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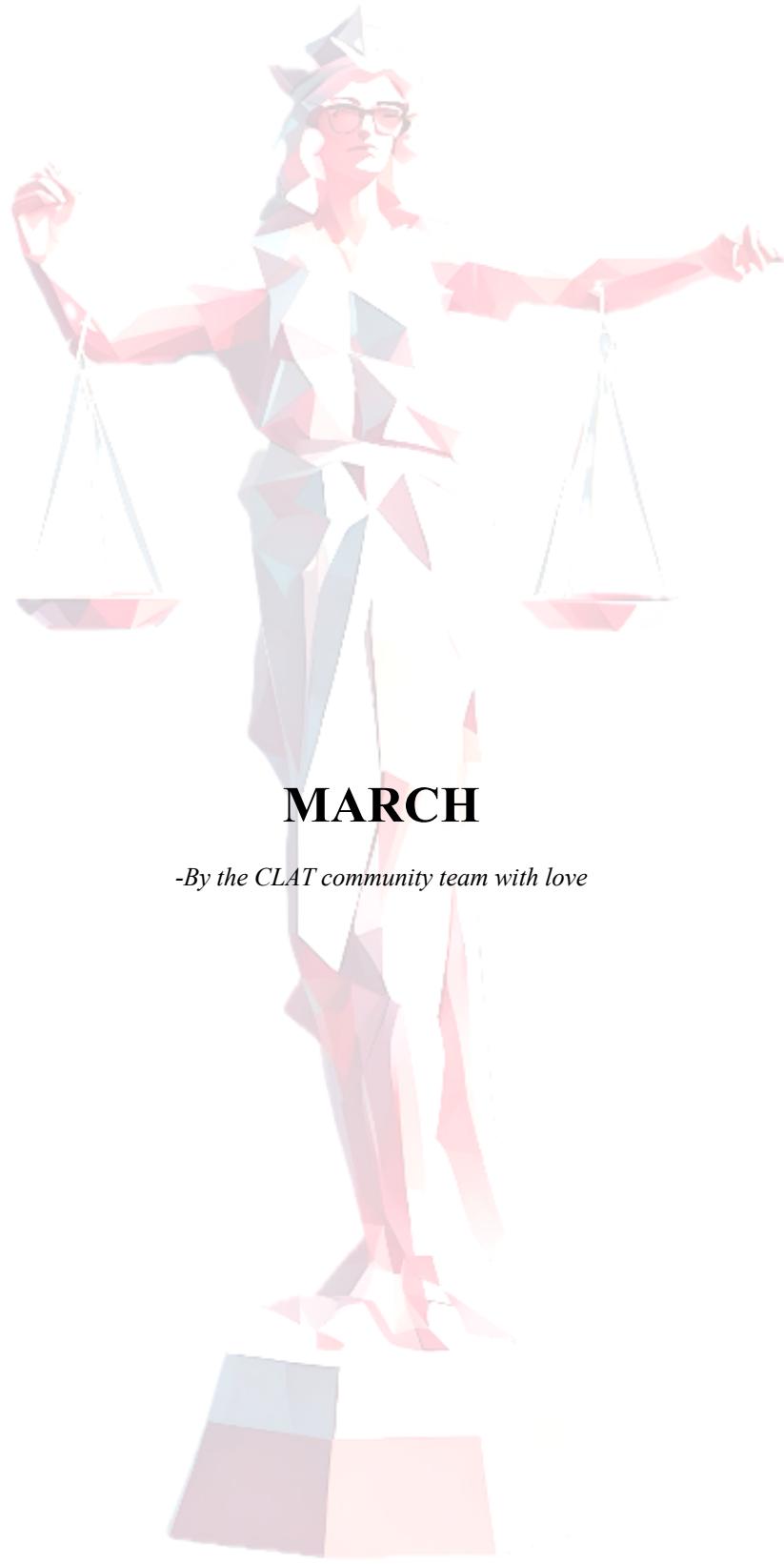


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Raisina Dialogue 2025

The Raisina Dialogue 2025, inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, stands out as a pivotal event in the realm of global geopolitics and geoconomics. The 10th edition, held from March 17–19, 2025, captured global attention for its timely engagement with pressing global challenges and the participation of international leaders, including members of the Five Eyes intelligence-sharing alliance.

Christopher Luxon, the Prime Minister of New Zealand, served as the Chief Guest and delivered the keynote address, emphasizing the importance of multilateral cooperation in addressing global challenges.

About Raisina Dialogue

Named after Raisina Hill—India's seat of government—the Raisina Dialogue symbolizes India's central role in global governance discussions. It is an annual conference hosted by the Observer Research Foundation (ORF) in collaboration with the Ministry of External Affairs, Government of India. The Dialogue brings together world leaders, policymakers, academics, military commanders, and industry experts to discuss issues related to geopolitics, geoconomics, and international affairs.

The 2025 edition was themed “Kālachakra – People, Peace and Planet,” and it focused on critical issues such as environmental sustainability, digital transformation, and global security. This year's conference witnessed participation from over 125 countries, including former heads of state, senior ministers, and global thought leaders.

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Event Highlights and Key Discussions:

The 4th Conference on Global Challenges and Intelligence-Sharing Mechanisms was held as a closed-door strategic meet just ahead of the Raisina Dialogue 2025. Organized by India's Research and Analysis Wing (R&AW) and the National Security Council Secretariat (NSCS), it included intelligence chiefs and national security advisers from over 20 countries, notably the Five Eyes alliance—United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

The Five Eyes Alliance

The Five Eyes (FVEY) is a prominent intelligence alliance consisting of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States. It facilitates extensive cooperation in signals intelligence (SIGINT) and plays a pivotal role in global security operations.

Originating from the US–UK collaboration during World War II, the alliance was formalized through the UKUSA Agreement in 1946. Canada joined in 1948, followed by Australia and New Zealand in 1956. The alliance has extended partnerships through the Nine Eyes (adding

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Denmark, France, the Netherlands, and Norway) and the Fourteen Eyes (including Germany, Belgium, Italy, Spain, and Sweden).

Observer Research Foundation (ORF)

Founded in 1990, the Observer Research Foundation is an independent Indian think tank conducting in-depth research on political, economic, and strategic affairs. Its mission is to inform public policy by providing evidence-based and practical policy inputs.

ORF organizes conferences, engages in policy dialogues, and publishes analytical research.

Since 2016, ORF has co-hosted the Raisina Dialogue, reinforcing its role in shaping international discourse on global governance, security, and development.

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USA-Russia-Ukraine Ceasefire Deal

Ukraine has expressed readiness to accept a 30-day ceasefire with Russia, contingent on Moscow's agreement. This development follows high-level talks between US and Ukrainian officials in Saudi Arabia, where the United States announced it would lift the suspension of military aid to Kyiv.

This marks a significant step in the diplomatic efforts to pause the ongoing war, which has devastated Ukraine since Russia's invasion in 2022.



Ukraine and Russia: Evolution as Countries:

Soviet Union (1922–1991): Formed in 1922, the USSR brought together Russia and other republics, including Ukraine. Under Soviet rule, Ukraine experienced severe repression, including the Holodomor famine (1932–33), and widespread Russification. During WWII, Ukraine was a major battleground. Post-war reconstruction further centralized power in Moscow.

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Chernobyl Disaster and Reforms: The 1986 Chernobyl disaster fueled nationalist sentiment. Gorbachev's reforms (Perestroika and Glasnost) catalyzed demands for autonomy in Soviet republics, including Ukraine.

Independence (1991): Ukraine declared independence on August 24, 1991, following a failed Soviet coup and held a referendum in December with 90% voting in favor. However, post-independence tensions remained, especially due to the Russian-speaking population in Crimea.

Territorial Disputes and NATO Tensions:

Crimea and Black Sea Fleet: Crimea, with a large Russian-speaking population, was transferred to Ukraine in 1954 by Khrushchev. Post-independence, Russia maintained military interests in the region, particularly in Sevastopol.

Assurances and NATO Expansion: In 1991, U.S. Secretary of State James Baker allegedly assured Gorbachev that NATO would not expand eastward, although this was not formalized. NATO later expanded into Eastern Europe, which Russia sees as a security threat.

NATO Membership and Expansion: NATO, established in 1949, expanded post-1999 to include Eastern European countries. By 2024, it included Finland and Sweden, increasing proximity to Russia. Russia views this as encirclement and a threat to its sovereignty.

Russia-Ukraine Conflict and Minsk Agreements:

Annexation and Donbas War (2014): Russia annexed Crimea after a disputed referendum and supported separatists in Donbas, leading to over 13,000 deaths by 2021. International sanctions were imposed on Russia.

Minsk I (2014): Mediated by OSCE, the ceasefire failed due to continued violations and lack of recognition of Ukrainian authority in Donbas.

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Minsk II (2015): Brokered by Germany, France, Ukraine, and Russia (Normandy Format), it introduced a new ceasefire and buffer zones. However, it failed due to ongoing hostilities and lack of trust. Russia used the failure to justify recognizing Donetsk and Luhansk in 2022.

Full-Scale Invasion (2022): Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, 2022, citing protection of Russian speakers and de-Nazification. The war caused massive destruction, loss of life, and global condemnation.

Ceasefire Proposal and Current Diplomatic Developments:

Ukraine's Offer: Ukraine offered a 30-day ceasefire, with the potential for extension based on mutual agreement.

