clearance (EC)** is a mandatory approval required **before starting, expanding or modernising** certain projects that may significantly affect the environment, based on an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) study.
- Environment (Protection) Act, 1986**; particularly **Section 3**, empowers the Central Government to take measures for environmental protection.
- Subsequently the central government issued **EIA Notification, 2006**, that specified which projects require EC and the procedure for obtaining it.
 - **Category A:** Projects with larger potential environmental impacts; clearance is given by the **Central Government (MoEFCC)**.
 - **Category B:** Projects with comparatively lower/regional impacts; clearance is generally given by the **State Environment Impact Assessment Authority (SEIAA)**.
 - **Sub-categories** :B1: Needs an EIA study and public consultation.B2: Exempted.
- Main stages of EIA: Screening → Scoping/Terms of Reference → Public Consultation → Appraisal → EC decision.**
- Applications and processing are done online through the **PARIVESH 2.0 portal**.
- In **2017**, the Ministry of Environment (MoEFCC) issued a **statutory notification** under EIA 2006 creating a **one-time 6-month window** for project proponents in India operating **without an EC**.
 - ✓ They could **self-disclose** their violations, undergo environmental appraisals, and pay financial penalties to acquire ex-post facto clearances (retrospective approval).
- This was **allowed by Madras HC**, treating it as a one-time emergency measure by the government.

- However, in 2021, MoEFCC issued an **Office Memorandum (OM)** introducing an **indefinite mechanism** for ex-post facto EC.
- The Supreme Court **upheld the limited 2017 statutory amnesty** but **quashed the 2021 OM**, holding that an executive OM cannot override statutory environmental rules.
- The Court also said that the Centre can **grant exceptions where the project is in public interest**, but that has to be done through formal statutory notifications under **Section 3 of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986**, and not through a mere administrative office memorandum.

Oil Spill in Hara Mangroves



- Recent satellite images have revealed a major environmental threat to Hara mangrove forest due to an oil spill off Qeshm's southern coast.
- Qeshm** is an Iranian island in the **Strait of Hormuz** of the Persian Gulf,
- Hara Mangrove is designated as a **UNESCO Biosphere Reserve** and consists mainly of the **grey mangrove (Avicennia marina)**.
- "Hara" (or "harra") is the local **Persian name** for the dominant mangrove tree species (**Avicennia marina**), which also **honors the famous Persian physician and philosopher Avicenna (Abu Ali Sina)**.
- Avicennia marina**, commonly called grey mangrove, is a **salt-tolerant mangrove species** found in **tropical and subtropical coastal areas**.
- It grows in **intertidal zones**, particularly muddy and saline coastal areas, estuaries and tidal flats.
- It has **pneumatophores** — specialised upward-growing roots that emerge from the soil and help the plant take in oxygen in waterlogged, oxygen-poor sediments.

- It has **salt-excreting glands** on its leaves, allowing it to remove excess salt absorbed from seawater.
- Leaves are generally **greyish-green, with a waxy surface** that helps reduce water loss.
- It is highly **tolerant of salinity, tidal flooding and harsh coastal conditions**, making it important for coastal protection and ecosystem stability.
- *A. marina* is among the widely distributed mangrove species in India and is found along several coastal regions.

Green India Mission

- Recently, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) have flagged major shortcomings in the implementation of the Green India Mission (GIM).
- **National Mission for a Green India (GIM)** is one of the **eight core missions under the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC)** and was launched in **February 2014**.
- The primary target of India's Green India Mission is to **increase forest and tree cover** by 5 million hectares and improve the quality of existing forest cover on another 5 million hectares, totaling 10 million hectares of land.
- It also targets to **boost forest-based livelihood income** for approximately 3 million households living in and around forest fringes
- The **2021–30 revised plan** follows a “**micro-ecosystem**” approach, focusing on vulnerable landscapes such as the **Aravallis, Western Ghats, arid north-west India, mangroves and Indian Himalayan region**.
- **CAG finding (2015–16 to 2024–25):** only **0.03 million ha** showed increased forest cover against a **1.4 million ha target**, a **nearly 98% shortfall**.



GOBARdhan Initiative

- The Union Cabinet approved the **revamped GOBARdhan National Circular Bioenergy Scheme**, building upon the **original rural sanitation initiative** launched under the Swachh Bharat Mission in 2018.
- **GOBARdhan (Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources Dhan)** converts **cattle dung, crop residues, press mud, municipal organic waste and other biomass** into **Compressed Biogas (CBG) and organic manure**.
- It promotes a **rural circular bioeconomy**, generates rural income, increases renewable gas production and reduces dependence on **imported fossil fuels**.
- Revamped GOBARdhan integrates **Sustainable Alternative Towards Affordable Transportation (SATAT scheme)** that promotes CBG as a transport fuel, **Market Development Assistance (MDA)** that supports the market for organic manure, **Biomass Aggregation Machinery (BAM)** that supports collection and transport of agricultural biomass, and the **National Bioenergy Programme** that provides broader support for biomass, biogas and waste-to-energy projects.
- GOBARdhan ensures CBG demand through mandatory blending targets: **3% (FY 2026–27), 4% (FY 2027–28) and 5% from FY 2028–29 onwards** for City Gas Distribution entities.
- Thus it legally requires fuel suppliers to **mix a specific percentage of Compressed Bio-Gas (CBG)** into the conventional natural gas supplied for vehicles and households
- Supports the CBG ecosystem through **capital assistance, pipeline connectivity, credit guarantees and a challenge fund**.

UNCCD COP17

- The **17th session** of the Conference of the Parties (COP17) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (**UNCCD**) took place in **Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia**.

