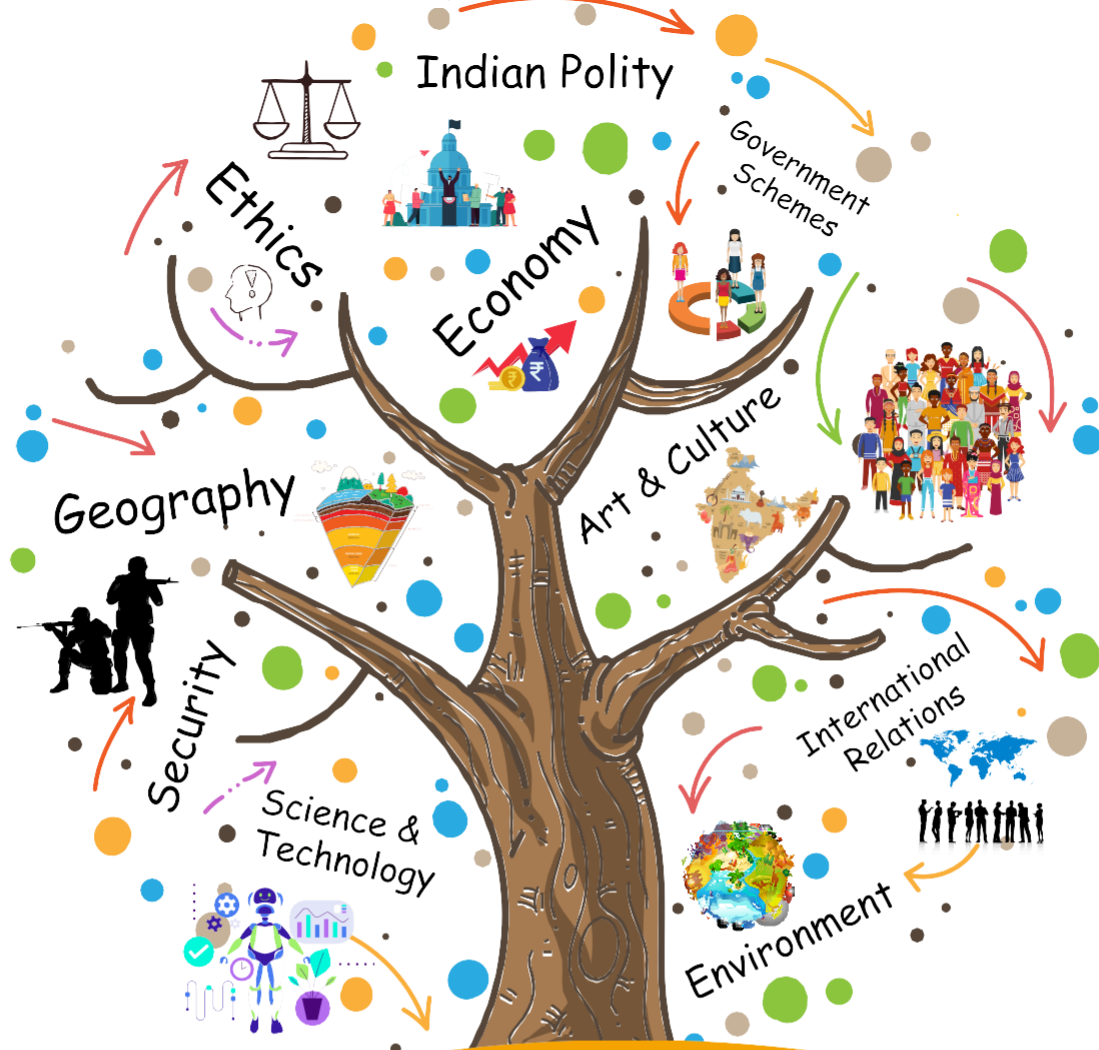


Monthly Current Affairs

JULY 2025



ZETA Topicals

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In Focus: July 2025

Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO)

“Shanghai Cooperation Organization”. It is an intergovernmental political, economic, and security alliance founded in 2001 by Kazakhstan, China, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan.