US Military Aid: After a two-week suspension due to political tensions between Presidents Trump and Zelenskyy, the US resumed aid, including intelligence sharing.

Global Support: European leaders such as UK PM Keir Starmer and French President Emmanuel Macron urged Russia to consider the ceasefire.

Envoy Diplomacy: Trump's envoy, Steve Witkoff, is expected to present the proposal to Putin. A meeting between Trump and Putin is also anticipated.

About NATO

NATO, or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, is a military alliance of 30 countries from Europe and North America, established in 1949 to ensure collective security and safeguard the freedom and security of its members through political and military means.

Headquarters: NATO's headquarters are located in Brussels, Belgium.

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NATO was formed in the aftermath of World War II, with the signing of the North Atlantic Treaty (also known as the Washington Treaty) on April 4, 1949.

Founding members (12): Belgium, Canada, Denmark, France, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, the United Kingdom and the United States.

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U.S. Strikes on Houthis

The United States recently launched over 40 airstrikes across Houthi-controlled Yemeni territories, including Sanaa, Sadaa, and the Hodeidah Port. These were described as "precision strikes against Iran-backed Houthi targets."

The Houthis responded with escalatory rhetoric and claimed responsibility for cruise and ballistic missile attacks on U.S. warships in the Red Sea, including three claimed attacks on the USS Harry S Truman within 48 hours.



Trigger for the Attack:

The immediate trigger for the strikes was the resumption of the Gaza conflict on March 17, 2025, with renewed Israeli operations in Jabalia. The Houthis linked their actions to this development. Since December 2023, Houthi attacks in the Red Sea have disrupted global shipping, forcing many vessels to reroute via the Cape of Good Hope and increasing insurance premiums for those passing through Bab-el-Mandeb.

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This U.S. response reflects policy continuity. In January 2024, President Biden had listed the Houthis as Specially Designated Global Terrorists and launched Operation Prosperity Guardian in December 2023. The strikes are consistent with the U.S. Navy's historical role in protecting global trade routes and ensuring freedom of navigation.

Trump's Objectives Behind the Renewed Strikes: President Trump's renewed offensive appears to serve multiple objectives:

- Responding to direct Houthi threats.
- Pressuring Iran without entering a full-scale war.
- Reinforcing the 2025 re-designation of the Houthis as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (building upon the initial 2021 FTO label).
- Projecting U.S. strength and compelling Iran to negotiate favorable terms in future nuclear talks.

Houthis (Ansar Allah): Origins and Rise

The Houthis, formally known as Ansar Allah ("Supporters of God"), are a Shiite Muslim armed political and religious movement that emerged from the Zaydi sect in northern Yemen, particularly the Saada region. Founded in the 1990s by Hussein Badreddin al-Houthi, the group initially focused on cultural revival but gradually transformed into a powerful armed insurgency.

In 2004, following the death of its founder at the hands of the Yemeni government, the Houthis launched an armed rebellion. Between 2004 and 2010, they fought six wars with President Ali Abdullah Saleh's government, expanding their influence across northern Yemen and gaining valuable combat experience.

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Yemen Civil War: Timeline of Crisis:

Pre-2011: Yemen was previously divided into North and South Yemen, unified in 1990 under President Saleh. Despite this, deep-rooted tribal, regional, and economic disparities remained unresolved.

Arab Spring (2011–2012): Mass protests during the Arab Spring led to Saleh's resignation and a power transfer to Vice President Abdrabuh Mansur Hadi.

Rise of the Houthis (2013–2015): Exploiting public dissatisfaction, the Houthis seized the capital, Sanaa, in September 2014. By January 2015, they placed Hadi under house arrest, prompting his flight to Saudi Arabia. This led to the Saudi-led military intervention under Operation Decisive Storm in March 2015.

Stockholm Agreement and Stalemate: A 2018 ceasefire attempt via the Stockholm Agreement failed to bring peace. By 2023, **Yemen faced what the UN called the world's worst humanitarian crisis, with 21 million people in need of aid and 370,000 deaths recorded.**

Iranian and International Support for the Houthis

Iran is the Houthis' main international backer, providing military, financial, and ideological support. Tehran uses the Houthis to extend its regional influence and challenge U.S. and Saudi dominance in the Arabian Peninsula.

Apart from Iran, the Houthis have cultivated support from Russia and China. These ties provide diplomatic backing and, reportedly, technological and strategic assistance. This geopolitical alignment has ensured safer passage for Russian and Chinese vessels through the Red Sea.

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Former Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte

Arrested on ICC's Warrant

News Highlights:

On March 12, 2025, former Philippines President Rodrigo Duterte was flown to the Netherlands to face charges before the International Criminal Court (ICC) for his role in the deadly "war on drugs" during his presidency.



Rodrigo Duterte's War on Drugs:

President Rodrigo Duterte launched the infamous “war on drugs” campaign on June 30, 2016, immediately after taking office. The initiative mirrored his tough-on-crime approach as mayor of Davao City and was positioned as a response to what he described as a nationwide methamphetamine (“shabu”) crisis. Duterte encouraged aggressive law enforcement, even urging police and civilians to kill suspected drug offenders who resisted arrest.

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The campaign was spearheaded by the Philippine National Police (PNP) under "Oplan Tokhang," a door-to-door operation that urged suspects to surrender. However, these operations often resulted in fatal confrontations, with many deaths justified by claims that suspects "nanlaban" (fought back). While the government claimed 6,000 official deaths between 2016 and 2022, human rights groups estimate between 12,000 and 30,000, including many extrajudicial killings.

Rodrigo Duterte:

Starting as a Davao City prosecutor in the 1970s, Duterte was elected mayor in 1988. He served multiple non-consecutive terms over 22 years (1988–1998, 2001–2010, and 2013–2016).

Duterte rose to national prominence for his crime-fighting reputation and was elected the 16th President of the Philippines in 2016 as a PDP-Laban candidate. He became the first president from Mindanao and vowed to eradicate drug crime in six months.

The ICC Case and Legal Timeline:

In April 2017, Filipino lawyer Jude Sabio filed a formal complaint with the ICC, accusing Duterte of crimes against humanity. The ICC began a preliminary examination in February 2018, focused on extrajudicial killings and potential human rights violations.

In March 2018, Duterte ordered the Philippines' withdrawal from the Rome Statute. This withdrawal became effective in March 2019. Nevertheless, the ICC maintained jurisdiction over crimes committed between November 1, 2011, and March 16, 2019. On September 15, 2021, the ICC authorized a full investigation.

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Legal and Political Developments:

Despite the Philippines' formal exit from the Rome Statute, the ICC reaffirmed its jurisdiction for crimes committed during the membership period. In January 2023, the ICC prosecutor resumed investigations, rejecting the Philippine government's assertion of sufficient domestic judicial remedies.

Rome Statute and the ICC: An Overview

The Rome Statute, adopted in 1998 and enforced from 2002, established the ICC to prosecute the most serious crimes of international concern. These include:

- **Genocide:** Intent to destroy a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group.
- **Crimes against Humanity:** Widespread or systematic attacks on civilians (e.g., murder, torture, rape).
- **War Crimes:** Violations of war laws (e.g., targeting civilians, child soldiers).
- **Crime of Aggression:** Use of force by one state against another (added in 2018).

ICC Jurisdiction Conditions:

- Crimes must occur within a State Party's territory or be committed by its nationals.
- The UN Security Council may refer non-member states.
- A non-State Party can accept jurisdiction for specific cases.

Headquartered in The Hague, Netherlands, the ICC operates independently of the United Nations but maintains close cooperation.

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Membership and Global Participation:

As of 2025, 125 countries are States Parties to the Rome Statute. However, major powers such as the United States, China, India, and Russia have not joined, citing concerns about sovereignty and potential political misuse. States can withdraw by notifying the UN Secretary-General, with withdrawal taking effect one year later. The ICC, however, retains jurisdiction over crimes committed during membership.

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Armenia-Azerbaijan Agree to End 40 Years of Conflict

Azerbaijan and Armenia have finalized a peace agreement aimed at ending nearly four decades of conflict, primarily over the disputed Nagorno-Karabakh region. The agreement has resolved key issues that had stalled previous negotiations, with both sides expressing readiness to sign the peace treaty.

Background of the Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict:

Nagorno-Karabakh is a landlocked region within Azerbaijan that has historically had a majority ethnic-Armenian population. The conflict dates back to the late 1980s, when the region, supported by Armenia, declared independence from Azerbaijan. Two major wars have been fought over this territory: one in the early 1990s and another in 2020.



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The name "Nagorno-Karabakh" is of mixed origin: "Nagorno" (Russian for "mountainous"), "Kara" (Turkic for "black"), and "Bakh" (Persian for "garden").

- **First Nagorno-Karabakh War (1992–1994)**
- **Status Quo (1994–2020):** From 1994 to 2020, ethnic Armenian authorities, backed by Armenia, maintained de facto control over Nagorno-Karabakh, despite international recognition of the region as Azerbaijani territory.
- **Second Nagorno-Karabakh War (September–November 2020):** Azerbaijan launched a major military offensive on September 27, 2020, reclaiming large swaths of territory.
- **2023 Azerbaijani Offensive and Mass Exodus:** In September 2023, Azerbaijan regained full control over Nagorno-Karabakh in a rapid 24-hour military operation. The local ethnic Armenian authorities surrendered, dissolving the unrecognized Republic of Artsakh.

