

# FEBRUARY

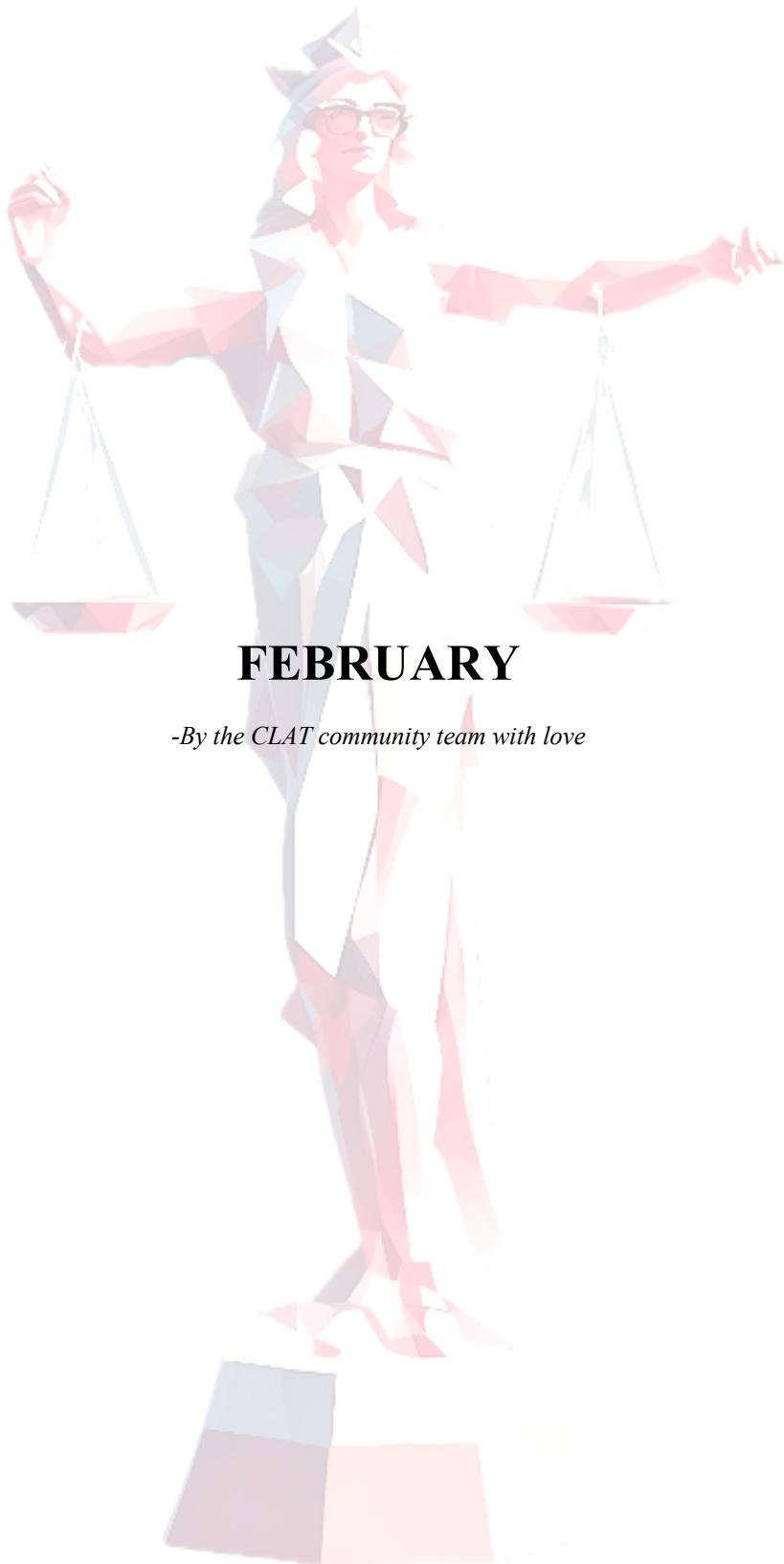


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**2025**



## FEBRUARY

*-By the CLAT community team with love*

## Table of Contents

1. World Wetlands Day 2025.....	1
2. UNION BUDGET 2025 .....	5
3. GYAN BHARATAM MISSION.....	10
4. INTERNATIONAL BIG CAT ALLIANCE COMES INTO FORCE.....	13
5. TELANGANA CASTE SURVEY .....	16
6. BHARAT RANBHOOMI DARSHAN.....	20
7. China's Chang'e-7 Mission .....	23
8. The Ocean Coordination Mechanism .....	29
9. Indian Ocean Conference 2025.....	31
10. TROPEX-25.....	33
11. PM-JANMAN SCHEME .....	35
12. Sundarbans Mangroves.....	37
13. India-Bangladesh Border Fencing Dispute.....	41
14. 14th Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2024.....	44
15. Climate Risk Index (CRI) 2025 .....	50
16. Fiscal Health Index (FHI) 2025 .....	53
17. Sahitya Akademi Award 2024.....	57
18. India-US Immigration Issue.....	59
19. US Agency for International Development (USAID) .....	62
20. India-France Cooperation on IMEC Project.....	64
21. National Games 2025.....	67
22. Olympic Esports Games 2027 .....	69
23. SHAKTI-Based Semiconductor Chip.....	72
24. India-France AI Summit .....	76
25. Extension of PM-AASHA Scheme Until 2025-26 .....	79
26. New Chief Minister of Delhi: Rekha Gupta .....	83
27. BRICS Expansion 2025: A New Era of Global Influence.....	86
28. Revised Free Movement Regime with Myanmar .....	91

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1

29. WHO Initiative to Provide Free Cancer Medicines .....	96
30. President's Rule in Manipur .....	99
31. Tamil Nadu's Opposition to NEP 2020.....	105
32. National Green Financing Institution: A Step Towards Net-Zero.....	109
33. Israel-Hamas Ceasefire .....	115
34. Grameen Credit Score: A New Initiative for Financial Inclusion .....	120
35. Kashmir Book Seizure and Crackdown on Dissent.....	124



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# World Wetlands Day 2025



## RAMSAR CONVENTION

**About**

- Also known as the Convention on Wetlands.
- An intergovernmental treaty, adopted in 1971, in Ramsar, Iran.
- Entered into force in 1975.
- Wetlands that are of international importance are declared as Ramsar sites.
- Largest Ramsar Site in World: Pantanal: South America

**Montreux Record**

- Adopted in Montreux (Switzerland) in 1990.
- Identifies Ramsar sites that need priority conservation attention at national or international level.

**Wetlands**

- A place in which the land is covered by water – salt, fresh, or somewhere in between – either seasonally or permanently.
- Take many forms including rivers, marshes, bogs, mangroves, mudflats, ponds, swamps, billabongs, lagoons, lakes, and floodplains.
- World Wetlands Day: 2<sup>nd</sup> February

**India & Ramsar Convention**

- Came into force in India: 1982
- Total Number of Ramsar Sites: 85
- Chilika Lake (Odisha), Keoladeo National Park (Rajasthan), Harike Lake (Punjab), Loktak Lake (Manipur), Wular Lake (Jammu and Kashmir), etc.

**Related Framework in India**

- The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) has notified Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017 under the provisions of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 as regulatory framework for conservation and management of wetlands.
- The 2017 Rules decentralise wetlands management and provide for the constitution of the State Wetlands Authority or Union Territory Wetlands Authority.

**Key Facts**

- Largest Ramsar Site:** Sunderbans, West Bengal
- Smallest Ramsar Site:** Vembannur Wetland Complex, Tamil Nadu
- State with the maximum number of Ramsar Sites:** Tamil Nadu (14)
- Wetlands in Montreux Record:**
  - Keoladeo National Park: Rajasthan
  - Loktak Lake: Manipur

## Why in News?

The Union Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) organized the World Wetlands Day 2025 celebrations at the Parvati Arga Ramsar Site, Gonda, Uttar Pradesh (UP) on 2nd February 2025.

## Key Facts Regarding World Wetlands Day 2025

### About World Wetlands Day

World Wetlands Day is observed annually to raise awareness about the importance of wetlands and marks the adoption of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in 1971 in Ramsar, Iran. The day

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is dedicated to educating the public and policymakers on the need for conserving these vital ecosystems.

## Theme for 2025

The theme for World Wetlands Day 2025 is "*Protecting Wetlands for Our Common Future*" which highlights the need for preserving wetlands to secure biodiversity, ecosystem services, and sustainable livelihoods.

## New Ramsar Sites in India

- The newly designated Ramsar Sites in 2025 include:
  - **Udhwa Lake** in Jharkhand
  - **Theerthangal and Sakkarakottai** in Tamil Nadu
  - **Khecheopalri** in Sikkim
- These additions are significant as they mark the first Ramsar Sites for the states of Sikkim and Jharkhand.
- With these inclusions, the total number of Ramsar Sites (Wetlands of International Importance) in India has increased to **89**.
- Tamil Nadu continues to hold the maximum number of Ramsar Sites with **20 sites**, followed by Uttar Pradesh with **10 sites**.

## New Tourism Corridor

The government has announced the development of a new **nature-culture tourism corridor** between **Ayodhya and Devi Patan in Uttar Pradesh**, which aims to integrate ecological conservation with cultural tourism.

## Amrit Dharohar Initiative

Launched in **June 2023**, the *Amrit Dharohar* initiative focuses on the conservation of Ramsar Sites through four key components:

- **Species and Habitat Conservation** – Protecting native flora and fauna.

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- **Nature Tourism** – Promoting eco-tourism in and around wetlands.
- **Wetlands Livelihood** – Enhancing community-based employment opportunities through wetland conservation.
- **Wetlands Carbon** – Strengthening the role of wetlands in carbon sequestration and climate change mitigation.

## Threats to Wetlands

One of the most critical threats to wetlands is **pollution**, particularly from industrial and human effluents. These pollutants degrade wetland ecosystems, impacting biodiversity and diminishing their ecological functions. Conservation efforts must address these challenges to maintain the health of wetlands.

## Definition of Wetlands

Wetlands are areas where water covers the soil or is present at or near the surface for varying durations, including during the growing season. These ecosystems are crucial for biodiversity conservation, climate regulation, and supporting human livelihoods.

## Types of Wetlands

The Ramsar Convention categorizes wetlands into two broad types:

- **Natural Wetlands:** Oases, estuaries, deltas, mangroves, coastal areas, coral reefs.
- **Human-Made Wetlands:** Fishponds, rice paddies, reservoirs.

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## About the Ramsar Convention

The Ramsar Convention is an international treaty adopted in **1971** in **Ramsar, Iran**, and came into force in **1975**. It provides a framework for national action and international cooperation in wetland conservation and sustainable use. The convention emphasizes the wise use of wetlands, recognizing their ecological, hydrological, and economic significance. It also establishes the **Ramsar List of Wetlands of International Importance**, which identifies and protects crucial wetland sites across the globe. Signatory nations, including India, commit to designating and managing wetlands in ways that maintain their ecological character while promoting their role in biodiversity conservation, climate resilience, and local livelihoods.

## The Montreux Record

The **Montreux Record** is a register of Ramsar Sites that have experienced or are likely to experience ecological changes due to human interference, pollution, or technological developments. The purpose of the Montreux Record is:

- To identify wetland sites requiring urgent conservation attention.
- To monitor and track changes in the ecological character of wetlands.

## India and the Ramsar Convention

India became a signatory to the **Ramsar Convention on February 1, 1982**. This international agreement focuses on the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands, ensuring that these ecosystems continue to provide environmental, social, and economic benefits.

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# UNION BUDGET 2025

## Why in News?

The Union Budget 2025-26 was presented by the Union Finance Minister in the Parliament, recognizing four key engines of development: **agriculture, Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), investment, and exports**. The budget, with the theme "*Sabka Vikas*", aims to stimulate balanced growth across all regions. In line with this vision, the Finance Minister outlined the broad principles of *Viksit Bharat*, emphasizing inclusive growth and economic resilience. The budget places special focus on the **poor (Garib), youth, farmers (Annadata), and women (Nari)** by introducing development measures tailored to their needs.



## Budget Estimates 2025-26

- The total receipts other than borrowings and the total expenditure are estimated at ₹ 34.96 lakh crore and ₹ 50.65 lakh crore respectively.
- The net tax receipts are estimated at ₹ 28.37 lakh crore.
- The fiscal deficit is estimated to be 4.4 per cent of GDP.
- The gross market borrowings are estimated at ₹ 14.82 lakh crore.

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– Capex Expenditure of ₹11.21 lakh crore (3.1% of GDP) earmarked in FY2025-26.

## Key Announcements in the Union Budget 2025-26

### 1. Agriculture and Rural Development

- **Prime Minister Dhan-Dhaanya Krishi Yojana:** Designed to cover 100 low agricultural productivity districts, benefiting 1.7 crore farmers by enhancing irrigation and post-harvest storage facilities.
- **Rural Prosperity and Resilience Programme:** A collaborative initiative with states to address agricultural underemployment through skilling, investment, and technology integration.
- **Atma Nirbharta in Pulses:** A six-year mission focusing on Tur, Urad, and Masoor, ensuring climate-resilient seeds and remunerative prices. NAFED and NCCF will procure these pulses from farmers over the next four years.
- **Enhanced Kisan Credit Card (KCC) Limit:** Raised from ₹3 lakh to ₹5 lakh, benefiting 7.7 crore farmers.
- **National Mission on High-Yielding Seeds:** Strengthening research efforts to ensure the availability of 100+ high-yielding and pest-resistant seed varieties.
- **Mission for Cotton Productivity:** A five-year initiative aimed at promoting sustainable farming, increasing extra-long staple cotton production, and improving fiber quality.

### 2. Strengthening MSMEs

- **Revised MSME Classification:** Investment and turnover limits increased to 2.5 times, expanding credit opportunities for small businesses.
- **Micro Enterprise Credit Cards:** ₹5 lakh credit facility introduced for 10 lakh micro enterprises, promoting financial inclusion.
- **Credit Cover for MSMEs:** Guarantee cover increased from ₹5 crore to ₹10 crore, enabling higher loan access for small businesses.

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### 3. Infrastructure and Connectivity

- **Jal Jeevan Mission:** Total budget outlay enhanced to ₹67,000 crore, with an extension till 2028, ensuring universal piped water coverage and enhanced funding for rural water projects. 15 crore households (representing 80% of India's rural population) have benefitted from this initiative.
- **Bharatiya Bhasha Pustak Scheme:** Focused on digital Indian language books to enhance school and higher education accessibility.
- **UDAN - Regional Connectivity Scheme:** A revised UDAN scheme will improve regional connectivity to 120 new destinations, with a target of carrying 4 crore passengers over the next 10 years. Support will also be provided for helipads and smaller airports in hilly, aspirational, and North-Eastern regions.
- **Greenfield Airport in Bihar:** New greenfield airports to be developed in Bihar, along with the expansion of Patna airport and a brownfield airport at Bihta (Patna).

### 4. Social Welfare and Inclusion

- **PM SVANidhi Scheme:** Introduction of UPI-linked credit cards with a ₹30,000 limit for street vendors, enhancing financial inclusion.
- **Identity Cards for Gig Workers:** Registration on the e-Shram portal, ensuring social security and health benefits under PM Jan Arogya Yojana.
- **Grameen Credit Score:** A new framework enabling Self-Help Group (SHG) members and rural borrowers to access formal credit facilities more efficiently.
- **Jan Vishwas Bill 2.0:** Decriminalizing over 100 legal provisions, reducing compliance burdens, and easing business operations.

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## Principles of Viksit Bharat

- **Eradication of poverty (Zero-poverty).**
- **High-quality universal school education.**
- **Access to affordable and comprehensive healthcare.**
- **Full employment with a skilled workforce.**
- **70% economic participation by women.**
- **Agricultural transformation to establish India as the “Food Basket of the World”.**

## Science, Technology, and Space Development

- **ISRO Funding Increase:** Expanded investment in **Gaganyaan, SSLV expansion, and private-sector space collaboration**, positioning India as a leader in global satellite markets.
- **Public-Private Partnerships in Nuclear Propulsion:** Encouraging collaboration for **nuclear propulsion in deep-space exploration**, ensuring sustained technological advancements.

## Union Budget Structure

- **Revenue Budget:** Includes **tax and non-tax revenue receipts** and **government expenditures**.
- **Capital Budget:** Includes **capital receipts** (such as borrowings) and **capital payments** (such as investments).
- **Finance Bill:** Proposes **taxation measures, income tax revisions, and indirect tax changes**.