Key Outcomes:

- **Rangelands Flagship Initiative:** Launched a **\$1.2 billion** global fund to protect grasslands, savannas, and pastoralists during the **International Year of Rangelands and Pastoralists (IYRP 2026)**.

- **Proactive Drought Resilience:** Introduced an AI-powered **Drought Resilience Index (DRI)** and a **\$400 million Drought Resilience Investment Facility** (jointly by UNCCD and Luxembourg) to shift policy from reactive relief to proactive preparedness.
- **Financial Mobilization:** Secured **\$1.3 billion** in targeted funding to accelerate **Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN)** and land restoration in vulnerable developing nations.
- **Nature-Based Solutions (NbS):** Formalized commitments to integrate **Ecosystem-based Adaptation (EbA)**—like grassland rejuvenation and biochar—into national infrastructure frameworks.

UNCCD is the **only legally binding** international agreement specifically focused on **combating desertification, land degradation and drought** through sustainable land management. It was adopted on **17 June 1994 in Paris** and entered into force in December 1996. It is one of the **three Rio Conventions, along with the UNFCCC and CBD**, and has **197 Parties** (196 countries + the EU). Its headquarters is in **Bonn, Germany**.

Gene-Edited Rice Varieties

- India developed two genome-edited rice varieties — **DRR Dhan 100 (Kamala)** and **Pusa Rice DST1** and is set to release Pusa Rice DST1 for commercial production in the upcoming rabi season.
- **DRR Dhan 100 (Kamala)** is developed by **ICAR-IIRR, Hyderabad**, from **Samba Mahsuri (BPT 5204)** which produces **more grains per panicle** and matures about **20 days earlier**.
- **Pusa DST Rice 1** is developed by **ICAR-IARI, New Delhi**, from **MTU 1010**; it is designed for improved tolerance to **drought and salt-affected soils**.
- They used precision **CRISPR-Cas9 genome-editing** without adding foreign DNA (unlike traditional Genetically Modified or GM crops)
 - 👉 **DRR Dhan 100 (Kamala):** CKX2 gene edited → **more grains per plant**, matures **15–20 days earlier**, and requires **less water and fertilizer**.
 - 👉 **Pusa DST Rice 1:** DST (Drought and Salt Tolerance) gene edited → improves tolerance to **salinity and alkalinity**, enabling cultivation in **saline coastal and alkaline soils** where conventional rice performs poorly.

Science & Technology

Antineutrinos

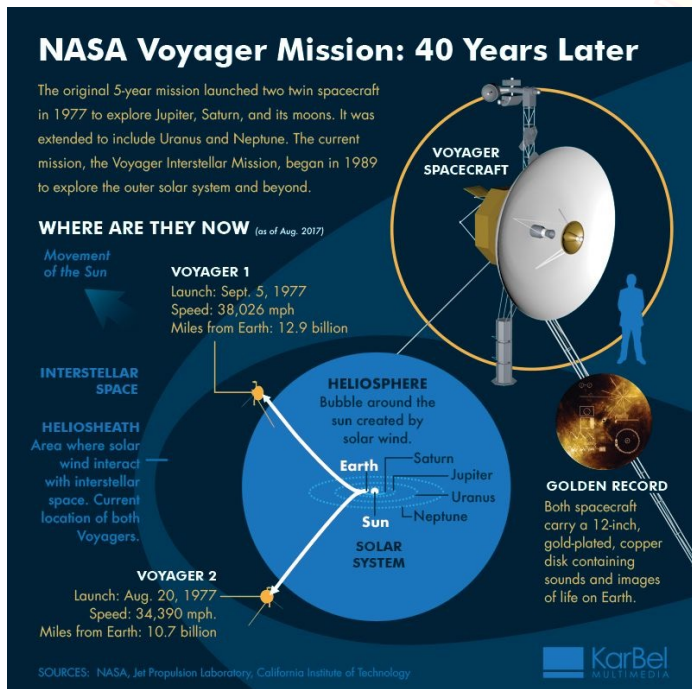
- Scientists in **France** developed a method to detect **antineutrinos from nuclear fuel**, enabling **remote, non-intrusive monitoring** of reactors and helping prevent misuse for nuclear weapons.
- **Neutrinos (ν)** are electrically neutral, extremely light subatomic particles that interact very weakly with matter; **antineutrinos (ν̄)** are their **antimatter counterparts** and are also electrically neutral.
- **Neutrinos** are commonly produced in processes such as **nuclear fusion in stars**, while **antineutrinos** are **abundantly produced during nuclear fission and radioactive beta decay**.
- **Nuclear reactors mainly emit electron antineutrinos**, whose predictable production makes them useful for monitoring reactor operations because they **cannot easily be shielded or altered**.
- Even after shutdown, **long-lived radioactive fission products in spent fuel continue to emit antineutrinos**, allowing monitoring of spent-fuel inventories.
- Applications include **nuclear safeguards, reactor safety, verification of reactor status and monitoring spent fuel**, although detection remains technically difficult because neutrinos and antineutrinos interact very weakly with matter.

Voyager 2 Mission

- NASA recently extended **Voyager 2's mission by one year** through a power-saving upgrade.
- Launched on **20 August 1977** from Cape Canaveral, USA, as a **flyby mission** to explore the outer Solar System.
- It is the **only spacecraft to closely study all four giant planets** — Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune — and the first to fly past **Uranus and Neptune**.
- It entered **interstellar space in 2018** after crossing the **heliopause**, the boundary between the Sun's heliosphere and interstellar

space; it became the **second human-made spacecraft** to do so after Voyager 1.

- Powered by **Radioisotope Thermoelectric Generators (RTGs)** using plutonium-238, which provide electricity far from the Sun.
- Continues to study the **heliosphere and interstellar medium**, despite having completed its primary planetary mission.