Key Terms of the 2025 Peace Agreement

Sovereignty Recognition: Armenia officially recognized Azerbaijan's sovereignty over Nagorno-Karabakh in 2025, a landmark step in normalizing bilateral relations. This effectively ended Armenian support for Artsakh's independence claims and acknowledged Azerbaijan's territorial integrity.

Legal Claims Renunciation: Both nations agreed to withdraw ongoing legal cases and renounce any future claims related to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. They committed to resolving disputes through diplomatic channels and avoiding international legal escalations.

India's Role and Regional Interests:

India has not taken sides in the conflict but supports a diplomatic resolution via the OSCE Minsk Group. Both Armenia and Azerbaijan are part of the International North-South Transport Corridor (INSTC), a strategic trade route for India.

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India shares a friendship and cooperation treaty with Armenia (signed in 1995), which restricts India from providing military or other forms of assistance to Azerbaijan. However, India also has economic interests in Azerbaijan:

- ONGC/OVL investments in Azerbaijani oilfields.
- Azerbaijan is a key link in the Baku-Tbilisi-Kars rail corridor, which can connect India to Turkey and beyond.

While Armenia supports India's stance on the Kashmir issue, Azerbaijan aligns with Pakistan's position, promoting its narrative on the matter.

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Aditya-L1 Captures First-Ever Image of Solar Flare ‘Kernel’

India's Aditya-L1 mission, launched by ISRO, has achieved a historic scientific milestone by capturing the first-ever image of a solar flare kernel in the lower solar atmosphere, specifically in the photosphere and chromosphere.

Scientific Breakthroughs and Observations

This groundbreaking observation was made using the Solar Ultra-violet Imaging Telescope (SUIT) in the Near Ultra-Violet (NUV) wavelength range.



This critical observation confirms the linkage between flare energy deposition in the lower solar atmosphere and the temperature dynamics in the corona. It supports long-held scientific theories and introduces new insights for solar flare modeling.

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The Aditya-L1 mission was launched on September 2, 2023, aboard ISRO's PSLV C-57 rocket. On January 6, 2024, the satellite was placed into a large halo orbit around the Lagrange Point 1 (L1), situated about 1.5 million kilometers from Earth. This positioning enables continuous, unobstructed observation of the Sun, bypassing the limitations imposed by Earth's shadow.

About ISRO:

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is India's space agency that conducts space research, exploration, and technology development. ISRO is headquartered in Bengaluru, Karnataka.

Recently on 8 January 2025, The Central Government has appointed Dr V. Narayanan as the new chairperson of ISRO, and also as the secretary of the Department of Space.

History

- Founded in 1969, ISRO replaced the Indian National Committee for Space Research (INCOSPAR)
- ISRO's first satellite, Aryabhata, was launched in 1975 by the Soviet Union
- ISRO's first satellite launched by an Indian-made launch vehicle was Rohini in 1980

About Solar Flares:

Solar flares are sudden, intense eruptions of energy resulting from the release of magnetic energy stored in the Sun. They emit powerful radiation, including X-rays and UV rays, and eject high-energy particles. These flares are categorized by intensity, with X-class being the most severe. Such flares can disrupt satellites, GPS systems, communication signals, and even power grids on Earth.

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Sunita Williams & Butch Wilmore Return to Earth

On March 18, 2025, NASA astronauts Butch Wilmore and Sunita Williams safely returned to Earth after an extended stay of 286 days in space. Their mission, initially intended to be a brief flight, was prolonged due to issues with the Boeing Starliner spacecraft and delays in the availability of a SpaceX capsule.

Initial Launch and Boeing Starliner Test Flight: Their mission began in June 2024 with a test flight aboard Boeing's CST-100 Starliner, part of NASA's Commercial Crew Program. The Starliner was intended to transport the astronauts to and from the International Space Station (ISS).

Transfer to SpaceX Crew Dragon: Due to the setbacks with Starliner, NASA decided to bring the astronauts home using a SpaceX Crew Dragon capsule. The Crew Dragon, already certified for operational missions, was undocked from the ISS on March 18, 2025.

Sunita Williams set a new record for the most time spent on spacewalks by a female astronaut, totaling 62 hours and 6 minutes over nine spacewalks.



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NASA's Commercial Crew Program (CCP)

Objective: The CCP was established to ensure safe and cost-effective crew transportation to the ISS, following the retirement of the Space Shuttle program.

Contracts Awarded (2014):

- **SpaceX:** Received ~\$2.6 billion to develop the Crew Dragon.
- **Boeing:** Received up to ~\$4.2 billion to develop the CST-100 Starliner.

About NASA:

NASA, or the National Aeronautics and Space Administration, is a US government agency that explores space and aeronautics. NASA was established in 1958 and is headquartered in Washington, DC.

NASA's achievements

- The Mercury, Gemini, and Apollo programs led to the first human landing on the Moon in 1969
- The International Space Station has provided a unique platform for research in biology, technology, and agriculture

The current administrator is KSC director Janet Petro, who was designated by President Donald Trump on January 20, 2025 as acting Administrator. She replaced Bill Nelson.

Valeri Polyakov (Russia) holds the world record for the longest single continuous space mission: 437 days aboard the Mir space station from January 1994 to March 1995

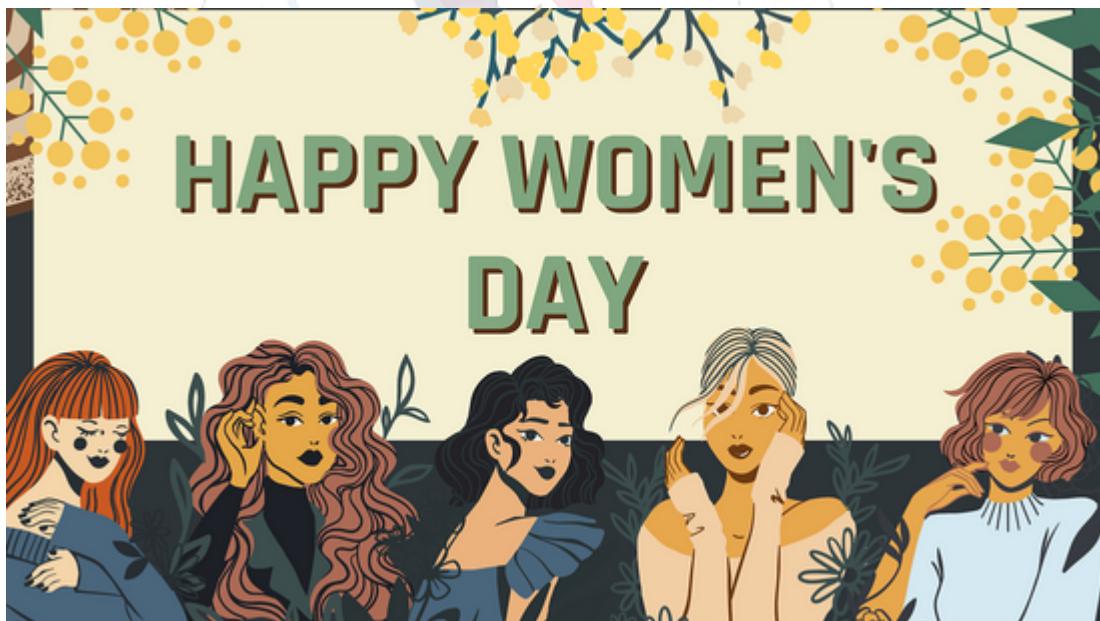
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International Women's Day 2025

International Women's Day (IWD) is celebrated annually on March 8 to honour the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women. It also serves as a platform to raise awareness about gender disparities and to call for action toward achieving gender equality.

The theme for 2025, as declared by the United Nations, is "For ALL Women and Girls: Rights. Equality. Empowerment," while the International Women's Day organization has chosen the campaign theme "Accelerate Action."



Historical

The origins of International Women's Day trace back to early labor and socialist movements in the United States and Europe. The first Women's Day was observed in the United States on February 28, 1909, in honor of a garment workers' strike. In 1910, Clara Zetkin proposed the idea of an International Women's Day at the Socialist Women's Conference in Copenhagen, which was unanimously approved.

Context:

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In 1975, the United Nations celebrated International Women's Year, and the first World Conference on Women was held in Mexico City. Two years later, the UN General Assembly called for member states to observe a Day for Women's Rights and International Peace, further legitimizing IWD.

Symbolism and Celebration:

- **Official Colors:**

- **Purple** – Justice and Dignity
- **Green** – Hope and Growth
- **White** – Purity

These were adopted from the Women's Social and Political Union in the UK, which played a central role in the suffrage movement.

Global Legal Frameworks for Women's Rights:

- **CEDAW (1979):** Known as the international "bill of rights" for women, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women was adopted by the UN in 1979. It requires member states to enact laws ensuring equality for women in education, health, marriage, and the workplace. India signed CEDAW in 1980 and ratified it in 1993 with reservations.
- **Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995):** A milestone global agenda adopted during the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing. It outlined 12 critical areas of concern, including violence, education, political participation, and health.

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- **Sustainable Development Goal 5 (2015):** Aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls by 2030. SDG 5 intersects with other goals such as health, education, and economic growth.

National Women's Day in India:

Celebrated on February 13 to honor the birth anniversary of Sarojini Naidu — poet, freedom fighter, and the first Indian woman to become President of the Indian National Congress and Governor of an Indian state. Known as the “Nightingale of India,” she was a prominent voice for women’s education and empowerment.