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## Constitutional and Historical Context of the Union Budget

- Article 112 of the Indian Constitution defines the **Union Budget as the Annual Financial Statement.**
- The term '**Budget**' is **not explicitly mentioned in the Constitution** but refers to the **Government's estimated receipts and expenditures for a financial year.**
- **Responsibility:** The **Department of Economic Affairs (DEA)** in the **Ministry of Finance** prepares the Union Budget.
- **India's First Budget:** The first Indian Budget was presented on **February 18, 1869**, by **James Wilson** under British rule.
- **Post-Independence Budget:** The first **Finance Budget of independent India** was presented on **26 November 1947** by **RK Shanmukham Chetty**, while the **first budget of the Republic of India** was introduced on **February 28, 1950**, by **John Mathai**.

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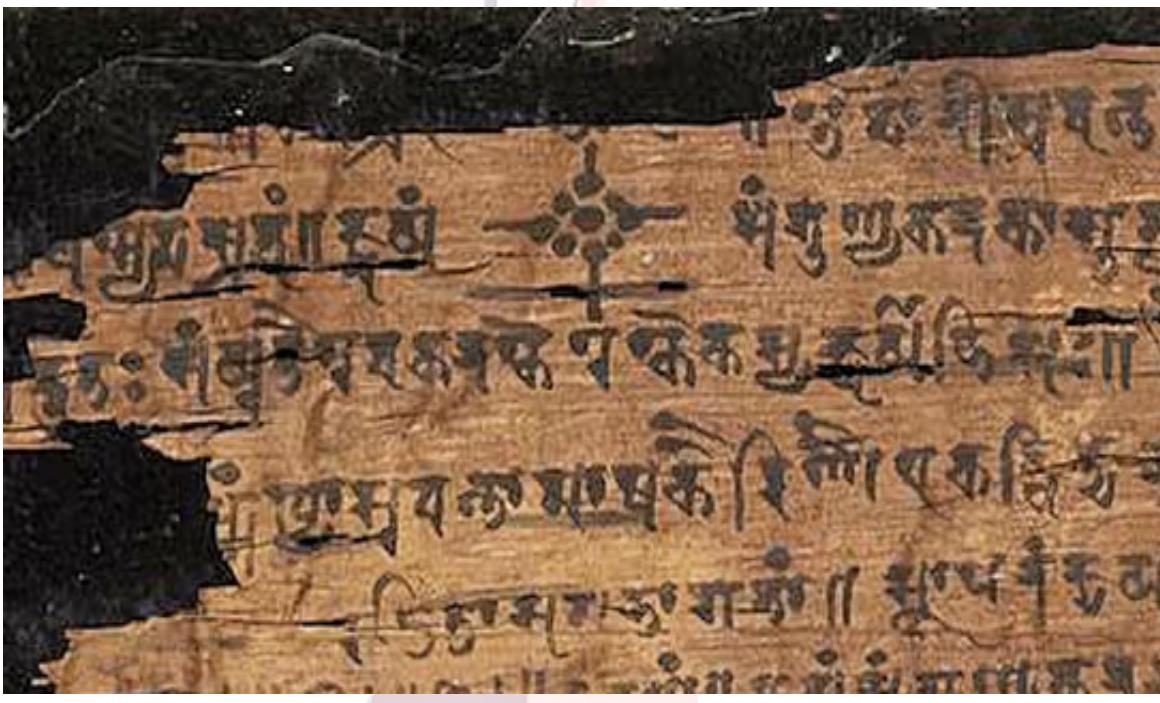
# GYAN BHARATAM MISSION

## Why in News?

The Union Budget 2025-26 has introduced the **Gyan Bharatam Mission**, an initiative aimed at **surveying, documenting, and conserving India's vast manuscript heritage**. Recognizing the importance of preserving ancient knowledge, the government has significantly increased the budget allocation for the **National Manuscripts Mission (NMM)** to support this initiative.

## Gyan Bharatam Mission

- **Objective:** To **conserve over one crore manuscripts** housed in academic institutions, museums, libraries, and private collections across India.
- **Budget Allocation:** The funding for the **National Manuscripts Mission (NMM)** has been **increased from ₹3.5 crore to ₹60 crore** to accommodate the mission's objectives.



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## National Manuscripts Mission (NMM)

- **Launched in:** 2003 by the **Ministry of Culture** under the **Indira Gandhi National Centre for the Arts (IGNCA)**.
- **Objective:** To preserve and make accessible India's vast manuscript heritage by documenting, digitizing, and conserving historical texts.
- **IGNCA's Role:** Established in **1987** as an **autonomous institution** focused on **research, academic pursuit, and dissemination in the arts**.

## Revival of National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM)

### Key Features of the Revived NMM

- **Formation of National Manuscripts Authority:** The **Union Ministry of Culture** plans to establish an **autonomous body** under its jurisdiction to oversee manuscript conservation.
- **Current Status:** The NMM currently operates under **IGNCA** but will be upgraded with greater autonomy.
- **Achievements (2003-2024):**
  - **52 lakh manuscripts documented.**
  - **Over 3 lakh titles digitized**, with one-third uploaded online.

## National Manuscripts Mission (NMM) – Key Facts

- **An initiative of the Ministry of Culture** to preserve and document India's vast manuscript collection.
- **Implemented by:** The **Department of Culture**, with **IGNCA as the nodal agency**.
- **Motto:** "*Conserving the past for the future*", emphasizing the **protection and accessibility of manuscripts**.

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11

- **Scope and Collection:** India possesses an estimated **five million manuscripts**, making it **one of the largest collections in the world.**
- **70% of manuscripts are in Sanskrit**, showcasing the linguistic richness of Indian heritage.

### Definition of a Manuscript

A **manuscript** is a **handwritten composition** created on materials such as **paper, bark, cloth, metal, or palm leaf**. It must be **at least 75 years old** to qualify as a manuscript.

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# INTERNATIONAL BIG CAT ALLIANCE COMES INTO FORCE.



**INTERNATIONAL BIG CAT ALLIANCE**

*The International Big Cat Alliance is a multi-country, multi-agency coalition aimed at conserving big cat species and their habitats.*

<b>Launched by</b> India (2023)	<b>Headquarters</b> India
<b>Member states</b> <b>96</b> countries	<b>Structure</b> Consists of Assembly of Members Standing Committee & Secretariat

**FUNCTIONS**

- Secure the future of big cats (Tigers, Lions, Leopards, Snow Leopards, Pumas, Jaguars, and Cheetahs)
- Mitigate the adverse effects of climate change
- Advocate for policy initiatives
- Attain the United Nations-mandated Sustainable Development Goals

**THREATS TO BIG CATS**

- Poaching
- Habitat loss & fragmentation
- Human-Leopard conflict
- Climate change & Deforestation

## Why in News?

The International Big Cat Alliance (IBCA) has officially come into force as a full-fledged Treaty-based Inter-Governmental International Organization and international legal entity. India has formally joined IBCA, which was launched by the Prime Minister of India in 2023 to strengthen conservation efforts for big cats globally.

## About IBCA

- Headquarters:** India.
- Structure:** A multi-country, multi-agency coalition comprising 96 big cat range and non-range countries interested in big cat conservation.

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- **Genesis:** Proposed in **2019** by India's **Prime Minister**, officially launched in **April 2023** during the event *Commemorating 50 Years of Project Tiger*.
- **Aim:** Conservation of **seven big cat species**—Tiger, Lion, Leopard, Snow Leopard, Cheetah, Jaguar, and Puma.
- **Primary Objective:** To **facilitate collaboration** among stakeholders, consolidate conservation practices, and implement expertise-driven efforts to achieve **global big cat conservation**.
- **Depository of Framework Agreement:** Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), Government of India.
- **Framework Model:** Modeled after the **International Solar Alliance (ISA)** with a **Director-General (DG)** appointed by the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)**.
- **Member Countries:** Nicaragua, Eswatini, India, Somalia, and Liberia have signed the **Framework Agreement**, formally becoming IBCA members.

**Note:** Although India launched IBCA, it still needs to **sign and ratify the Framework Agreement** similar to other global institutions such as the **Paris Agreement**, the **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**, and the **Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)**.

## Objectives of IBCA

- **Prevent illegal wildlife trade** involving the seven big cat species.
- **Promote conservation of natural habitats** for these species.
- **Encourage international cooperation** for research, knowledge-sharing, and funding initiatives.
- **Support reintroduction and translocation programs** for endangered big cat populations.

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## India's Contributions:

### Cheetah Reintroduction Project

#### Project Cheetah

- Phase 1 (2022):

- Launched to restore the population of cheetahs in India after they were declared extinct in 1952.
- Involved translocation of cheetahs from South Africa and Namibia to Kuno National Park, Madhya Pradesh.
- Implemented by National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) in collaboration with Madhya Pradesh Forest Department and Wildlife Institute of India (WII).

- Phase 2 (Upcoming):

- India is considering sourcing cheetahs from Kenya due to similar habitats.
- Plans to translocate cheetahs to Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary (Madhya Pradesh) as well.

### Project Tiger

- Launched: 1973 with nine tiger reserves to conserve India's national animal.
- Current Status: Expanded to 50 reserves across 18 tiger range states.
- Implementing Body: National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), a statutory body of MoEFCC.
- Legislative Basis: NTCA was established in 2005 under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972 and given statutory status through its 2006 amendment.

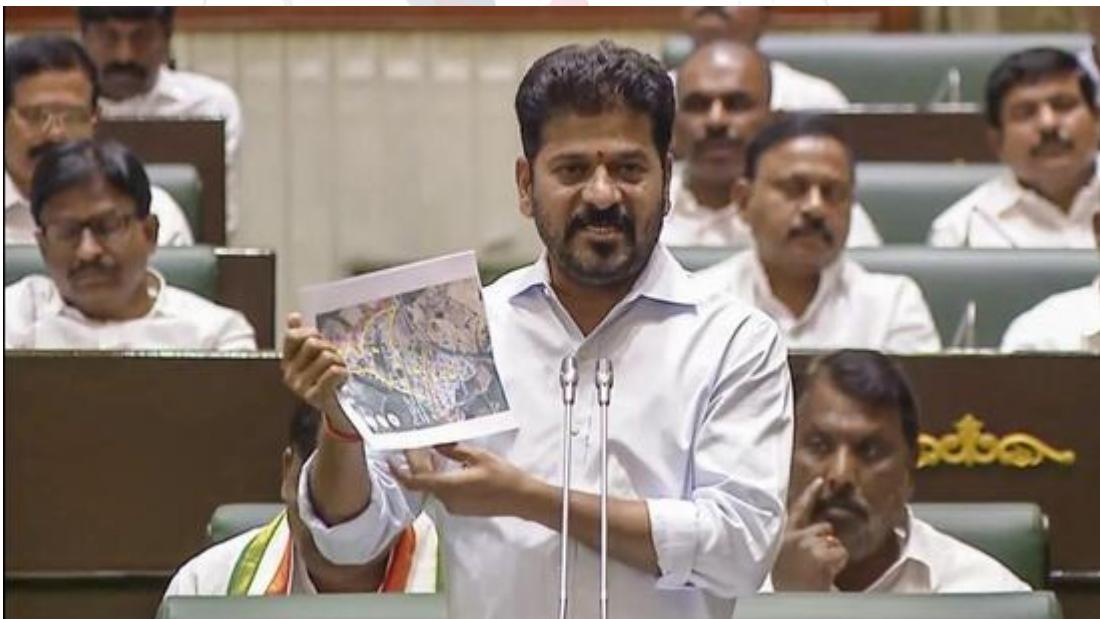
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15

# TELANGANA CASTE SURVEY

## Why in News?

A recent **socio-economic survey in Telangana** has revealed crucial demographic insights about the state's population distribution, caste composition, and economic conditions. Conducted over **50 days**, the survey covered **over 35 million individuals**, making it one of the most comprehensive studies in the state. The findings aim to shape welfare schemes and job opportunities, particularly for **underrepresented groups**.



## Survey Overview

- The Telangana government conducted a **Socio-Economic, Educational, Employment, Political, and Caste survey**.
- **Coverage: 3,54,77,554 individuals**, accounting for **96.9% of households**.
- **Enumerators & Supervisors: 94,863 enumerators** and **9,628 supervisors** worked across **94,261 enumeration blocks**.

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- **Data Entry Process:** 76,000 operators completed data entry within 36 days.
- **Legislative Backing:** The initiative stemmed from a resolution passed in the Telangana Assembly in February 2024.

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### Implications for Governance

- The findings will help refine existing welfare schemes and enhance job opportunities for marginalized communities.
- The survey aligns with the Congress Party's 2023 election campaign promises, led by Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy.
- The government views the survey as a tool for data-driven governance to improve social justice and economic inclusion.

### Challenges Faced During the Survey

- 103,000 houses were locked during enumeration, making data collection difficult.
- 168,000 families were initially reluctant to participate, requiring additional engagement efforts.
- 84,137 houses were misclassified, complicating data verification.
- Despite challenges, the participation rate was commendable, ensuring robust data collection.

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### Future Prospects

- The survey is expected to reshape policy-making in Telangana.
- A major focus will be on uplifting backward classes and marginalized communities.
- The government aims to align governance with socio-economic realities for equitable development.

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## Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC)

- **First Conducted:** 1931, aimed at collecting **economic and caste data** to identify deprivation indicators.
- **Scope:** Evaluates the **economic conditions** of different caste groups across **rural and urban India**.
- **Data Collection:** Includes specific **caste names**, unlike the general **Census**.

Feature	Census	SECC
Purpose	Provides a <b>general demographic profile</b> of India	Identifies <b>beneficiaries for government support</b>
Data Confidentiality	<b>Protected under Census Act, 1948</b>	<b>Open for government use</b> to grant/restrict benefits
Caste Data	<b>Not collected after 1951</b>	<b>Includes caste information</b> for policy-making

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## History of Caste-Based Data Collection in India

- **Pre-1951:** Census included **caste-based data**.
- **Post-1951:** The practice was discontinued to **promote national unity** and move away from caste-based divisions.
- **Recent Trends:** With evolving socio-political dynamics, there is **renewed demand for caste-based data to ensure accurate policy targeting**.

## Role of the Socio-Economic and Caste Census (SECC)

- **SECC 2011** was the first modern attempt to collect **comprehensive caste and socio-economic data**.
- **Challenges:** Issues in **data classification and quality** prevented effective **utilization of caste data**.
- **Pending Actions:** An **Expert Group** was formed to process raw caste data, but its **recommendations have not yet been implemented**.

## Constitutional Mandate for Caste Census

- **Article 340** of the Indian Constitution mandates the appointment of a **commission to investigate socially and educationally backward classes**.
- Such a commission can make **recommendations on policies and welfare schemes**.
- The Telangana socio-economic survey aligns with this constitutional objective by providing **granular data for targeted welfare interventions**.

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# BHARAT RANBHOO MI DARSHAN



## Why in News?

On the occasion of the 77th Army Day, Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh launched the **Bharat Ranbhoomi Darshan** initiative, a dedicated **website and app** designed to promote **battlefield and border tourism** in India. The initiative aims to highlight India's **military history, strategic locations, and valor**, while also boosting **socio-economic development** in border regions.

## About Bharat Ranbhoomi Darshan

- **What It Is:** A comprehensive digital platform offering historical narratives, virtual battlefield tours, and travel assistance for significant military sites and border areas in India.

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- **Developing Authority:** Launched by the **Ministry of Defence (MoD)** in collaboration with the **Ministry of Tourism**.
- **Objective:**
  - Promote **battlefield tourism** and **border tourism**.
  - Increase **awareness of India's military history** and strategic operations.
  - Support **socio-economic development** in **remote and border areas**.
  - **Preserve operational readiness** while maintaining controlled visitor access.
- **Part of:** The **Incredible India Campaign** to attract both **domestic and international tourists**.

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### Key Locations Highlighted

- **Galwan Valley (Ladakh)** – Site of the **2020 India-China clash**.
- **Doklam (India-Bhutan-China tri-junction)** – Strategic location of past border tensions.
- **Nathu La Pass (Sikkim)** – Scene of **1967 clashes with China**.
- **Longewala (Rajasthan)** – Battlefield of the **1971 Indo-Pakistani War**.
- **Forward locations along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) and Line of Control (LoC)** – Featuring **75 key military sites** from past wars.

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### Historical Context

- **1962 Sino-Indian War**: Sites of Indian military operations against China.
- **1967 Nathu La Clashes**: Conflict between Indian and Chinese troops in Sikkim.
- **1971 Indo-Pakistani War (Battle of Longewala)**: A crucial engagement where the Indian Army successfully defended the western border.

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## Battle of Longewala

- **Location:** Thar Desert, Rajasthan.
- **Importance:** One of the most decisive victories in the 1971 Indo-Pakistani War, where Indian forces repelled a major Pakistani attack.

## About Doklam

- **Strategic Significance:** Located at the India-Bhutan-China tri-junction.
- **Geopolitical Tension:**
  - China attempted to build a **motorable road** from **Dokola** to a Bhutanese **military camp**, escalating tensions.
  - **Bhutan claims sovereignty** over the area, while China exerts **de facto control**.
- **Border Agreements:**
  - **1988 and 1998 Agreements:** Both sides agreed to **maintain peace** until a **final border resolution** is reached.
  - **Status Quo:** Parties agreed to maintain **territorial status as it was before March 1959**.

