



SHAPING TALENT SINCE 2009

MONTHLY CURRENT AFFAIRS

FOR UPSC CIVIL SERVICE EXAMINATION

APRIL 2026



$$x = \frac{-b \pm \sqrt{b^2 - 4ac}}{2a}$$

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Dr. Bhimrao Ambedkar

Context: India celebrated the birth anniversary of Dr. B. R. Ambedkar on April 14, 2026.

About Dr. B. R. Ambedkar

- Born on April 14, 1891, at Mhow in Madhya Pradesh in a Mahar family.
- Influenced by the teachings of Sant Kabir and his ideas of equality.
- Briefly served as Military Secretary to the Maharaja of Baroda but resigned due to caste discrimination.
- Chairman of the Drafting Committee of the Indian Constitution and member of the Constituent Assembly from West Bengal.
- India's first Law Minister; resigned over differences regarding the Hindu Code Bill.
- His death anniversary (December 6) is observed as Mahaparinirvan Diwas.

Major Contributions

Social Contributions

- Founded the Bahishkrit Hitkarini Sabha (1924) to promote education and rights of Dalits.
- Led the Mahad Satyagraha (1927) for equal access to public water resources.
- Started the Kalaram Temple Entry Movement (1930) against caste-based religious discrimination.

Political Contributions

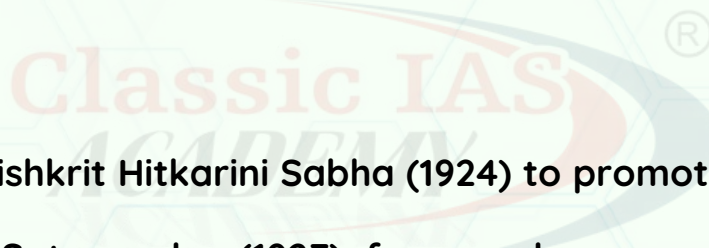
- Played a key role in framing the Constitution with provisions for Fundamental Rights, equality, and affirmative action.
- Secured political representation for marginalised communities through the Poona Pact (1932).
- Raised issues of caste discrimination at the Round Table Conferences.

Economic Contributions

- His work "The Problem of the Rupee" influenced the creation of the Reserve Bank of India.
- Advocated fiscal federalism and balanced Centre-State financial relations.
- Supported state ownership of key industries for equitable development.

Philosophical Contributions

- Emphasised constitutional morality, rule of law, and ethical democracy.
- Advocated the ideals of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity.
- Adopted Navayana Buddhism in 1956 to promote equality and social justice.



Major Achievements

- Principal architect of the Indian Constitution.
- Strengthened social justice through reservation policies for SCs and STs.
- Supported gender justice through the Hindu Code Bill.
- Awarded the Bharat Ratna in 1990.
- Honoured with the title “Bodhisattva” in 1954 in Kathmandu, Nepal.

Ambedkar’s Conversion to Buddhism

- On October 14, 1956, at Deekshabhoomi, Nagpur, Ambedkar embraced Buddhism along with over five lakh followers.
- The conversion became a major social reform movement against caste oppression.
- His 22 Vows rejected caste hierarchy and promoted equality, ethical living, and social justice.

Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj

Context: India commemorated the death anniversary (Punyatithi) of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj, who died on April 3, 1680, at Raigad, Maharashtra.

About Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj (1630–1680)

- Founder of the Maratha Empire and a visionary ruler who established Hindavi Swaraj.

Early Life

- Born in 1630 at Shivneri Fort to Shahaji Bhosle and Jijabai.
- His mother Jijabai inspired him with values of courage and Dharma.
- Dadoji Kondadeo trained him in administration, warfare, and revenue management.
- At the age of 16, he captured Torna Fort (1646), marking the beginning of Maratha expansion.

Major Achievements

- Crowned as Chhatrapati at Raigad Fort in 1674, establishing an independent Maratha kingdom.
- Introduced Ganimi Kawa (guerrilla warfare), which helped defeat stronger Mughal and Bijapur forces.
- Known as the Father of the Indian Navy for developing naval power and securing Konkan coastal trade routes.
- Established an efficient administration through the Ashta Pradhan Council, revenue reforms, and welfare-oriented governance.
- Major victories included:
 - Battle of Pratapgarh (1659)
 - Battle of Salher (1672)



Basava Jayanthi

Context: Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid tribute to Jagadguru Basaveshwara on Basava Jayanthi for his contributions to social equality and reform.

About Jagadguru Basaveshwara

- Jagadguru Basaveshwara, also known as Basavanna (1131–1167 AD), was a major saint of the Bhakti movement and founder of the Lingayat sect.
- He promoted devotion to Lord Shiva along with equality and social justice.
- Born in present-day Karnataka, he later served as a minister under King Bijjala I of the Kalachuri dynasty.

Key Contributions

Social Reforms

- Opposed caste discrimination, social inequality, and ritualism.
- Advocated an egalitarian society based on dignity and equality for all.

Concept of Kayaka and Dasoha

- Kayaka: Emphasised dignity of labour and honest work.
- Dasoha: Promoted sharing of wealth and service to society..

Anubhava Mantapa

- Established Anubhava Mantapa, considered an early democratic forum for discussions on social and spiritual issues.
- Encouraged participation of women and marginalised communities.

Literary Contributions

- Composed Vachanas — simple Kannada poetic verses spreading messages of devotion, ethics, and social reform.

Legacy

- Basaveshwara is remembered as a pioneer of social equality, democratic values, and reform-oriented thought.
- His teachings continue to inspire ideas of inclusivity, justice, and social harmony in modern India.



Ancient Reservoir Unearthed on Elephanta Island

Context: The Archaeological Survey of India discovered a 1,500-year-old stepped reservoir on Elephanta Island in Mumbai Harbour.



About the Stepped Reservoir

- A massive T-shaped reservoir measuring about 14.7 m in length and 6.7–10.8 m in width.
- Excavation revealed 20 stone steps reaching nearly 5 meters deep.
- Stone blocks used in construction were transported from the mainland, showing advanced engineering and logistics.
- The structure reflects an efficient rainwater harvesting system designed for the island's rocky terrain.

About Elephanta Island

- Located around 10 km from the Mumbai coast in the Arabian Sea.
- Famous for the Elephanta Caves, a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1987.
- The caves date from the 5th–8th century CE and are linked to dynasties like the Kalachuris and Chalukyas.
- Dedicated mainly to Lord Shiva, featuring the famous Trimurti (Maheshmurti) sculpture.
- Known for rock-cut cave temples, pillared halls, and detailed basalt sculptures showing advanced craftsmanship.

Gourami Fossil

Context: Scientists discovered freshwater fish fossils (otoliths) in the Mohand area of Saharanpur, Uttar Pradesh, marking India's first gourami fossil discovery and only the second such record globally.

About Gourami Fossils

- The fossils belong to the Osphronemidae family (gouramis), freshwater fishes known for their labyrinth organ.
- The fossils date back to the Pliocene Epoch around 4.8 million years ago.
- This is the first fossil evidence of gouramis found in India.
- The fossils are otoliths — calcium carbonate structures that help fishes in hearing and balance.
- It is only the second known gourami fossil record in the world, making the discovery extremely rare.
- The fossils indicate the existence of calm and stable freshwater ecosystems in the region during the Pliocene period.

Key Findings

- Evidence suggests the region once had freshwater bodies surrounded by dense vegetation.
- Fossils of gouramis, snakeheads (genus Channa), and gobies were also found.
- The discovery points to a diverse and well-developed freshwater fish community in the Upper Siwalik region during the Pliocene epoch.

World Buddhist Peace Conference 2026

Context: The World Buddhist Peace Conference 2026 was held in Hyderabad to promote peace, dialogue, and ethical leadership.



About the Conference

- A two-day international conference inaugurated in March 2026 at Begumpet, Hyderabad.
- Organised by Buddhavanam under the Telangana Tourism Development Corporation in association with the Vietnam Buddhist Sangha.
- Aim: To promote Buddhavanam as a global Buddhist Heritage Theme Park.
- The event witnessed participation from ministers, Buddhist monks, scholars, and delegates from over 20 countries.

Women's Reservation

Context: The defeat of the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026 in the Lok Sabha has revived debate over women's reservation in Parliament.

**WOMEN'S
RESERVATION BILL**



About the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026

- Proposed 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and State Legislative Assemblies.
- Reservation was to be applied within existing SC/ST quotas to ensure inclusivity.
- Proposed increasing Lok Sabha strength from 543 to a maximum of 850 seats.
- Implementation was linked to:
 - A fresh Census
 - Delimitation of constituencies
- Reserved constituencies were to rotate periodically.

Reasons for Defeat

- Failed to secure the required special majority in Lok Sabha.
- Linking reservation with delimitation created political controversy.
- Demand for an OBC sub-quota within women's reservation remained unresolved.
- Concerns over possible domination by socially privileged groups reduced support.

Historical Background

- Demand for women's reservation began in the 1990s with the Women's Reservation Bill, 1996.
- The 106th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2023 (Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam) provided constitutional backing for 33% reservation.
- However, implementation was deferred until after Census and delimitation.

Need for Women's Reservation

- Women remain underrepresented in legislatures, making up only around 14-15% of the Lok Sabha.
- Reservation promotes substantive equality under Articles 14 and 15.
- Greater representation can improve focus on health, education, nutrition, and welfare issues.
- Supports India's international commitments under:
 - United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)
 - Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995)
- Encourages women's political empowerment and leadership.

International Models

- Rwanda: Constitutional quotas with over 60% women representation.
- France: Mandatory candidate quotas with penalties for non-compliance.
- Norway & Sweden: Voluntary party quotas.
- Nepal: Constitutional and proportional representation mechanisms.

Key Challenges

- Risk of proxy representation and tokenism.
- Lack of sub-quotas may lead to elite capture.
- Frequent rotation of reserved seats may reduce accountability.
- Delimitation linkage has raised federal concerns.
- Women face structural barriers like limited financial resources and political networks.

Way Forward

- Build wider political consensus through consultations and committee review.
- Decouple reservation from delimitation.
- Introduce sub-quotas for OBC and marginalized women.
- Strengthen internal party quotas and leadership opportunities for women.
- Provide training, mentorship, and institutional support for women representatives.
- Promote social awareness and gender sensitisation to address patriarchal barriers.