The first summit was held in Shanghai, China, in 2001.

In News: India's Defence Minister refused to sign the joint statement at the Defence Ministers' meeting in Qingdao, China. The joint statement omitted the mention of Pahalgam terror attack while mentioning about the Jaffar Express hijacking in Pakistan in March. This bold move has sent ripples across the geopolitical landscape, highlighting India's unwavering stance on terrorism and its commitment to strategic autonomy.



About SCO:

- Aim: cooperation and mutual support in areas such as trade, investment, energy, transportation, and security.
- The official working language of the SCO Secretariat is Russian and Chinese.

Objectives:

- Strengthen relations among member states.
- Promote cooperation in political affairs, economics, and trade, scientific-technical, cultural, and educational spheres as well as in energy, transportation, tourism, and environmental protection.
- Safeguard regional peace, security, and stability.
- Create a democratic, equitable international political and economic order.

Shanghai Cooperation Organization

The Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) is a regional intergovernmental security alliance involving Russia, China and four Central Asian states



SCO Defence Ministers Meeting: Qindao, June 2025

- At the SCO Defence Ministers' meeting, India refused to endorse a joint declaration that omitted mention of the April 22 Pahalgam terror attack while referencing militant activity in Balochistan
- India also emphasized its long-standing contributions to Afghanistan's development and humanitarian assistance during the meeting.

Why did India refused to sign a Joint Declaration?

- Double Standard for Terrorism:** In the document, there was no mention of the recent Pahalgam attack but included militant activities in Balochistan. India emphasized that SCO should not hesitate to criticize nations that promoted cross-border terrorism.
- Non-Negotiable Core Principles:** India has consistently maintained that peace and terrorism cannot coexist, and this principle remains non-negotiable even in multilateral forums.

Post Qindao:

- At the SCO foreign ministers' meeting, Jaishankar reiterated the necessity of an uncompromising stance against terrorism and called on member countries to adhere to the SCO's founding principles: combating terrorism, separatism, and extremism

- When SCO issued a joint statement condemning Israeli attack on Iran. India chose not to sign the statement. Instead, it promoted de-escalation through diplomacy and directly raised its concerns with Iranian officials
- The Indian Prime Minister is set to attend the SCO meeting in Tinjian (China) from August 31, 2025-September 1, 2025.

How can SCO become an asset for India amidst the global challenges facing India today?

- SCO can provide buffer against Western pressure:** India is at a crossroad with its foreign policy. The trade war has escalated with the USA imposing differential tariffs on countries and China is aggressively isolating India in its neighborhood through dialogues like the Kunming trilateral meeting in June 2025 between Pakistan, China and Bangladesh. Given the challenging times ahead of India, it can use regional groups like SCO and BRICS to assert its position as the third largest economy in the world.
- Economic window to Eurasian countries:** The India-Central Asia trade routes, energy access via Russia, and potential ties with Iran (via INSTC) can grow under SCO's umbrella. This can diversify India's supply chains, especially if the West tightens economic nooses.
- Economic cooperation:** The SCO will help India to enhance economic cooperation with member countries, which could potentially lead to greater access to markets, technology, and investment opportunities.
- Multilateral diplomacy:** The SCO provides India with a platform to engage in multilateral diplomacy and deepen its engagement with member countries.

Though SCO can play a significant role in establishing India's prowess in Central Asia, it may pose challenges like counter-action from China, since SCO is largely controlled by China.

Secondly, since India is part of QUAD, which is against China and Russia, it has to navigate its path in SCO in a balanced approach as these two countries play a vital role in SCO.

Thirdly, India's relationship with Pakistan is at its lowest, after the Pahalgam attack. India has to mindfully strategize its relationship with Pakistan at SCO.

BRICS

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In News: the 17th BRICS Summit was held at Rio de Janeiro on 6-7th July 2025.

Theme for this year: "Strengthening Global South Cooperation for a More Inclusive and Sustainable Governance".