- During charging, **lithium ions move from the cathode to the anode**; during discharge, they move back to the cathode, producing electricity.
- **Key advantages:** high thermal and chemical stability, lower fire risk, long cycle life, high efficiency and relatively low cost because it uses **iron and phosphate instead of nickel and cobalt**.
- **Limitation:** lower energy density than some other lithium-ion chemistries such as NMC, so more battery capacity/weight may be needed for the same energy.
- **Uses:** electric vehicles, grid-scale battery storage, solar energy storage and backup power systems.
- In renewable-energy storage, LFP cells can **store surplus solar/wind electricity and release it when generation is low or during power outages**.

EVEREST Engine

- Bengaluru-based **Astrobase Space Technologies** unveiled **EVEREST**, India's first privately developed **800 kN (80-tonne-class) liquid rocket engine**.
- It uses **LOX (Liquid Oxygen)** as oxidiser + **liquid methane** as fuel, a combination called **Methalox**.
- It uses the **Full-Flow Staged Combustion (FFSC) cycle**, where **both fuel-rich and oxygen-rich preburners** drive separate turbopumps before the gases enter the main combustion chamber.
- **FFSC is highly efficient** because propellant gases are used more completely, but it is **technically more complex** than gas-generator or simpler staged-combustion cycles.
- Its **50–110% throttle range** and methane's relatively clean combustion support **vertical landing, recovery and rapid refurbishment**, making it suitable for reusable rockets.
- Uses **metal additive manufacturing (3D printing)** and is supported by **IN-SPACE's Technology Adoption Fund**, targeting next-generation reusable medium-lift launch vehicles.

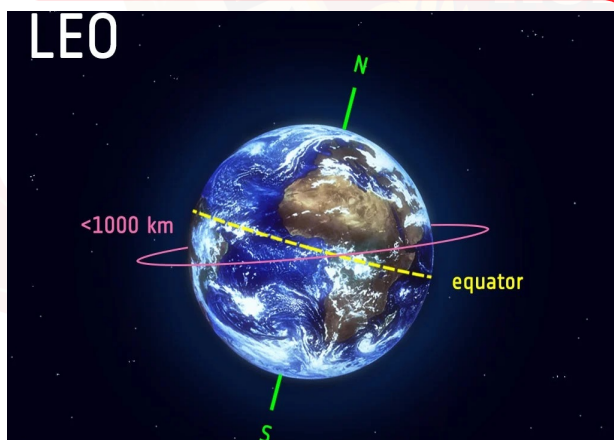
Lithium Iron Phosphate (LFP) cell

- Battery-grade **lithium carbonate prices dropped 10.3%** month-on-month to average around RMB 140,000 per tonne, driving down high-capacity **Lithium Iron Phosphate (LFP) energy storage cell costs**.
- Lithium carbonate is a key refined lithium product used to manufacture **cathode materials**, particularly **Lithium Iron Phosphate (LFP)**.
- It is obtained mainly from **lithium-rich continental brines (salar deposits)** and **hard-rock pegmatite ores** containing minerals such as **spodumene, lepidolite and petalite**.
- Besides lithium-ion batteries, lithium carbonate is used in **specialised glass and ceramics, aluminium smelting, and pharmaceuticals as a mood stabiliser**.
- **LFP is a type of lithium-ion battery chemistry** in which the **cathode is made of lithium iron phosphate (LiFePO₄)**; the anode is generally graphite.

Legal Metrology (Indian Standard Time) Rules, 2026

- The Union government has notified the Legal Metrology (Indian Standard Time) Rules, 2026, mandating Indian Standard Time (IST) as the single reference for legal, administrative, commercial and official purposes.
- The Rules establish **Indian Standard Time (IST) as the uniform official time reference** for government, commercial and critical digital systems.
- The **Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution** is the nodal ministry for implementing the Rules and the rules provide a **180-day transition period** to enable organisations to upgrade and synchronise their existing systems.
- It promotes **NavIC and other approved Indian timing sources** to reduce dependence on foreign satellite-based timing systems.
- Also the Rules support **White Rabbit Technology** (an open-source, ultra-precise network synchronization system developed by CERN) and a domestic timing-distribution network for highly precise synchronisation of **banking, telecom, power, transport and digital infrastructure**.
- Note: Indian Standard Time IST is based on the **82.5° E Standard Meridian**, which passes through **Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh** and it is **5 hours and 30 minutes ahead of Coordinated Universal Time (UTC+5:30)**.

ISRO and Low Earth Orbit (LEO)



- A peer-reviewed study in **Economics Letters** found that **India has the highest cost per kg for placing payloads into LEO among major spacefaring nations**, challenging its image as a low-cost launch provider.

- **LEO** is an orbit relatively close to Earth, generally **below 1,000 km**, with some orbits as low as **~160 km**.
- Objects in LEO travel at about **7.8 km/s** and complete an Earth orbit in roughly **90 minutes**.
- LEO is widely used for **Earth observation and imaging** because its proximity allows **high-resolution images**.
- The **International Space Station (ISS)** operates in LEO, and its relatively low altitude facilitates access from Earth.
- LEO satellites move quickly across the sky; therefore, **large satellite constellations** are often used to provide continuous communication coverage.

Zhuque-3

- **Zhuque-3** is a reusable orbital launch vehicle developed by **LandSpace**, a Chinese private space company.
- It recently achieved **China's first successful land-based recovery of an orbital rocket's first stage** after an orbital mission, using deployable landing legs.
- It uses **liquid methane + LOX (Methalox)** and a **stainless-steel structure** designed to withstand atmospheric re-entry.
- Its first stage supports **vertical landing and reuse** using **landing legs, grid fins and a reaction-control system**.
- Reusable technology can **reduce launch costs and increase launch frequency**, especially for large satellite constellations and commercial space missions.
- **Reusable launch programmes:** US – Falcon 9, Falcon Heavy, Starship, New Glenn; China – Zhuque-3, Long March-10B; India – Pushpak/RLV-TD, RLV-LEX; Europe – Themis; Japan – CALLISTO.