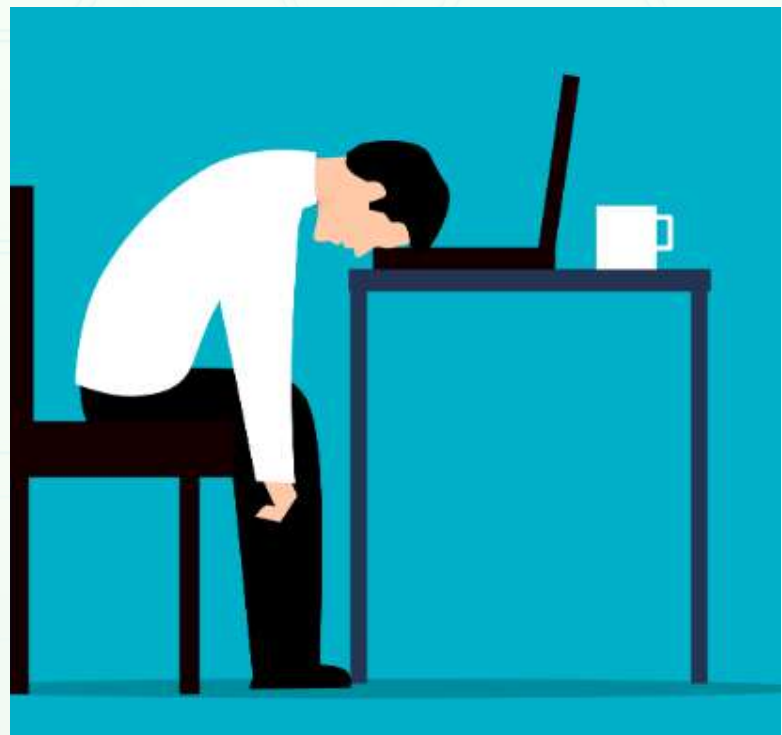
Conclusion: Women's reservation is essential for inclusive democracy and gender justice. Effective implementation requires political consensus, inclusive design, and institutional reforms to ensure meaningful representation and empowerment.

Quiet Quitting: A Silent Crisis in the World of Work

Context: The State of the Global Workplace 2026 Report highlighted a decline in employee engagement globally, with South Asia, especially India, witnessing the sharpest fall.

Key Highlights of the Report

- Employee engagement in India improved over the last decade but has declined after the 2020-22 peak.
- A large section of workers remain “not engaged” — neither dissatisfied enough to quit nor motivated to contribute actively.
- South Asia recorded the lowest levels of employee well-being and life satisfaction.
- Active disengagement has reduced, but passive disengagement or quiet quitting has increased.
- Lower engagement negatively affects productivity and economic performance.



About Quiet Quitting

- Quiet quitting refers to employees doing only the minimum work required without leaving their jobs.
- Employees avoid extra responsibilities and show reduced enthusiasm, initiative, and commitment.

Major Drivers

Always-On Work Culture

- Continuous digital connectivity has blurred work-life boundaries, increasing stress and burnout.

Weak Management Practices

- Lack of empathetic leadership, mentoring, and employee support reduces morale and engagement.

Psychological Disengagement

- Employees feel emotionally disconnected from organizations, leading to reduced commitment and productivity.

Changing Aspirations

- Younger generations such as Gen Z and Millennials prioritise mental health, work-life balance, and personal fulfilment over traditional career success.

Impacts of Quiet Quitting

Organizational Impact

- Decline in productivity and innovation.
- “Doing the bare minimum” may become normalized in workplaces.

Leadership Challenges

- Managers spend more time monitoring employees instead of focusing on long-term strategy.
- Disengagement can spread across teams and reduce overall morale.

Employee Well-being

- Positive: Helps reduce stress and burnout.
- Negative: May lead to career stagnation and loss of professional purpose over time.

Challenges in Addressing Quiet Quitting

- Difficult to measure because it is a silent form of disengagement.
- Toxic workplace culture, micromanagement, and lack of trust hinder reforms.
- Low managerial engagement weakens team motivation.
- Labour laws focus mainly on wages and physical safety, while mental health issues remain under-addressed.

Way Forward

- Shift from control-based to trust-based workplace culture.
- Promote empathetic leadership and emotional intelligence among managers.
- Strengthen Employee Assistance Programmes (EAPs) and mental health support systems.
- Redesign jobs to provide growth opportunities, clarity, and meaningful work.
- Encourage healthier work-life balance and employee well-being initiatives.

Lanjia Saora Tribe

Context: The Lanjia Saora Tribe reflects the challenge of balancing traditional cultural practices with modern influences.



About the Lanjia Saora Community

- A Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group (PVTG) mainly found in Rayagada and Gajapati districts of Odisha.
- Known for their nature-centric lifestyle and close relationship with forests.

Distinct Cultural Features

Nature-Centric Beliefs

- Their rituals and traditions are deeply connected with forests and natural forces.

Music and Dance

- Music, drumming, and dance are important parts of daily life, rituals, and festivals.

Traditional Adornments

- Traditionally wear large metal earrings in stretched earlobes, symbolising identity and endurance.

Tattoo Traditions

- Permanent tattoos with geometric and natural designs are believed to have spiritual and protective value.
- Younger generations increasingly prefer temporary tattoo designs.

Challenges Faced

- Cultural erosion due to modernization and changing lifestyles.
- Economic insecurity because of dependence on foraging.
- Habitat loss and livelihood threats caused by deforestation.

Industrial Accidents in India

Context: A boiler explosion at a Vedanta Limited power plant in Chhattisgarh caused multiple deaths and injuries.

About Industrial Accidents

- Industrial accidents are unplanned incidents in factories, power plants, or industrial units that lead to:
 - Loss of life
 - Injuries
 - Property damage
 - Environmental harm
- They are often caused by unsafe working conditions, hazardous processes, and weak regulation.
- Example: Bhopal Gas Tragedy

Causes Behind Industrial Accidents

- Weak Regulatory Oversight
 - Boiler inspections and safety checks are often infrequent and outdated.
 - Annual certification may fail to detect day-to-day safety risks.
- Faulty Incentive Structure
 - Industries are penalised for shutdowns, discouraging preventive maintenance.

Ease of Doing Business Approach

- Greater reliance on self-certification and third-party audits has reduced surprise inspections.
- Ageing Infrastructure
 - Old industrial equipment is operating under increasing pressure due to rapid industrial expansion.

Vulnerability of Contract Workers

- Migrant and subcontracted workers face higher risks and often lack proper safety protection.

Lack of Safety Awareness

- Safety manuals and warning signs are often unavailable in workers' native languages.
- Workers may not fully understand hazardous chemicals or industrial processes.
- Weak Labour Liability Framework
 - The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions (OSHW) Code, 2020 does not clearly fix criminal liability on principal employers for contractor-related safety lapses.

Way Forward

- Introduce surprise inspections and real-time monitoring using IoT sensors.
- Replace annual certification with continuous risk-based safety audits.
- Clearly define accountability of principal employers.
- Encourage industries to prioritise preventive maintenance and safety culture.
- Use AI, predictive maintenance, and digital technologies to identify risks early.

Industrial Disaster vs Chemical Disaster		
Aspect	Industrial Disaster	Chemical Disaster
Definition	Accidents from machinery failure, explosions, or structural collapse	Disasters caused by release or leakage of hazardous chemicals
Nature of Hazard	Mechanical, electrical, thermal	Toxic, flammable, corrosive substances
Causes	Boiler explosions, equipment failure, poor maintenance	Gas leaks, chemical spills, improper handling
Impact Area	Usually limited to factory premises	Can spread to large surrounding areas affecting air and water

Heatwaves in India: Trends, Impacts & Preparedness

Context: India is witnessing early and intense heatwaves in April 2026, with temperatures crossing 40°C in several states.

More on News

- The India Meteorological Department issued heat alerts for states such as Vidarbha, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Telangana, and Kerala.
- A 2022 World Bank report warned that by 2030, around 160–200 million Indians could face lethal heatwaves annually.

About Heatwaves

- A heatwave is a period of unusually high temperatures occurring mainly between March and July.

IMD Criteria for Heatwave

Temperature Conditions

- Plains: Temperature $\geq 40^{\circ}\text{C}$
- Hilly regions: Temperature $\geq 30^{\circ}\text{C}$

Based on Departure from Normal

- Heatwave: 4.5°C–6.4°C above normal
- Severe Heatwave: More than 6.4°C above normal

Based on Actual Maximum Temperature

- Heatwave: Temperature $\geq 45^{\circ}\text{C}$
- Severe Heatwave: Temperature $\geq 47^{\circ}\text{C}$

Causes of Heatwaves

- Persistent high-pressure systems trap heat.
- Clear skies increase solar radiation.
- Dry soil reduces natural cooling through evaporation.
- Hot winds like loo intensify temperatures.
- Urban Heat Island effect makes cities hotter.
- Climate change increases frequency and intensity of heatwaves.

Reasons for Current Heatwaves (2026)

- Earlier and more intense pre-monsoon heatwaves.
- El Niño causing weaker monsoon conditions and higher temperatures.
- Weak western disturbances reducing cooling rainfall.
- Lack of cloud formation and convective currents.
- Urban heat retention due to concrete structures.
- High wet bulb temperature (heat + humidity), making conditions dangerous even at lower temperatures.

Heat Action Plans (HAPs)

- Heat Action Plans are strategies to reduce heatwave impacts on health and livelihoods.
- Prepared with support from agencies like:
 - National Disaster Management Authority
 - India Meteorological Department

Key Components

- Early warning systems and heat alerts.
- Public awareness campaigns.
- Cooling centres and hospital preparedness.
- Coordination among health, labour, and disaster agencies.

Issues with Current HAPs

- Mostly reactive and short-term in nature.
- Lack of dedicated funding.
- Informal workers remain highly vulnerable.
- Declining urban green cover worsens heat stress.
- Weak coordination among agencies.
- Limited local-level heat data and forecasting systems.

Impacts of Rising Heatwaves

Health Impacts

- Increased heat stress and cardiovascular diseases.
- Warmer nights reduce body recovery and increase health risks.

Economic Impacts

- Loss of labour productivity, especially in agriculture and construction.
- According to The Lancet Countdown Report, billions of work-hours were lost due to heat in 2024.

Agricultural Impacts

- Heat accelerates crop maturity and threatens food security.
- Increases inflationary pressure through lower agricultural output.

Urban Impacts

- Coastal and urban areas face severe heat due to humidity and Urban Heat Island effect.

Way Forward

- Strengthen localized early warning systems and ward-level heat alerts.
- Promote urban re-greening through trees, green roofs, and cool roofs.
- Introduce heat-safety laws for outdoor workers.
- Deploy mobile health units in heatwave-prone areas.
- Integrate nature-based solutions into Heat Action Plans.
- Improve coordination, accountability, and transparency in heatwave management.
- Enhance climate adaptation efforts through international cooperation and finance.

Odisha: India's First State to Launch Marine Spatial Planning

Context: Odisha became the first Indian state to implement Marine Spatial Planning (MSP).

What is Marine Spatial Planning (MSP)?

- MSP is a scientific method for organising and managing different uses of ocean and coastal spaces.
- It aims to balance economic activities such as fisheries, ports, tourism, and energy with environmental conservation.
- It uses scientific data like:
 - Water quality analysis
 - Biodiversity mapping
 - Seabed (benthic) studies

About Odisha Marine Spatial Planning

- Implemented with support from the National Centre for Coastal Research under the Ministry of Earth Sciences.
- Objective: Sustainable and integrated use of marine resources while protecting coastal ecosystems.
- Includes:
 - Benthic mapping
 - Water quality assessment (salinity, temperature)
 - Spatial zoning of marine activities

Sectoral Planning

- Identifies suitable marine zones for:
 - Fisheries
 - Aquaculture
 - Tourism
 - Ports and industries
 - Ocean energy projects.



Importance for Odisha

- Odisha has a coastline of over 550 km, making MSP important for managing competing coastal and marine demands.

Linked Initiative

- Supported by the Odisha Marine Biotechnology Research and Innovation Corridor (OMBRIC, 2025) for marine research and innovation.