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## China's Chang'e-7 Mission

China launched its **Chang'e-7 mission in 2025**, aiming to investigate the **Moon's south pole for potential water resources**. The mission features a **flying robot** capable of traversing the Moon's rugged terrain, a major technological advancement. This initiative is part of **China's broader strategy to establish a permanent lunar research base by 2030**.

### Objectives of the Chang'e-7 Mission

- **Water Ice Detection:** Locate and analyze **water ice deposits** in the **Moon's south pole**, essential for **future lunar habitats**.
- **Sustainable Lunar Exploration:** Water could be used for **drinking, oxygen production, and as rocket fuel**, reducing dependence on Earth.
- **Technological Advancement:** Develop and test **autonomous landing and resource utilization technologies**.
- **Long-Term Space Exploration:** The mission aims to support future human missions to the Moon, Mars, and beyond.

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### Significance of the Lunar South Pole

- **Permanently Shadowed Regions:** These areas **may contain water ice** that has been frozen for **billions of years**.
- **Resource Availability:** The discovery of **usable water** would support **sustained human presence on the Moon**.
- **Ideal for Future Habitats:** The region offers **continuous sunlight** for **solar power generation**.
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**India's Achievement:** Chandrayaan-3 was the **first mission to land on the south pole** of the moon and to confirm sulfur presence and conduct a detailed analysis of the lunar surface. It marked a historic milestone in global space exploration.

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## Panama Exits China's Belt and Road Initiative

In February 2025, Panama decided **not to renew its participation in China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)** upon the agreement's expiration. This decision reflects a broader trend of countries reassessing their involvement in the BRI due to economic, strategic, and geopolitical concerns. Given Panama's strategic role in global trade, its exit raises critical questions about the future of the BRI and China's influence in Latin America.



### Understanding the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

- **Launched: 2013 by Chinese President Xi Jinping.**
- **Purpose:** A global infrastructure development strategy aimed at enhancing trade connectivity across Asia, Africa, Europe, and Latin America.
- **Two Main Components:**

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- **Silk Road Economic Belt** – A land-based network linking **China to Central Asia, Europe, and the Middle East** through railways, highways, and energy corridors.
- **21st Century Maritime Silk Road** – A sea-based route connecting **China to Southeast Asia, Africa, and Europe** via port developments and shipping lanes.

While aimed at **strengthening China's economic leadership**, the BRI has faced criticism for **debt dependency, geopolitical influence, and lack of transparency**.

### The Global Reach of the BRI: China's Expanding Influence

The BRI has facilitated **major infrastructure projects**, increasing **China's geopolitical presence**. Some key projects include:

- **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)** – A \$62 billion project linking **Xinjiang (China) to Gwadar Port (Pakistan)**, offering China direct access to the **Indian Ocean**.
- **Hambantota Port (Sri Lanka)** – A Chinese-funded port, later leased to China for **99 years** due to Sri Lanka's inability to repay debts.
- **Djibouti Military and Commercial Port** – China's first overseas military base, located strategically near global shipping lanes.
- **African Infrastructure Projects** – Railways, roads, and energy investments in **Kenya, Ethiopia, and Nigeria**.

### Why Did Panama Exit the BRI?

Panama's decision was driven by **strategic, economic, and geopolitical considerations**:

#### 1. National Sovereignty Concerns

- The **Panama Canal** is a **critical global trade route**, and Chinese investments in nearby infrastructure raised fears of **potential external influence**.
- The **U.S. and its allies** cautioned Panama against allowing **excessive Chinese economic control** over its key assets.

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## 2. Economic Risks and Debt Concerns

- Several **BRI countries** (e.g., Sri Lanka, Zambia, Laos) have struggled with **high-interest debt repayments**.
- Panama sought to **avoid debt-trap scenarios**, where economic policies become **heavily influenced by China**.

### Recent Exits from the BRI

Panama is not the only country **reconsidering BRI participation**. Several nations have **withdrawn, renegotiated, or scaled back their involvement** due to **financial and strategic concerns**:

- **Italy:** First **G7 nation** to join the BRI in **2019**, but **withdrew in 2023** due to **limited economic benefits**.
- **Philippines:** Announced its **departure in 2023**, citing **unfavorable loan terms** and **strategic concerns**.

### India's Issues with the BRI

India has **consistently opposed the BRI**, citing concerns over **sovereignty, security, and economic competition**:

- **China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC)** passes through **Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK)**, violating India's **territorial integrity**.
- **Encirclement Strategy ("String of Pearls")** – China's **military presence in South Asia (Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Pakistan)** poses security risks for India.
- **Debt-driven Diplomacy** – India fears that BRI projects in **neighboring countries** could lead to **long-term Chinese influence**.

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**Note:**

Initially, BRI included the **Bangladesh-China-India-Myanmar (BCIM) Economic Corridor**, but **India opted out** due to its opposition to **CPEC**.

### Strategic Rivalry: String of Pearls vs. Necklace of Diamonds

China's "String of Pearls" Strategy	India's "Necklace of Diamonds" Counterstrategy
Building ports and bases in countries like <b>Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, Myanmar</b>	Establishing naval bases and strategic alliances to counter China's presence
Increasing naval presence in the Indian Ocean	Strengthening naval partnerships with <b>Singapore, Iran, Oman, Bangladesh, and Myanmar</b>
Examples: <b>Gwadar Port (Pakistan), Hambantota Port (Sri Lanka), Kyaukpyu Port (Myanmar)</b>	Examples: <b>Changi Naval Base (Singapore), Chabahar Port (Iran), Duqm Port (Oman)</b>

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28

# The Ocean Coordination Mechanism

## Why in News?

Recently, the **Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (UNESCO-IOC)** signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** enabling the creation of the **Ocean Coordination Mechanism (OCM)**. This initiative aims to address **critical marine challenges** in the **Caribbean and North Brazil Shelf**, promoting **sustainable ocean governance and biodiversity protection**.

## About the Ocean Coordination Mechanism (OCM)

- **What It Is:** A collaborative framework for the sustainable management of marine resources in the Wider Caribbean region.
- **Established Under:** The 10-year CLME+ Strategic Action Program (CLME+ SAP), endorsed in 2014.
- **Launched By:** Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission of UNESCO (UNESCO-IOC).
- **Implementing Agency:** UNESCO-IOC Sub-commission for the Caribbean and Adjacent Regions (IOCARIBE).
- **Funding:** Receives \$15 million from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) under the UNDP/GEF PROCARIBE+ Project (2024–2028), with an additional \$126.02 million in co-financing.
- **Regions Covered:** Caribbean Sea and North Brazil Shelf Large Marine Ecosystem.

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# Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC) of UNESCO

- Established in 1961, the IOC/UNESCO promotes **marine science cooperation for sustainable ocean governance**.
- It operates in key areas:
  - **Ocean science research:** Supports studies on **climate change, biodiversity, and sustainability**.
  - **Tsunami warning systems:** Maintains **early warning mechanisms** to mitigate risks.
  - **Ocean observations:** Collects and analyzes **oceanographic data** for policy-making.
- The IOC leads the **UN Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030)**, known as the “**Ocean Decade**”, advancing global **marine conservation efforts**.



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# Indian Ocean Conference 2025

India's External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar represented India at the **8th Indian Ocean Conference (IOC)** held in **Muscat, Oman**, under the theme '*Voyage to New Horizons of Maritime Partnership*'. This event reaffirms India's commitment to **regional maritime security and economic cooperation** through its **Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) vision.**

## Indian Ocean Region (IOR) and Its Strategic Importance

- **Definition:** IOR refers to the region surrounding the **Indian Ocean**, covering nations that border it.
- **Geographic Span:** Extends from the **Strait of Malacca and Western Australia (East) to the Mozambique Channel (West)**.
- **Coverage:**
  - **20% of the world's water surface.**
  - **25% of global landmass.**
  - **Holds three-quarters of global oil reserves.**

## Economic Importance

- **80% of global maritime oil trade and 80% of India's oil imports** pass through the Indian Ocean annually.
- Critical minerals in the **Central Indian Ocean Basin (CIOB)** include **nickel, copper, cobalt, and manganese**.

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## India's SAGAR Vision

India introduced **SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region)** in **2015** as a strategic vision for the **Indian Ocean**.

### Objectives of SAGAR

- Deepen economic and security cooperation with maritime neighbors.
- Assist smaller nations in strengthening maritime security capabilities.
- Exchange information & conduct coastal surveillance.
- Develop maritime infrastructure & capabilities.
- Ensure an inclusive and rules-based maritime order.

### Need for SAGAR

1. **Leveraging the Blue Economy:**
  - Oceans provide food, livelihood, and transport for **80% of global trade**.
  - Seabed hydrocarbons currently account for **32% of global energy supply**.



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32

# TROPEX-25



## What is TROPEX?

The Theatre Level Operational Exercise (TROPEX) 2025 is the Indian Navy's largest biennial maritime exercise, conducted in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) from January to March 2025.

## Objectives of TROPEX-25

- Validate the Indian Navy's warfighting skills.
- Strengthen joint operations against maritime threats with participation from the Army, Air Force, and Coast Guard.
- Ensure an integrated response to conventional, asymmetric, and hybrid maritime threats.

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## Strategic Context: Chinese Naval Presence in the IOR

- China has the world's largest navy with over 360 warships and submarines.
- China continuously deploys 7-8 naval vessels and spy ships in the IOR.

## Phases of TROPEX-25

- Harbour Phase: Prepares forces with planning, logistics, and mission coordination.
- Sea Phase: Involves combat operations, cyber & electronic warfare, live weapon firings, and the Amphibious Exercise (AMPHEX).

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## PM-JANMAN SCHEME



The Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN) allocation has doubled to Rs 300 crore in Budget 2025-26 to enhance healthcare, education, and livelihoods for Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs).

To expedite the PM-JANMAN Housing Scheme, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs revised the approval process for PM-AWAS homes, aiming for 4.90 lakh houses for PVTGs.

### About PM JANMAN Scheme

- **Launch:** PM JANMAN was launched on 15th November 2023, a day also celebrated as Janjatiya Gaurav Divas.
- This initiative augments the Pradhan Mantri-PVTG Development Mission announced in India's 2022-23 Union Budget.
- **Objective:** The objective of the scheme is to enhance the socio-economic conditions of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) by providing comprehensive development interventions.

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- **Beneficiaries:** The scheme targets 75 PVTG communities across 18 states and 1 Union Territory (Andaman & Nicobar Islands) as its beneficiaries.
- **Nodal Ministry:** The Ministry of Tribal Affairs is the nodal ministry responsible for the implementation of the scheme in collaboration with 9-line Ministries/ Departments, and the respective state governments.
- **Budgetary Outlay:** The total budgetary outlay for the scheme is Rs 24,104 crore, with the central share amounting to Rs 15,336 crore and the state share being Rs 8,768 crore.
- **Coverage Period:** The coverage period for the scheme extends from 2023-24 to 2025-26.

## Focus Areas

The scheme focuses on 11 critical interventions across various sectors, including housing, drinking water, healthcare, education, nutrition, livelihood, and electrification, to improve the quality of life for PVTGs.

## Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)

### About

- PVTGs are more vulnerable among the tribal groups.
- In 1960-61, the Dhebar Commission identified disparities among Scheduled Tribes, leading to the creation of the “Primitive Tribal Groups” (PTG) category.
- In 2006, this category was renamed Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs).

### Numbers and Spread

- In 1975, the Government of India declared 52 tribal groups as PVTGs on the recommendation of Dhebar commission.
- Currently, there are 75 such groups in 22,544 villages across 18 states and one Union Territory of India, totalling about 28 lakh individuals.
- Odisha has the highest number (more than 2.5 lakh) of PVTGs.

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# Sundarbans Mangroves

## Why in News?

A recent study, “*Resilience of Sundarban Mangroves in South Asia to Weather Extremes and Anthropogenic Water Pollution,*” conducted by **IIT Bombay, IISER Kolkata, and ISRO’s**

**National Remote Sensing Centre**, sheds light on the **Sundarbans’ ability to withstand both natural disasters and human-induced stress.** While the findings highlight the region’s remarkable resilience, they also raise concerns about the long-term sustainability of this delicate ecosystem.

## Key Findings of the Study

- **Resilience Mechanism:** Mangroves recover swiftly from environmental stresses like **cyclones and floods within 1–2 weeks**, maintaining **stable productivity** despite nutrient depletion from human activities.
- **Nutrient Imbalance:** The **Nitrogen/Phosphorus (N/Ph) ratio** has surged from the **ideal 16:1 to 75:1 (2015)**, disrupting ecological balance due to **rising nitrate pollution and declining phosphate levels.**
- **Adaptive Memory & Link Strength:** Mangroves exhibit **ecological memory**, enabling **faster recovery** from repeated stress while strengthening interactions with environmental factors like **water chemistry and wind.**
- **Sustainability Concerns:** Prolonged exposure to **pollution and climate extremes** threatens to **surpass the ecosystem’s resilience threshold**, risking **long-term degradation.**

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## About Sundarbans

- **Largest Tidal Mangrove Forest:** Covers approx. 10,000 sq. km, with 40% in India and 60% in Bangladesh.
- **Boundaries:** Bordered by the Muriganga River (west) and Harinbhanga & Raimangal Rivers (east).
- **Global Recognition:**
  - Biosphere Reserve (1989)
  - Tiger Reserve (1973)
  - Ramsar Site (1992)
  - UNESCO World Heritage Site (1987)



## Significance of Sundarbans for India

### 1. Environmental and Climate Benefits

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- **Natural Coastal Barrier:** Acts as a **bioshield** by reducing the **impact of cyclones like Amphan (2020) and Yaas (2021)**, protecting inland areas.
- **Carbon Sequestration Hub:** One of the **world's most efficient carbon sinks**, significantly contributing to **climate change mitigation**.
- **Flood Regulation:** Controls water flow, reduces soil erosion, and stabilizes sediment deposits, preventing inland flooding.

## **2. Biodiversity Conservation**

- **Habitat for Endangered Species:** Safeguards India's largest population of Royal Bengal Tigers, playing a vital role in **Project Tiger's success**.
- **Global Biodiversity Hotspot:** The Sundarbans host **300+ bird species, 250+ fish species, 49 mammals, 59 reptiles, and endangered species like the River Terrapin and Ganges River Dolphin**.

## **3. Economic and Livelihood Importance**

- **Livelihood Support:** Sustains approximately **4.5 million people** through **fishing, honey collection, ecotourism, and non-timber forest products**.
- **GI-Tagged Products:** Sundarbans honey holds a **Geographical Indication (GI) tag**, boosting **global recognition** and enhancing **local incomes**.

## **4. Strategic and Cultural Significance**

- **National Security Buffer:** Acts as a **natural defense** along India's **eastern coast**, strengthening **maritime security**.
- **Cultural Heritage:** Holds **immense cultural value**, featuring in **local folklore, rituals, and religious traditions** of Bengal.

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**39**

### **Mangrove Cover in India (ISFR 2023)**

- **Overall Coverage:** Total mangrove cover is 4,991.68 km<sup>2</sup>, constituting 0.15% of India's geographical area, a decrease of 7.43 km<sup>2</sup> from 2021.
- **State/UT Distribution:** Present across 12 States/UTs (9 States and 3 UTs), with increases in most areas except for Gujarat and the Andaman & Nicobar Islands.
- **Key Regions:**
  - West Bengal, Gujarat, A&N Islands, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Goa, Karnataka, Kerala, Daman & Diu, and Puducherry.

### **Conservation Efforts & Way Forward**

#### **Government Initiatives**

- **National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change (NAFCC) (2015):** Provides financial assistance for climate adaptation and ecosystem restoration projects in vulnerable regions.
- **Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats and Tangible Incomes (MISHTI) (2023):** Aims to restore 540 sq. km of mangroves through public-private partnerships and community participation.

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**40**

# India-Bangladesh Border Fencing Dispute



India summoned Bangladesh's **Acting High Commissioner** over **border security and fencing issues** after Bangladesh expressed concerns about alleged violations by the **Border Security Force (BSF)**. Previously, Bangladesh had summoned **India's High Commissioner in Dhaka, Pranay Verma**, over **BSF's activities**, claiming they breached a **bilateral agreement**. The tensions escalated when **Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB)** attempted to obstruct fencing construction along the **West Bengal-Malda border**.

The **4,096.7 km India-Bangladesh border** remains a **longstanding source of disputes** due to **barbed wire fencing, border management, and security challenges**.