Current Status of Women in India (2025):

- **Maternal Health:** Institutional deliveries increased to 95%, reducing maternal mortality from 130 to 97 per 100,000 live births (2014-2020).
- **Education:** Campaigns like Beti Bachao Beti Padhao have improved female literacy and enrollment.
- **Sex Ratio:** NFHS-5 reports 1020 females per 1000 males.

National Commission for Women (NCW): Established in 1992 to review legal safeguards, recommend reforms, and address grievances. Jayanti Patnaik was its first chairperson; as of October 2024, Vijaya Kishore Rahatkar serves as the current chairperson.

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ICC Champions Trophy 2025

News Highlights:

India's cricket team secured a record-extending third ICC Champions Trophy title by defeating New Zealand in the final held in Dubai. India clinched the title with a 4-wicket victory, ending a 12-year wait since their last triumph in 2013.



Tournament Overview

- **Event:** ICC Champions Trophy 2025
- **Venue:** Co-hosted by Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates (UAE)
- **Final Match:** India vs New Zealand, held in Dubai
- **Result:** India won by 4 wickets

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Qualification

Qualification was based on the results of the 2023 ICC Men's Cricket World Cup. The top eight teams from the World Cup automatically qualified for the Champions Trophy, unlike previous editions that relied on team rankings.

Criteria:

India's ICC Tournament Record:

- **World Cups:** 2 titles (1983, 2011)
- **Champions Trophies:** 3 titles (2002 [joint], 2013, 2025)
- **T20 World Cups:** 2 titles (2007, 2024)

Rohit

Sharma's

Achievement:

With this win, Rohit Sharma became only the second Indian captain after MS Dhoni to win multiple ICC trophies, further solidifying his legacy in Indian cricket.

Key Awards and Recipients:

- **Player of the Tournament:** Rachin Ravindra (New Zealand)
- **Player of the Match (Final):** Rohit Sharma (India)
- **Golden Bat (Most Runs):** Rachin Ravindra (New Zealand)
- **Golden Ball (Most Wickets):** Matt Henry (New Zealand)

Security and Hosting Concerns:

Due to security and political tensions between India and Pakistan:

- India refused to play matches in Pakistan.
- A hybrid hosting model was implemented, with all of India's matches held at the **Dubai International Cricket Stadium.**
- Other teams played across **Karachi, Lahore, and Rawalpindi** in Pakistan.

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About the ICC:

The **International Cricket Council (ICC)** is the global governing body of cricket, established in 1909 and headquartered in Dubai. It consists of 108 members, including **12 Full Members** authorized to play Test cricket. The ICC:

- Organizes major global tournaments including the World Cup, T20 World Cup, and Champions Trophy.
- Oversees international match regulations.
- Appoints match officials and upholds the sport's code of conduct.

As of 2025, **Jay Shah** serves as the ICC Chairman.

Champions Trophy: A Brief History

- **Inception:** Launched as the ICC Knockout in 1998 in Dhaka, Bangladesh; renamed the Champions Trophy in 2002.
- **Format:** Features 8 teams divided into 2 groups of 4. Top 2 from each group progress to semi-finals and then the final.
- **Frequency:** Biennial until 2009, then every four years.
- **Most Successful Teams:**
 - India: 3 titles (2002 [joint], 2013, 2025)
 - Australia: 2 titles (2006, 2009)

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97th Academy Awards

The 97th Academy Awards, commonly known as the Oscars 2025, were held on March 2, 2025, at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, Los Angeles. Hosted by comedian Conan O'Brien, the ceremony honored films released in 2024.

Key Highlights:

- **Anora's Historic Sweep:** Won 5 out of 6 nominations including Best Picture, Best Director (Sean Baker), Best Actress (Mikey Madison), Best Film Editing, and Best Original Screenplay.
- **Adrien Brody:** Won Best Actor for his role in *The Brutalist*, marking his second Oscar.
- **Zoe Saldaña:** Secured Best Supporting Actress for *Emilia Pérez*, her first Oscar win.
- **No Other Land:** Won Best Documentary Feature for its depiction of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.
- **Indian Entry "Anuja":** Lost to *I'm Not a Robot* in the Best Live Action Short Film category.

Anora's Triumph:

- *Anora* became the fourth film to win both the Palme d'Or and Best Picture Oscar (following *The Lost Weekend*, *Marty*, and *Parasite*).
- Produced on a modest \$6 million budget, its success highlighted the power of independent cinema.
- Director Sean Baker led multiple aspects of the film (writing, producing, directing, editing).

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James Bond Tribute:

- Honored the legacy of James Bond and producers Barbara Broccoli and Michael G. Wilson.
- Performances included BLACKPINK's Lisa ("Live and Let Die"), Doja Cat ("Diamonds Are Forever"), and Raye ("Skyfall").

"No Other Land" Documentary:

- Co-directed by Palestinian Basel Adra and Israeli Yuval Abraham.
- Chronicles the forced displacement of Palestinians in Masafer Yatta (2019-2023).
- Won Best Documentary Feature; acceptance speech called for recognition of national rights of both Palestinians and Israelis.



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Oscar Statuette Resale Restrictions:

- Since the 1950s, winners cannot resell their statuettes without offering them to the Academy for \$1.
- Legal examples include the Academy's injunction against the resale of Michael Todd's Oscar (1989) and controversy over Harold Russell's auction (1992).

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences (AMPAS):

- Established: May 11, 1927
- Members: Over 10,000 (as of 2024), divided into 17 branches (e.g., actors, directors, editors).
- Voting: Each branch votes for its own category; all members vote for Best Picture.
- Museum: Opened in 2021 in LA, showcasing film history and artifacts.
- Governance: Managed by a Board of Governors; led by a President and CEO.

Interesting Oscar Facts:

- **Longest Ceremony:** 4 hrs 23 mins (2002)
- **Youngest Winner:** Tatum O'Neal (10 years old, *Paper Moon*, 1973)
- **Most Individual Wins:** Walt Disney (22 Oscars)
- **Most Wins by a Film:** *Ben-Hur* (1959), *Titanic* (1997), *The Lord of the Rings: Return of the King* (2003) – 11 Oscars each

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National Science Day 2025

Why in News?

India celebrates National Science Day (NSD) on 28th February annually to honor Sir Chandrasekhara Venkata (CV) Raman's discovery of the Raman Effect in 1928.

The 2025 theme, "Empowering Indian Youth for Global Leadership in Science and Innovation for Viksit Bharat," highlights the role of scientific innovation and youth leadership, aligning with the Viksit Bharat 2047 vision.

About CV Raman

- **Early Life:** Born on 7th November 1888 in Tiruchirappalli, Tamil Nadu, CV Raman earned his M.A. in Physics from Presidency College, Madras. He made significant contributions to atomic physics and optics.
- **Institution Building:** He founded the Raman Research Institute (1948), Indian Journal of Physics (1926), and Indian Academy of Sciences (1934).
- **Honors & Recognition:**
 - Knighted in 1929 by the British Government
 - Awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1930 for the Raman Effect (first Asian Nobel laureate in science)
 - Conferred the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian award, in 1954

The Raman Effect

The Raman Effect refers to the phenomenon in which incoming excitation light interacts with a sample and undergoes a change in wavelength. This results in scattered light due to its interaction with molecular vibrations.

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India's Advancements in Science and Technology in 2024

- **Innovation and IP:** India ranked 39th in the Global Innovation Index 2024 and 6th in global Intellectual Property (IP) filings, according to the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) 2024 Report.
- **Network Readiness:** India rose to 49th place in the Network Readiness Index 2024, a significant improvement from 79th in 2019, indicating progress in ICT and digital transformation.
- **Anusandhan National Research Foundation (ANRF):** Launched under the ANRF Act 2023, this initiative aims to boost India's R&D ecosystem. Notable programs include promoting electric vehicles (EVs) in India.
- **National Supercomputing Mission (NSM):** Under this initiative, 33 supercomputers with a combined computing capacity of 32 petaflops have been deployed across India.

Note: In 1986, the Government of India designated 28th February as National Science Day, which was first celebrated in 1987.

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HeroRATS Innovation & National TB Elimination

A Tanzanian non-profit organization is conducting research to train African giant pouched rats, or HeroRATS, to detect Tuberculosis (TB).

How Can HeroRATS Help India's TB Elimination Efforts?

- **Fast & Cost-Effective Screening:** HeroRATS provide rapid detection of TB by sniffing sputum samples, offering a non-invasive, inexpensive method for mass screening.
- **Improving Early Diagnosis:** Especially useful in pediatric and smear-negative TB cases, where traditional methods may miss detection.
- **Reducing Transmission:** Early and accurate identification allows for quicker treatment, thereby helping reduce TB transmission rates.



Key Facts About Tuberculosis (TB):

- **Cause:** TB is caused by the bacterium *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, affecting primarily the lungs (pulmonary TB) but can also affect other organs (extra-pulmonary TB).
- **Transmission:** Airborne disease spread when infected individuals cough, sneeze, or spit.

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India's Progress and Challenges

- **UN SDG Target:** Elimination of TB by 2030; India aims for 2025.
- **WHO Recognition (Nov 2023):**
 - TB incidence in India dropped by 16% (2015–2022).
 - TB mortality declined by 18% in the same period.
- **PM Initiatives:**
 - PM Modi addressed the One World TB Summit in Varanasi.

What is Nikshay Poshan Yojana (NPY)?