Super Typhoon Sinlaku

Context: Super Typhoon Sinlaku struck the remote Northern Mariana Islands in the Pacific Ocean.



About Super Typhoon Sinlaku

- A high-intensity tropical cyclone formed in the western Pacific Ocean.
- Affected parts of the western Pacific and East Asian coastal regions.
- Posed risks to islands and nearby mainland coastal areas due to strong winds and heavy rainfall.

What is a Super Typhoon?

- A super typhoon is an extremely powerful tropical cyclone in the western Pacific with very high sustained wind speeds.

About Northern Mariana Islands

- A group of islands located in the western Pacific Ocean, north of Guam.
- It is an unincorporated territory of the United States with local self-government.



Variable Rate Repo (VRR) Auction

Context: The Reserve Bank of India injected ₹25,101 crore liquidity via a 3-day VRR auction.

About VRR

- An auction-based liquidity injection tool used by RBI.
- Banks bid for interest rates, unlike fixed repo (pre-determined rate).
- Cut-off rate decided by market demand and supply.

Types of VRR

- Overnight VRR: For daily liquidity mismatches.
- Term VRR: 3-day, 7-day, 14-day, etc.
- Fine-tuning VRR: To manage sudden liquidity shocks.

VRR vs Fixed Repo-

Aspect	Fixed Repo	VRR
Interest Rate	Fixed by RBI	Market-determined
Flexibility	Low	High
Role	Routine	Active liquidity
Market Link	Limited	Reflects market

Mechanism

- RBI announces amount & tenure of funds.
- Banks bid (amount + interest rate).
- RBI accepts bids from lowest rates upward.
- Cut-off rate becomes the final borrowing rate.

Conclusion

- VRR enhances flexibility and market-based liquidity management in the banking system.

Delimitation in India

Context: The Union government proposed the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill to increase the strength of the Lok Sabha from 550 to 850 and introduced a separate Delimitation Commission Bill, 2026. However, the Amendment Bill was defeated in the Lok Sabha, leading to withdrawal of the Delimitation Bill.

What is Delimitation?

- Delimitation is the process of:
 - Allocating seats among states
 - Redrawing boundaries of Lok Sabha and State Assembly constituencies
- Conducted by an independent Delimitation Commission of India constituted by the President through a parliamentary law.
- Delimitation Commissions were set up in:
 - 1952
 - 1963
 - 1973
 - 2002
- Objective: To uphold the principle of “One Citizen, One Vote, One Value” by ensuring equal population representation.

Historical Evolution

- Early Delimitation Phase
 - Delimitation was regularly conducted based on the 1951, 1961, and 1971 Census data.
- Freeze on Seat Allocation
 - The 42nd Constitutional Amendment Act froze inter-state Lok Sabha seat allocation based on the 1971 Census.
 - Aim: To encourage population control measures.
- Extension of Freeze
 - The 84th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2001 extended the freeze until the first Census after 2026.
- Post-2026 Scenario
 - After the next Census, a fresh delimitation exercise may significantly alter parliamentary representation among states.

Why Delimitation Matters

Democratic Equality

- Ensures fair representation by reducing disparities in constituency population sizes.

Federal Balance

- States with larger populations like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar may gain more seats.
- Southern states fear political marginalisation despite successful population control.

Women’s Reservation

- Delimitation is linked to implementation of women’s reservation under the 106th Constitutional Amendment Act, 2023.

Parliamentary Functioning

- India has a low MP-to-population ratio, increasing pressure on elected representatives.

Right to Be Forgotten (RTBF)

Context: A financial journalist challenged a Delhi court gag order directing removal and de-indexing of reports related to the Sterling Biotech Bank Fraud Case, reviving debate on the Right to Be Forgotten (RTBF) and freedom of the press.



About Right to Be Forgotten (RTBF)

- RTBF allows individuals to request deletion, de-indexing, or restricted access to personal information available online.
- It applies when information becomes outdated, irrelevant, harmful, or unnecessary.
- It is based on the principle of informational self-determination, giving individuals greater control over their digital presence.

Status of RTBF in India

Constitutional Basis

- RTBF is derived from the Right to Privacy under Article 21 recognised in:
 - K.S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India
- However, the Supreme Court clarified that RTBF is not absolute and must be balanced with:
 - Freedom of speech and expression under Article 19(1)(a)
 - Public interest
 - Transparency and legal records

Statutory Position

- The Digital Personal Data Protection Act recognises the right to erasure of personal data.

Judicial View

- In R. Rajagopal v. State of Tamil Nadu, the Supreme Court recognised the “right to be let alone” but allowed publication of public records.

Need for RTBF

- Protects privacy in the digital age where online records remain permanently accessible.
- Prevents reputational harm from outdated or inaccurate information.
- Supports dignity and rehabilitation of individuals after acquittal or legal closure.
- Helps individuals avoid social and professional discrimination based on pa

Challenges in Implementing RTBF

Conflict Between Privacy and Press Freedom

- RTBF may clash with media freedom and public accountability.

Misuse Through Gag Orders

- “John Doe” orders and SLAPP suits may suppress genuine journalism.

Threat to Historical Records

- Deletion of archives can weaken public memory and historical transparency.

Technical and Jurisdictional Issues

- Online information may still be accessible through global platforms or VPNs.

Lack of Clear Law

- Absence of a dedicated legal framework causes inconsistent court decisions.

Way Forward

- Enact a clear statutory framework defining scope and limits of RTBF.
- Protect journalism, public archives, and historical research from unnecessary erasure.
- Strengthen the role of an independent Data Protection Board for RTBF decisions.
- Ensure media organisations receive prior notice and fair hearing.
- Prefer de-indexing or contextual updates instead of complete deletion.
- Develop a uniform balancing test considering privacy, public interest, and freedom of expression.

Conclusion

The RTBF debate highlights the need to balance privacy, dignity, press freedom, and public interest in the digital age. India requires a balanced legal framework that protects both individual rights and democratic transparency.

Governor Bound by the Council of Ministers

Context: The Madras High Court held that the Governor is bound by the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers while exercising powers under Article 161 related to remission and premature release of convicts.

Key Highlights of the Judgment

Article 161 is Not a Personal Power

- The Court stated that the Governor cannot exercise pardon or remission powers independently.
- Powers under Article 161 are institutional, not personal.

Aid and Advice is Binding

- The Governor must act according to the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers, consistent with the parliamentary system.

No Deviation from Cabinet Advice

- Any departure from ministerial advice was termed constitutionally impermissible.

Governor is a Nominal Head

- The Governor is a constitutional head, not a parallel executive authority.
- Real executive power lies with the elected government led by the Chief Minister.

Governor and the Elected Executive

Nominal vs Real Executive

- **Governor:** Constitutional/nominal head of the State.
- **Council of Ministers:** Real executive authority responsible for governance.

Doctrine of Aid and Advice

- Under Article 163, the Governor generally acts on ministerial advice.
- This principle also applies to Article 161 powers.
- Discretionary powers are limited and exceptional.

Democratic Accountability

- The Council of Ministers is accountable to the elected Legislative Assembly and ultimately to the people.
- This preserves democratic legitimacy in executive decisions.

Significance of the Judgment

Strengthens Parliamentary Democracy

- Reaffirms supremacy of the elected executive in governance.

Enhances Democratic Accountability

- Important decisions like remission and clemency remain under accountable elected institutions.

Prevents Arbitrary Action

- Restricts unilateral or politically motivated use of gubernatorial powers.

Protects Federalism

- Safeguards the constitutional authority of State governments.

Promotes Constitutional Clarity

- Aligns with earlier Supreme Court interpretations regarding gubernatorial powers.

Key Concerns

Ambiguity in Discretionary Powers

- Constitution does not clearly define all situations where Governors can act independently.

Governor-State Conflicts

- Delays in assent to Bills and Cabinet recommendations have increased tensions.

Questions on Political Neutrality

- Since Governors are appointed by the Union government, concerns over political bias persist.

Impact on Cooperative Federalism

- Conflicts between Governors and State governments may weaken Centre-State relations.

Way Forward

Define Discretionary Powers Clearly

- Need for constitutional clarification or judicial guidelines to reduce ambiguity.

Strengthen Constitutional Conventions

- Governors should maintain political neutrality and respect the democratic mandate.

Reform the Governor's Office

- Implement recommendations of the Sarkaria Commission and Punchhi Commission regarding appointments and accountability.

Ensure Time-Bound Decisions

- Fix timelines for Governors to act on Bills and Cabinet advice to avoid delays and “silent vetoes”.

Improve Constitutional Discipline

- Codified procedures can ensure efficiency, accountability, and smoother governance.

Conclusion

The judgment reinforces the principle that real executive power rests with the elected government, while the Governor functions as a constitutional head. It strengthens parliamentary democracy, federalism, and democratic accountability in India's constitutional framework.

Excommunication in Parsi Community

Context: The Supreme Court of India is examining whether a Parsi woman loses her Parsi identity after marrying outside the community, reviving the long-pending Parsi Excommunication Case.

About Excommunication

- Excommunication means formally excluding a person from a religious community.
- It may result in denial of participation in:
 - Religious rituals
 - Community events
 - Access to places of worship
- It can lead to social and religious isolation.

Constitutional Provisions Involved

- Article 14 (Right to Equality): The rule is challenged for gender discrimination as women are treated differently from men.
- Article 21 (Right to Life and Liberty): Freedom to choose a life partner is part of dignity and personal autonomy.
- Article 25 (Freedom of Religion): Guarantees the right to practice religion.
- Raises the issue of whether a community body can declare loss of religion without formal conversion.
- Special Marriage Act, 1954: Allows interfaith marriages without religious conversion.

Key Issues

- **Gender Discrimination:** Different treatment of men and women in interfaith marriages reinforces patriarchal practices.
- **Identity vs Religion:** Debate over whether ‘Parsi’ is an ethnic identity or purely a religious identity.
- **Authority of Religious Bodies:** Questions the power of community institutions to regulate membership and identity.

Privilege Notice

Context: The Opposition moved a Privilege Notice against the Prime Minister, alleging that his remarks on the defeat of the Constitution (131st Amendment) Bill, 2026 undermined the dignity and independence of Parliament.



Why was the Notice Moved?

The Opposition argued that the Prime Minister's remarks:

- Imputed motives to MPs' voting behaviour.
- Undermined legislative autonomy and parliamentary dignity.

About Privilege Motion

- A Privilege Motion is a formal notice moved by an MP or MLA alleging:
 - Breach of parliamentary privilege, or
 - Contempt of the House.

Key Features

- Who can move: Any member of the House.
- Condition: Must relate to a recent incident.
 - Procedure: Notice must be submitted before 10:00 AM to the Speaker/Chairperson.
 - Requires approval of the Presiding Officer.

Role of the Speaker/Chairperson

- Conducts initial scrutiny of the motion.
- May:
 - Decide the matter directly, or
 - Refer it to the Privileges Committee.
- Under Rule 222 of Lok Sabha Rules, the member may present the case if the motion is admitted.

About Privileges Committee

Composition

- Lok Sabha: 15 members nominated by the Speaker.
- Rajya Sabha: 10 members headed by the Deputy Chairperson.