## India – Bangladesh Border (IBB)

- **Total Length: 4,096.7 km** (India's longest border).
- **States Bordering Bangladesh:**
  - **West Bengal – 2,216.7 km**

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- **Assam – 263 km**
- **Meghalaya – 443 km**
- **Tripura – 856 km**
- **Mizoram – 318 km**

### **Status of Fencing Along the India-Bangladesh Border**

#### **Overall Fencing Coverage**

- **Out of 4,096.7 km, 3,141 km have been fenced**, covering all eastern states, including West Bengal.

#### **Fencing in West Bengal**

- **West Bengal shares a 2,216.7 km border with Bangladesh.**
- **As of 2023, 81.5% of this border had been fenced**, but certain patches remain unfenced due to:
  - **Objections from local villagers.**
  - **Challenging terrain.**
  - **Ongoing diplomatic negotiations with Bangladesh.**

#### **Challenges in Fencing Completion**

- **Delays caused by:**
  - **Non-cooperation from the West Bengal government.**
  - **Pending land acquisition** in some areas.
- **Riverine Borders:** Over **900 km** of the border is **riverine**, making **physical fencing impossible**.
  - These areas are secured by the **BSF's Water Wing**.

### **India-Bangladesh Border Guidelines**

#### **1975 Border Guidelines Between India and Bangladesh**

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- The **1975 Joint India-Bangladesh Guidelines** prohibit constructing **defense structures** within **150 yards of the international boundary (zero line)**.
- **India does not classify wire fencing as a defense structure**, but **Bangladesh and Pakistan do**.

## Challenges Due to Border Complexity

- The **2,217 km-long border in West Bengal** is **highly populated** with **villages, rivers, and enclaves**, complicating fencing efforts.
- Many **villages and houses** are **located directly on the international border or within the fencing line**.
- Example: The **Dahagram–Angarpota enclave** in **Jalpaiguri** (a Bangladeshi territory within India) has **fencing along the zero line**.

## Exceptions to the 150-Yard Rule

- In areas where **terrain, population, or water bodies** make fencing at **150 yards impractical**, construction **closer to the zero line** is **negotiated with Bangladesh**.
- **Villages within 20 yards of the boundary** are **not relocated**; instead, fencing is built **near the border**.

## Reasons for the Dispute- Violation of the 1975 Agreement

- Bangladesh **opposes fencing within 150 yards of the international border**, citing the **1975 India-Bangladesh guidelines**.
- They argue that even **Single-Row Fencing (SRF)** **breaches this agreement**.

## Impact on Border Residents

- **Fencing restricts movement** of residents living along the border.
- **Limited access** to farmlands and daily resources for communities near the boundary.

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43

# 14th Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2024



## Assessing reading levels

The table shows the percentage of children in Classes 3 and 5 able to read a Class 2 text in government schools

### Class 3: % children reading at Class 2 level

2018	20.9
2022	16.3
2024	23.4

### Class 5: % reading at Class 2 level

2018	44.2
2022	38.5
2024	44.8



SOURCE: ASER(RURAL) 2024

The 14th Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2025 assesses the recovery of foundational reading and arithmetic skills among children in rural India post-pandemic.

Conducted by the NGO Pratham Foundation, ASER 2024 focuses on learning outcomes across Grades III, V, and VIII, comparing them with pre-pandemic benchmarks (2018). The report also evaluates the impact of policy initiatives like the NEP 2020 and NIPUN Bharat Mission.

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44

## Why in News?

The **14th Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) 2025** focuses on assessing the **recovery of foundational reading and arithmetic skills** among children in **rural India**. Conducted post-pandemic, it measures **learning outcomes across Grades III, V, and VIII**, comparing them to **pre-pandemic benchmarks (2018)**. The report highlights the role of policy initiatives such as **NEP 2020** and the **NIPUN Bharat Mission** in improving **foundational literacy and numeracy skills**.

## Key Findings of the Report

### Reading and Arithmetic Skills

- **Reading Skills:** The ability of students to **read Standard II-level texts** improved significantly between **2022 and 2024**. However, for **Grade III**, the recovery in **government schools (44.8% in 2024 vs. 35.5% in 2022)** remains **below pre-pandemic levels (30.4% in 2018)**. Grades **V and VIII** show **substantial progress**, nearing or surpassing **2018 levels**.
- **Arithmetic Skills:** Recovery in **basic arithmetic** (subtraction and division) is evident, particularly in **government schools**, where improvement has outpaced **private schools**. For example, **Grade V division skills in government schools improved from 40.2% (2022) to 45.5% (2024)**.

### Impact of NEP 2020 and NIPUN Bharat Mission

The **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** and the **NIPUN Bharat Mission** have played a crucial role in driving **foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN)**. The **NIPUN Bharat Mission (2021)** specifically targeted **early learning up to Standard III** with the following measures:

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- Over 80% of government schools implementing FLN programs.
- At least 75% of teachers trained in FLN across schools.
- Distribution of FLN teaching-learning materials.

These interventions have **improved foundational skills**, although progress remains **uneven across states**.

## Enrollment Trends

- Enrollment rates in the **6-14 age group** remained stable at **1.9% in 2024**, slightly higher than in **2022 (1.6%)** and comparable to **pre-pandemic levels**.
- The **pandemic-induced financial crisis** caused **many parents to shift children from private to government schools**, reversing earlier trends of rising **private school enrollment**.

## Challenges in the Recovery Process

- **Uneven Progress Across States:** Some states **lag behind in recovery**; Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh were **grouped together due to insufficient pre-pandemic data**.
- **Arithmetic Proficiency in Higher Grades:** Grades **V and VIII** students are yet to fully recover **pre-pandemic arithmetic levels**.
- **Long-Term Impact:** Learning losses **persist**, requiring **sustained interventions** to bridge educational gaps.

## Recommendations for Education Improvement

- **Reduce disparities across states** to ensure **equitable progress**.

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- Extend foundational literacy and numeracy programs to higher grades to address learning gaps.
- Strengthen teacher training and increase resource allocation to rural schools.
- Integrate remedial learning measures within regular school curricula to address long-term pandemic learning losses.

## Broader Implications of the Report

The pandemic significantly disrupted India's education system, affecting both literacy and numeracy skills. The recovery process has demonstrated the effectiveness of targeted policy interventions, but challenges such as state-wise disparities, resource allocation, and student engagement remain. Sustained policy focus is essential to maintain progress and address systemic challenges.

### About ASER

- Conducted by: NGO Pratham Foundation.
- Surveyed in 2024 across 17,997 villages in 605 rural districts.
- Coverage: Reached 649,491 children (3-16 years age group) and tested reading and arithmetic skills of over 500,000 children (5-16 years age group).
- First launched: 2005, ASER remains India's largest citizen-led education survey.

### Focus Areas of ASER

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- **Enrollment Trends:** Tracks school and preschool enrollments to analyze shifts in education patterns.
- **Learning Outcomes:** Assesses basic reading and arithmetic skills at primary and secondary levels.
- **Digital Literacy:** ASER 2024 evaluates older children's smartphone skills, including tasks like setting alarms, browsing, and messaging.

## National Education Policy (NEP) 2020

### Overview

- NEP 2020 seeks to address India's evolving development needs, aligning education with 21st-century goals and SDG 4.
- Replaces the National Policy on Education (1986/92) after 34 years.

### Key Features

- **Universal Access to Education:** Covers pre-school to secondary levels.
- **Early Childhood Education:** Introduces a 5+3+3+4 system, integrating 3-6-year-olds into formal education.
- **Multilingualism:** Promotes mother tongue/regional language as a medium of instruction till Grade 5.
- **Indian Sign Language (ISL):** Standardization to promote inclusive education.
- **Holistic Learning Approach:** Eliminates rigid distinctions between arts & sciences, academics & vocational education.
- **Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) Target:** Aims to increase GER from 26.3% to 50% by 2035, adding 3.5 crore new seats.
- **Research & Innovation:** Establishment of National Research Foundation (NRF) to boost research capabilities.

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- **Language Preservation:** Strengthening Indian language departments and creation of **Institute of Translation and Interpretation (IITI)**.
- **Assessment Reforms:** **PARAKH (Performance Assessment, Review, and Analysis of Knowledge for Holistic Development)** established as a **national competency-based assessment center**.
- **Gender Inclusion Fund:** Introduces a **Gender Inclusion Fund** to promote gender equality in education.

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# Climate Risk Index (CRI) 2025

## Why in News?

The Climate Risk Index (CRI) 2025 was released, highlighting the increasing global impact of extreme weather events and the urgent need for stronger climate action. India ranked sixth among the most affected countries (1993-2022) due to extreme weather events, despite improving its short-term ranking to 49th in 2022.

## About Climate Risk Index (CRI) 2025

### What is the Climate Risk Index?

The Climate Risk Index (CRI) ranks countries based on their vulnerability to extreme weather events. It assesses the human and economic losses caused by climate-induced disasters and is published annually by Germanwatch, an environmental think tank. First introduced in 2006, the report provides comparative analysis of extreme weather impacts over the past 30 years (1993-2022).

The CRI serves as a policy tool by guiding global climate policies and risk mitigation efforts. It identifies the most affected nations, emphasizing the need for enhanced climate resilience.

## CRI Methodology and Criteria

The ranking is determined by assessing several key factors:

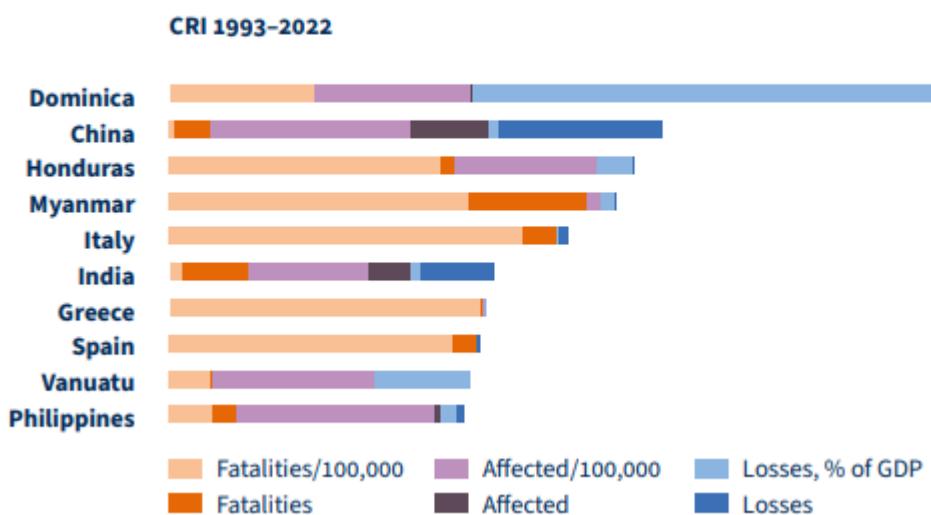
- **Fatalities** – Direct and indirect deaths due to extreme weather events.
- **Affected Population** – Individuals who are injured, displaced, or otherwise impacted.
- **Economic Losses** – Damage incurred to infrastructure, agriculture, and GDP.

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- **Frequency of Extreme Weather Events** – The number of disasters such as floods, storms, heatwaves, droughts, and wildfires.
- **Long-Term Impact (1993-2022) and Short-Term Impact (2022)** – Evaluates sustained damage and year-on-year shifts in vulnerability.

**Figure 1: The 10 countries most affected in 1993–2022**



## Key Insights from CRI 2025 Report

### Most Affected Countries (1993-2022)

The report identifies **Dominica, China, and Honduras** as the three most affected nations over the past three decades. **India, Myanmar, Italy, and Vanuatu** are also among the top ten most impacted.

### Most Affected Countries in 2022

For 2022 alone, the countries that suffered the greatest climate-related damages were **Pakistan, Belize, and Italy**. The most devastating factors included **heatwaves, storms, and floods**.

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## Top Disasters by Impact (1993-2022)

The study found that **storms accounted for 35% of economic losses**, totaling approximately **\$2.33 trillion**. **Heatwaves caused the most fatalities, contributing to 30% of global deaths from extreme weather events**. Meanwhile, **floods were the most widespread**, affecting the largest number of people worldwide (27%).

## India's Performance in CRI 2025

### Long-Term Ranking (1993-2022)

India ranks **sixth globally** among the **most climate-affected nations**. Over the past 30 years, the country has witnessed **more than 400 extreme weather events**, resulting in **over 80,000 deaths** and economic damages exceeding **\$180 billion**.

### Short-Term Ranking (2022)

Although India's **short-term ranking improved to 49th in 2022**, compared to **7th in 2019**, **severe floods, cyclones, and heatwaves continue to pose major threats**.

## About Germanwatch

Germanwatch is an **independent non-profit organization** based in **Bonn, Germany**.

Established in **1991**, it promotes **sustainable development and global equity**. The organization focuses on **policy advocacy, research, and public engagement**, working to **influence climate action and social justice initiatives** worldwide.

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# Fiscal Health Index (FHI) 2025

In a bid to enhance fiscal governance, the **National Institution for Transforming India (NITI Aayog)** launched its inaugural **Fiscal Health Index (FHI) 2025**. This index provides a comprehensive evaluation of the fiscal health of 18 major Indian states for 2022-23, offering data-driven insights to guide policy interventions at the state level.

## What is the Fiscal Health Index (FHI)?

The **Fiscal Health Index (FHI)** is an assessment tool designed to evaluate the **fiscal health of Indian states**, highlighting key **strengths and areas for improvement**. The index ranks states based on **five key sub-indices**:

- **Quality of Expenditure:** Evaluates the proportion of spending on long-term growth (developmental) vs. routine operations (non-developmental). Assesses capital investments as a share of economic output.
- **Revenue Mobilization:** Measures a state's ability to generate its own revenue and cover expenditures independently.
- **Fiscal Prudence:** Tracks fiscal and revenue deficits, borrowing relative to economic output, and overall fiscal discipline.
- **Debt Index:** Assesses the state's debt burden, focusing on interest payments and liabilities relative to economic size.
- **Debt Sustainability:** Compares Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) growth to interest payments, with a positive gap indicating fiscal sustainability.

The index aims to guide policymakers in designing targeted reforms for:

- Sustainable economic growth.
- Fiscal consolidation and stability.
- Improved resource management at the state level.

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- Encouraging healthy competition among states, aligning their fiscal strategies with national economic objectives.

## Key Findings of FHI 2025

### Top-Performing States

- **Odisha** leads the index with the highest FHI score of 67.8, followed by **Chhattisgarh (55.2), Goa (53.6), Jharkhand (51.6), and Gujarat (50.5)**.
- These states performed well in **Debt Index, Revenue Mobilization, and Fiscal Prudence**.

### Revenue Mobilization

- **Goa, Telangana, and Odisha** lead in Revenue Mobilization and Fiscal Prudence.
- **Odisha, Jharkhand, Goa, and Chhattisgarh** excel in non-tax revenue, with:
  - Odisha relying on mining-linked premiums.
  - Chhattisgarh benefiting from coal block auctions.
- **Punjab and West Bengal** lag behind in Revenue Mobilization, highlighting disparities in fiscal management and economic resilience.

### Fiscal Challenges in Aspirational States

- **Punjab, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, and Kerala** face significant fiscal challenges.
- **Punjab and Kerala** struggle with Debt Sustainability and Quality of Expenditure.
- **Andhra Pradesh** faces high Fiscal Deficits, impacting its financial health.

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## Capital Expenditure Trends

- **Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Goa, Karnataka, and Uttar Pradesh** allocate **27%** of their expenditure to capital investments, strengthening **long-term economic growth**.
- **West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Punjab, and Rajasthan** allocate only **10%**, which can hinder **long-term infrastructure development**.

## Debt Management

- **Odisha and Goa** effectively manage debt, with a **low risk of default**.
- **West Bengal and Punjab** struggle with **rising debt burdens**, raising concerns over **debt sustainability and fiscal distress**.