Defence

Javelin Missiles



- India has signed a **Letter of Offer and Acceptance (LOA)** with the **US** to procure **FGM-148 Javelin** anti-tank guided missiles.
- Javelin** is a **man-portable, shoulder-fired, medium-range** anti-tank guided missile (**ATGM**) designed for infantry soldiers, jointly manufactured by **Lockheed Martin** and **Raytheon (RTX)**.
- It uses a **passive imaging-infrared (IIR) seeker** and **fire-and-forget** technology, so the operator need not guide the missile after launch.
- Its **soft-launch system** allows firing from relatively confined spaces such as bunkers and buildings.
- India is acquiring Javelin for **immediate operational capability**, while indigenous **MPATGM** is being developed to progressively replace ageing **Milan-2T** and **Konkurs** systems.

MPATGM (Man-Portable Anti-Tank Guided Missile) is an indigenous, third-generation “fire-and-forget” anti-tank weapon system developed by India’s Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO)

- The deal was made under the **FMS (Foreign Military Sales) route**, a US government-to-government route through which other nations purchase US defence equipment, rather than purchasing the missiles directly from Lockheed Martin/RTX.

- The Indian Army used the **Emergency Procurement (EP) mechanism**, which delegates financial powers to the **Vice Chiefs of the three armed services** to fast-track weapon systems **up to ₹300 crore per project** first introduced in 2016 following the Uri terror attack

Samarthak Multi-Purpose Vessel



- Samarthak**, the first indigenously designed and built **Multi-Purpose Vessel (MPV)**, was delivered to the **Indian Navy** by **L&T**.
- It is the **lead ship of the Navy’s new MPV class**, with a displacement of about **3,750 tonnes**, built at L&T’s **Kattupalli shipyard** near **Chennai**.
- Acts as a **testbed for indigenous weapons and sensors**, allowing DRDO and industry to test radars, sonars and weapon systems before deployment on frontline warships.
- Supports **fleet training, target towing, ASW exercises** and deployment/recovery of **UAVs, USVs and UUVs**.
- It also performs **Humanitarian Assistance and Disaster Relief (HADR)**, **marine pollution control, towing and logistics**, reducing the burden on frontline warships and allowing them to focus on combat roles.

Mangrol, Anti-Submarine Warfare Water Craft



Military Exercises

Exercises	Participants	Force	Description
MAITREE-XV 2026	India-Thailand	Army	This is the 15th edition of the Exercise. The exercise was conducted at Vibhavadi Rangsit Camp, Surat Thani, Thailand.
Explosive Ordnance Disposal Exercise (EOD)	India-U.S.	Navy	The 8th edition of the Exercise was held at the Southern Naval Command in Kochi. safe detection, The exercise involves identification, handling and disposal of explosive hazards.
Pitch Black	Multinational (India Included)	Air Force	It is the Royal Australian Air Force's (RAAF's) premier biennial multinational air combat exercise. It was held at RAAF's Base Darwin
Udara Shakti 2026	India-Malaysia	Air Force	The exercise was held at Subang Airbase, Malaysia.
ROTOR CLAP III	India	Air Force	A specialized counter-unmanned aerial systems (Counter-UAS) military drill conducted to test and validate helicopter gunships as mobile airborne drone hunters. The third iteration of the drill was held at Pokhran Field Firing Range in the Jaisalmer district of Rajasthan..

Miscellaneous

Samudra Manthan scheme



- The Union Cabinet approved ₹84,084 crore for the **National Offshore Exploration Scheme (Samudra Manthan)** under the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas, to be implemented up to FY 2030–31.
- It is a **Central Sector Scheme** focused on **deepwater, ultra-deepwater and frontier offshore hydrocarbon exploration**, including seismic surveys, data processing and scientific drilling.

- The government will **de-risk exploration by covering up to 50% of eligible drilling costs**, capped at ₹675 crore per well, to encourage private investment.
- It provides for **common offshore production/evacuation infrastructure** and an integrated **Oil & Gas Manufacturing and Services Zone**, along with technology adoption and capacity building.
- It aims to **increase domestic oil and gas production, reduce import dependence and strengthen energy security**, particularly in the **Krishna-Godavari, Cauvery, Mahanadi and Andaman basins**.

National Handloom Day

- National Handloom Day is observed annually on 7 August** to celebrate India's handloom heritage and recognise the contribution of handloom weavers.
- The day commemorates the **Swadeshi Movement launched on 7 August 1905**, promoting indigenous goods and self-reliance

during the freedom struggle.

- It was instituted in **2015**, with the first observance inaugurated in **Chennai**.
- According to the **4th All India Handloom Census (2019–20)**, India has **35.22 lakh handloom weavers and allied workers**, with **over 72% women**.
- The **Ministry of Textiles** supports the sector through schemes such as the **National Handloom Development Programme, Raw Material Supply Scheme, India Handloom Brand and Handloom Mark**.

UDISE+ 2025–26 report

- The **UDISE+** (Unified District Information System for Education Plus) 2025-26 report shows significant progress in India's school education system. However, it also highlights continuing regional, social and infrastructural inequalities.
- **UDISE+** is the **Ministry of Education's nationwide school-education data system**, covering **14.67 lakh schools, 1.03 crore teachers and 24.72 crore students** in 2025–26.