- **Launched:** 2018 by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.
- **Objective:** Provide nutritional support to TB patients.
- **Mechanism:** Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) of ₹500 per month to each patient.
- **Concerns:** Only two-thirds of eligible patients availed benefits in 2021, raising implementation concerns.

National TB Elimination Programme (NTEP)

- **Objective:** Eliminate TB in India by 2025.
- **Replaced:** The Revised National Tuberculosis Control Program (RNTCP).

Pradhan Mantri TB Mukt Bharat Abhiyan

- **Aim:** Mobilize support from citizens and organizations to adopt TB patients and support their nutrition and care.
- **Launched by:** Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

Global and National Efforts to Combat TB

- **Global:** WHO's "Find. Treat. All. #EndTB" initiative.

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World Wildlife Day & 7th Meeting of the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL)

The Prime Minister chaired the 7th meeting of the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) at Gir National Park (Junagadh, Gujarat) on the occasion of World Wildlife Day (3rd March) and announced several initiatives for wildlife conservation.



What is World Wildlife Day?

- **About:** It is observed annually on 3rd March to highlight the urgent need to protect biodiversity amid the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution.
- **Origin:** It was established by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in December 2013 to commemorate the adoption of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) in 1973.
- **Theme 2025:** "Wildlife Conservation Finance: Investing in People and Planet."
 - This theme emphasizes the importance of financial investment in wildlife conservation to ensure a sustainable future.

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Key Announcements During the 7th Meeting of NBWL

New Initiatives:

1. **Great Indian Bustard Conservation:** A National Great Indian Bustard Conservation Plan was launched to address the declining population of this critically endangered species.
2. **Gharial Conservation:** A new conservation initiative was introduced to arrest the dwindling population of gharials.
3. **Expansion of Project Cheetah:** Project Cheetah will be expanded to:
 - Gandhi Sagar Wildlife Sanctuary (Madhya Pradesh)
 - Banni Grasslands (Gujarat)
4. **Strengthening Project Lion:** The government extended Project Lion for another 10 years to expand the range of Asiatic Lions across Gujarat's Saurashtra region.
5. **Riverine Dolphin Estimation:** India's 1st Riverine Dolphin Estimation Report was released, revealing the presence of 6,327 dolphins across the Ganga, Brahmaputra, and Indus river basins.

Namami Gange Programme

- An Integrated Conservation Mission approved as a Flagship Programme by the Union Government in June 2014.
- Aims to accomplish the twin objectives of:
 - Effective abatement of pollution
 - Conservation and rejuvenation of the National River Ganga
- Operated under the Department of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation, Ministry of Jal Shakti.

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- Implemented by the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) and respective State Program Management Groups (SPMGs).

Project Lion

- **Launched:** 2020
- **Objective:** Securing Asiatic lions through habitat improvement and advanced monitoring using radio collars and camera traps.
- **Conservation Status:**
 - IUCN: Vulnerable
 - Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972: Schedule I and IV
 - CITES: Appendix I
- **Other Initiatives for Lions:**
 - International Big Cats Alliance (2023)
 - **Greater Gir Concept:** Aims to develop additional lion habitats beyond the Gir National Park and Sanctuary.
 - **Barda Wildlife Sanctuary:** Identified as a potential "second home" for Asiatic lions.

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Project Hifazat

In a significant step toward strengthening the safety and protection of women and children affected by violence, Punjab's Social Security, Women, and Child Development Minister, Dr. Baljit Kaur, officially launched 'Project Hifazat' on March 7, 2025. The initiative provides integrated and immediate support through 24x7 helplines, inter-departmental coordination, and on-ground response mechanisms..

Key Features of 'Project Hifazat':

- **24x7 Women and Child Helpline:** Dedicated helplines under *Mission Shakti* and *Mission Vatsalya* have been launched to offer round-the-clock support to victims of violence.
- **Integrated Agency Response:** The project ensures coordination between police, social welfare departments, child protection services, and healthcare systems to offer a unified response.
- **Rapid Field Response Teams:** On-ground teams will be mobilized swiftly to reach out to victims and ensure safety and timely intervention.

India's Global Engagement in Gender Equality: Annpurna Devi, Union Minister for Women and Child Development, will participate in the 69th session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) at the UN Headquarters in New York from March 10 to 21, 2025.

CSW is a key global intergovernmental body under the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), dedicated exclusively to promoting gender equality and women's rights. The 2025 session holds special significance as it marks the 30th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, adopted during the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995.

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About

Mission

Shakti:

Launched during the 15th Finance Commission cycle (2021-22 to 2025-26), *Mission Shakti* is an umbrella scheme focused on the safety, security, and empowerment of women. It integrates all previous women-focused schemes under one platform, aiming for impactful implementation through convergence.

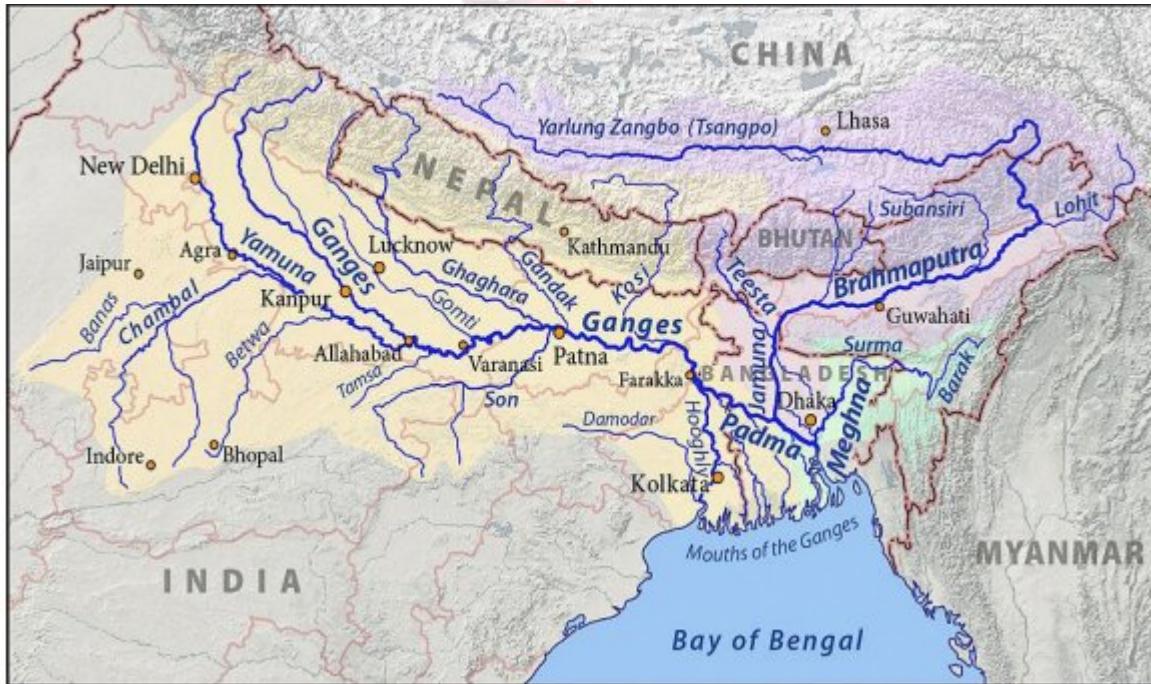
Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana (PMMVY):

This centrally sponsored maternity benefit programme, implemented by the Ministry of Women and Child Development, has been operational since January 1, 2017. It provides financial assistance to pregnant and lactating mothers for their nutritional and healthcare needs.

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Ganga Water Treaty



The Ganga Water Treaty, signed in 1996 between India and Bangladesh, is set to expire in 2026. In light of this, upcoming meetings between the two nations hold significant weight in shaping future water-sharing agreements. Bangladesh is demanding a larger share of the dry-season flow due to growing agricultural water scarcity. Tensions have been heightened by recent political changes in Bangladesh and longstanding unresolved disputes, particularly over the Teesta River.

Background of the Ganga Water Treaty

The Ganga River has historically been a source of friction between India and Bangladesh. The construction and operationalization of the Farakka Barrage in 1975, aimed at diverting water to flush out silt from the Hooghly River, triggered intense disputes. As a downstream riparian country, Bangladesh experienced water shortages, especially in the dry season, leading to grievances over reduced flow.

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To address this, the Ganga Water Treaty was signed on December 12, 1996, by Indian Prime Minister H. D. Deve Gowda and Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina Wajed. The treaty established a 30-year arrangement that recognized Bangladesh's rights as a lower riparian and created a framework for cooperative water-sharing.

Key Provisions of the Treaty

- The treaty specifies formulas for sharing the Ganga's water at the Farakka Barrage during the dry season.
- When the flow is at or below 70,000 cusecs, both countries are guaranteed equal shares.

Recent Developments

- The 86th meeting of the India-Bangladesh Joint Rivers Commission took place in Kolkata in March 2025. An 11-member Bangladeshi delegation, led by Md. Abul Hossan, visited the Farakka Barrage to observe water flow and erosion.
- India and Bangladesh share 54 rivers. The Joint Rivers Commission, established in 1972, continues to serve as a bilateral mechanism for managing shared river systems.

Teesta River Dispute: A Lingering Challenge

Among the many shared rivers, the Teesta remains one of the most contentious. Originating in the Himalayas, the river flows through Sikkim and West Bengal before merging with the Brahmaputra in Assam and then flowing into Bangladesh.