Functions

- Investigates alleged breach of privilege.
- Examines evidence and hears concerned parties.
- Submits a recommendatory report to the House.

Right to be Considered for Promotion as a Fundamental Right

Context: The Punjab and Haryana High Court in March 2026 reaffirmed that while promotion is not a Fundamental Right, the right to be fairly considered for promotion is protected under the Constitution.

Kulwant Singh Case

Background

- Kulwant Singh, a Junior Engineer, was excluded from consideration by the Departmental Promotion Committee (DPC).

State's Argument

- The government claimed he was ineligible because he held a diploma obtained through distance learning.

Court's Observation

- The Court found that the State had misinterpreted its own service rules, which exempted existing employees from such conditions.
- Due to this administrative error, the employee was unfairly denied consideration for promotion.

Judgment

- The Court held that denial of fair consideration violated:
 - Article 14 (Equality before law)
 - Article 16(1) (Equality of opportunity in public employment)

Directions Issued

- Granted notional promotion with retrospective effect.
- Ordered regular DPC meetings every three months.

About Right to be Considered for Promotion

- It means every eligible employee must be:
 - Fairly evaluated,
 - Through a transparent and non-arbitrary process.
- It does not guarantee promotion, but guarantees fair consideration.

Judicial Role

Courts have increasingly intervened in cases involving:

- Delay in DPC meetings,
- Administrative negligence,
- Career stagnation of employees.

Examples

- Himachal Pradesh High Court (2025): Directed timely promotions for employees nearing retirement.
- Delhi High Court (2024): Emphasised regular DPC meetings for fair career progression.

Judicial Evolution

Supreme Court Principle

- No Fundamental Right to promotion exists.
- But there is a Fundamental Right to be considered for promotion.

Important Cases

- **Ajit Singh v. State of Punjab (1999):** Non-consideration for promotion violates Article 16(1).
- **Bihar State Electricity Board v. Dharamdeo Das (2024):** Reaffirmed that consideration for promotion is a Fundamental Right.
- Clarified that employees do not have an automatic right to promotion from the date of vacancy.

Constitutional Basis

Article 14

- Ensures equality before law and protection against arbitrary State action.

Article 16(1)

- Guarantees equality of opportunity in public employment, including promotions.

Significance

- Strengthens fairness and transparency in public administration.
- Prevents arbitrary exclusion from career advancement.
- Promotes accountability in government service matters.

India Flagged 'Extremely High Risk' in Doping

Context: The Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU) has placed India in Category A under World Athletics Anti-Doping Rules, marking it as an “extremely high-risk” country for doping.

Reasons for High-Risk Classification

- India has reported a high number of Anti-Doping Rule Violations (ADRVs).
- The anti-doping system is considered inadequate compared to the scale of the problem.
- Reforms by the Athletics Federation of India (AFI) have shown limited impact.

Meaning of Category A

- It is the highest doping-risk category under AIU rules.

Implications

- More frequent and stricter testing of athletes.
- Mandatory minimum testing requirements for national-level athletes.

Rule 15

- India was shifted from Category B to Category A under Rule 15 of World Athletics Anti-Doping Rules.
- The rule makes national federations responsible for maintaining an anti-doping system proportional to the country's doping risk.
- Example: Bahrain was recently removed from Category A after improving its anti-doping framework.

Causes of Doping in India

- Use of banned substances during training cycles to improve performance.
- Increasing involvement of junior athletes due to weak monitoring.
- Lack of awareness about anti-doping rules.
- High performance pressure on athletes.

Issues with NADA

About the National Anti-Doping Agency (NADA):

- Outdated systems and institutional weaknesses.
- Excess focus on quantity instead of quality of testing.
- Shortage of skilled manpower and leadership instability.
- Lack of a proper scientific testing plan.
- High attrition among contractual staff.

Implications for India

Credibility Concerns

- Indian athletes face growing international suspicion.

Future Risks

- Possible restrictions on athletes in global events.
- Damage to India's sporting reputation.
- Reduced international opportunities for athletes.

Example

- In 2024, three Indian athletes were denied entry into France over doping-related concerns.

Conclusion: India's placement in Category A highlights serious weaknesses in its anti-doping system. Strengthening testing mechanisms, athlete awareness, and institutional reforms is essential to restore credibility in Indian athletics.

Official Languages of Meghalaya

Context: Meghalaya has granted official language status to Khasi and Garo along with English through an ordinance. The move aims to strengthen regional linguistic identity and support their inclusion in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.

About Official Language

- An official language is the language used by the government for administration, legislation, and communication.

Constitutional Provisions

- **Article 343:** Declares Hindi in Devanagari script as the official language of the Union, while English continues for official purposes.
- **Eighth Schedule:** Contains languages officially recognised by the Constitution under Articles 344(1) and 351.
- **Article 348:** Provides that proceedings in the Supreme Court and High Courts shall be conducted in English unless Parliament decides otherwise.
- **Article 345:** Allows state legislatures to adopt one or more regional languages for official use based on local requirements.

Significance of Meghalaya's Decision

- Promotes preservation and growth of Khasi and Garo languages.
- Strengthens cultural and linguistic identity of indigenous communities.
- Supports the demand for inclusion of Khasi and Garo in the Eighth Schedule.
- Encourages greater use of local languages in governance and public administration.

Sadhna Saptah 2026

Context: Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched Sadhna Saptah 2026 in New Delhi to enhance the capacity and skills of civil servants.

About Sadhna Saptah 2026

- **Objective:** To strengthen civil services and align governance reforms with the vision of Viksit Bharat (Developed India).
- **Organised By:** Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT), Capacity Building Commission, and Karmayogi Bharat.

Key Features

- **Linked to Mission Karmayogi:** Focuses on creating a future-ready, efficient, and citizen-centric bureaucracy.
- **Use of iGOT Platform:** Training and learning are delivered through the Integrated Government Online Training (iGOT) platform.
- **Skill Development Areas:** Includes technology, Artificial Intelligence (AI), behavioural skills, functional expertise, and domain-specific knowledge.

Significance

- Promotes continuous learning and modern governance practices among civil servants.
- Enhances administrative efficiency and public service delivery.
- Supports digital governance and innovation-driven policymaking.

NCERT as Deemed University

Context: The Ministry of Education has granted deemed-to-be university status to the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT), allowing it to offer courses and award degrees.

About 'Deemed-to-be University'

- A deemed university is a higher educational institution recognised for excellence in academics and research.
- The status is granted by the Ministry of Education on the recommendation of the University Grants Commission (UGC) under Section 3 of the UGC Act, 1956.



Coverage of the Status

The deemed university status applies to:

- NCERT Headquarters, and
- Its six regional institutes.

Key Conditions

- **No Commercial Activities:** NCERT cannot engage in profit-oriented activities.
- **Academic Compliance:** All programmes must follow UGC norms and standards of relevant statutory bodies.
- **Approval for New Courses:** Off-campus, offshore, and new programmes can only be introduced according to UGC guidelines.

Significance

- Strengthens teacher education, educational research, and curriculum development.
- Enhances NCERT's academic autonomy and institutional capacity.
- Supports improvement in quality and innovation in school education.

Emperor Penguin Listed as Endangered by IUCN

Context: The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has classified the Emperor Penguin as Endangered, highlighting it as a key sentinel species for climate change.

About Sentinel Species

- Sentinel species are organisms that indicate the health of an ecosystem.
- Changes in their population or health act as early warning signals of pollution, disease, or climate change.

About Emperor Penguin (*Aptenodytes forsteri*)

- Largest and heaviest living penguin species.
- Found across Antarctica, especially along coastal breeding colonies (66°-78° South).
- Lives entirely in Antarctic ice and surrounding ocean waters.

Key Features & Adaptations:

- Flightless bird adapted for swimming with flipper-like wings.
- Extreme cold adaptations:
 - Two layers of feathers
 - Thick fat reserves
 - Reduced beak and flipper size to conserve heat
- Deep-diving capability up to ~550 metres

(deepest among birds).

- Exhibits huddling behaviour to survive extreme cold.
- Males incubate eggs in harsh winter conditions.

Diet & Lifespan:

- Carnivorous (feeds on fish, krill, squid).
- Lifespan: 15-20 years.



Amaravati as the Capital of Andhra Pradesh

Context: The Lok Sabha passed the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation (Amendment) Bill, 2026, officially declaring Amaravati as the sole and permanent capital of Andhra Pradesh.

More on the News

- The amendment replaces Hyderabad's temporary capital status with Amaravati from June 2024 under the Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, 2014.
- The earlier three-capital model proposed by former Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy has effectively been withdrawn.

About Amaravati

- **Location:** Amaravati is a planned greenfield capital city situated on the banks of the Krishna River in Andhra Pradesh.
- **Background:** It was proposed after the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh in 2014, when Hyderabad became part of Telangana.
- **Modern Capital Vision:** Designed as a sustainable and world-class city with advanced infrastructure, inspired by global cities like Singapore.
- **Land Pooling Scheme (LPS):** Land for the capital was collected through voluntary land pooling by farmers instead of compulsory land acquisition.

Significance

- Provides administrative clarity and political stability for Andhra Pradesh.
- Aims to promote planned urban development and economic growth.
- Strengthens long-term infrastructure and governance planning in the state.

14th WTO Ministerial Conference

Context: The World Trade Organization (WTO) held its 14th Ministerial Conference (MC14) in Yaoundé, Cameroon, where member countries discussed reforms and key global trade challenges.

About WTO Ministerial Conference

- It is the highest decision-making body of the WTO.
- The first Ministerial Conference was held in Singapore in 1996.
- Usually conducted every two years with participation from trade ministers of all member countries.



14th WTO Ministerial Conference
Yaoundé - Cameroon
2026

Key Outcomes of MC14 (2026)

- **Fisheries Subsidies:** Members agreed to continue negotiations on reducing harmful fisheries subsidies.
- **Support for Developing Countries:** Decisions were taken to improve implementation of Special and Differential Treatment (S&DT) provisions for small and developing economies.
- **WTO Reform Agenda:** Discussions continued on:
 - WTO reforms,
 - E-commerce rules,
 - TRIPS-related issues,
 - Support measures for Least Developed Countries (LDCs).
- **Limited but Positive Outcome:** No major binding agreement was reached, but negotiations were kept alive.

Major Issues Discussed

- **Deadlock over agriculture subsidies and Public Stockholding (PSH).**
- **Debate on digital trade and e-commerce moratorium.**
- **Concerns over weakening of the multilateral trading system due to plurilateral agreements.**
- **Continued crisis in the WTO's Dispute Settlement Mechanism because of the non-functioning Appellate Body.**

India's Stand at MC14

- **Food Security:** India demanded a permanent solution for Public Stockholding programmes under WTO rules.
- **Support for S&DT:** India stressed the need for policy flexibility for developing countries.
- **Digital Sovereignty:** Opposed permanent extension of customs duty-free electronic transmissions, citing revenue and policy concerns.
- **Fisheries:** Sought protection for small-scale and traditional fishers.
- **Dispute Settlement:** Called for restoration of the Appellate Body.