Key Highlights:

- **Teacher availability improved** in 2025–26, with the total number of teachers increasing to about **1.03 crore**, while the **Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR)** stood at 10:1 at the Foundational stage, 12:1 at the Preparatory stage, 17:1 at the Middle stage, and 21:1 at the Secondary stage.
- The report indicates **improvement in student retention and transition rates and a decline in dropout rates**, reflecting progress in access and continuity of school education.
- **Girls constituted 48.4% of total enrolment** in school education in 2025–26, highlighting continued progress towards **gender parity in school participation**.
- **UDISE+ 2025–26 also highlights inclusive education**: about **22.11 lakh Children with Special Needs (CwSN)** were enrolled, while **1.17 lakh schools had a dedicated Special Educator**.

PM SVANidhi Scheme

- According to the **Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs**, as many as **21.86 lakh loans** to the tune of **Rs 6,294 crore** have been disbursed to **street vendors** under PM SVANidhi Scheme in the last 12 months.
- Prime Minister Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi (**PM SVANidhi**) was launched in **June 2020** by the **Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA)** as a **Central Sector Scheme** to provide **collateral-free working-capital loans to street vendors**.
- The scheme was **restructured in August 2025**, extending its lending period up to **31 March 2030** and targeting **1.15 crore street vendors**, including **50 lakh new beneficiaries**.
- It provides **graduated working-capital loans** of up to **₹15,000, ₹25,000 and ₹50,000** in three successive tranches, subject to timely repayment of earlier loans.
- Beneficiaries receive a **7% per annum interest subsidy through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT)** and incentives for digital transactions, promoting **formal credit and digital financial inclusion**.
- The '**SVANidhi se Samridhi**' initiative complements the scheme by mapping the socio-economic profiles of vendors and their families and facilitating access to **eight Central Government welfare schemes**, thereby extending support beyond credit.

Mushk Budji

- Mushk Budji is in focus as **expansion of its cultivation into unsuitable areas** has reportedly **increased supply and depressed prices** for farmers.
- **Mushk Budji** is a traditional **aromatic, short-grain rice variety of Kashmir**, known for its distinctive fragrance and taste.
- It is mainly associated with **Anantnag and adjoining areas of the Kashmir Valley**, where local agro-climatic conditions favour its cultivation.
- It received a **GI tag in 2023**, providing legal protection to its regional identity.
- Its cultivation had declined due to **low yields, changing cropping patterns and preference for high-yielding varieties**.

- It is important for **agricultural diversification and heritage conservation**, while its premium quality offers scope for **value addition and higher farmer incomes**.

Dirac Medal

- Indian theoretical physicist Prof. Deepak Dhar** received the **2026 ICTP Dirac Medal** for his contributions to theoretical physics.

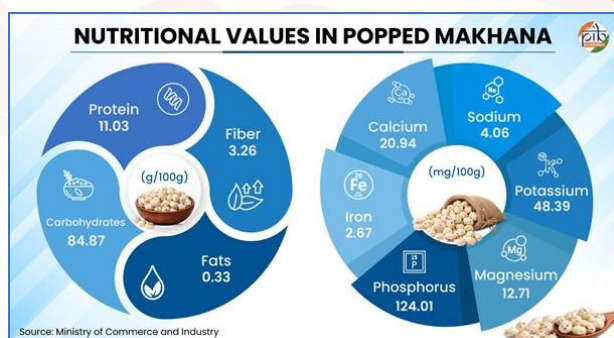


- The **ICTP Dirac Medal**, established in **1985**, is awarded by the **International Centre for Theoretical Physics (ICTP), Trieste, Italy**, for outstanding contributions to theoretical physics.
- Named after physicist **Paul A. M. Dirac**, the medal is generally not awarded to current **Nobel Prize, Fields Medal or Wolf Prize** winners.
- Deepak Dhar** is the **second Indian recipient**, after **Ashoke Sen (2012)**.
- Dhar is known for his work on the **Abelian Sandpile Model and Self-Organized Criticality**, which helps explain complex **non-equilibrium systems**.
- Paul A. M. Dirac (1902–1984)** was a renowned **British theoretical physicist** and **Nobel laureate (1933)**, famous for his foundational work in **quantum mechanics and quantum electrodynamics**.

cultivation and the Centre has also **established the National Makhana Board**.

- Makhana (Euryale ferox)** is an **aquatic crop** belonging to the **water lily family (Nymphaeaceae)**, and its edible seeds are commonly known as **fox nuts or gorgon nuts**.
- It grows mainly in **shallow, stagnant freshwater wetlands, ponds, oxbow lakes and flood-prone lowlands**, requiring warm and humid climatic conditions.
- India is the leading producer of makhana globally**, with **Bihar** being the **major producing state**, particularly in the **Mithila and Kosi-Seemanchal regions**.
- Mithila Makhana** received the **Geographical Indication (GI) tag in 2022**, recognising its distinct regional identity and supporting the livelihoods of local producers.
- Makhana is a **nutrient-rich, gluten-free food** containing plant protein, dietary fibre and minerals such as **magnesium, potassium, iron and calcium**.

Makhana



- India's makhana market is projected to reach **₹11,000–₹12,000 crore by 2029–30**, supported by rising global demand and modern

Places in News

Ceuta



- Around **60,000 migrants** attempted to enter Ceuta from Morocco by land and sea, triggering a major border crisis.
- Ceuta is an **autonomous Spanish city in North Africa**, bordering **Morocco** and facing the **Strait of Gibraltar**.
- Along with **Melilla**, it is one of Spain's **two land borders with Africa**.
- Its location near the **Strait of Gibraltar**, linking the **Atlantic Ocean and Mediterranean Sea**, makes it strategically important for maritime security, trade and migration control.
- **Morocco claims Ceuta** and has sought its return since gaining independence in **1956**.
- It remains a major **irregular migration hotspot** and a recurring source of **Spain-Morocco tensions**.