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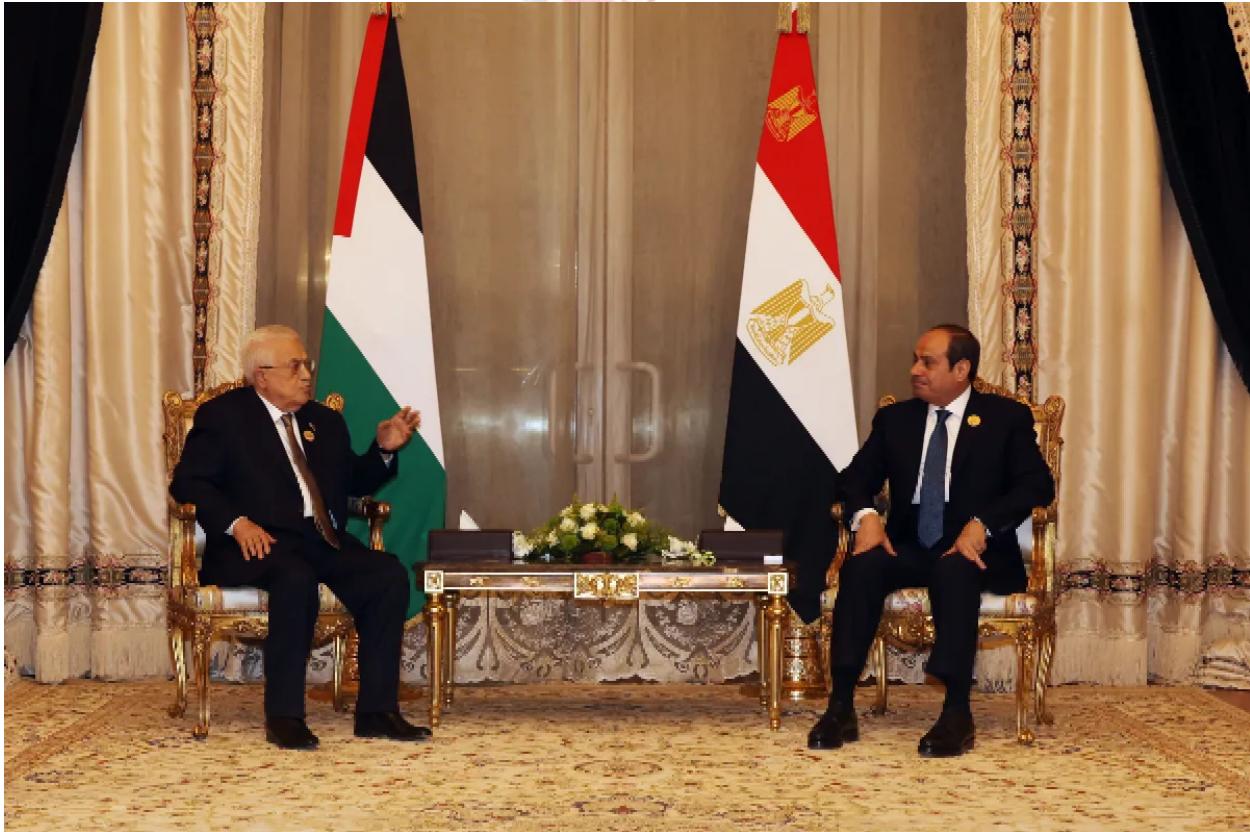
- The Teesta governs the livelihoods of thousands of people in both India and Bangladesh.
- Bangladesh has sought an equitable share of Teesta waters, akin to the Ganga Water Treaty framework.
- For West Bengal, Teesta is vital to the water supply of several North Bengal districts, which has led to resistance from the state government.
- Despite the MoU on Kushiyara River water sharing being finalized in 2022, the Teesta agreement has seen no formal resolution.

A major hurdle in advancing the Teesta agreement is the internal federal structure of India, where individual states possess considerable say over transboundary agreements. West Bengal, a critical stakeholder in the Teesta issue, has not yet endorsed the agreement.

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Arab League Proposes Cairo Declaration for Gaza



Context: An emergency summit of the Arab League was held in Cairo, Egypt, to address the escalating humanitarian crisis in Gaza caused by Israeli military operations. The result was the proposal of the Cairo Declaration—a comprehensive, Arab-backed plan for Gaza's reconstruction and governance.

What is the Cairo Declaration and Its Purpose?

- The Cairo Declaration is a \$53-billion Arab League plan led by Egypt for the reconstruction of Gaza.
- It was adopted on March 4, 2025, a day after Israel halted all humanitarian aid to Gaza.

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- The plan supports a two-state solution based on the 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as the capital of Palestine.
- It calls for the creation of a “Gaza administration committee” composed of qualified Gazans for a transitional period.

How Does the Cairo Declaration Differ from Previous Proposals?

- It follows the Bahrain Declaration of May 2024 but includes new elements.
- Unlike previous plans, the Cairo Declaration does not mention the removal of Hamas, allowing room for the group’s involvement in transitional governance. Hamas welcomed the plan for its call for fresh elections.
- **Contrasted with Trump’s proposal:**
 - Trump proposed evacuating Palestinians from Gaza and repositioning the U.S. as the administrator of a “Middle East Riviera.”
 - The Cairo Declaration rejects these proposals as ethnic cleansing and violations of international law.

Major Provisions of the Cairo Declaration

- Deployment of UN peacekeeping forces in both Gaza and the West Bank, reiterating the Bahrain Declaration.
- All Palestinian factions are encouraged to unite under the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), following essential internal reforms.
- The PLO is reaffirmed as the “sole legitimate representative” of the Palestinian people. Hamas, however, is currently not a part of the PLO.

Reactions to Trump’s Plan

- **Saudi Arabia:** Rejected the Trump plan and reaffirmed support for an independent Palestinian state.
- **European and Global Leaders:** Countries such as Australia, Ireland, Germany, China, and New Zealand opposed Trump’s proposal and reiterated support for the two-state solution.

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- **Turkey:** Strongly condemned the proposed forced deportations of Palestinians.
- **Palestinian Authority:** President Mahmoud Abbas called on the UN to protect Palestinian rights and condemned Trump's plan as a violation of international law.

About Arab League:

The **Arab League**, also known as the League of Arab States, is a regional organization of Arab states in the Middle East and North Africa, formed in Cairo on March 22, 1945, with the aim of strengthening relations and coordinating policies among its members.

Founding

The initial members included Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Iraq, Transjordan (now Jordan), Saudi Arabia, and Yemen.

The Arab League is **headquartered in Cairo, Egypt**.

Membership:

- Member States: The Arab League currently comprises 22 member states from the Arab world, including countries from North Africa and the Middle East

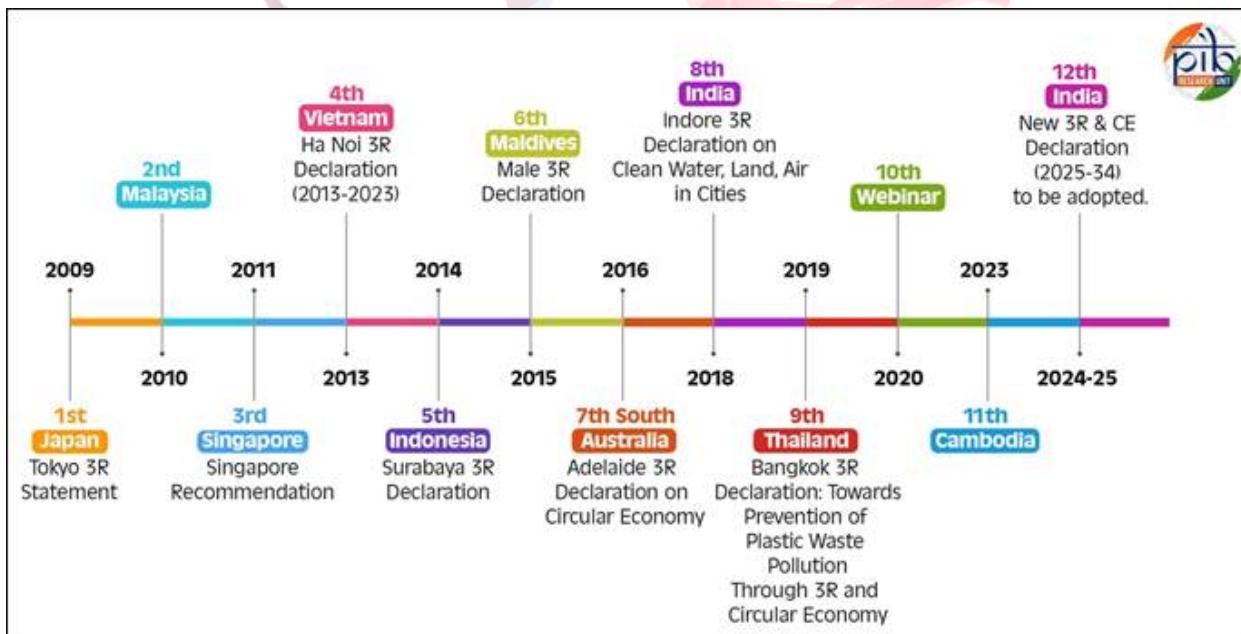
Members:

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Coalition of Cities for Circularity (C-3)

Context: Recently, the Union Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs announced the launch of the Coalition of Cities for Circularity (C-3), a key initiative to promote sustainable urban development in the Asia-Pacific region.