About WTO

- **Established in 1995** under the Marrakesh Agreement, replacing GATT.
- **Objective:** Promote free, fair, and rules-based global trade.
- **Membership:** 166 countries, covering over 98% of global trade.
- **Key Principles:**
 - Most Favoured Nation (MFN)
 - National Treatment
 - Transparency
 - Non-discrimination

Challenges Before WTO

- **Paralysis of the Appellate Body.**
- **Rising protectionism and unilateral trade measures.**
- **Growing divide between developed and developing countries.**
- **Difficulty in achieving consensus-based decisions.**

Way Forward

- Restore the WTO dispute settlement system.
- Balance trade liberalisation with development concerns.
- Reform S&DT provisions based on present economic realities.
- Develop inclusive digital trade rules while protecting policy space of developing nations.

UNSC Triple Veto (1986)

Context: April 23, 2026 marked 40 years of the historic “Triple Veto” incident in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), which renewed debates on veto power and UNSC reforms.

About the 1986 Triple Veto

- On April 23, 1986, the United States, United Kingdom, and France jointly used their veto power in the UNSC.
- They blocked a resolution condemning US air strikes on Libya (Operation El Dorado Canyon).
- The strikes were carried out after the US blamed Libya for a bombing in West Berlin, Germany.
- Although the resolution received the required 9 votes, it failed due to the veto by the three permanent members.

About UNSC

- The UNSC is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations responsible for maintaining international peace and security.
 - Composition: 15 members:
 - 5 Permanent Members (P5): US, UK, France, Russia, China
 - 10 Non-permanent members elected for two years.
- A resolution requires:
 - At least 9 affirmative votes, and
 - No veto by any P5 member.

About Veto Power

- Under Article 27 of the UN Charter, any permanent member can block substantive resolutions.
- The veto was introduced to:
 - Prevent direct conflict among major powers,
 - Ensure participation of powerful nations in the UN system.

Criticism of Veto Power

- Creates a democratic deficit by allowing one country to override majority opinion.
- Often leads to paralysis during global crises.
- Reflects the power structure of 1945 rather than present geopolitical realities.

2022 “Veto Initiative”

- The UN General Assembly decided that whenever a veto is used:
 - The General Assembly must meet within 10 working days.
 - The country using the veto must explain its decision before the Assembly.

India’s Stand on UNSC Reform

- India argues that the UNSC is structurally imbalanced and does not adequately represent the Global South.
- India, along with Germany, Japan, and Brazil (G4 group), seeks permanent membership in the UNSC.
- India also supports:
 - Expansion of permanent membership,
 - Restricting veto use in cases of mass atrocities,
 - More democratic and representative global governance.

Conclusion: The 1986 Triple Veto highlights the tension between global power politics and democratic decision-making. It strengthens the demand for UNSC reforms to make the institution more representative, transparent, and effective in the 21st century.

Naval Blockade Around Iranian Ports

Context: Global oil prices increased sharply after reports that the United States may enforce a naval blockade around Iranian ports and the Strait of Hormuz, raising fears of disruption in global oil supply.



About Naval Blockade

- A naval blockade is a military strategy used to restrict maritime access to a country’s coastline or ports.
- Its objective is to cut off trade, supplies, and economic resources of the targeted state.
- It usually involves deployment of warships, aircraft carriers, and surveillance systems to monitor and intercept vessels.

Status Under International Law

- A blockade must be:
 - Officially declared,
 - Communicated to neutral states,
 - Enforced impartially.
- Under international law, a naval blockade is generally considered an act of war.

Importance of Strait of Hormuz

- The Strait of Hormuz is a crucial global oil transit route connecting the Persian Gulf with the Arabian Sea.
- Any disruption can significantly impact global energy markets and trade.

Major Historical Examples of Naval Blockades

- American Civil War - Union Blockade
 - The Union blocked Confederate ports under the “Anaconda Plan” to weaken the South economically.
- World War I - Allied Blockade of Germany
 - Britain imposed a blockade leading to severe shortages in Germany.
- Cuban Missile Crisis (1962)
 - The US imposed a “naval quarantine” around Cuba to stop Soviet missiles from reaching the island.

Significance

- Naval blockades are powerful tools of strategic and economic pressure.
- However, they can escalate regional conflicts and disrupt global trade and energy security.

India-South Korea Trade to Double by 2030

Context: India and South Korea announced a futuristic partnership to strengthen trade, technology cooperation, and cultural ties during South Korean President Lee Jae-myung’s visit to India.

More on the News:

- PM Narendra Modi and President Lee held bilateral talks at Hyderabad House, New Delhi.
- The partnership aims to promote peace, stability, and cooperation in the Indo-Pacific region amid rising global tensions.

India-South Korea Trade Relations

- **Trade Target:** Bilateral trade aims to increase from USD 27 billion to USD 54 billion by 2030.
- **Growth Requirement:** Achieving the target requires nearly 18% annual growth.
- **Complementary Strengths:** India provides a large market and skilled workforce, while South Korea contributes advanced technology and innovation.
- **Strategic Focus:** Emphasis on co-production, co-design, and co-innovation to strengthen global value chains.
- **Long-Term Vision:** The partnership supports India’s goal of becoming a \$30 trillion economy by 2047.

Key Outcomes of the Visit

- **Joint Strategic Vision:** Both countries adopted a long-term roadmap for a futuristic partnership.
- **Industrial Cooperation Committee:** A new institutional mechanism will improve coordination in trade, industry, and resources.
- **CEPA Upgrade:** India and South Korea agreed to fast-track the upgradation of the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), 2009 for better trade and investment opportunities.
- **Digital Cooperation:** Launch of the India-Korea Digital Bridge focusing on AI, semiconductors, and IT collaboration.
 - **Global Cooperation:** South Korea joined the International Solar Alliance and Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative.
 - India will join the Global Green Growth Institute headquartered in Seoul.
- **People-to-People Ties:** Introduction of a Distinguished Visitors Programme and Cultural Exchange Programme (2026-2030).
- **Cultural Cooperation:** Plans for a K-pop hub in Mumbai and an India-Korea Friendship Festival (2028) to strengthen cultural ties.

India-Austria Bilateral Relations

Context: India and Austria signed several agreements during the visit of Austrian Chancellor Christian Stocker to New Delhi.

Key Agreements & Cooperation

- **Multi-Sector Cooperation:** Agreements signed include:
 - MoU on Food Safety
 - Letter of Intent (LoI) on Military Cooperation
 - Joint Working Group on Counter-Terrorism
- **Future Technologies:** Both countries agreed to cooperate in:
 - Semiconductors
 - Quantum Computing
 - Biotechnology
 - Defence Technology
- **Economic Relations:** Bilateral trade between India and Austria has reached nearly €3 billion over the last decade.
- **Working Holiday Programme:** A youth mobility initiative was launched to promote:
 - Cultural exchange
 - Skill development
 - People-to-people ties
- **Geopolitical Importance:** Austria views India as a stable and strategic partner amid growing global uncertainty.

About Austria

- **Location:** Austria is a landlocked country in Central Europe.
- **Neighbouring Countries:** Germany, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Italy, Switzerland, and Liechtenstein.
- **Geography:** Nearly 60% of Austria is covered by the Alps, and the Danube River flows through the country.

BRICS Health Working Group (HWG) Meeting 2026

Context: The first Health Working Group (HWG) meeting under the BRICS framework for 2026 was held virtually under India's chairship.



Key Highlights

- Theme: India's BRICS Presidency theme is "Building for Resilience, Innovation, Cooperation and Sustainability."

New Priorities Proposed by India

- BRICS Mission for Healthy Lifestyles: Focus on reducing major health risk factors such as:
 - Unhealthy diet
 - Physical inactivity
 - Tobacco use
 - Alcohol consumption
- Mental Health and Wellness: Emphasis on improving mental health services and reducing social stigma.

Major Areas of Discussion

- Strengthening collaboration under the BRICS TB Research Network.
- Developing an Integrated Early Warning System for infectious diseases.
- Promoting digital health architecture for better continuity of healthcare services.
- Expanding cooperation in traditional and integrative medicine.
- Addressing social determinants of health and strengthening public health institutions.

BRICS-MENA Meeting in Delhi

Context: India chaired the BRICS Deputy Foreign Ministers and Special Envoys meeting for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region in New Delhi on April 23-24.

Key Outcomes of the Meeting

- **Concern over Gaza Conflict:** Members expressed deep concern regarding the Palestine–Gaza crisis and the wider Middle East situation.
- **Humanitarian & Counter-Terror Focus:** The meeting stressed:
 - Humanitarian assistance
 - Post-conflict recovery
 - Zero tolerance against terrorism
- **Regional Stability:** Emphasis was laid on ensuring political stability and development in:
 - Syria
 - Yemen
 - Iraq
 - Libya
 - Sudan
 - **Support for UN Agencies:** Members recognised the role of United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) in providing humanitarian aid.
 - The group also condemned attacks on United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) in Lebanon.
- **Future Engagement:** Countries agreed to continue dialogue under China's chairship in 2027 to promote peace and cooperation in the region.

About BRICS–MENA

- BRICS–MENA is a dialogue platform between BRICS countries and the Middle East & North Africa (MENA) region.
- It focuses on:
 - Peace and security
 - Economic cooperation
 - Development through multilateral engagement
- **Nature of Platform:** It is not a formal organisation and does not have fixed membership.

India at ECOSOC

Context: India was elected unopposed to four bodies of the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), reflecting strong international support and credibility.

Key Highlights

- **Re-election to CESCR:** Indian diplomat Preeti Saran was re-elected in her personal capacity to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR).
- **Representation in Key Bodies:** India secured positions in:
 - Commission on Science and Technology for Development
 - Committee on Non-Governmental Organisations
 - Committee for Programme and Coordination

About ECOSOC

- ECOSOC is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations responsible for coordinating global economic, social, and environmental policies.
- Established: 1945 under the UN Charter (Chapter X).
- Headquarters: New York City, with major sessions also held in Geneva.
- Objective: To promote:
 - Sustainable development
 - Human rights
 - Higher living standards
 - International cooperation
- Structure: ECOSOC has a 54-member plenary body, elected by the UN General Assembly for three-year terms.
- Special Feature: It also facilitates engagement with civil society organisations and NGOs.

Israel Introduces 'Yellow Line' in Lebanon

Context: Israel's creation of a "Yellow Line" buffer zone in southern Lebanon has raised concerns regarding ceasefire violations and the possibility of prolonged occupation.



What is the 'Yellow Line'?

- The "Yellow Line" is a military buffer zone created by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) to separate controlled and hostile territories.

Key Features

- Purpose: Prevent militant infiltration
- Restrict civilian movement
- Support continued military operations
- Physical Demarcation: Marked using yellow barriers, poles, and fortified checkpoints within conflict zones.
- Usage: Implemented:
 - First in the Gaza Strip (2025)
 - Later in southern Lebanon (2026)
- Scale in Gaza: Nearly 58% of the Gaza Strip came under Israeli military control.

Concerns and Criticism

- Human rights groups, including the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), criticised the move as a possible violation of international humanitarian law.
- Concerns include:
 - Long-term occupation
 - Restrictions on civilian movement
 - Humanitarian consequences in conflict zones.

Labour Unrest in India's Industrial Hubs

Context: Recent worker protests in industrial hubs such as Noida, Gurugram, Manesar, and Faridabad have highlighted growing concerns over stagnant wages, rising living costs, and gaps in labour law implementation.