Lake Mead

- Lake Mead, the **largest reservoir in the US by storage capacity**, fell to a record-low level of **1,040.4 feet (317.1 m)** above sea level.
- It was formed by the **Hoover Dam on the Colorado River** and lies along the **Arizona-**

Nevada border, near Las Vegas.

- It is a major source of water for the **southwestern US** and part of the **Colorado River Basin**.
- Along with **Lake Powell**, it plays a key role in storing and regulating Colorado River water.
- Falling water levels are linked to **prolonged drought, reduced Rocky Mountain snowpack, rising temperatures and over-allocation** of Colorado River water.
- The decline threatens **water supply and hydroelectric power generation**.



Kuril Islands



- Russian President **Vladimir Putin** visited **Iturup (Etorofu)**, prompting a diplomatic protest from Japan.
- The **Kuril Islands** are an archipelago in the **Russian Far East**, stretching from the **southern Kamchatka Peninsula to northeastern**

Hokkaido, Japan.

- They form a natural boundary between the **Pacific Ocean and the Sea of Okhotsk** and lie within the **Pacific Ring of Fire**, making them prone to earthquakes and volcanic activity.
- **Japan claims four southern islands—Iturup, Kunashir, Shikotan and Habomai—as the Northern Territories**, while Russia administers them as the **South Kurils**.
- The dispute dates to the **Soviet seizure of the islands at the end of World War II** and has prevented Russia and Japan from signing a **formal post-war peace treaty**.

Mocha (Mokka) port



- Houthi rebels launched an offensive near the **Bab el-Mandeb Strait**, seeking control of **Mocha Port** and positions overlooking the Red Sea shipping route.
- **Mocha Port** is located in **Taiz Province, western Yemen**, on the **Red Sea coast near Bab el-Mandeb**.
- Historically, it was an important **maritime trade port**, linking Yemen with the **Horn of Africa** and routes between the **Indian Ocean and Mediterranean**.
- Mocha became famous for **coffee exports**, giving rise to the term **“Mocha coffee.”**
- Its proximity to **Bab el-Mandeb**, a key gateway between the **Red Sea and Gulf of Aden**, gives it major **strategic and geopolitical importance**.
- The **Bab el-Mandeb Strait**, about **32 km wide**, is divided by **Perim (Mayyun) Island**, a volcanic island belonging to **Yemen**, into the **western Bab al-Mayun Channel (26 km wide)** and the **eastern Bab Iskender Channel (3 km wide)**.
 - The western channel is **wider and deeper**, while the eastern channel is **narrower and shallower**.

Larak Island



- Larak Island recently witnessed **United States military strikes** targeting Iranian rocket launchers.
- **Larak Island** is a small **Iranian island in the Strait of Hormuz**, located near **Qeshm and Hormuz Islands**.
- Seven islands form **Iran's curved defensive line** in the area for controlling shipping traffic: **Hormuz, Larak, Qeshm, Hengam, Greater Tunb, Lesser Tunb and Abu Musa**.

Petermann Glacier



- An international research team reported that **Petermann Glacier calved a 76.4 km² ice island on 4 August 2026**, its largest floating-ice loss since 2012.
- Located in **northwestern Greenland**, east of the **Nares Strait**, which separates Greenland from **Ellesmere Island, Canada**.
- It connects the **Greenland Ice Sheet to the Arctic Ocean** and covers about **1,295 km²**.
- The glacier periodically **calves large icebergs**, while accelerating ice flow and melting make it important for studying **Arctic climate change**.

Lake Ontario as Lake America



- US President Donald Trump signed an **executive order** directing US domestic agencies to refer to **Lake Ontario as Lake America** amid escalating trade tensions and tariff disputes with Canada.
- Lake Ontario** is the **easternmost and smallest by surface area** of the **five Great Lakes** of North America, located between **Canada and the United States**.
- The **Niagara River** is its principal inflow, connecting it with **Lake Erie**, while Lake Ontario drains eastward through the **St. Lawrence River** towards the **Atlantic Ocean**.
- Lake Ontario** is named after an **Indigenous Iroquoian (specifically Wendat or Huron) word**, Ontarí:io, which means “great lake” or “beautiful lake”, even before the existence of Canada or USA.

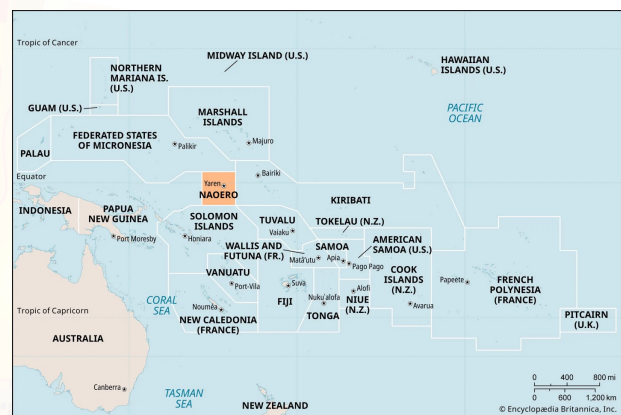
Danube River



- Water levels in the **Danube River** fell to record lows in **Hungary, Slovakia, Romania and Bulgaria** due to prolonged **heatwaves and drought** in Europe.

- The **Danube** is **Europe's second-longest river**, originating in Germany's **Black Forest** and flowing eastward.
- It flows through or along the borders of **10 countries**, more than any other major river.
- It empties into the **Black Sea through the Danube Delta**, a major wetland ecosystem.
- It is an important **navigation and trade route**, connecting Central and Eastern Europe and passing through **Vienna, Bratislava, Budapest and Belgrade**.