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# NITI Aayog

(National Institution for Transforming India)

## HISTORY- PLANNING COMMISSION

Set up in 1950  
to direct investment activity

Replaced by NITI Aayog on January 1, 2015

### Composition of #NITIAayog

#### Chairperson

Prime Minister

#### Governing Council

CMs (States) and Lt Governors (UTs)

#### Regional Councils

Formed on need-basis, comprising CMs and Lt Govs of the region

#### Members

Full-time basis

#### Part-time Members

Max 2, rotational, from relevant institutions

#### Ex-officio Members

Max 4 from Council of Ministers, nominated by PM

#### Special Inviters

Experts, specialists, practitioners with domain knowledge

#### Chief Executive Officer

Appointed by PM for fixed tenure (Secy rank)

#### Secretariat

As deemed necessary

## Major Initiatives

- ⌚ SDG India Index
- ⌚ Atal Innovation Mission
- ⌚ e-AMRIT Portal (electric vehicles)
- ⌚ Good Governance Index
- ⌚ India Innovation Index

## OBJECTIVES

- ⌚ Foster cooperative federalism
- ⌚ Develop mechanisms to formulate credible plans (village level)
- ⌚ Interests of national security in economic strategy and policy
- ⌚ Special attention to weaker sections
- ⌚ Provide advice and encouragement to partnerships between key stakeholders, national-international Think Tanks, research institutions
- ⌚ Create knowledge, innovation and entrepreneurial support system
- ⌚ Platform for inter-sectoral and inter-departmental issues resolution
- ⌚ Maintain state-of-the-art Resource Centre

## NITI Aayog vs Planning Commission

NITI Aayog	Planning Commission
Advisory Think Tank	Extra-constitutional body
Wider expertise	Limited expertise
Secretaries (CEO) appointed by PM	Secretaries appointed by usual process
Bottom-up approach	Top-Down approach
No Mandate to impose policies	Imposed policies on states
No power to allocate funds	Allocated funds to ministries/state govts

## Issues

- ⌚ No powers in granting discretionary funds to states
- ⌚ Only an advisory body
- ⌚ No role in influencing private or public investment
- ⌚ Politicisation of the organisation
- ⌚ Lacks the requisite power to bring positive change

Shri Suman Bery is currently the Vice Chairperson of NITI Aayog, while B.V.R. Subrahmanyam has been serving as the CEO of NITI Aayog since February 2023.

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# Sahitya Akademi Award 2024



## Why in News?

The Sahitya Akademi Awards 2024 have announced 22 winners, with Bengali and Urdu awards pending, bringing the total to 24 awards.

## About Sahitya Akademi Awards

- The Sahitya Akademi Awards recognize exceptional literary contributions in categories such as novels, poetry, essays, and plays.
- It is India's second-highest literary honor, following the Jnanpith Award.
- Established in 1954, the Sahitya Akademi functions as an autonomous body under the Ministry of Culture.

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## Eligibility and Languages

- The awards are conferred for literary works in **22 languages** listed in the **Eighth Schedule of the Indian Constitution**, as well as **English and Rajasthani**, making it a total of **24 recognized languages**.
- **Translations of Indian literary works** are also eligible for the award.
- The **author must be an Indian citizen** to qualify for consideration.

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## India-US Immigration Issue

### Why in News?

The US has intensified its **immigration crackdown**, with **military planes deporting undocumented Indian migrants** under **President Donald Trump's administration**. With an estimated **7,25,000 undocumented Indians** in the US, this move affects thousands of Indian nationals. India has agreed to take back **illegal migrants after verifying their citizenship**, aiming to protect **legal migration pathways for students and professionals**. Prime Minister **Narendra Modi's upcoming visit to the US** will include discussions on **immigration, bilateral trade, and diplomatic cooperation**.

### New Immigration Measures:

- **Legal protections under Biden's administration** have been **removed**.
- The **CBP One mobile app**, which allowed migrants to **schedule border entry appointments**, has been **shut down**.
- **Birthright citizenship** for children born to undocumented immigrants has been **eliminated**.

### Expansion of Detention Centers:

- **Guantanamo Bay detention facility** is being repurposed to **house 30,000 migrants**.
- The **Buckley Space Force Base in Colorado** is also being used for migrant detention.

### India's Diplomatic Response and Concerns

India has engaged in diplomatic efforts to **manage the immigration issue without affecting bilateral ties**.

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### **India's Position on Deportation:**

- India has agreed to accept **undocumented Indians** if **nationality verification is confirmed.**
- External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar has conveyed India's stance to **US Secretary of State Marco Rubio.**
- India opposes **illegal immigration due to links to organized crime and human trafficking.**

### **Ensuring Legal Pathways for Migration:**

- Over **1 million visas** were issued to **Indian nationals in 2024**, including record numbers of **student and business visas.**
- **72% of H-1B visas issued in the last fiscal year** went to **Indian professionals.**
- Trump has assured that the **H-1B visa program will continue**, though some **reforms may be introduced.**

### **Trump's Economic Leverage on Immigration Policy**

President Trump has **used trade policies** to enforce **immigration compliance**:

#### **Tariff Impositions on Non-Cooperative Countries:**

- **Colombia refused to accept a deportation flight**—Trump retaliated with **25% tariffs on Colombian goods.**
- Canada and Mexico faced tariff threats, forcing them to increase border enforcement.
- The US Congress is considering sanctions on countries not cooperating with deportation orders.

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## The H-1B Visa Program

- The H-1B visa is for “specialty occupations” requiring high skills and a bachelor’s degree.
- Valid for six years, with an option to extend for those in line for a green card.
- Capped at 65,000 H-1B visas annually.
- Indians accounted for 72.3% of H-1B visas issued in 2023.



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# US Agency for International Development (USAID)

## Why in News?

US President Donald Trump has imposed a 90-day freeze on foreign aid, halting US Agency for International Development (USAID) programs worldwide. Additionally, the US has announced that it will not attend the 2025 G20 Foreign Ministers' meeting in Johannesburg, South Africa.

## What is the US Agency for International Development (USAID)?

- USAID is the primary US agency for global humanitarian and development aid.
- In 2024, USAID was allocated USD 44.2 billion, which is just 0.4% of the total US federal budget but accounted for 42% of all humanitarian aid tracked by the United Nations.
- USAID funds initiatives in healthcare, food aid, disaster relief, and policy advocacy worldwide.
- Top aid recipients include Ukraine, Ethiopia, Jordan, Somalia, and Afghanistan.

## USAID and India

- India's association with USAID began in 1951 with the India Emergency Food Aid Act, evolving over decades from food aid to infrastructure, capacity building, and economic reforms.
- The agency has been instrumental in supporting education, immunization, polio eradication, and HIV/Tuberculosis (TB) prevention in India.
- Over the last decade, India has received around USD 1.5 billion from USAID, which accounts for about 0.2% to 0.4% of USAID's total global funding.

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## What are the Implications for India?

### India's Role in the Global South

- India has positioned itself as a **bridge between the Global North and the Global South**, benefiting from its **rising status within the G20**.
- A reduction in **US involvement in the G20** could create a vacuum, allowing **China and Russia to expand their influence**, potentially shifting **global economic dynamics**.
- A weakened US presence might challenge **India's diplomatic position amid China's growing geopolitical influence**.
- Although **direct financial aid to India has decreased**, USAID contributions **exceeded USD 50 million in 2024**.

## G-20 (The Group of Twenty)

**About**

- In 1999, following the **Asian Financial Crisis** of the **1990s**, **G20** was established as a Forum for **Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors**.
- Raised to the **Summit level in 2008** to address the global financial and economic crisis of 2008.

**Aims**

- Secure global financial stability by involving world's largest advanced and emerging economies.

**Structure and Functioning of G20**

- The **G20 Presidency rotates annually**
- No permanent **Secretariat or Headquarters**
- **19 countries** are divided into **5 groups**
- The presidency rotates between each group

**Troika**

- It is a working association between the **current presidency, past presidency and next presidency**.

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# India-France Cooperation on IMEC Project

## Why in News?

India and France have reaffirmed their commitment to **jointly implement the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEC) project**, an initiative that aims to **enhance connectivity and economic integration across Asia, West Asia, the Middle East, and Europe**.

## India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC)

### Participants

During the **Delhi G20 Summit**, **India, USA, UAE, Saudi Arabia, France, Germany, Italy, and the European Union** signed a **Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)** to establish the **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor**.

### Objective

The corridor aims to **enhance economic development** by improving **connectivity, trade, and investment flows** between Asia, the Middle East, and Europe.

### Components of IMEC

IMEC consists of two major corridors:

- **The East Corridor**, connecting **India to West Asia/Middle East**.
- **The Northern Corridor**, connecting **West Asia/Middle East to Europe**.

The project involves **constructing a railway line** across the **Arabian Peninsula**, through **UAE and Saudi Arabia**, linking **shipping routes to India and Europe**. The corridor is expected to **expand further to transport energy via pipelines and data through an optical fiber network**.

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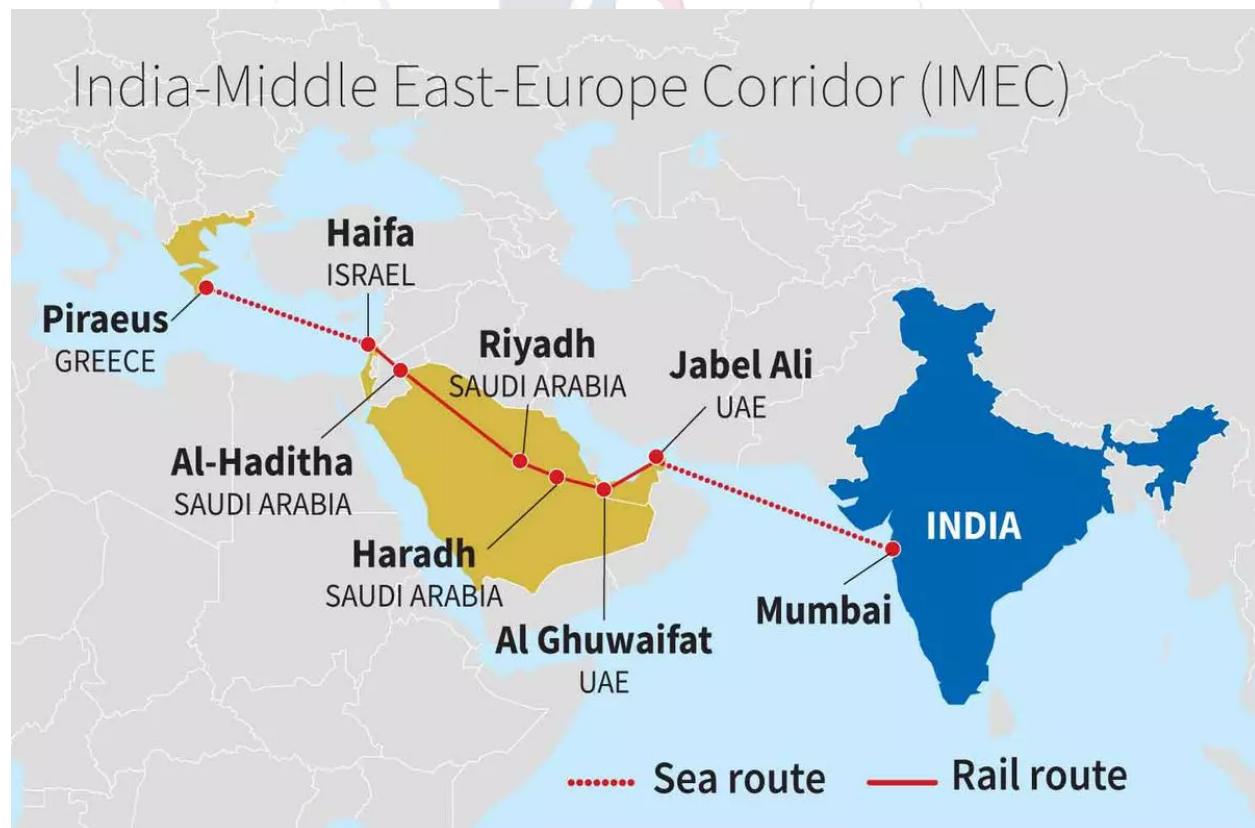
## Ports Included in IMEC

### India

- Mundra Port (Gujarat)
- Kandla Port (Gujarat)
- Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (Navi Mumbai)

## Railway Connectivity

A railway network will link Fujairah Port (UAE) to Haifa Port (Israel), passing through Saudi Arabia (Ghuwaifat and Haradh) and Jordan.



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## India-France Partnership in IMEC

### Access to European Markets

France's strategic location provides **India** with a key gateway to European markets, enhancing trade and investment opportunities.

### Technological Collaboration

France's expertise in infrastructure development, logistics, and digital technology is vital for the success of IMEC.

### Countering China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

Both **India** and **France** oppose China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), viewing IMEC as a viable alternative to establish regional connectivity and economic resilience.

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# National Games 2025



## About the National Games

The National Games of India is an Olympic-style multi-sport event where athletes from states and Union Territories compete for medals. It is one of the largest sporting events in the country, bringing together top national talent in various disciplines.

### 38th National Games – Uttarakhand 2025

- The 38th edition of the National Games will take place from 28th January to 14th February 2025 in Uttarakhand.
- This will mark Uttarakhand's first time hosting the National Games, providing an opportunity to showcase its sports infrastructure, culture, and natural beauty.

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## Competition Structure

- The National Games 2025 will feature **32 sporting disciplines** as part of the **competitive events**.
- Additionally, **four demonstration sports** will be included:
  - **Kalaripayattu** (Indian martial art)
  - **Yogasana** (Traditional yoga sport)
  - **Mallakhambh** (Pole-based traditional sport)
  - **Rafting** (Adventure water sport)

## Theme and Tagline

- **Mascot:** The official mascot of the games is **Mouli**, inspired by **Uttarakhand's state bird, the Monal**, symbolizing the state's natural beauty and cultural heritage.
- **Tagline:** “*Sankalp Se Shikhar Tak*” (*From Resolution to Zenith*), reflecting determination, perseverance, and the pursuit of excellence.

## National Games of India – Key Facts

- **Abbreviation:** NGI (National Games of India)
- **Motto:** “*Get Set Play*”
- **First Event:** 1924 (101 years ago)
- **Frequency:** Held every two years, though sometimes with irregular intervals.
- **Latest Edition:** 2025 (Uttarakhand)

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68

# Olympic Esports Games 2027



## Why in News?

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) has announced the launch of the first-ever Olympic Esports Games, set to be held in 2027 in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. This decision is part of a 12-year deal with Saudi Arabia to integrate esports into the Olympic movement and engage a younger global audience.

## IOC's Decision to Launch the Olympic Esports Games

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- The IOC has been exploring esports for several years, recognizing its growing global influence.
- A six-member committee has been formed to define the selection of games for the first edition of the Esports Olympics.
- The first official competitions under this initiative are set to begin in 2025, marking the road to the Olympic Esports Games 2027.
- Previous IOC Involvement in Esports:
  - 2021: Launched the Olympic Virtual Series as a pilot esports event.
  - 2023: Organized the Olympic Esports Week in Singapore, further solidifying esports' place in global competitive sports.

### Host Country: Saudi Arabia

- Saudi Arabia has been investing billions in sports, including soccer, Formula One, boxing, and golf.
- The country aims to establish itself as a global sports hub and will host the 2034 FIFA World Cup.
- Saudi Arabia has denied allegations of sportswashing, maintaining that its investments align with its Vision 2030 economic diversification strategy.

### Partnerships for Olympic Esports Games

The IOC has partnered with:

- The Saudi Olympic and Paralympic Committee (SOPC).
- The Esports World Cup Foundation (EWCF).

These partnerships aim to ensure a structured and competitive environment for Olympic-level esports events.

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## India's Role in Global Esports and the Olympics

### Esports Recognition in India

- In 2022, the President of India amended regulations, officially recognizing esports as a multi-sport event under the Department of Sports, Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports.
- The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MEITY) oversees online gaming regulations.

### India's Performance in Esports

- Esports debuted at the 2018 Asian Games as a demonstration sport, where India won a bronze medal.
- Asian Games 2022 featured esports as a medal event, highlighting its growing importance in international sports competitions.
- The International Olympic Committee (IOC) and the Olympic Council of Asia (OCA) now officially recognize esports as a legitimate sport.

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# SHAKTI-Based Semiconductor Chip

## Why in News?

A joint collaboration between IIT Madras and ISRO has successfully developed the **IRIS (Indigenous RISC-V Controller for Space Applications) chip**, marking a significant step towards self-reliance in semiconductor technology under the ‘Make in India’ and ‘Atmanirbhar Bharat’ initiatives. The chip was conceived by IISU Thiruvananthapuram, designed by IIT Madras, and manufactured at SCL Chandigarh, with additional contributions from Tata Advanced Systems in Karnataka.

## What is the Digital India RISC-V (DIR-V) Program?

- **Launched In:** April 2022
- **Ministry:** Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY).
- **Aim:** To strengthen India’s semiconductor ecosystem by developing indigenous RISC-V-based microprocessors for self-reliance in the digital sector.

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### How the Chip Strengthens the ‘Make in India’ Initiative

The development of the IRIS chip highlights India’s increasing self-sufficiency in semiconductor manufacturing:

- **Chip conceived by:** IISU Thiruvananthapuram.
- **Chip designed by:** IIT Madras.
- **Manufactured at:** Semiconductor Laboratory (SCL) Chandigarh.
- **Packaged by:** Tata Advanced Systems, Karnataka.
- **Motherboard developed in Gujarat and assembled in Chennai.**

### Significance of the Development

Professor V. Kamakoti, Director of IIT Madras, highlighted that this is the third SHAKTI chip successfully fabricated in India, following RIMO (2018) and MOUSHIK (2020).