Why are Workers Protesting?

- Around 40,000 workers participated in protests, leading to factory shutdowns and police intervention.
- A 35% minimum wage hike in Manesar triggered demands for similar wage increases across the NCR region.
- Workers argue that wages are not keeping pace with inflation and urban living expenses.

Major Reasons Behind Labour Unrest

Wage-Inflation Mismatch

- Inflation for industrial workers has risen sharply, while wage growth has remained slow.
- This has reduced workers' real income and purchasing power.

Delay in Wage Revision

- Several states delayed revision of minimum wages despite periodic revision requirements.
- Dependence on Variable Dearness Allowance (VDA) alone has not adequately compensated workers.

Rising Cost of Living

- Increasing fuel, transport, housing, and food costs have intensified financial stress on workers.

Gaps in Labour Code Implementation

- Partial implementation of Labour Codes (2025) created confusion and uneven enforcement.
- Lack of clarity on social security provisions remains a concern.

Structural Labour Market Issues

- Over 90% of India's workforce remains informal with limited legal protection.
- Regional wage disparities and weak bargaining power worsen labour insecurity.

Constitutional & Legal Dimension

- Article 21: Right to life includes living with dignity.
- Article 39: Ensures adequate livelihood and protection of workers.
- Article 43: Directs the State to provide a living wage.
- Labour Codes aim to simplify labour laws, but implementation challenges persist.

Impact of Labour Unrest

On Workers

- Financial hardship and rising debt burden.
- Reduced access to healthcare, education, and basic needs.

On Industry

- Production losses, supply disruptions, and reputational damage.
- Decline in investor confidence and competitiveness.

On Government & Economy

- Pressure on law and order machinery.
- Reduced tax revenues and slower economic growth.
- Rising social tensions and unemployment risks.

Global Best Practices

- Nordic Countries: Strong social dialogue and collective bargaining.
- United Kingdom: Legal procedures like secret ballots before strikes.
- Japan: Consensus-based negotiations reduce industrial conflicts.
- ILO Standards: Protect freedom of association and collective bargaining rights.

Key Concerns

- Risk of “race to the bottom” where states reduce labour standards to attract investment.
- MSMEs may struggle with higher compliance costs.
- Weak enforcement leaves informal workers vulnerable.

Way Forward

- Ensure regular revision of minimum wages linked to inflation.
- Implement Labour Codes with clear and uniform rules.
- Expand universal social security coverage for all workers.
- Strengthen digital monitoring of wage payments and benefits.
- Promote tripartite dialogue between government, industry, and labour unions.
- Improve welfare portability for migrant workers through platforms like e-Shram.

Conclusion: The recent labour unrest reflects deeper structural issues in India’s industrial economy. Sustainable growth and the vision of Viksit Bharat require balancing economic efficiency with workers’ welfare, dignity, and social justice.

Artificial Intelligence & Computational Thinking Curriculum

Context: The Union Education Minister launched the CBSE Curriculum on Computational Thinking (CT) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) for Classes III to VIII, in line with the vision of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

About CT & AI Curriculum

- It is a structured and age-appropriate curriculum designed to introduce students to Computational Thinking (CT) and Artificial Intelligence (AI).
- Aim: To create AI-ready learners by developing problem-solving and digital skills.

Key Features

- Aligned with the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2023.
- Focuses on:
 - Computational thinking skills
 - Digital literacy
 - Ethical and responsible use of AI
 - Creativity and innovation
 - Critical thinking and decision-making

Institutions Involved

- Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE)
- National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT)
- Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan (KVS)
- Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti (NVS)
- State and UT Education Boards

Implementation Framework

Classes III to V - Foundation Stage

- CT concepts integrated into subjects like Mathematics and “The World Around Us” (TWAU).
- Activity-based learning through exercises and workbooks.
- Around 50 hours of learning recommended.

Classes VI to VIII - Expansion Stage

- Project-based and interdisciplinary learning.
- Introduction to AI concepts and AI literacy.
- Around 100 hours of curriculum time suggested.

Teaching & Assessment Approach

- Focus on hands-on and real-world learning.
- Methods include:
 - Puzzles and problem-solving activities
 - Group projects and discussions
 - Reflective exercises and debates
- Assessment will be competency-based rather than rote learning.

Ethical Use of AI

Students will learn to:

- Identify bias in AI systems
- Verify AI-generated information
- Use AI responsibly and fairly

School Support

- CBSE will provide teacher manuals and resource materials.
- Schools can use free and open-source technologies for accessibility.

About Computational Thinking (CT)

Computational Thinking is a problem-solving method involving:

- Decomposition
- Pattern recognition
- Abstraction
- Algorithm design
- Data analysis and troubleshooting

Importance of CT & AI Education

- Builds the foundation for understanding AI technologies.
- Enhances logical thinking and problem-solving skills.
- Prepares students for future jobs and digital society.
- Encourages interdisciplinary learning by connecting Science, Mathematics, and Humanities.

Conclusion

The CT & AI curriculum marks an important step towards preparing students for a technology-driven future. By combining digital literacy with ethical and creative thinking, it aims to develop responsible and future-ready learners.

Indian Economy Slid to 6th-Largest in the World

Context: According to the latest World Economic Outlook (WEO) released by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), India has slipped to the position of the world's 6th-largest economy, with the UK and Japan moving ahead.

More on the News

- India was earlier ranked as the 4th-largest economy.
- IMF estimates for 2026:
 - India's GDP: around \$4.15 trillion
 - UK's GDP: around \$4.27 trillion
 - Japan's GDP: around \$4.38 trillion

How IMF Calculates GDP Rankings

The IMF measures GDP in US dollar terms using:

- GDP in local currency, and
- Exchange rate against the US dollar.

Reasons Behind India's Decline in Ranking

Revision in GDP Estimates

- India revised its GDP calculations with a new base year in 2026.
- The updated estimates showed earlier GDP figures were overestimated.
- India's GDP for 2025-26 was revised downward from ₹357 lakh crore to ₹345 lakh crore.

Depreciation of Indian Rupee

- The rupee weakened significantly against the US dollar.
- A weaker rupee lowers India's GDP value when converted into dollars, even if domestic production remains stable.



Relative Strength of Other Currencies

- The US dollar weakened against currencies like the British pound and Japanese yen.
- This increased the dollar value of the UK and Japan's economies, helping them move ahead of India.

Key Takeaway

- India's decline in ranking is largely due to GDP revision and exchange rate changes rather than a sharp fall in actual economic activity.
- Despite the ranking shift, India continues to remain one of the world's fastest-growing major economies.

Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) Annual Report 2025

Context: India released the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) Annual Report 2025, introducing a calendar-year methodology and improved labour market estimation.

Key Highlights of PLFS 2025

Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR)

- LFPR for persons aged 15+ remained stable at 59.3%.
- Male LFPR: 79.1%
- Female LFPR: 40.0%
- Rural female participation remained strong, while urban participation showed limited change.

Worker Population Ratio (WPR)

- WPR stood at 57.4% in 2025.
- Male WPR: 76.6%
- Female WPR: 38.8%
- Reflects continuing gender disparity in employment.

Unemployment Rate (UR)

- Overall unemployment rate declined to 3.1%.
- Rural UR: 2.4%
- Urban UR: 4.8%
- Youth unemployment showed noticeable improvement.

Employment Structure

- Share of self-employed workers declined from 58.2% (2023) to 56.2% (2025).
- Regular salaried employment increased to 23.6%, indicating gradual formalisation.
- Casual labour remained around one-fifth of total employment.

Sectoral Trends

- Agriculture remained the largest employer, though its share declined to 43%.
- Manufacturing and services sectors saw higher employment share, reflecting structural economic change.

Gender Dimensions

- Female workforce participation improved moderately.
- Wage gaps and unequal working hours continue.
- Domestic responsibilities remained the main reason for women staying outside the labour force.

Education & Skills

- Average schooling for persons aged 15+ reached 10 years.
- Only 4.2% of people aged 15-59 received formal vocational training, highlighting skill gaps.

About Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS)

- Conducted by the National Statistics Office (NSO).
- Published by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI).
- Provides regular data on employment and unemployment trends.

Key Changes in 2025 Report

- Covers the period from January-December 2025, replacing the earlier July-June cycle.
- Introduced a revamped sampling design with around 2.7 lakh households for improved accuracy.

Important Indicators:

Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR)

- Percentage of people aged 15+ who are working or seeking work.

Worker Population Ratio (WPR)

- Percentage of people aged 15+ who are employed.

Unemployment Rate (UR)

- Percentage of unemployed persons within the labour force.

Activity Status Measures

- Usual Status (PS+SS): Based on activities over the last 365 days.
- Current Weekly Status (CWS): Based on employment during the last 7 days.

Conclusion: the PLFS 2025 report highlights improving employment conditions and gradual formalisation of the workforce. However, gender inequality, skill gaps, and low female labour participation continue to remain major challenges for India's labour market.

Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Bill, 2026

Context: Parliament recently passed the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (Amendment) Bill, 2026 to strengthen India's insolvency framework and improve the ease of doing business.

About the Amendment Bill

- The Bill aims to:
 - Speed up insolvency proceedings
 - Reduce delays in resolution
 - Strengthen creditor-driven insolvency mechanisms
 - Improve transparency and predictability in the insolvency process

Key Features of the Bill

Faster Admission of Insolvency Cases

- The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) is required to admit insolvency applications within 14 days.
- The amendment seeks to reduce prolonged delays in starting insolvency proceedings.

Mandatory Admission by NCLT

- NCLT must admit insolvency applications once default is proven.
- Rejection can occur only for procedural non-compliance or disciplinary proceedings against the Resolution Professional (RP).

Creditor-Initiated Insolvency Resolution Process (CIIRP)

- Introduces an out-of-court insolvency initiation mechanism.
- Requires approval of at least 51% of financial creditors.

Group and Cross-Border Insolvency Framework

- Introduces provisions for:
 - Group insolvency
 - Cross-border insolvency
- Aims to align India's insolvency regime with global standards and improve investor confidence.

Reducing Conflict of Interest

- Resolution Professionals (RPs) handling insolvency cases cannot become liquidators of the same company.

Time-bound Appeals

- National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT) must dispose of appeals within three months to reduce delays.

Broader Definition of Corporate Debtor

- Expands the term "corporate debtor" to include foreign-incorporated entities with limited liability.

Reforms in Pre-Packaged Insolvency (PPIRP)

- Voting threshold reduced to 51% for approval.
- Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) empowered to prescribe timelines and standards for creditors' committees.

Shift from Criminal to Civil Penalties

- Certain offences under IBC will now attract civil penalties instead of criminal punishment.
- Includes violations related to moratorium and non-disclosure of disputes.

About Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), 2016

- Enacted in 2016 to provide a time-bound framework for insolvency resolution and liquidation.
- Objective:
 - Maximise value of assets
 - Ensure fair distribution among creditors
 - Improve recovery of stressed assets
- Covers:
 - Corporate Insolvency Resolution Process (CIRP)
 - Liquidation process

Conclusion

The IBC Amendment Bill, 2026 seeks to make India's insolvency system faster, more efficient, and investor-friendly. By reducing delays and strengthening creditor participation, it aims to improve financial discipline and business confidence in the economy.