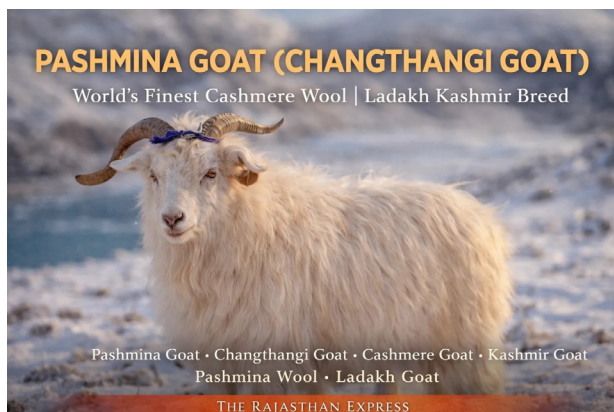
Republic of Naoero (formerly Nauru)



- Nauru** officially changed its name to the **Republic of Naoero**.
- Naoero is a small **Pacific island republic**, located about **42 km south of the Equator** and northeast of Australia.
- With an area of about **21 km²**, it is one of the **world's smallest independent states**.
- It gained independence in **1968** and follows a **unicameral parliamentary system**, with the President serving as both **Head of State and Head of Government**.
- Phosphate mining** was historically important, while **fisheries and fishing-licence fees** are major revenue sources today.

Species in News

Changthangi goat



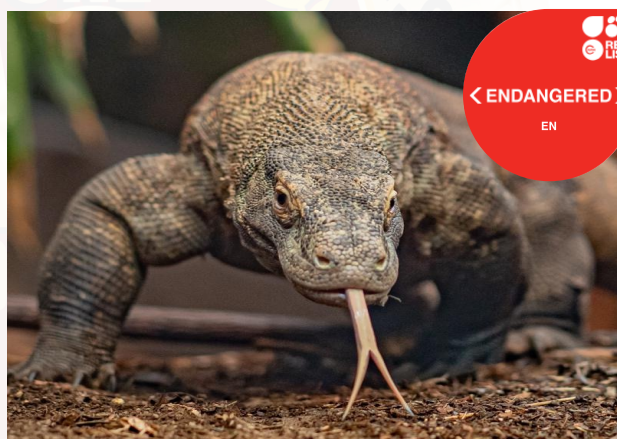
- Climate change is affecting the **high-altitude habitat** of Changthangi goats, threatening **Pashmina production and Changpa pastoral livelihoods**.
- Also known as **Pashmina goat**, they are associated with the **Changpa nomadic communities of Ladakh**.
- Reared mainly in the **cold, arid and high-altitude regions of Ladakh**.
- Its **fine undercoat** is the main source of **Pashmina fibre**, used in high-quality textiles.
- The dense, soft under-fleece provides **insulation against extreme Himalayan cold**, making the breed well adapted to its environment.
- The Changthangi goat is a **domesticated breed of goat** (*Capra hircus*) and is **not evaluated or listed on the IUCN Red List** of Threatened Species,

Khejri Tree



- Rajasthan banned felling of Khejri tree after the **Khejri Bachao Andolan** by the Bishnoi community.
- Khejri (Prosopis cineraria)** is a drought-resistant tree of **arid/semi-arid Rajasthan and Gujarat**.
- They are deep-rooted and tolerates **low rainfall, poor and saline soils**.
- They are **nitrogen-fixing legumes** that improve soil fertility.
- Important for **desert agroforestry, erosion control, biodiversity and livestock fodder**.
- It was in 1730, at **Khejarli, Rajasthan** that **Amrita Devi** and her three daughters sacrificed their lives protecting Khejri trees while 363 Bishnois were killed resisting their felling on the orders of Maharaja Abhai Singh of Marwar.
- ➔ The sacrifice later inspired the **Chipko Movement of the 1970s**.
- Prosopis cineraria* is the **state tree of Rajasthan** (where it is known as khejri), and **Telangana** (where it is known as jammi) in India.

Komodo Dragon



- Indonesian authorities busted a **Komodo dragons trafficking ring**.
- Komodo dragon (Varanus komodoensis)** is the **world's largest lizard**, endemic to a few Indonesian islands including **Komodo, Rinca and Flores**.
- A **carnivorous apex predator**, feeding on carrion and prey such as deer and water buffalo.
- It has **venom glands**, serrated teeth and powerful claws.
- Much of its habitat is protected in **Komodo National Park**, established in **1980**.

- They live only in Indonesia because **rising sea levels trapped their ancestors** on a few isolated islands where they **evolved into giant apex predators**.

Narwhal



- A study revealed why the **long tusk of the Narwhal (Monodon monoceros)** is so strong and straight.
- A narwhal is a **medium-sized, toothed whale (odontocete)** that is only found in **Arctic** waters.
- Unlike all other toothed whales, it **has no teeth in its mouth** and instead, male narwhals have a **single long, straight tooth (or tusk)** that protrudes two to three meters out of the upper left jaw.

➡ Females almost never have a tusk.

- The tooth (tusk) grows in a **counterclockwise spiral** in the outer layer and is balanced by interior core that twists in the opposite direction
- These **opposing twists** create tension that helps keep its tusk remarkably straight.
- The tusk contains **many nerves and can detect changes** in temperature, pressure and water chemistry, helping the narwhal sense its environment.
- Despite its appearance, the **tusk is not primarily used to spear prey**. Narwhals generally suck up their prey rather than stabbing it.

Guggal Plant

- A Kutch-based NGO is planting **Khara and Mitha Guggal** across five villages to restore medicinal heritage and biodiversity.
- **Guggal (Commiphora wightii)**: Drought- and

salinity-resistant shrub/tree of arid and semi-arid India.

- Found mainly in **Rajasthan, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh and Karnataka**.
- Its **resin (guggul gum)** is used in **Ayurveda, incense, perfumes and ointments**.
- **Slow-growing and difficult to propagate**, with poor seed germination; may take **~10 years to mature**, making conservation important..