BRICS:

BRICS is a grouping of major emerging economies: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. The acronym was coined by Jim O'Neill of Goldman Sachs in 2001. BRICS aims to foster cooperation on trade, investment, technology, and global governance.



What is **BRICS**?

BRICS: Acronym for Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.

Origin: Coined in 2001 by economist Jim O'Neill (initially BRIC, without South Africa).

Objective: Foster economic cooperation among member nations and challenge Western economic dominance.

Expansion: South Africa joined in 2010; Saudi Arabia, Iran, Ethiopia, UAE, and Egypt joined in 2024.

Economic Focus: Predicted to dominate global growth by 2050, offering foreign investment opportunities and strong returns for institutional investors.



Key Outcomes of the summit:

- a. Indonesia officially joined BRICS, while Belarus, Bolivia, Kazakhstan, Cuba, Nigeria, Malaysia, Thailand, Vietnam, Uganda, and Uzbekistan were welcomed as BRICS partner countries.
- b. BRICS backed expansion of the UN Security Council to include more permanent members from Asia, Africa, and Latin America for greater Global South representation, urged IMF and World Bank reforms to reflect Emerging Markets and Developing Countries' (EMDCs) role, and supported a rules-based WTO.
- c. BRICS adopted the Leaders Framework Declaration on Climate Finance to mobilize resources for developing countries and endorsed an, MoU on the BRICS Carbon Markets Partnership to enhance cooperation in carbon pricing and emissions trading.
- d. **Reaffirmed “African Solutions to African Problems”**, called for a Gaza ceasefire and two-state solution. BRICS leaders condemned the Pahalgam attack, and India stressed that terrorism must be rejected on principle, not treated as a matter of convenience.
- e. BRICS advanced talks on a **Cross-Border Payments Initiative to reduce US dollar reliance**, supported the New Development Bank's expansion, and the BRICS Multilateral Guarantees (BMG) pilot to de-risk investments.
- f. BRICS adopted the Leaders **Statement on Global AI Governance, concluded the Data Economy Governance Understanding and agreed to form a BRICS Space Council for collaborative space exploration.**
- g. BRICS launched the **Partnership for the Elimination of Socially Determined Diseases (Tuberculosis)** to tackle health disparities.
- h. BRICS nations have **‘condemned and rejected’ the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanisms (CBAM) of the European Union (EU)** and similar restrictive trade measures, saying they undermine their transition to a cleaner economy.

CBAM is an EU's tax on imported goods with more carbon emissions, meant to stop carbon leakage but making items like Indian steel and cement less competitive in the European market.

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India will Host the 18th BRICS Summit in 2026.

Prime Minister Modi redefining BRICS:

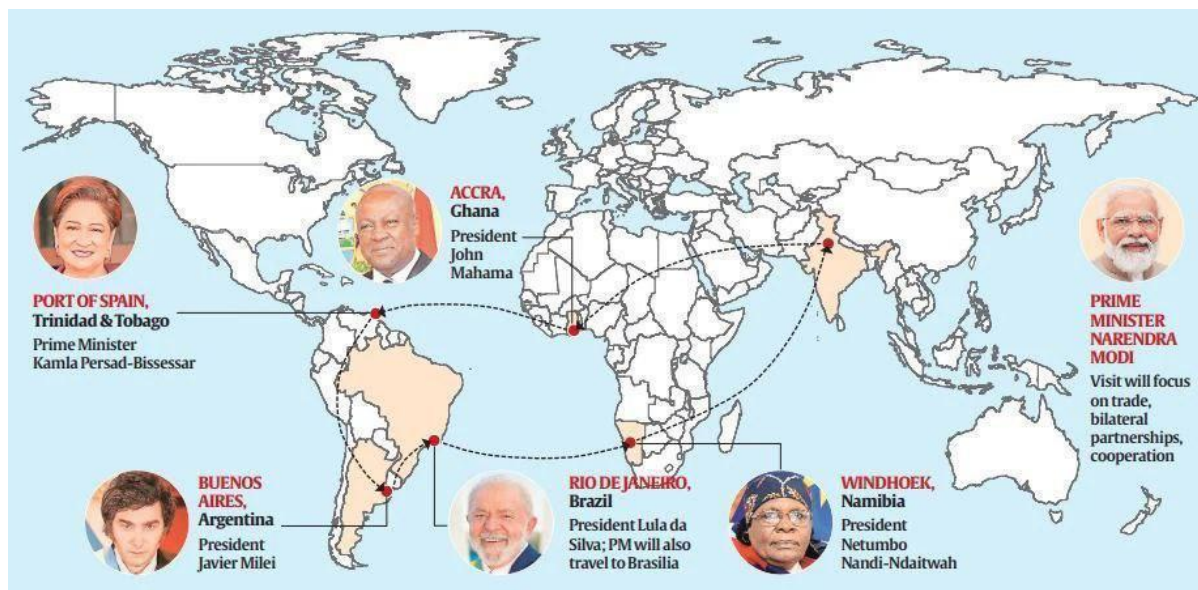
'Building Resilience and Innovation for Cooperation and Sustainability',