Offshore Rupee Derivatives

Context: India plans to implement a proposal requiring banks to report offshore rupee derivative trades, despite concerns raised by lenders.

RBI Proposal on Offshore Rupee Derivatives

Applicability to Banks

- Domestic banks will have to report all derivative transactions, including trades conducted through their overseas branches.
- Foreign banks currently report only trades executed by their India-based units.
- The proposal aims to create a level playing field between Indian and foreign banks.

Implementation Timeline

- The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) plans to begin implementation from February 2027.
- Banks may initially be required to report at least 70% of offshore derivative transactions.

About Offshore Rupee Derivatives

- Offshore rupee derivatives are financial instruments linked to the value of the Indian Rupee (INR) but traded outside India.
- Their value depends on the exchange rate between the rupee and foreign currencies.

Major Offshore Trading Centres

- Singapore
- Hong Kong
- London
- Dubai

Why Do Offshore Markets Exist?

Partial Capital Account Convertibility

- India does not allow complete freedom in cross-border capital movement.
- Foreign investors therefore prefer offshore markets with fewer restrictions.

Domestic Regulatory Constraints

- Regulatory and operational restrictions in Indian markets encourage trading outside India.
- Offshore markets provide greater flexibility and easier compliance.

Ease for Global Investors

- Offshore markets offer higher liquidity and simpler access for foreign investors.
- Investors can participate without directly entering India's regulatory framework.

Significance of Offshore Rupee Derivatives

Impact on Domestic Exchange Rate

- Offshore market movements can influence the onshore rupee exchange rate.
- High volatility in offshore markets may affect India's domestic forex market.

Global Financial Integration

- Offshore derivatives improve India's integration with global financial markets.
- They increase liquidity and participation by international investors.

Hedging and Risk Management

- These instruments help exporters, importers, and investors hedge currency risks.
- They reduce uncertainty in international trade and investments involving India.

Conclusion: Offshore rupee derivatives play an important role in global currency markets and India's financial integration. The RBI's proposal aims to improve transparency, monitoring, and stability in offshore rupee trading activities.

Bauxite Clashes in Odisha

Context: Clashes erupted in Odisha's Rayagada district over a proposed bauxite mining project, highlighting the conflict between tribal rights, environmental protection, and industrial development.

About Bauxite

- Bauxite is the chief ore of aluminium and a non-ferrous mineral mainly made of hydrated aluminium oxides.
- It also contains impurities such as iron oxide, silica, and titania.

Key Features

- Soft, porous, and reddish-brown in colour.
- Rich source of aluminium with low hardness.

Uses of Bauxite

- Production of aluminium through the Bayer Process.
- Used in:
 - Refractory materials
 - Abrasives
 - Cement industry
 - Chemical industries

Distribution of Bauxite

Global Distribution

- Major reserves: Guinea, Australia, Brazil, Vietnam, and China.
- Guinea and Australia are the leading producers globally.

Distribution in India

- Odisha holds about 41% of India's total bauxite resources.
- Other major states:
 - Chhattisgarh - 20%
 - Andhra Pradesh - 12%
 - Gujarat - 8%
 - Jharkhand - 6%
 - Maharashtra - 5%
 - Madhya Pradesh - 4%

Important Region

- The East Coast Belt (Odisha-Andhra Pradesh) is the most bauxite-rich region in India.

RBI Utkarsh 2.0

Context: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has launched Utkarsh 2.0 as a medium-term strategy framework to guide its institutional priorities.

What is Utkarsh?

- Utkarsh is a three-year strategic framework of the RBI aimed at improving regulation, supervision, and overall institutional functioning.
- First Phase (2019-2022): Introduced in 2019 to define RBI's medium-term goals and reforms.

About Utkarsh 2.0

- It focuses on strengthening the RBI through seven key pillars:
 - Regulation
 - Customer centricity
 - Inclusive finance
 - Competitive markets
 - Technology
 - Future-ready organisation
 - Global focus

Key Objectives

- **Regulatory Simplification:** Streamlining rules to improve efficiency and ease compliance.
- **Financial Inclusion:** Expanding access to banking and financial services for underserved sections.
- **Market Development:** Deepening financial markets and improving transparency in pricing, especially in government securities.

Rise in India's Wind Energy

Context: India achieved its highest-ever wind energy addition of 6.05 GW in FY 2025-26, recording a 46% year-on-year growth.

Wind Energy Scenario

Global Scenario

- China leads the world with more than 650 GW of installed wind energy capacity.
- The United States has around 150-160 GW capacity.
- Germany remains the leading wind energy producer in Europe.
- Global wind installations are expected to reach around 160 GW in 2026, after a record 170 GW in 2025.

India's Position

- India ranks 4th globally in wind energy capacity.
- The country has over 50 GW of installed wind energy capacity with strong growth potential ahead.

Leading Wind Energy States in India

- Gujarat - Highest capacity
- Tamil Nadu
- Karnataka
- Maharashtra

Significance

- Wind energy is becoming a major renewable energy source due to:
 - Scalability
 - Clean and sustainable power generation
 - Improved energy security for India

Chip Fabrication Plant at SEZ Dholera

Context: India's first semiconductor fabrication plant has been established at the Dholera Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Gujarat.

About the Plant

- The project is being developed by Tata Semiconductor Manufacturing Private Limited.
- Estimated investment: ₹91,000 crore.
- The project is supported through reforms in India's SEZ policy.

Significance

Strategic Self-Reliance

- Reduces India's dependence on imported semiconductors.
- Strengthens India's role in global semiconductor supply chains.

Economic & Technological Growth

- Encourages innovation and advanced manufacturing.
- Strengthens domestic electronics value chains.
- Supports India's goal of becoming a global electronics manufacturing hub.

Geopolitical Importance

- Improves resilience against global supply chain disruptions.
- Aligns with India's vision of technological sovereignty and secure digital infrastructure.

Vishwa Sutra

Context: The Ministry of Textiles launched the initiative "Vishwa Sutra - Weaves of India for the World."

About Vishwa Sutra

- The initiative aims to present Indian handlooms in a modern global design format to increase their international appeal.
- The designer collection was showcased during the 61st Femina Miss India event held in Bhubaneswar, Odisha.

Implementing Agencies

- Developed by:
 - Office of the Development Commissioner (Handlooms)
 - National Institute of Fashion Technology (NIFT)

Key Features

- Showcases 30 traditional handloom weaves from different Indian states.
- Each weave is redesigned using inspirations from 30 different countries, blending Indian traditions with global fashion aesthetics.

Policy Significance

- Supports the government's "Vocal for Local to Global" vision.
- Promotes the 5F Textile Value Chain:
 - Farm → Fibre → Factory → Fashion → Foreign.



Mundial do Queijo do Brasil 2026

Context: Prime Minister Narendra Modi congratulated Indian cheesemakers for their success at the Mundial do Queijo do Brasil 2026.

About Mundial do Queijo do Brasil

- It is an international cheese and dairy competition held in Brazil.
- The event showcases and evaluates cheeses from across the world.

Objectives

- Promote artisanal cheesemaking traditions.
- Encourage innovation in dairy products.
- Support small-scale dairy producers globally.

Evaluation Criteria

Cheeses are judged based on:

- Texture
- Aroma
- Flavor
- Appearance
- Overall balance

Award Categories

- Super Gold
- Gold
- Silver
- Bronze



India's Performance

- India won four medals in its debut participation, reflecting growing global recognition of Indian artisanal cheese.

Winners from India

- Super Gold: Eleftheria Gulmarg (Brie-style cheese)
 - Gold: Yak Churpi-Soft by Nordic Farm (Leh, Ladakh)
 - Eleftheria Brunost (whey cheese)
- Silver: Eleftheria Kaali Miri (Belper Knolle-style cheese)

Soul Threads

Context: The Central Cottage Industries Corporation of India (CCIC) launched a designer collection named "Soul Threads."



About Soul Threads

- It is the inaugural heritage designer collection of CCIC.
- The collection showcases:
 - Handloom products
 - Handicrafts
 - Designer fashion
 - Cultural performances

Objectives

- Platform Creation: Provides opportunities for designers, artisans, and cultural performers to showcase their work.
- Heritage Conservation: Aims to preserve India's traditional textiles and craftsmanship.

Significance

- Revival Initiative: Marks a renewed effort to revive and promote traditional Indian crafts through CCIC.
- Market Visibility: Helps position Indian handicrafts and handlooms in modern and global markets.

About CCIC

- The Central Cottage Industries Corporation of India (CCIC) is a Public Sector Undertaking under the Ministry of Textiles.
- It promotes and markets authentic Indian handloom and handicraft products.

Arsenic & Fluoride Contamination in Groundwater

Context: The National Green Tribunal (NGT) directed all States to take urgent steps to address arsenic and fluoride contamination in groundwater and asked the Centre to monitor implementation nationwide.

More on the News

- The directions were issued during a suo motu hearing based on media reports on rising contamination.
- Long-term consumption of contaminated groundwater causes serious and irreversible health problems, especially in rural areas dependent on untreated water sources.

NGT's 2026 Enforcement Framework

Key Directions

- Granular Data Reporting: States must provide contamination data at district, block, village, and ward levels.
- Regulatory Oversight: The Central Ground Water Authority (CGWA) will monitor mitigation measures and compliance.
- Time-Bound Action: States must adopt filtration and purification technologies within a fixed timeline.
- Legal Accountability: NGT invoked principles such as:
 - Polluter Pays Principle
 - Sustainable Development
 - under the NGT Act, 2010.

Arsenic vs Fluoride Contamination

Aspect	Arsenic	Fluoride
Nature	Toxic metalloid harmful in drinking water	Beneficial in small amounts but harmful in excess
Source	Ganga–Brahmaputra alluvial sediments	Fluoride-bearing minerals like fluorite
Human Causes	Mining, industrial waste, pesticides	Fertilisers, industrial discharge, groundwater overuse
Health Impact	Arsenicosis, skin lesions, cancer risk	Dental and skeletal fluorosis
Major Regions	Bihar, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh	Rajasthan, Gujarat, Karnataka

Major Challenges

Economic & Social Issues

- High healthcare expenses and reduced earning capacity.
- Social stigma due to visible health effects like skin lesions and dental discoloration.

Governance Problems

- Excessive groundwater extraction through private borewells.
- Subsidised electricity encouraging over-pumping.
- Weak coordination among agencies.

Implementation Issues

- High maintenance cost of purification systems.
- Low public acceptance of treated water.
- Weak monitoring and last-mile delivery systems.

Way Forward

- **Data-Based Monitoring:** Develop GIS-based real-time groundwater quality monitoring systems.
- **Affordable Technology:** Promote low-cost community and household filtration systems.
- **Regulate Groundwater Use:** Control borewell expansion and encourage micro-irrigation.
- **Safe Water Supply:** Expand treated surface water access through schemes like Jal Jeevan Mission.
- **Community Awareness:** Increase public participation and awareness regarding safe drinking water.
- **Better Coordination:** Improve cooperation between CGWA and State agencies with clear accountability.

Conclusion: Groundwater contamination by arsenic and fluoride is a major public health and governance challenge. Effective monitoring, regulation, technology adoption, and community participation are essential for ensuring safe drinking water and long-term water security.