Periyar Cow



- ICAR-NBAGR recently registered **Periyar Cow** as an indigenous cattle breed, making it **Kerala's second nationally recognised breed after Vechur (1996)**.
- Also called **Periyar Kullan, Kuttampuzha cattle or Andukanni**, it is associated with the **Periyar basin of Kerala**.
- Adapted to **semi-feral, low-input management**, grazing naturally in agroforestry landscapes.
- A **small, hardy breed** weighing about **150–200 kg**, valued for resource-efficient livestock farming

Keywords

- **Information Technology Resilience Index:** It is a **SEBI regulatory index** that assesses the **technical robustness, cybersecurity, fault tolerance and disaster-recovery capabilities** of Market Infrastructure Institutions (MIIs), such as exchanges and depositories. It ensures critical capital-market IT systems can **withstand and recover from cyberattacks, software failures and operational disruptions**, reducing the risk of **systemic financial-market disruptions**.
- **PARIVARTAN Scheme:** It is a **Ministry of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH) vehicle scrappage and fleet-renewal scheme** replacing pre-BS-IV and BS-IV commercial trucks and buses in **Delhi-NCR** with BS-VI or electric vehicles. It aims to **reduce PM2.5, PM10 and NOx emissions** through interest subvention, tax/fee waivers and purchase incentives, thereby promoting fleet renewal and EV adoption.
- **Regenerative Agriculture:** It is a holistic farming approach focused on **restoring soil health and biodiversity** through practices such as **mulching, cover cropping, reduced tillage, crop-livestock integration and bio-inputs**. It **improves soil fertility and water retention, reduces input costs, enhances biodiversity and strengthens farm resilience** to droughts, heatwaves and excessive rainfall.
- **Permanent Pictorial Cancellation (PPC):** PPC is a special **postmark** used by postal departments to **promote tourist, religious, historical, or cultural sites**. A **postmark** prints ink over a postage stamp to cancel it and prevent its reuse. **PPC** makes a postmark significantly more attractive because it **replaces a standard, plain date stamp** with a custom graphic design highlighting a local monument like the recent Sree Padmanabha Temple, historical site, culture, or native wildlife.
- **Glyphosate:** It is a **broad-spectrum, non-selective herbicide** that controls grasses and broadleaf weeds by inhibiting the shikimic acid pathway essential for plant growth. It is **widely used for weed control in agriculture and forestry**, helping farmers manage weeds and enabling reduced-tillage/no-till farming, which can reduce soil erosion and runoff.
- **Sanchar Mitra Scheme:** It is a **nationwide Department of Telecommunications (DoT) initiative** where student volunteers called **Sanchar Mitras** are trained to promote awareness of **digital safety, cyber-fraud prevention, EMF radiation and responsible mobile use**. They conduct **grassroots awareness drives** and engage with communities and NGOs to promote digital literacy.
- **NAVYA Programme:** NAVYA (Nurturing Aspirations through Vocational training for Young Adolescent Girls) was launched in 2025 jointly by the **Ministry of Skill Development & Entrepreneurship (MSDE) and Ministry of Women & Child Development (MWCD)** for girls aged **16–18 years in aspirational districts**. It provides vocational and industry-relevant skills to promote their socio-economic independence.
- **DAANVEER Initiative:** DAANVEER stands for **Digital Advancement and Access Network for Village Empowerment and E-governance Resources**. Launched by the **Ministry of Panchayati Raj**, it is a citizen participation initiative where they **can voluntarily contribute computers** to Gram Panchayats strengthening the digital infrastructure. DAANVEER operates through the **‘Meri Panchayat’ mobile application** and follows the tagline **“Give Back to Your Village”**.
- **Guide to Grasslands & Natural Ecosystems:** It is India’s **first comprehensive guide to Open Natural Ecosystems (ONEs)** launched at **UNCCD COP17, Ulaanbaatar**, covering grasslands, savannas, deserts, scrublands and other naturally open landscapes. The guide promotes **science-based conservation and restoration** of these ecosystems, supporting India’s **Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) goal of restoring 26 million hectares by 2030**.
- **Polysilicon:** It is a polycrystalline form of **highly purified silicon**, mainly produced from quartz/silica (SiO₂). The **Siemens process** is the dominant production method, while Fluidized Bed Reactor (FBR) is an alternative. It is a **critical upstream input for solar PV ingots/wafers and semiconductors** and India is planning a subsidy scheme targeting 30 GW domestic polysilicon capacity by 2030.

Record Breaking Results

20 Selections from Fortune IAS
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Kerala



Kerala Rank 1
SREEJA J S
AIR 57
First Attempt Topper



DIVYA S
AIR 166



HRIDYA S BIJU
AIR 202



ANJANA B
AIR 222



**ARAVIND
ISWARANKUTTY**
AIR 248



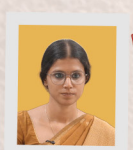
RAJATH R
AIR 348



AMAL KAMPTIYL
AIR 362
First Attempt
Topper



**HARSHIDAA S
NAIR**
AIR 372



SANDHRA S
AIR 380



**ATHIDHI
KRISHNADEV B**
AIR 451
First Attempt
Topper



**SHEIK MOHAMED
NISHATH M**
AIR 497



**JAHANA
SAREEN V P**
AIR 511



ARUNIMA M S
AIR 558



ASNA ANWAR
AIR 576
First Attempt
Topper



NIDHIN R H
AIR 699



FAIRUZ FATHIMA M
AIR 708



**MOHAMED
HASHIM K**
AIR 713



**MUHAMMED
SUHAIL**
AIR 718



SHIYAD
AIR 743



NANDANA J S
AIR 745



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