- India would give priority to the global south in its agenda and focus on a people-centric and "humanity first" approach.
- It would endeavour to present BRICS in a new form, and the acronym would stand for - Building Resilience and Innovation for Cooperation and Sustainability

- For India, climate justice was "not an option, but a moral duty" as India believed that without technology transfer and affordable financing to countries in need, climate action will remain confined to climate talks.

Prime Minister's 5-Nation Visit

India took a step ahead in taking major role in Global South. The Indian Prime Minister visited 5-nations- Ghana, Trinidad & Tobago, Argentina, Brazil and Namibia between July 2- July 9, 2025. This visit aimed at deepening India's bilateral ties and strengthening India's leadership role in the Global South.



Ghana:

- Ghana is one of West Africa's fastest-growing economies, its relationship with India is marked by robust and expanding trade and investment.
- Ghana is a valued partner in the Global South and plays an important role in the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).
- India is the largest destination for Ghanaian exports; gold accounts for more than 70% of India's imports from Ghana.
- India and Ghana have elevated their ties to the level of comprehensive partnership with the resolve to expand bilateral ties in food security, pharmaceuticals, and development cooperation.
- **Ghana plans to emerge as the vaccine hub for Africa.**
- India-Ghana cooperation will be enhanced in areas- such as training of armed forces, maritime security, defence supply and cyber security.
- Indian companies will cooperate with Ghana in the exploration and mining of critical minerals. India would share its experience of UPI digital payments with Ghana.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is the first Prime Minister to visit Ghana in three decades. He was conferred with the country's highest state honour, the Companion of the Order of the Star of Ghana during the visit for his distinguished statesmanship and influential global leadership.

Trinidad and Tobago:

- First bilateral visit by an Indian PM after 1999.
- 40-45% of the Indian diaspora in the Caribbean lives in Trinidad and Tobago.
- The visit will mark 180 years of the arrival of Indian immigrants in T&T.
- The bilateral economic relationship has witnessed steady growth, with total trade reaching \$341.61 million in FY 2024-25.

Argentina:

- First bilateral visit by an Indian PM in 57 years.
- Both countries will review ongoing cooperation and discuss ways to enhance defence, agriculture, mining, oil and gas, energy, etc. partnerships.
- Argentina is a key economic partner in Latin America and a G20 member.
- India and Argentina have significantly advanced bilateral cooperation in the mineral resources sector, particularly in lithium, a critical input for India's green energy transition.
- Argentina is a major supplier of soybean and sunflower oil to India.
- New areas of collaboration discussed include satellite development, launch services, and space applications. The Prime Minister highlighted the significant growth of India's space industry, including the emergence of a vibrant private sector, capable of building everything from rockets to satellites.
- Prospects of cooperation in Sports Management was also discussed, acknowledging India's strength in cricket with Argentina's strength in football; and on exploring startup and innovation ecosystems.

In 2024, India was Argentina's fifth-largest trading partner and export destination.