CMS COP15 (Convention on Migratory Species)

Context: The CMS COP15 held in Brazil (March 2026) highlighted the global decline of migratory species and added several new species to international protection lists.

About CMS COP15

- The Conference of the Parties (COP) is the highest decision-making body of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (CMS).
- It meets every three years to set global priorities, budgets, and conservation actions.
- Venue: Campo Grande, Brazil
- Participation: Over 130 member countries
 - Theme: “Connecting Nature to Sustain Life” Focus on habitat connectivity and protection of migratory corridors.

Key Outcomes of COP15 (2026)

Species Protection

- Over 40 migratory species added to CMS protection lists.
- Examples:
 - Cheetah (Zimbabwe population)
 - Striped hyena
 - Giant otter
 - Snowy owl

Marine Conservation

- Appendix I listing: Great hammerhead and scalloped hammerhead sharks (strict protection).
- Appendix II listing: Patagonian narrownose smoothhound (cooperative conservation).

Regional Conservation Plans

- Action plan for Amazonian migratory catfish.
- Conservation initiatives for jaguars in the Americas.

Combating Illegal Trade

- New global initiative launched to curb illegal and unsustainable exploitation of migratory species.

Climate & Habitat Connectivity

- Emphasis on protecting migration routes from disruptions caused by infrastructure like roads and dams.

About CMS (Bonn Convention)

- A legally binding UN treaty for conservation of migratory animals and their habitats.
- Origin: Signed in 1979 in Bonn, Germany under UNEP.

Objectives

- Transboundary conservation: Coordinated action across countries.
- Habitat protection: Safeguarding migratory routes and ecosystems.

Species Listing System

- Appendix I: Endangered migratory species
 - → Strict protection and international cooperation.
- Appendix II: Species with unfavourable conservation status
 - → Requires international agreements for conservation.

Instruments under CMS

- Agreements & MoUs: Binding and non-binding frameworks for species protection.
- Scientific reports: Such as the State of Migratory Species Report (2026) for evidence-based policy.

Significance: CMS COP15 reinforces global cooperation for protecting migratory species, especially in the face of habitat loss, climate change, and illegal wildlife trade.

Double-Zero Mustard Variety (GSC-7)

Context: Scientists at Punjab Agricultural University have developed a new “double-zero (00)” mustard variety named GSC-7, aimed at making mustard oil safer and globally acceptable.

About “00” (Double-Zero) Mustard

- Based on Brassica napus (Gobhi Sarson), widely used for edible oil production.
- Called “double-zero” due to low erucic acid and low glucosinolate content, which improves oil quality and safety.

Key Features of GSC-7

- **Low Erucic Acid:** Less than 2%, meeting international edible oil safety standards.
- **Low Glucosinolate Content:** Below 30 $\mu\text{mol/g}$, improving nutritional quality and reducing toxicity concerns.
- **Global Standards Compliance:** Meets canola-quality benchmarks, enabling international market acceptance.
- **Non-GM Variety:** Developed without genetic modification, increasing consumer trust and regulatory ease.

Global Canola-Quality Standards

- Set of international benchmarks that define safe edible rapeseed oil.
- Distinguish canola-quality oil (safe for consumption) from traditional rapeseed oil.

Significance

- Enhances safety and nutritional value of mustard oil.
- Boosts India’s potential in global edible oil markets.
- Supports farmer income through higher-value crop varieties.
- Aligns with food safety and export competitiveness goals.

Shekha Jheel Bird Sanctuary

Context: Shekha Jheel Bird Sanctuary has been designated as India's 99th Ramsar Site, highlighting its international importance as a wetland ecosystem.

About Shekha Jheel Bird Sanctuary

- It is a freshwater wetland ecosystem known for rich biodiversity and migratory bird habitats.
- Located in Aligarh district, Uttar Pradesh, in the Gangetic plains.

Origin

- The wetland developed after the construction of the Upper Ganga Canal (1852).

Key Features

- Perennial freshwater wetland, influenced by monsoonal water flow.
- Situated along the Central Asian Flyway, an important migratory bird route.

Vegetation

- Submerged plants: Hydrilla, Vallisneria
- Floating plants: Azolla, Eichhornia
- Rooted vegetation: diverse wetland flora

Avifauna

- Bar-headed Goose
- Painted Stork
- Various migratory duck species

Significance

- Serves as a critical stopover and breeding site for migratory birds.
- Supports eco-tourism and local livelihoods.
- Enhances climate resilience through:
 - Water regulation
 - Carbon sequestration

About Wetlands

- Wetlands are areas where land is saturated with water (fresh, saline, or brackish) either permanently or seasonally.
- Include ecosystems like marshes, lakes, and floodplains.

About Ramsar Sites

- Wetlands of international importance designated under the Ramsar Convention.
- Convention adopted: 1971 (Ramsar, Iran)
- Enforced: 1975

Purpose

- Conservation and wise use of wetlands.
- Countries designate sites based on ecological, hydrological, or biodiversity value.

Montreux Record

- A list of Ramsar sites facing ecological threats requiring urgent attention.
- Established in 1990.

India's Sites in Montreux Record

- Keoladeo National Park (Rajasthan)
- Loktak Lake (Manipur)

Significance: The designation strengthens wetland conservation in India and reinforces the importance of protecting migratory bird habitats under global environmental frameworks.

State of India's Bats 2024-25

Context: India's first national bat assessment highlights growing threats to bat populations, major data gaps, and the urgent need for conservation of these ecologically important species.



About the Report

- Prepared by:
 - Bat Conservation International (BCI)
 - Nature Conservation Foundation (NCF)
- It is India's first comprehensive national bat assessment, covering around 135 bat species.
- Identifies conservation priorities and baseline ecological data for future action.

Key Findings

- India hosts about 135 bat species.
- Of these:
 - 16 species are endemic
 - 7 species are IUCN threatened, including critically endangered species.

Key Recommendations

- Strengthen scientific research and monitoring of bat populations.
- Improve inter-agency coordination for conservation.
- Enhance surveillance for zoonotic disease risks linked to wildlife.
- Promote public awareness to reduce stigma, especially after COVID-19.
- Recognise bats as ecologically beneficial species, not threats.

About Bats

- Bats are the only mammals capable of sustained flight.
- They play a key role in ecosystem balance.



Key Characteristics

- **Wings:** Skin membranes stretched over elongated fingers.
- **Diet:** Fruits, insects, nectar, and small animals.
- **Habitat:** Caves, trees, and human structures.
- **Echolocation:** Use sound waves for navigation and hunting.
- **Nocturnal:** Active mainly at night.

Examples of Indian Bat Species

- **Kolar Leaf-nosed Bat** (*Hipposideros hypophyllus*) - Critically Endangered
- **Salim Ali's Fruit Bat** (*Latidens salimalii*) - Endangered
- **Nicobar Leaf-nosed Bat** (*Hipposideros nicobarulae*) - Endangered
- **Indian Flying Fox** (*Pteropus giganteus*) - Least Concern

Major Threats to Bats

- **Habitat Loss:** Due to deforestation, urbanisation, and land-use change.
- **Climate Change & Pollution:** Impacts food availability and survival.
- **Human Persecution:** Fear of disease leads to killing and disturbance.
- **Infrastructure Expansion:** Roads, buildings, and lighting disrupt roosting and movement.

Significance

Bats are crucial for:

- Pollination of plants
- Seed dispersal (forest regeneration)
- Natural pest control (insect population regulation)

Conclusion: The report highlights that bats are vital yet overlooked components of biodiversity. Their conservation is essential for maintaining ecological balance and ensuring long-term environmental sustainability.

20 Years of Earth Hour

Context: WWF India and the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) organised awareness activities to mark 20 years of Earth Hour with a nationwide call "Give an Hour for Earth."

About Earth Hour:

- Earth Hour is the world's largest grassroots environmental movement, organised annually by the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).
- It encourages people, communities, and businesses to switch off non-essential lights for one hour to show support for environmental protection.
- It began in 2007 in Sydney, Australia, as a symbolic lights-out event.
- Today, it is observed in over 190 countries worldwide.

Significance:

- Raises awareness about climate change and energy conservation.
- Promotes collective global action for environmental sustainability.

2026 Milestone:

- Marks 20 years of the Earth Hour movement.

IUCN Reclassifies Antarctic Fur Seals as Endangered



Context: The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) has reclassified Antarctic fur seals as Endangered, mainly due to the impacts of climate change and declining population trends.

About Antarctic Fur Seal:

- Scientific name: *Arctocephalus gazella*
- Found mainly on sub-Antarctic islands and in the Southern Ocean.
- Smallest Antarctic seal species with thick fur and external ear flaps.
- Males are significantly larger than females.
- Strong swimmer adapted to cold marine environments.

Diet & Ecological Role:

- Feeds on krill, fish, and squid.
- Plays an important role in the Southern Ocean food chain as a key predator.

Population Trend:

- Population has declined by over 50% between 1999 and 2025.

Conservation Status & Efforts:

- Previously benefited from international protection under the Convention for the Conservation of Antarctic Seals, which helped recovery in earlier decades.
- Despite past recovery, recent climate-related pressures have led to a sharp decline.
- Now officially uplisted to Endangered by the IUCN.

Significance:

- Highlights growing climate change impacts on polar ecosystems.
- Signals the need for stronger marine biodiversity protection in the Antarctic region.

Soil Sakhis: Grassroots Soil Advisors in Maharashtra

Context: In drought-prone regions of Maharashtra, Soil Sakhis are emerging as community-level change agents, helping farmers improve productivity through scientific soil management.

About Soil Sakhis:

- Soil Sakhis are trained rural women who act as local soil advisors for farmers.
- They bridge the gap between scientific agricultural knowledge and ground-level farming practices.
- The initiative is part of climate-resilient agriculture programmes led by the Mann Deshi Foundation.

Key Functions:

- Collect soil samples from fields.
- Support soil testing and interpretation of results.
- Guide farmers on crop selection based on soil health.
- Advise on balanced fertiliser use and sustainable farming practices.

Significance:

- Improves soil health and farm productivity in drought-affected areas.
- Promotes scientific farming at the grassroots level.
- Empowers rural women through livelihood-linked agricultural roles.

New Gecko Species *Cyrtodactylus jayadityai* Discovered in Tripura

Context: Researchers have discovered a new bent-toed gecko species, *Cyrtodactylus jayadityai*, in Tripura, highlighting the rich reptile diversity of Northeast India.

About the Species:

- Named *Cyrtodactylus jayadityai* in honour of Assam-based herpetologist Jayaditya Purkayastha.
- Belongs to the *Cyrtodactylus khasiensis* species group.
- Genetically distinct from its closest relative (*Cyrtodactylus tripuraensis*), with 4.7–5.2% DNA divergence.

Habitat & Behaviour:

- Found in lowland forest patches.
- Nocturnal in nature—active at night for foraging.
- Hides in burrows and rock crevices during the day.

Significance:

- Increases the number of *Cyrtodactylus* species in Northeast India to 31.
- Highlights Northeast India as a major hotspot for herpetofaunal diversity.
- Underlines the importance of continued biodiversity exploration and conservation efforts in the region.