About the Coalition (C-3):

- C-3 is a multinational alliance designed for city-to-city collaboration, knowledge-sharing, and private sector partnerships focused on sustainable urban development.
- Its primary aim is to support cities in the Asia-Pacific region in addressing challenges related to waste management and enhancing resource efficiency.
- The Prime Minister of India has proposed the formation of a working group comprising member countries to finalize the structure and operational framework of the C-3 Alliance for effective implementation.

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Announcement Platform:

- The initiative was announced during the 12th Regional 3R and Circular Economy Forum on Asia and the Pacific, held in Jaipur.

12th Regional Forum Meeting:

- **About:** This regional platform promotes the 3R principles (Reduce, Reuse, Recycle) and encourages circular economy practices across Asia-Pacific.
- **Participants:** The forum brings together policymakers, industry leaders, researchers, and partners to strategize on resource efficiency.
- **Historical Background:** Initiated in 2009, the forum aims to foster a resource-efficient society. The Hanoi 3R Declaration (2013-2023) had previously set 33 voluntary goals aligned with circular economy targets.
- **Theme for 2025:** "Realizing Circular Societies Towards Achieving SDGs and Carbon Neutrality in Asia-Pacific."

Global Initiatives:

- Cities like Amsterdam, Copenhagen, and Tokyo have already begun implementing circular economy policies under the C-3 framework.

India's Circular Economy Efforts:

- **Swachh Bharat Mission:** Promotes waste segregation and recycling at the grassroots level.
- **Smart Cities Mission:** Encourages sustainable and resilient urban infrastructure development.
- **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR):** Holds producers accountable for the entire lifecycle of their products, especially in waste management.

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- **GOBAR-Dhan Scheme:** Covers approximately 67.8% of India's districts, aiming to convert waste into wealth by promoting biogas and organic compost.

What is a Circular Economy?

- A circular economy is a regenerative system in which materials and resources remain in continuous use, avoiding waste creation.
- Processes include maintenance, reuse, refurbishment, remanufacturing, recycling, and composting.
- This model addresses climate change, biodiversity loss, waste, and pollution by disconnecting economic growth from the consumption of finite resources.

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Swavalambini

The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE), in collaboration with NITI Aayog, launched "Swavalambini" in Assam, Meghalaya, and Mizoram.

What is Swavalambini?

About: Swavalambini is a women entrepreneurship program aimed at empowering women in Northeast Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) by nurturing entrepreneurial mindsets, providing resources, and offering mentorship for business success.

Program Structure: The initiative is launched by MSDE in partnership with the Indian Institute of Entrepreneurship (IIE), Guwahati, and NITI Aayog.



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Government Support for Swavalambini ‘Swavalambini’ is aligned with broader government efforts to promote women entrepreneurship through several flagship initiatives:

- **Start-Up India**
- **Stand-Up India**
- **PM Mudra Yojana (PMMY)**
- **Women Entrepreneurship Platform**

Union Budget 2025 Announcements:

- Allocation of ₹10,000 crore fund for start-ups.
- Extension of the 100% tax exemption on start-up profits for another five years.

Policy Alignment: Swavalambini complements the goals of the **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020**, emphasizing skill development and industry collaboration. By targeting the Northeast region, the program aims to unlock the entrepreneurial potential of women, contributing to sustainable economic development.

About PM Mudra Yojana (PMMY)

- **Launched:** 2015 during the Union Budget FY-2016.
- **Objective:** To extend affordable credit to micro and small enterprises (MSMEs), especially to those not covered under the formal financial system.
- **Focus on Women:** In FY 2022, women entrepreneurs accounted for approximately 71.4% of total PMMY loan accounts.

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US Withdrawal from Loss and Damage Fund

On March 10, 2025, the United States officially withdrew from the Loss and Damage Fund (LDF), a multilateral climate finance mechanism created under the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) to support vulnerable nations dealing with climate-induced disasters.

The decision adds to the US's broader disengagement from global climate responsibilities, including earlier withdrawals or minimal participation in the Paris Agreement and the Green Climate Fund.

About the Loss and Damage Fund (LDF)

- **Establishment:** Created at COP27 (2022) in Sharm El Sheikh, Egypt.
- **Operationalization:** Finalized at COP28 (2023), with operational frameworks agreed upon by member states.
- **Purpose:** To assist developing countries, particularly small island nations and those facing heightened climate vulnerability, in coping with losses and damages resulting from climate change. This includes economic and non-economic losses such as property damage, displacement, biodiversity loss, and destruction of cultural heritage.
- **Governance:** Managed by a Governing Board under the UNFCCC, with the World Bank designated as its interim trustee.
- **Current Pledges:** As of March 2025, 27 countries had pledged a total of USD 765.59 million.

Historical Evolution of the Concept

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- The concept of "loss and damage" has existed since the early 1990s under the UNFCCC framework.
- Initially raised by the Least Developed Countries (LDC) group, the demand was for rich nations to compensate vulnerable countries for irreversible damage caused by climate change.
- In 2013, the Warsaw International Mechanism (WIM) on Loss and Damage was created at COP19 but lacked dedicated funding.
- At COP26 (Glasgow 2021), a task force was formed to develop financial instruments to address loss and damage.

Need vs. Reality

- **Estimated Needs:** Developing nations may need up to USD 300 billion annually by 2030 to address loss and damage, with some estimates going as high as USD 671 billion.
- **Actual Pledges:** As of 2025, the fund has received less than USD 1 billion, far below the estimated needs.
- **India's Losses:** India alone faced climate-induced weather-related losses amounting to USD 56 billion between 2019 and 2023.

Implications of US Withdrawal

- Creates uncertainty and funding gaps for vulnerable nations already grappling with rising sea levels, extreme heat, and unpredictable climate events.
- Exacerbates tensions in North-South climate negotiations, with developing countries accusing wealthy nations of not fulfilling historical responsibilities.

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About UNFCCC

- Adopted in 1992, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change aims to stabilize greenhouse gas concentrations to prevent dangerous human-induced interference with the climate system.
- It is the parent treaty to major climate agreements such as the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Agreement.
- It operates through annual COP (Conference of Parties) summits to coordinate global climate action.

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De-Dollarization and India



Recent financial and currency initiatives, particularly within the BRICS+ framework, aim to reduce global dependence on the US dollar-dominated financial system (a process termed de-dollarisation), and promote alternative mechanisms for international trade and financial transactions.

What is De-dollarization?

De-dollarisation refers to the systematic reduction of the US dollar's dominance in global trade, finance, and foreign exchange reserves. It involves the substitution of the US dollar with other currencies or assets such as gold, cryptocurrencies, or regional currencies in the following domains:

- International trade settlements
- Commodity transactions (e.g., oil)

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- Central bank reserve holdings

Recent Financial and Currency Initiatives for De-dollarisation:

- **mBridge Project:**
 - A digital cross-border payment system based on Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs).
 - Initially promoted by central banks of China, Thailand, and others, supported by the Bank for International Settlements (BIS).
 - Speculative reports suggest the BIS withdrew support under US pressure to preserve dollar dominance.
- **BRICS+ Initiatives:**
 - **BRICS Bridge and BRICS Clear:** Proposed financial systems to facilitate payment and clearing among BRICS+ countries.
 - **BRICS+ Members:** Includes Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, UAE, and Indonesia.
- **BRICS Currency Proposal:**
 - During the 16th Kazan BRICS Summit 2024, members agreed in principle to adopt a settlement currency known as the "Unit".
 - The Unit is to be backed by 40% gold and 60% local currencies of BRICS+ member states.

Implications for India:

- **Strategic Autonomy:**
 - De-dollarisation efforts align with India's goal of greater financial and strategic independence in global affairs.
- **Digital Rupee and UPI Expansion:**
 - India's launch of the Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) and growing global recognition of UPI offer tools to engage in alternative payment systems.
- **Bilateral Trade in Local Currencies:**

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- India has signed agreements with several countries, including Russia and the UAE, to settle bilateral trade in rupees.



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Operation Brahma



A massive 7.7 magnitude earthquake struck central Myanmar, causing widespread destruction, particularly in the city of Mandalay. This seismic event is one of the most powerful earthquakes to hit the region in recent years and has resulted in significant loss of life and infrastructure damage.

What Caused the Myanmar Earthquake?

- **Strike-Slip Faulting:**

- The earthquake was triggered by a geological phenomenon known as strike-slip faulting.
- This type of faulting occurs when two blocks of the Earth's crust slide past one another horizontally.

- **Sagaing Fault:**

- The quake occurred along the Sagaing Fault, a major geological feature that spans approximately 1,500 km through Myanmar.

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The Sagaing Fault is one of the world's longest and most active strike-slip faults and has been responsible for several devastating earthquakes in Myanmar's history.

India's Humanitarian Response: Operation Brahma

- In response to the disaster, the Government of India launched **Operation Brahma** to provide humanitarian assistance and disaster relief (HADR) to Myanmar.
- This move reinforces India's role as the '**First Responder**' in the Indo-Pacific region and its commitment to regional cooperation.