Dr. V. Narayanan, Chairman of ISRO, praised this milestone in India’s semiconductor development, calling it a game-changer for India’s space program.

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## What are Semiconductors?

Semiconductors are materials with electrical conductivity between conductors and insulators, used in various electronic devices such as diodes, transistors, and integrated circuits. They are critical for power efficiency, reliability, and compact electronics.

## What is the India Semiconductor Mission (ISM)?

### Overview

- Launched in 2021 under the Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY) with a financial outlay of ₹76,000 crore.
- Aims to develop a sustainable semiconductor and display manufacturing ecosystem in India.
- Provides financial support to companies investing in semiconductors, display manufacturing, and design ecosystems.
- Led by global semiconductor experts, ISM acts as the nodal agency for implementation of semiconductor schemes in India.

## Approved Semiconductor Units in India

1. Semiconductor Fab in Dholera, Gujarat
  - Set up by Tata Electronics Private Limited (TEPL) in partnership with Powerchip Semiconductor Manufacturing Corp (PSMC), Taiwan.
  - Investment: ₹91,000 crore.
  - Capacity: 50,000 wafer starts per month (wfsm).
2. Semiconductor ATMP (Assembly, Testing, Marking, and Packaging) Unit in Assam
  - Set up by Tata Semiconductor Assembly and Test Pvt Ltd (TSAT) in Morigaon, Assam.
3. Specialized Semiconductor ATMP Unit in Sanand, Gujarat

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- Established by CG Power, in collaboration with Renesas Electronics Corporation (Japan) and Stars Microelectronics (Thailand).

The construction of **Micron's semiconductor unit in Sanand, Gujarat**, is progressing rapidly, contributing to a **robust semiconductor ecosystem in India**.



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# India-France AI Summit

## Why in News?

India and France have significantly **deepened their strategic partnership** since 1998, expanding cooperation in **defence, nuclear energy, space, trade, and culture**. Now, with **AI as a key frontier**, France has invited **India to co-chair the AI Action Summit**, reaffirming their **global collaboration in emerging technologies**.

## Indo-France Relationship in Brief

### Enduring Diplomatic Relations

- Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Emmanuel Macron share a strong personal rapport, having met thrice in 2024.
- Macron attended India's Republic Day celebrations as Chief Guest, underscoring the deepening ties.
- France has historically supported India:
  - 1998: Refused to impose sanctions after India's nuclear tests.
  - 1976: Then-PM Jacques Chirac visited India during the Emergency, when India faced global isolation.

### Robust Defence Collaboration

India and France maintain a **strong defence partnership**, reviewed under the **Annual Defence Dialogue and the High Committee on Defence Cooperation**. Major projects include:

- **Rafale fighter jet acquisitions**, with discussions on purchasing **26 Rafale-M jets for the Indian Navy**.
- **P-75 Scorpene Project**, with plans for three additional submarines.
- **Co-development of next-generation fighter jet engines**.

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- DRDO office in the Indian Embassy (opened in 2023) to enhance technology cooperation.
- France's commitment to "Make in India", ensuring technology transfer and training programs for Indian personnel.

## India at the AI Summit: A Recognition of Its Growing Role

India's invitation to co-chair the AI Summit highlights its expanding influence in emerging technologies and Paris's commitment to shared values.

- While China dominates AI globally, France's choice to invite India underscores a strategic alignment in AI governance.
- The Summit, attended by key global leaders, presents an opportunity for India to:
  - Promote inclusive and responsible AI development.
  - Address ethics, governance, and accessibility concerns.
  - Advocate for AI democratization and benefits for the Global South.

## Aims of the AI Summit

The Paris AI Summit builds on previous global efforts, including the UK AI Summit (November 2023) and South Korea AI Summit (May 2024), to advance responsible AI governance.

## Key Outcomes from Previous Summits

- Bletchley Park Declaration (UK Summit 2023): Affirmed that AI should be safe, human-centric, trustworthy, and responsible.
- Seoul Declaration (South Korea Summit 2024): Strengthened international AI cooperation and proposed a network of AI Safety Institutes.

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## New Delhi's Focus at the AI Summit

### IndiaAI Mission

India will showcase the **IndiaAI Mission**, a ₹10,371 crore initiative under the theme “*Making AI in India and Making AI for India*”. The program aims to **democratize AI innovation** and ensure **equitable AI access for all citizens**.

### Global AI Cooperation

#### Global Partnership on Artificial Intelligence (GPAI)

- India is a **founding member and lead chair of GPAI (2024)**, an OECD-backed initiative for responsible AI development.
- India aims to establish **GPAI as the central platform for global AI cooperation**.

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# Extension of PM-AASHA Scheme Until 2025-26

## Why in News?

The Union Government has approved the continuation of the Pradhan Mantri Annadata Aay Sanrakshan Abhiyan (PM-AASHA) Scheme during the 15th Finance Commission Cycle up to 2025-26. This decision aims to strengthen price support mechanisms for farmers and ensure stability in agricultural markets.

## PM-AASHA Scheme

The PM-AASHA scheme was launched in 2018 as an umbrella scheme to ensure Minimum Support Price (MSP) to farmers, particularly for pulses, oilseeds, and copra. Its objectives include:

- Ensuring remunerative prices for farmers.
- Maintaining price stability in the agricultural sector.

## Components of PM-AASHA

### 1. Price Support Scheme (PSS):

- The government procures pulses, oilseeds, and copra at MSP.
- Central Nodal Agencies (CNAs) conduct procurement with state agencies.
- Only Fair Average Quality (FAQ) produce is procured.

### 2. Price Deficiency Payment Scheme (PDPS):

- Compensates farmers for the difference between MSP and market price.
- No physical procurement is involved.
- Applies to oilseeds and requires transparent auctions in notified market yards.

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### 3. Private Procurement & Stockist Scheme (PPSS) (Pilot Basis):

- Allows states to involve private stockists for oilseed procurement.
- Implemented in selected Agricultural Produce Market Committees (APMCs) or districts.



### Key Changes in the Scheme

- In 2024, the government merged the Price Support Scheme (PSS) & Price Stabilization Fund (PSF) into PM-AASHA to enhance efficiency.
- This merger helps in maintaining buffer stocks of pulses and onions, ensuring price stability for farmers and consumers.
- The Market Intervention Scheme (MIS) has been included under PM-AASHA for perishable agricultural commodities like onions, potatoes, and tomatoes.
- The MIS activates when prices fall by 10% or more from the normal season average.

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## What is the Minimum Support Price (MSP)?

### About MSP

- **MSP is the guaranteed price paid to farmers** when the government buys their produce.
- It is determined based on recommendations from the **Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP)**, which considers:
  - **Cost of production.**
  - **Demand and supply conditions.**
  - **Market price trends.**
  - **Inter-crop price parity.**
- The **Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA)**, chaired by the **Prime Minister**, takes the final decision on MSP levels.
- MSP aims to **ensure remunerative prices to farmers** and **encourage crop diversification**.

### Three Kinds of Production Costs Considered for MSP

- **A2:** Includes **paid-out costs** like seeds, fertilizers, hired labor, fuel, and irrigation.
- **A2+FL:** A2 plus the **imputed value of unpaid family labor**.
- **C2:** A more comprehensive cost, covering **A2+FL plus rentals and interest on owned land and fixed capital assets**.

### The Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP)

- The **CACP is an expert body under the Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare, Government of India**, that **recommends Minimum Support Prices (MSPs) for select crops** to motivate farmers and optimize resource use.

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- Initially known as the Agricultural Prices Commission, it was renamed as the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices in 1985.
- It plays a critical role in ensuring fair pricing mechanisms and sustainable agricultural practices.

### The Fifteenth and Sixteenth Finance Commissions

- The 15th Finance Commission, constituted in November 2017, is a constitutional body under Article 280 of the Indian Constitution that determines the formula for distributing tax revenues between the Union and State Governments.
- Its recommendations cover the period from 2021-22 to 2025-26 and were led by N.K. Singh, former MP and Secretary to the Government of India.
- The 16th Finance Commission, established under Article 280, is chaired by Dr. Arvind Panagariya and is responsible for recommending the distribution of tax revenues for the period commencing April 1, 2026.

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# New Chief Minister of Delhi: Rekha Gupta

Delhi witnessed a **grand oath-taking ceremony** as **Rekha Gupta assumed office as the new Chief Minister of Delhi**, marking **BJP's return to power in the capital after 27 years**

In a **significant diplomatic gesture**, ambassadors and diplomats from major countries were invited, reflecting **Delhi's growing national and global political significance**. The BJP government also invited **farmers, beneficiaries of central schemes like Laadli Behna, and citizens from various walks of life**, reinforcing its commitment to **inclusive governance**.

## Rekha Gupta as Delhi's First BJP CM in 27 Years

In the **assembly elections**, BJP secured **48 out of 70 seats**, paving the way for **Rekha Gupta's appointment as Chief Minister**. She is **the fourth woman to hold this position**, following **Sushma Swaraj, Sheila Dikshit, and Atishi Singh**. Her leadership is expected to focus on **community development, infrastructure growth, governance reforms, and women's empowerment**.

## Deputy CM of Delhi: Parvesh Verma

- **Parvesh Verma**, BJP MLA from **New Delhi constituency**, has been appointed **Deputy Chief Minister of Delhi**.
- He defeated **AAP chief and former CM Arvind Kejriwal**.

## Notable Former Chief Ministers of Delhi

### First Chief Minister of Delhi: Chaudhary Brahm Prakash

- **Born in 1918 (Nairobi, Kenya)**, he became Delhi's **first Chief Minister on March 17, 1952**, at age **34**.

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### First Woman Chief Minister of Delhi: Sushma Swaraj

- Served from October 13, 1998, to December 3, 1998 (51 days).
- Focused on education reforms and women empowerment.
- Took charge after the resignation of Sahib Singh Verma.

### Longest Serving Chief Minister of Delhi: Sheila Dikshit

- Born March 31, 1938, in Kapurthala, Punjab.
- Served as Delhi CM for 15 years (1998-2013), representing the Indian National Congress.

## About Delhi's Administration

### Delhi as a Union Territory

- Classified as a **Union Territory** under the **First Schedule of the Indian Constitution**.
- Governed under **Article 239**, where the **President administers UTs through an appointed Administrator**.

### Special Status of Delhi (69th Amendment Act, 1991)

- **Article 239AA** was inserted into the Constitution to grant **Delhi special status**.
- Recommended by the **S. Balakrishnan Committee** to address demands for full statehood.
- After this amendment, Delhi became the **National Capital Territory (NCT) of India**.

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## Delhi.

### Structure of Governance in Delhi

- **Administrator** (Lieutenant Governor - LG)
- **Legislative Assembly**
- **Council of Ministers led by the Chief Minister**

### Delhi CM Vs Other State CM

Feature	Delhi Chief Minister	State Chief Minister
Appointment	By the President	By the Governor
Tenure	Serves at President's pleasure	Serves at Governor's pleasure
Powers Over Law & Order	No control over Police, Public Order, or Land	Full control over law and order
Bureaucratic Control	Limited (under LG's authority)	Full control over state officials
LG/Governor's Role	LG has discretionary powers and can override CM	Governor must act on CM's advice

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# BRICS Expansion 2025: A New Era of Global Influence

## Why in News?

As 2025 begins, BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) is experiencing significant growth after fully welcoming four new members in 2024. The expansion marks a major shift in global economic and geopolitical dynamics.



## New BRICS Member Countries

### BRICS Expansion

- **Original Members:** Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa.
- **New Members:** Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, UAE, and Indonesia.
- **Indonesia became the first Southeast Asian member in 2025.**

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- Saudi Arabia has put its membership on hold.
- Argentina declined the invitation it had previously accepted.
- Several regional powers have expressed interest, including Türkiye, Vietnam, Thailand, and Malaysia.

## Evolution of BRICS+

### Origins: BRIC (2001)

- The **BRIC concept** was introduced in **2001** by economist **Jim O'Neill**, recognizing the economic potential of **Brazil, Russia, India, and China**.
- Initially focused on **economic cooperation**, BRIC emphasized the rising influence of these economies in global markets.

### Formalization and Early Growth

- The grouping was formalized at the **2006 BRIC Foreign Ministers' meeting**.
- The first **BRIC Summit in 2009 (Russia)** focused on reforming the global financial architecture.
- South Africa joined in **2010**, transforming **BRIC into BRICS**.

### Institutional Development

- **New Development Bank (NDB) (2014)**: Established to finance **infrastructure and sustainable development projects** in emerging economies.
- **Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) (2015)**: Designed to provide **emergency liquidity** to BRICS countries during economic instability.

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## Significance of BRICS+ in the Global Order

### A Voice for the Global South

- **BRICS+ aims to counterbalance the G7**, advocating for **inclusive development and multipolarity**.
- Positions itself as a **leading platform for emerging economies**.

### Rising Global Influence

- The **successful BRICS+ meeting in Kazan, Russia** (attended by **36 heads of state and UN Secretary-General António Guterres**) showcased its resilience and growing impact.
- **BRICS+ represents 47% of the world's population and 41% of global GDP**.
- If **Türkiye and ASEAN members** join, the group would surpass **50% in both population and GDP**.
- The inclusion of **UAE and Iran strengthens BRICS+ energy security**, as these nations are **among the world's top oil producers**.

### India, Brazil and South Africa (IBSA) Forum

- The IBSA forum was inaugurated in June 2003 as a development initiative between India, Brazil and South Africa.
- It brought together three democracies, representing a coalition of regional powers of the global South.

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### Key differences between Brics+ and IBSA

	IBSA	BRICS+
Size and membership	IBSA is smaller and focused on democratic nations	BRICS+ is larger and more diverse in political systems
Focus area	IBSA emphasizes democratic values and development cooperation	BRICS concentrates more on economic and financial cooperation
Power dynamics	IBSA has more equal partnership between members.	BRICS has China as a dominant economic force.
Challenges	Limited global reach, overshadowed by BRICS in global discussions	Internal divisions, balancing different economic interests, maintaining cohesion with expanded membership

### Importance of BRICS for India

**Key Multilateral Grouping:** From India's perspective, BRICS is one of the top six multilateral groupings, alongside the G-20, Quad, BIMSTEC, G-7, and SCO.

**Strengthening Russia Ties:** Through this grouping, India has strengthened its ties with Russia, balancing its relationships with Western powers and enhancing its geopolitical leverage.

**Advocating for Global South:** India uses BRICS to champion the interests of the Global South, pushing for equitable global governance and development.

**India-China Diplomatic Breakthrough:** The 2024 BRICS summit in Kazan facilitated the first meeting in five years between Prime Minister Modi and President

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**Xi Jinping.**

- This bilateral dialogue led to an agreement on border patrolling and disengagement, signalling a thaw in India-China relations.

**Bridging East and West:** BRICS allows India to serve as a bridge between the West and the East, as well as between the North and the South.

- This strategic positioning enhances India's geopolitical relevance and provides it with a unique platform to influence global discourse and policy-making.

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## Revised Free Movement Regime with Myanmar



### Why in News?

The revised Free Movement Regime (FMR) has led to the activation of 22 border gates out of the 43 planned crossing points along the India-Myanmar border, aimed at regulating movement while maintaining border security.

India's 1,643-km border with Myanmar runs through Arunachal Pradesh (520 km), Nagaland (215 km), Manipur (398 km), and Mizoram (510 km). 1,472 km of the border has been demarcated.

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## What is the Free Movement Regime?

### Historical Context

Much of India's northeast region was under Burmese occupation until the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826 established the current India-Myanmar boundary.

The Treaty of Yandabo was signed by General Sir Archibald Campbell on behalf of the British and Governor of Legaing Maha Min Hla Kyaw Htin on behalf of the Burmese.

It ended the First Anglo-Burmese War (1824-1826).

However, the border separated communities with shared ethnicity and culture, including the Nagas in Nagaland and Manipur, as well as the Kuki-Chin-Mizo communities in Manipur and Mizoram, without their agreement.

Currently, India and Myanmar share a 1,643 km border across Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh, of which only 10 km is fenced, in Manipur.

### Free Movement Regime

The FMR was established in 1968 to facilitate movement due to ethnic and familial ties across the largely unfenced northeastern border.

The free movement limit was reduced from 40 km to 16 km in 2004 and is now 10 km.

Border residents can travel without a visa or passport but require a QR code-enabled border pass. Biometric data is recorded and uploaded to a centralized portal to check against a negative list.

Assam Rifles is responsible for issuing border passes and conducting initial security verification.

Border pass validity is up to 7 days.

### Role of Assam Rifles in Border Security

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The Assam Rifles is the oldest paramilitary force in India, established in 1835. Evolved from protecting British tea estates to maintaining internal security in the Northeast and guarding the Indo-Myanmar Border.

Assam Rifles played key roles in the Sino-India War (1962), and were known as 'Sentinel of the North East' and 'Friend of the Hill People'.

Headquarters: Directorate General of Assam Rifles in Shillong.

## What are the Major Aspects of India-Myanmar Relations?

### Historical and Cultural Ties

India and Myanmar share a long history dating back centuries, with cultural and religious connections deeply rooted in Buddhism.

The Treaty of Friendship, 1951, forms the foundation of their diplomatic relations.

### Economic Cooperation

India is Myanmar's 4th largest trading partner and a major source of investment.

The projects in which India has been involved in Myanmar include the Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project, the Trilateral Highway Project and restoration and conservation of Ananda Temple in Bagan (completed in 2018).

### Disaster Relief

India has responded promptly and effectively in rendering assistance following natural calamities in Myanmar like Cyclone Mora (2017), earthquake in Shan State (2010) and the outbreak of influenza virus in Yangon in July-August 2017.

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## India and Myanmar

### ■ Significance of Myanmar for India:

- Myanmar is geopolitically significant to India as it **stands at the center of the India-Southeast Asia geography**.
- Myanmar is the **only Southeast Asian country that shares a land border with northeastern India**.
- Myanmar is the only country that sits at the **intersection of India's "Neighborhood First" policy and its "Act East" policy**.
- As part of India's **SAGAR Vision**, India developed the **Sittwe port** in Myanmar's Rakhine state.
  - The port is meant to be India's answer to the **Chinese-fronted Kyaukpyu port**, which is intended to cement China's geostrategic footprint in Rakhine.

## Evolution of India's Act East Policy

India's **Act East Policy**, unveiled by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the 12th ASEAN-India Summit in 2014, succeeded the **Look East Policy** (1992) initiated by P. V. Narasimha Rao to strengthen ties with Southeast Asia post-Cold War.

## Key Differences Between Look East & Act East Policies

- **Look East Policy (1992)** focused on **ASEAN nations and economic integration**,

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enhancing trade from \$2 billion in 1992 to \$72 billion in 2017-18 after the 2010 Free Trade Agreement.

- **Act East Policy** (2014) expanded beyond ASEAN to **East Asia and security cooperation**, emphasizing **India's role in the Indo-Pacific and strengthening Quad ties**.

#### Key Elements of Act East Policy (4Cs)

1. **Culture** – Strengthening historical and cultural ties.
2. **Commerce** – Deepening trade and economic integration.
3. **Connectivity** – Enhancing infrastructure, digital, and maritime links.
4. **Capacity Building** – Collaborating in education, technology, and skill development.

With **growing Chinese influence in the South China Sea and the Indian Ocean**, Act East Policy prioritizes **maritime security, freedom of navigation, and regional stability**, reinforcing India's strategic engagement in the Indo-Pacific.

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# WHO Initiative to Provide Free Cancer Medicines

## Why in News?

The World Health Organization (WHO) has launched a new platform to provide cost-free cancer medicines to thousands of children in low- and middle-income countries. This initiative aims to improve survival rates and reduce healthcare disparities between high-income and low-income nations.



## Details of the WHO Initiative

- First shipments of medicines have been sent to Mongolia and Uzbekistan, with further deliveries planned for Ecuador, Jordan, Nepal, and Zambia.
- Participating nations will receive a continuous and quality-assured supply of childhood cancer medications at no cost.
- Survival rates for childhood cancer in low- and middle-income countries remain below 30%, compared to 80% in high-income nations.

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- The initiative aims to **bridge this gap by ensuring access to essential medicines and treatment facilities.**
- 

## Other Global Health Initiatives

### Air Pollution and Pregnancy Risks

- A study of **400,000 births in Australia** links **air pollution and extreme temperatures to prolonged pregnancy.**
- **Delayed delivery increases risks such as stillbirth, birth complications, and behavioral issues.**
- Findings published in the **Urban Climate journal** indicate that while climate change has been linked to **premature births**, this study is among the first to explore **late-term delivery effects.**

### Singapore's Senior Care Initiative: Horse Therapy

- '**Haydays with Horses**', a two-year program, aims to **enhance senior care through horse therapy.**
  - The initiative helps elderly individuals **improve physical health, cognitive function, and psychological well-being.**
  - Conducted at **active-aging centers**, seniors engage with **miniature horses** through grooming and interaction.
  - **Backed by Singapore's state investment fund, Temasek**, the program is **free for participants.**
- 

### What is the Silver Tsunami?

- The **Silver Tsunami** refers to the **aging population phenomenon**, particularly the **baby boomer generation (born between 1946-1964)** reaching retirement age.

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- First used in the **early 2000s**, the term highlights the **demographic shift** and its impact on **healthcare, economy, and social welfare**.
- In the **United States**, the population **aged 65 and older** doubled from **1940 to 2020**, rising from less than **7%** to nearly **17%**.
- By **2040**, the number of cancer survivors is expected to grow to **26.1 million**, with **73% aged 65 or older**.

### About the World Health Organization (WHO)

- The **WHO** is a **United Nations agency** that focuses on **global health and well-being**.
- **Mission:** To improve health for everyone, everywhere.
- **Structure:**
  - **194 member states**, grouped into **six regions**.
  - Each region has a **regional office coordinating country and field offices**.
  - Headquarters located in **Geneva, Switzerland**.

### History of WHO

- **Founded in 1948**.
- **India joined WHO in 1948**.
- **Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus**, born in Ethiopia on **March 3, 1965**, is the current **Director-General of WHO**.

### World Health Assembly (WHA)

- The **WHA** is **WHO's highest decision-making body**, setting global health policies.
- **77th WHA (2024):**
  - Held in **Geneva, Switzerland (May 27 – June 1, 2024)**.
  - Theme: "**All for Health, Health for All**".
  - Adopted resolutions on **climate change and health**.

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- Approved WHO's Fourteenth General Programme of Work (2025-2028).

## President's Rule in Manipur

### Why in News?

The Centre has imposed President's Rule in Manipur under Article 356 of the Indian Constitution and suspended the state assembly following the resignation of the Chief Minister.

### How President's Rule Can Help in Resolving Conflict in Manipur?

- **Neutral Administration:** Central rule removes allegations of bias in handling ethnic violence, protecting both Kuki-Zo and Meitei communities.
- **Security Management:** Governor-supervised central forces can prevent ethnic clashes and restore law & order.
- **Electoral Stability:** Prevents governance erosion by ending internal disputes within the ruling party.
- **Rehabilitation:** Ensures fair relief and rehabilitation for 60,000 displaced people living in camps for over 20 months.

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## CHEQUERED HISTORY



**NSCN-IM**  
Integration of Naga-inhabited areas of Northeast is the core demand of NSCN-IM which has been holding peace parleys with the Centre. There was violent protest in Manipur in 2001 when the cease fire agreement signed between the Government of India and NSCN-IM was extended.

Manipur, which has over 35 communities inhabiting the valleys and hills of the state, has a chequered history of violent and deadly clashes.

### Naga-Kuki Fight

The Kukis are hill tribes spread across the Northeast besides Myanmar and the Chittagong Hill Tracts in Bangladesh. On September 13, 1993, militants of National Socialist Council of Nagaland (Isak Muivah) massacred around 115 Kuki civilians in the hills of Manipur. However, NSCN-IM refuted the allegation.

**The rivalry between Nagas and Kukis** started in the colonial era. In 1990 there were clashes over land. Kukis often claimed 350 of their villages were uprooted, over 1,000 killed and 10,000 were people displaced. Chins are called Kukis on the Indian side.

### Meitei Pangal and Meiteis

In 1993 there were clashes between Meitei Pangal (Muslim) and Meitei. A bus carrying Muslim passengers was set on fire. Over 100 people were killed.

### Hill and Valley



The current conflict between Meiteis and tribals is the extension of hills versus plains conflict. Meiteis account for 53% of the population, while tribal communities account for around 40% of the population. Naga tribes make up for (24%) and Kuki/Zomi tribes (16%).

### Insurgency

Manipur had scores of militant outfits and violence was largely triggered by insurgents.

Valley-based militant outfits (Meitei groups) such as the UNLF, PLA, KYKL etc. are yet to come to the negotiating table.

The Kuki outfits under two umbrella groups, the Kuki National Organisation (KNO) and United People's Front (UPF), also signed the tripartite Suspension of Operation (SoO) pacts with the Centre and Manipur on August 22, 2008.

## What is President's Rule?

### About

- President's Rule refers to the suspension of a state government and its legislative assembly, placing the state under direct control of the central government.
- It is imposed under Article 356 of the Indian Constitution.

### Constitutional Basis

- Article 355 mandates the Central government to ensure that every state functions as per the Constitution.
- If a state government fails to function constitutionally, the Centre can intervene under Article 356 by imposing President's Rule.
- Also known as: State Emergency or Constitutional Emergency.

### Grounds for Proclamation

1. Article 356: The President can impose President's Rule if a state government fails to function as per the Constitution.

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- On the recommendation of the Governor.
  - On the President's discretion, even without the Governor's report.
2. Article 365: If a state fails to comply with the Centre's directions, the President can declare that its government cannot function constitutionally.

### Parliamentary Approval

- A proclamation of President's Rule must be approved by both Houses of Parliament within two months.
- If Lok Sabha is dissolved before approving it, the proclamation remains valid until 30 days after the new Lok Sabha convenes.
- Approval requires a simple majority (majority of members present and voting).

### Duration

- Initially imposed for six months.
- Can be extended up to 3 years with Parliament's approval every six months.
- Beyond one year extension requires:
  - National Emergency is in force.
  - The Election Commission certifies that elections cannot be held in the state.
- Examples:
  - 67th Amendment Act (1990) and 68th Amendment Act (1991) extended President's Rule in Punjab beyond 3 years due to insurgency.

### Revocation

- The President can revoke President's Rule anytime without Parliamentary approval.

### Supreme Court's Stand on President's Rule

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### 1. SR Bommai Case (1994):

- Judicial review of Article 356 is allowed.
- Dismissal of state governments must be based on a floor test, not just the Governor's opinion.

### 2. Sarbananda Sonowal Case (2005):

- Expanded the scope of Article 355, allowing the Union to take necessary actions to uphold state governance.

### 3. Rameshwar Prasad Case (2006):

- Condemned the dissolution of the Bihar Assembly without a floor test.
- Article 356 cannot be used to curb political defections.
- Article 361 immunity does not prevent courts from reviewing the validity of actions.

## Recommendations on President's Rule

### 1. Sarkaria Commission (1987):

- Article 356 should be used sparingly, as a last resort.

### 2. Punchhi Commission (2010):

- Proposed localizing emergency provisions, allowing Governor's rule in specific districts for up to 3 months.

### 3. National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution (NCRWC, 2000):

- Article 356 should not be deleted but must be used only in extreme cases.
- President's Rule may continue without an emergency if elections cannot be held.

### 4. Inter-State Council (Article 263):

- The Governor's report recommending President's Rule should be detailed and explanatory.
- A warning must be given before imposing President's Rule.
- A special majority should be required for approving President's Rule.

## What Led to the Manipur Unrest?

- Communal clashes erupted due to the Manipur High Court's directive to consider granting Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to the non-tribal Meitei community.
- The All-Tribal Student Union Manipur (ATSUM) protested the move, leading to violent clashes.
- Ethnic Composition of Manipur:
  - Imphal Valley (10% of land): Dominated by Meitei (64% of population), electing 40 of 60 MLAs.
  - Surrounding Hills (90% of land): Home to Kuki and Naga tribes, sending only 20 MLAs.

## Meitei Demand for ST Status

- The Meiteis were recognized as a tribe before 1949, prior to Manipur's merger with India.
- They seek ST status to preserve their land, culture, and traditions.

## Opposition from Tribal Groups

- Meiteis already have demographic and political dominance.
- ST status for Meiteis would reduce job opportunities and allow land acquisition in tribal areas.
- Meitei language is in the Eighth Schedule, and many Meiteis benefit from SC, OBC, or EWS reservations.
- Tribal regions (90% of Manipur) receive less budgetary and development support than the Meitei-dominated Imphal Valley.

## What is the Difference Between President's Rule and National Emergency?

### President's Rule (Article 356)

### National Emergency (Article 352)

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It can be proclaimed when the government of a state cannot be carried on in accordance with the provisions of the Constitution due to reasons which may not have any connection with war, external aggression or armed rebellion

National Emergency can be proclaimed only when the security of India or a part of it is threatened by war, external aggression or armed rebellion.



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104

# Tamil Nadu's Opposition to NEP 2020

## Why in News?

The Union Government has withheld Tamil Nadu's central share of Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan funds due to the state's opposition to the National Education Policy (NEP 2020).



## Why Tamil Nadu Opposes NEP 2020?

### Language Policy Dispute

- NEP 2020 mandates a three-language policy (Tamil, English, and a regional language), which Tamil Nadu rejects as an imposition of the Centre's policy.
- Tamil Nadu has followed a two-language formula (Tamil and English) since 1968 and refuses to adopt an additional language.

### Undermining State Autonomy

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- Tamil Nadu views the Centre's push for uniform NEP implementation as an infringement on state autonomy, weakening cooperative federalism.
- Education falls under the Concurrent List, requiring flexibility for state-level adaptations.
- In response, Tamil Nadu is drafting its own State Education Policy to suit its socio-linguistic and economic context.

### Call for a Pragmatic Approach

- Tamil Nadu demands that central schemes like Samagra Shiksha and PM SHRI be delinked from NEP 2020.
- The state advocates for funding to be based on performance indicators rather than compliance with NEP 2020.

### What is the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020?

#### About NEP 2020

- NEP 2020 replaced the 34-year-old NEP of 1986, aiming to bridge gaps in quality, equity, and access to education at all levels.
- Developed based on the recommendations of the Dr. K. Kasturirangan Committee.
- Prioritizes:
  - Foundational literacy and numeracy.
  - Holistic curriculum and flexible learning paths.
  - Multilingual education.
  - Integration of vocational and academic pathways.

### What is Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan?

#### About Samagra Shiksha

- Introduced in the Union Budget 2018-19, it is a comprehensive education program from pre-nursery to Class 12 to ensure equitable learning outcomes.

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## Key Features

1. **Integration of Schemes**
  - **Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA)** – Focused on **universal primary education**.
  - **Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA)** – Aimed at **secondary education**.
  - **Teacher Education (TE)** – Focused on **teacher training and development**.
2. **Sector-Wide Development Approach**
  - Streamlines implementation across **state, district, and sub-district levels** rather than relying on fragmented project-based approaches.
3. **Alignment with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**
  - **SDG 4.1:** Ensures **free, equitable, and quality education for all**.
  - **SDG 4.5:** Focuses on **eliminating gender disparities** and ensuring **education access for vulnerable groups**.

## Implementation

- **Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS)** implemented through a single State Implementation Society (SIS) at the State/UT level.

**The Centre has also stopped funding for the Samagra Shiksha scheme in states that have refused to implement its PM SHRI scheme.**

## **Pradhan Mantri Schools for Rising India (PM-SHRI) Scheme:**

**PM SHRI is a Centrally Sponsored scheme announced in 2022.**

**It aims to develop 14,500 schools across the country by strengthening selected existing schools being managed by Central Government/ State/ UT Government/ local**

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bodies.

It will create and nurture **holistic and well-rounded** individuals equipped with key **21st century skills**.

The duration of the scheme is from **2022-23 to 2026-27**, after which it shall be the responsibility of the States/UTs to continue to maintain the benchmarks achieved by these schools.



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# National Green Financing Institution: A Step Towards Net-Zero



## Achieving Climate Goals

### Non-Fossil Energy Capacity

Achieving 500 GW of non-fossil energy capacity by 2030.

### Renewable Energy Source

Sourcing 50% of energy requirements from renewable sources by 2030.

### Carbon Emission Reduction

Reducing projected carbon emissions by 1 billion tonnes by 2030.

### Economic Carbon Intensity

Lowering carbon intensity of the economy by 45% by 2030.

### Net-Zero Goal

Reaching net-zero emissions by 2070.

## Why in News?

The Government of India is working to establish a National Green Financing Institution to aggregate green finance from multiple sources and lower the cost of capital to achieve its net-zero target by 2070.

- NITI Aayog is evaluating models like NaBFID/NABARD, IREDA, Green InvITs, and global Green Banks to determine the best structure for the institution.

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# CLIMATE FINANCE

Climate finance refers to local, national or transnational financing—drawn from public/ private/alternative sources of financing—to support mitigation and adaptation actions against climate change.