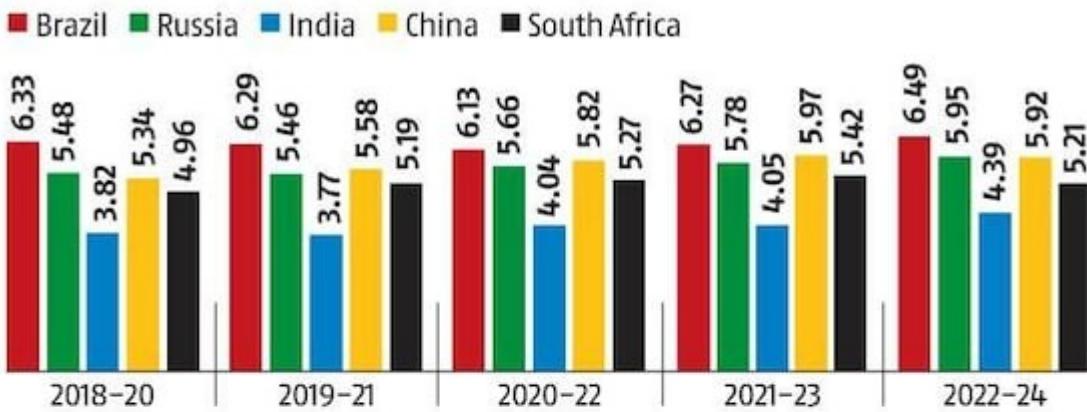
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World Happiness Report 2025

The World Happiness Report (WHR) 2025, released on March 20 (World Happiness Day), was published by the Wellbeing Research Centre at the University of Oxford in collaboration with Gallup and the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (UNSDSN). This annual report ranks countries based on citizens' self-reported happiness and life satisfaction.

REPORT CARD Scores of Brics countries (out of 10)



HOW THE NEIGHBOURS FARED



| Countries | Happiness score (2022-24) | Change in happiness score from 2006-10 to 2022-24 |
|------------|---------------------------|---|
| Nepal | 5.31 | 0.71 |
| Pakistan | 4.77 | -0.37 |
| INDIA | 4.39 | -0.58 |
| Sri Lanka | 3.89 | -0.38 |
| Bangladesh | 3.85 | -0.92 |

Note: Scores have been calculated on a three-year average

Source: World Happiness Report 2025

Key Highlights

Finland has once again topped the list of the world's happiest countries for the eighth consecutive year, followed by Denmark, Iceland, and Sweden. These Nordic countries continue to dominate the top ranks due to strong social systems, trust in governance, and high levels of personal well-being.

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India has improved its position, moving from 126th in 2024 to 118th in 2025. Despite the rise, it still remains far behind the top-performing countries. Afghanistan remains the lowest-ranked country in the report, holding the 147th spot for the fourth consecutive year.

Methodology of WHR

The rankings are derived from a three-year average of people's life evaluations, where respondents assess their current lives on a scale from 0 to 10 (known as the "Cantril ladder"). The overall happiness score for each country is determined using six key indicators:

- GDP per capita
- Social support
- Healthy life expectancy
- Freedom to make life choices
- Generosity
- Perceptions of corruption

Beyond these metrics, the report also emphasizes the importance of trust, social connections, shared meals, and community kindness. These factors are often seen to outweigh purely economic indicators in contributing to happiness.

World Happiness Day

World Happiness Day is celebrated annually on March 20. The idea was initiated by Bhutan, a country known for its Gross National Happiness (GNH) philosophy, which prioritizes well-being over economic output. Recognizing Bhutan's approach, the UN General Assembly declared March 20 as the International Day of Happiness in July 2012.

The theme for 2025 is "Caring and Sharing," which highlights the role of compassion, generosity, and community bonds in fostering happiness and well-being worldwide.

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About the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network

The UNSDSN is a non-profit organization launched by the United Nations in 2012. It works to promote the implementation of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) at both national and international levels. The Network plays a central role in producing the World Happiness Report and supporting data-driven policy efforts for global well-being.

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World Water Day 2025



On the occasion of World Water Day (22nd March 2025), the Ministry of Jal Shakti launched the 6th edition of the Jal Shakti Abhiyan: Catch the Rain campaign with the theme "People's Action for Water Conservation - Towards Intensified Community Connect" (Jal Sanchay Jan Bhagidari: Jan Jagrukta Ki Or). The campaign highlights the importance of water conservation and community involvement in sustainable water management.

The government emphasized its commitment to the principle of "Every Drop Counts" by focusing the campaign on 148 districts across the country. The initiatives include promoting water conservation, rainwater harvesting, and groundwater recharge. Furthermore, the "Jal-Jangal-Jan" Abhiyan was launched to restore ecological links between forests, rivers, and springs, reinforcing the interconnectedness of natural ecosystems and water sustainability.

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About World Water Day:

World Water Day is observed every year on 22nd March to raise global awareness about the importance of water conservation and sustainable water management. The day was conceptualized during the 1992 Rio Summit and was officially adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) in 1993. It aligns with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal 6 (SDG-6), which aims to ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all by 2030.

The theme for World Water Day 2025 is "Glacier Preservation," emphasizing the urgent need to protect glaciers as critical freshwater reservoirs that are being threatened by climate change.

Jal Shakti Abhiyan and Jal Jeevan Mission:

The Jal Shakti Abhiyan, launched in 2019 by the Ministry of Jal Shakti, is a national campaign to promote water conservation and water security. It involves collaboration among various ministries of the central and state governments.

One of the flagship programs under this initiative is the Jal Jeevan Mission. This central government program aims to ensure access to piped water supply for every household in rural India. The mission subsumes the earlier National Rural Drinking Water Programme (NRDWP) and operates under the objective of providing Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTC), known popularly as "Har Ghar Nal Se Jal" (HGNSJ).

The Jal Jeevan Mission incorporates several water conservation techniques such as:

- Point recharge systems,
- Desilting of minor irrigation tanks,
- Reuse of greywater (wastewater from household activities) for agriculture,

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- Ensuring source sustainability

The program emphasizes a community-based approach to water management. The Prime Minister has called on all states to promote active community participation and transform the Jal Jeevan Mission into a mass movement or 'Jan Andolan', aiming to achieve universal household tap connection by 2024.

The Ministry of Jal Shakti (lit. 'Ministry of Water Resources') is a ministry under Government of India which was formed in May 2019 under the second Modi ministry. This was formed by merging of two ministries; the Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation and the Ministry of Drinking Water and Sanitation.

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ONE LINERS

Tea Industry and Jhumoir

Jhumoir is a traditional Assamese folk dance celebrating the lives of tea garden workers, primarily from tribal communities. Performed during festivals and cultural events, it symbolizes resilience and unity. The tea industry in Assam employs millions, and Jhumoir reflects their cultural identity, heritage, and socio-economic role in regional development.

NASA's SPHEREx Mission

NASA's SPHEREx (Spectro-Photometer for the History of the Universe, Epoch of Reionization, and Ices Explorer) mission, launching in 2025, aims to map the entire sky in infrared. It will investigate the Big Bang, galaxy evolution, and the building blocks of life, offering unprecedented insights into cosmic origins and structure.

Jan Aushadhi Diwas

Jan Aushadhi Diwas is celebrated annually on March 7 to promote the use of generic medicines under the Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana (PMBJP). It raises awareness about affordable healthcare and accessible medicine. The day recognizes efforts to reduce out-of-pocket expenses for patients and ensure equitable pharmaceutical distribution across India.

Mission 300: Electrifying 300 Million Lives in Africa

- ◆ *Launched By:* World Bank & African Development Bank (AfDB) in 2025, with key partners like Rockefeller Foundation, GEAPP, SE4ALL & ESMAP.
- ◆ *Objective:* Provide affordable, reliable, and sustainable electricity to **300 million people** in Sub-Saharan Africa by 2030.

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The **Khelo India Para Games (KIPG) 2025** will take place in New Delhi from **March 20-27**, featuring **1,230 para athletes** from around the world. Union Minister **Dr. Mansukh Mandaviya** announced that the event will include **six disciplines**, showcasing medalists from the **Paris Paralympics 2024** and **Asian Para Games 2023**.

India has emerged as the **third-largest biofuel producer globally**, marking a significant shift toward cleaner and renewable energy, according to Petroleum Minister **Hardeep Singh Puri**. The country has achieved **19.6% ethanol blending in petrol** as of January, well ahead of its **original 2030 target**.

Japanese mathematician Masaki Kashiwara wins the 2025 Abel Prize for pioneering contributions to algebraic analysis, notably in D-modules and crystal bases, advancing connections between differential equations and algebraic geometry.

AIKEYME 2025 is India's maiden naval exercise with 10 African nations, co-hosted by Indian Navy and TPDF in Tanzania. A symbol of maritime unity and cooperation, held mid-April.\

AIKEYME – Africa-India Key Maritime Engagement

Haryana topped the Khelo India Para Games 2025 medal tally with 34 golds. The event saw 1,300 athletes, 18 national records, and showcased India's rising para-sports excellence.

The **second edition of the Khelo India Para Games (KIPG) 2025** concluded after eight days of competitive action.

Held across **three venues in New Delhi**

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Kirsty Coventry becomes the first woman and African to lead the IOC, winning the presidency at 41. The Olympic champion pledges athlete welfare and zero tolerance for corruption.

India's first automated vertical-lift railway bridge, replacing the century-old Pamban Bridge, will enhance maritime safety and connectivity to Rameswaram, Tamil Nadu, inaugurated by PM on April 6.

World Forests Day (WFD), is celebrated each year on **21st March**

Madhav National Park in Madhya Pradesh was officially declared as India's 58th Tiger Reserve

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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.*