## PRINCIPLES OF CLIMATE FINANCE

- ⦿ Polluter Pays
- ⦿ Common but Differentiated Responsibility and Respective Capability (CBDR-RC)

## Multilateral Climate Funds Coordinated by UNFCCC

- ⦿ **Global Environment Facility (GEF):** Operating entity of financial mechanism (1994)
- ⦿ **Kyoto Protocol (2001):**
  - ⦿ **Adaptation Fund (AF):** Gives developing countries full ownership of adaptation projects
  - ⦿ **Clean Development Mechanism (CDM):** To carry out emission-reduction projects in developing nations
- ⦿ **Green Climate Fund (GCF):** estd. - 2010 (COP 16)
  - ⦿ Funds under it - **Least Developed Countries Fund (LDCF) and Special Climate Change Fund (SCCF)**
- ⦿ **Long-Term Climate Finance:**
  - ⦿ **Cancun Agreements (2010):** Mobilize and provide scaled-up funds in short and long term
  - ⦿ **Paris Agreement (2015):** Developed nations agreed to establish new collective goal of at least \$100 billion/year by 2025
- ⦿ **Loss and Damage Fund (2023) (COP27 & COP28):** Financial assistance to nations most vulnerable and impacted by effects of climate change

## Climate Investment Funds (CIFs) under World Bank

- ⦿ Clean Technology Fund
- ⦿ Strategic Climate Fund

## INDIA'S INITIATIVES REGARDING CLIMATE FINANCE

Fund	Objective
National Adaptation Fund for Climate Change (NAFCC) (2015)	For vulnerable Indian states
National Clean Energy Fund (2010-11)	Advancing clean energy (started with initial carbon tax on industrial coal use)
National Adaptation Fund (2014)	Bridging gap between required and available funds
Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs) (2015)	Nationally binding targets adopted under UNFCCC
Climate Change Finance Unit (2011)	Leads on global climate finance issues

## Challenges to Climate Finance

- ⦿ Gap between national needs and climate finance under NDCs
- ⦿ Least Developed Countries receive much less approved funding in per-capita terms from the multilateral climate funds
- ⦿ Slow rate of approvals
- ⦿ Failure in securing viability-gap funding



Drishti IAS

## Need for Green Finance in India

### Escalating Climate Change Risks

- Climate change could result in an estimated **10% loss in total economic value** and potentially wipe out **18% of global GDP by 2050.**

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- India's goal of a USD 10 trillion economy by 2030 is at risk due to climate-related economic challenges.

## India's Net-Zero Ambitions

- At COP26 UNFCCC, India presented the five nectar elements (Panchamrit) of its climate action:
  1. Reach 500GW non-fossil energy capacity by 2030.
  2. Meet 50% of its energy requirements from renewable energy by 2030.
  3. Reduce total projected carbon emissions by one billion tonnes from now to 2030.
  4. Reduce the carbon intensity of the economy by 45% by 2030, over 2005 levels.
  5. Achieve the target of net zero emissions by 2070.
- Achieving this target requires an investment of over USD 10 trillion.

## Threat to Financial Institutions

- 72% of the financial impact of climate change falls on the financial services industry.
- Banks can mitigate risks by funding green infrastructure, renewable energy, energy-efficient buildings, and industrial decarbonization.

## Investment Deficit

- India requires USD 1.4 trillion in total investments or USD 28 billion annually to reach its 2070 net-zero goal.
- As of February 2023, India's green bond issuances totaled USD 21 billion, with private sector contributions accounting for 84%.

## Current Green Energy Financing Initiatives in India

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## National Clean Energy and Environment Fund (NCEEF)

- Funds clean energy ventures and research through the **Clean Environment Cess on coal**.
- IREDA (Indian Renewable Energy Development Agency) lends part of the NCEEF fund to banks at **2% interest**, enabling concessional loans for renewable energy projects.
- The World Bank provided **USD 100 million** to IREDA for **solar park development**.

## Recognition of Renewable Energy under Priority Sector Lending (PSL)

- In April 2015, RBI classified **renewable energy as a priority sector**, requiring banks to allocate **40% of their net credit**.
- **Loans up to Rs 15 crore per borrower** cover solar, biomass, wind, micro-hydel, and non-conventional energy utilities.

## Green Banks

- Accelerate clean energy financing by funding **environmentally sustainable projects**.
- IREDA, SBI, and other financial institutions offer concessional loans for renewable energy projects.

## Green Bonds

- Market-based financial instruments used to raise capital for **environmentally beneficial projects**.
- Example: **IREDA's Green Masala Bonds**.

### Sovereign Green Bonds (SGBs)

#### What are Sovereign Green Bonds?

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- Debt securities issued by national governments to fund projects with positive environmental benefits.
- Proceeds are exclusively allocated to green initiatives like renewable energy, sustainable agriculture, and waste management.
- Helps governments raise capital while promoting environmental sustainability.

### Sovereign Green Bonds in India

- Announced in Union Budget 2022-23 to finance green infrastructure, they are issued by RBI.
- Framework issued on November 9, 2022, outlining fund allocation and monitoring.

### Evaluation & Reporting of Green Projects

- Green Finance Working Committee (GFWC), chaired by the Chief Economic Adviser, evaluates proposals.
- Ministries submit projects, which are assessed twice a year.
- The Finance Ministry's budget division approves the final list, and RBI issues the bonds to fund selected projects.

### Global Green Bond Market

- First issued in 2007 by the European Investment Bank, followed by the World Bank in 2008.
- Since then, governments and corporations worldwide have used green bonds to finance sustainable projects.

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## United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

### What is the UNFCCC?

- The UNFCCC is an international treaty adopted in 1992 at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro to combat climate change and its impacts.
- Objective: To stabilize greenhouse gas (GHG) concentrations at a level that prevents dangerous human interference with the climate system.
- Entered into force on March 21, 1994, and currently has 198 parties.

### Key Functions of UNFCCC

- Provides a framework for international climate negotiations.
- Monitors and reports global greenhouse gas emissions.
- Supports technology transfer and climate finance to developing nations.

### Major Agreements Under UNFCCC

1. Kyoto Protocol (1997) – Legally binding emission reduction targets for developed countries.
2. Paris Agreement (2015) – Aims to limit global temperature rise to below 2°C, with efforts to stay within 1.5°C.
3. COP (Conference of Parties) – Annual climate summits where countries discuss and negotiate climate actions.

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# Israel-Hamas Ceasefire



## Why in News?

Hamas has agreed to a **draft ceasefire agreement**, with final approval pending from the **Israeli Cabinet**.

The conflict began in **October 2023**, when **Hamas launched attacks on Israel**, resulting in **1,200 deaths**. This was followed by an **Israeli military offensive in Gaza**, which has reportedly killed **over 64,000 people**, according to **The Lancet**.

## Background: Israel-Hamas Conflict

### Hamas' Attack on Israel (October 7, 2023)

- Hamas launched a **large-scale assault**, firing **thousands of rockets** and **infiltrating Israeli territory**.

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- The attack resulted in over 1,200 Israeli deaths, including civilians and security personnel.
- Approximately 100 Israelis remain captive inside Gaza, with the Israeli military estimating that at least a third of them are dead.

## Israel's Military Offensive in Gaza

- Israel initiated a massive military campaign, targeting Hamas' infrastructure.
- The offensive has resulted in widespread destruction and civilian casualties, with over 64,000 deaths reported.
- 90% of Gaza's 2.3 million population has been displaced, with many living in tent camps along the coast, facing severe hunger and humanitarian crises.

## Ceasefire Attempts and Humanitarian Concerns

- The ongoing conflict has drawn global condemnation and efforts to mediate peace.
- Multiple ceasefire attempts have been made, involving the US, Egypt, and Qatar, but a long-term resolution remains elusive.

## Three-Phase Ceasefire Plan Overview

### Basis of the Ceasefire Plan

- The plan is based on a framework proposed by US President Joe Biden in June 2024.
- However, unresolved details and the lack of guarantees for a sustained ceasefire pose challenges.

### Phase 1: Ceasefire and Hostage Exchange

- A six-week ceasefire will be implemented.
- Israel will withdraw all military forces from populated areas in Gaza.

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- Hamas will release 33 Israeli hostages, including women, the elderly, and the wounded, in exchange for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners.
- All civilian captives, living or dead, will be released by the end of this phase.
- 600 humanitarian aid trucks will enter Gaza daily.
- Palestinians will be allowed to return to their homes, though extensive destruction complicates resettlement.

### Phase 2: Further Hostage Release and Israeli Withdrawal

- Hamas will release remaining captives, mainly male soldiers, in exchange for more Palestinian prisoners.
- Israel will conduct a “complete withdrawal” of its forces from Gaza.
- Uncertainty remains regarding the ceasefire's continuation, leaving room for a potential resumption of hostilities.

### Phase 3: Gaza Reconstruction

- A large-scale reconstruction plan for Gaza will begin.
- Any remains of deceased hostages will be returned to their families.

## Challenges to Ceasefire Implementation

### Hamas' Conditions

- Hamas insists on a complete Israeli military withdrawal and a permanent end to the war before releasing the remaining hostages.

### Recurring Obstacles in Past Ceasefires

- Temporary ceasefires have often failed due to:
  - Hamas demanding Israel's full withdrawal from Gaza, which Israel rejects.
  - Israel's insistence on the destruction of Hamas as a condition for peace.

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117

## Internal Political Opposition in Israel

- **Far-right Israeli Ministers** have threatened to **resign** over the ceasefire deal, calling it a **surrender to Hamas**.
- **Prime Minister Netanyahu** faces challenges in maintaining a coalition, as his government includes **Likud Party, far-right Jewish National Front, and ultra-Orthodox Jewish leaders.**

## Netanyahu's Political Position

- The war has **temporarily strengthened Netanyahu's leadership**, despite **domestic dissatisfaction**.
- **A deal with Hamas could further weaken his coalition.**

## About Hamas

- Hamas is the **largest Palestinian militant Islamist group** and one of the two major political parties in the region.
- **Governance:** Controls **over two million Palestinians** in the **Gaza Strip**.
- **Founded:** Late **1980s**, during the **First Palestinian Uprising**.
- **Designation:** Recognized as a **terrorist organization** by **Israel, the US, the UK, the European Union, and several other nations.**

## Israel-Palestine Conflict: A Longstanding Dispute

- **Origins:** The conflict dates back to the **mid-20th century**, when **Britain facilitated the creation of a Jewish homeland** in present-day Israel.
- **Occupied Territories:** Israel has **controlled the West Bank and Gaza Strip**, which **Palestinians claim as their state.**

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- **Normalization Efforts:** Some Arab nations have normalized relations with Israel through agreements like the **Abraham Accords** and **Oslo Accords**, but **tensions persist**.
- **International Push for Two-State Solution:** The global community continues efforts to **resolve the conflict through a two-state solution**.

## India's Stand on the Israel-Palestine Crisis

- **India follows a dehyphenation policy** between Israel and Palestine.
- Initially, India was **unequivocally pro-Palestine**, but since the 1990s, it has **balanced relations with Israel**.
- **India-Israel Ties Strengthened:**
  - In **2017**, PM Modi visited **only Israel**, breaking precedent.
- **India-Palestine Engagement Continues:**
  - In **2018**, PM Modi visited **Palestine, Oman, and the UAE**, signaling **continued diplomatic engagement**.

## India's Dehyphenation Policy

### What is Dehyphenation Policy?

- **Dehyphenation policy refers to India's strategic shift in foreign relations, wherein it engages with two conflicting parties independently, without linking its relationship with one to the other.**
- This approach allows India to maintain **balanced and pragmatic diplomatic ties** with nations that have historical disputes or rivalries.

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# Grameen Credit Score: A New Initiative for Financial Inclusion



## Why in News?

Recently, the **Finance Minister of India announced the Grameen Credit Score Scheme** in the **Union Budget 2025** to promote **financial inclusion for self-help group (SHG) women entrepreneurs**.

## About Grameen Credit Score

- Objective:** The scheme aims to **formalize SHG transactions** within India's central credit system, allowing financial institutions to better assess creditworthiness.
- Target Group:** Focuses on **women entrepreneurs** involved in SHGs, providing them with the necessary financial support to **grow their businesses**.

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- **Significance:** Represents a **transformative shift** in analyzing the **creditworthiness of rural women** engaged in SHGs across India.

## Key Benefits of the Grameen Credit Score

### 1. Enhanced Financial Access

- Opens up **new financial opportunities** for rural women.
- Enables them to **expand their businesses** and improve **livelihoods**.
- Introduces them to **financial concepts** such as **credit cards, loan EMIs, creditworthiness, and repayment structures**.

### 2. Customized Financial Products

- Introduces **customized credit cards** for **micro-enterprises** with limits of **up to ₹5 lakh**.
- Encourages **grassroots-level financial empowerment**.

### 3. Improved Credit Assessment

- Establishes a **digital framework** for assessing **creditworthiness**.
- Bridges existing **gaps in the credit bureau system**, which often **overlooks SHG members**.
- Allows women to **check their credit score, credit limits, and understand ways to improve their financial standing**.

### 4. Economic Stability

- **Increased credit availability** will empower **women-led SHGs** to contribute more effectively to their households.
- Strengthens **economic growth in rural communities**, fostering **self-reliance and financial stability**.

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## Mount Taranaki gets Legal Status



### Why in News?

Mount Taranaki, now officially known by its **Maori name Taranaki Maunga**, in New Zealand, has been **granted human status**.

### About Mount Taranaki

- **Alternative Names:** Mount Egmont or Mount Taranaki.
- **Location:** Situated in **Egmont National Park, North Island, New Zealand**.

### Features of Mount Taranaki

- **Type:** Stratovolcano (**composite cone**) – characterized by alternating layers of **ash and lava flow**.

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- **Geological Formation:** Formed by the **subduction of the Pacific Plate below the Australian Plate**. The magma originates **deeper** than that of the **Taupo Volcanic Zone volcanoes**.
- **Symmetry:** One of the **most symmetrical volcanic cones** in the world.
- **Ring Plain Formation:** Encircled by a **volcanic material ring plain** formed due to **lahars and landslides**.
- **Elevation:** **8,261 feet (2,518 meters)**, making it the **second-highest mountain in North Island, New Zealand**.
- **Current Activity:** Snow-capped and dormant.

### Recognition and Cultural Significance

- **Third natural feature in New Zealand to receive human status**, following **Te Urewera National Park and Whanganui River**.
- **Cultural Importance:** The Indigenous Maori people respect **Taranaki Maunga** as a **sacred ancestor**.

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# Kashmir Book Seizure and Crackdown on Dissent



## Why in News?

Indian police have **raided dozens of bookstores in Kashmir**, seizing more than **650 books** as part of an ongoing **crackdown on dissent** in the region.

## Background of the Book Seizure

- The raids began **on February 14, 2025, in Srinagar**, before expanding to **other parts of Kashmir**.
- **668 books** were confiscated, mostly authored by **Abul A'la Maududi**, the **founder of Jamaat-e-Islami**, an Islamic organization banned in Kashmir.
- Authorities claim the books were **promoting the ideology of a banned organization**.

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## Police Statement on the Seizure

- The Srinagar police issued a statement, saying the action was based on credible intelligence regarding clandestine sales of banned literature.
- The books were published by **Markazi Maktaba Islami Publishers**, New Delhi, which is linked to Jamaat-e-Islami's Indian branch.
- Authorities declared the books violated legal regulations, and strict action would be taken against those found in possession.

## Jamaat-e-Islami's Response

- The organization condemned the seizure, calling it unjust, unconstitutional, and a violation of fundamental rights.
- Leaders argued that the books are legally published in Delhi, and they are prepared to cooperate with authorities.
- Jamaat-e-Islami claims that the crackdown appears arbitrary and politically motivated.

## Jamaat-e-Islami Ban in Kashmir

- Jamaat-e-Islami was banned in February 2019, when Indian authorities declared it an unlawful association for five years.
- The ban was extended in February 2024.
- The Indian government accused the group of links to militant groups, although Jamaat-e-Islami has denied supporting violence.
- In 1989, Hizbul Mujahideen, Kashmir's largest militant group, declared itself as the military wing of Jamaat-e-Islami.

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## Broader Context: Kashmir Conflict

- The Kashmir conflict dates back to 1947, when both India and Pakistan claimed the region.
- Since 1989, armed insurgencies have fought against Indian rule, leading to tens of thousands of deaths.
- In August 2019, the Indian government revoked Article 370, ending Jammu & Kashmir's special autonomy.
- Following the abrogation of Article 370, New Delhi implemented policies aimed at shaping “Naya Kashmir” (New Kashmir), restricting political and civil dissent.

## Jammu & Kashmir Assembly Elections and Political Developments

- Jammu & Kashmir held its first assembly elections in a decade, concluding on October 1, 2024.
- Omar Abdullah returned as Chief Minister after 10 years, marking his second term (previously served from 2009 to 2014).
- He is the first leader to assume office after the abrogation of Article 370.

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# CLAT COMMUNITY

*EVERY SETBACK IS JUST A SETUP FOR A  
GREATER COMEBACK. KEEP PUSHING  
FORWARD – YOUR BREAKTHROUGH IS  
CLOSER THAN YOU THINK.*