Brazil:

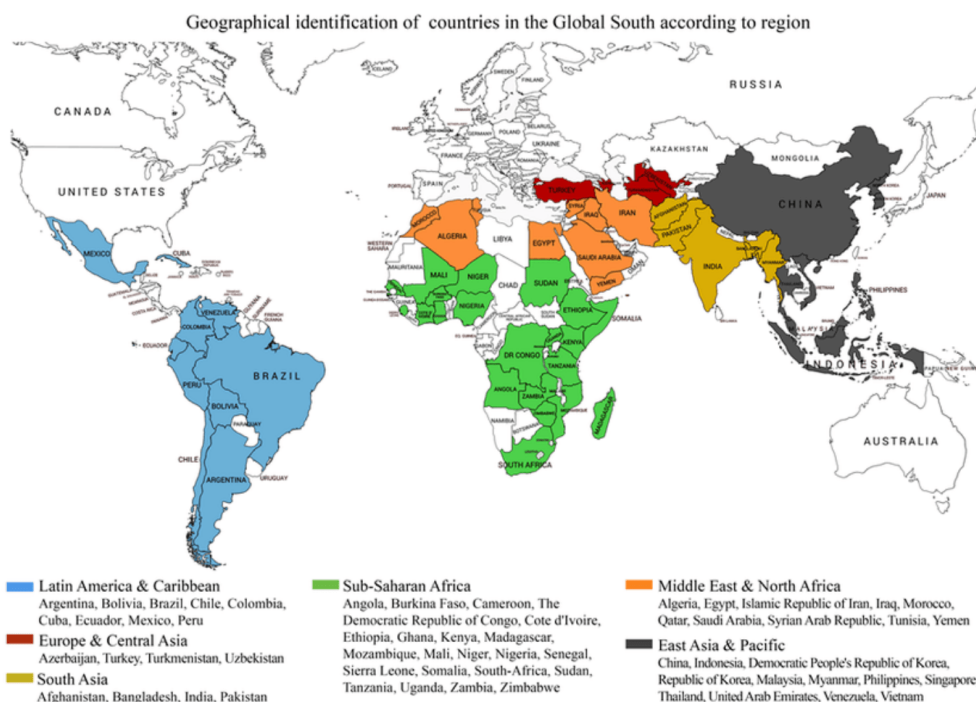
- The spirit of friendship and trust has been the cornerstone of Brazil - India relationship along almost eight decades. The relationship was elevated to Strategic Partnership in 2006.
- The discussion centered around reinforcing the India-Brazil Strategic Partnership, emphasizing a commitment to cooperation across multiple sectors including in trade, energy, tech, defence, health and more. A strong, people-centric partnership between Global South nations benefits everyone.
- pivotal regional and global issues, emphasizing the necessity for increased collaboration among emerging economies
- Both leaders highlighted the significance of a multipolar world order and advocated for greater cooperation through platforms such as BRICS and the G20.

Namibia:

- It is a country in Southern Africa. Its western border touches the Atlantic Ocean. To its north, Angola and Zambia, while Botswana sits to its east. South Africa borders Namibia on both its eastern and southern sides.
- It is the driest country in sub-Saharan Africa. It has several big deserts, including the Namib, the Kalahari, the Succulent Karoo, and the Nama Karoo.
- In 2022, India moved 8 cheetahs from Namibia to India. This project marked the world's first intercontinental movement of a large meat-eating animal species.
- Trade between the two countries reached USD 568.40 million in 2024–25. Key areas of trade include mining, energy, agriculture, education, infrastructure, health, and general trade.
- India and the Southern African Customs Union (SACU), where Namibia acts as a coordinator, are currently discussing a Preferential Trade Agreement (PTA) to make trade easier.
- Namibia also presented him their highest civilian award, called the "Order of the Most Ancient Welwitschia Mirabilis, making him the first Indian leader to receive it.
- Namibia also agreed to join two important global groups India supports: the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI) and the Global Biofuels Alliance.

Global South: Significance for India

The "Global South" refers to developing and emerging countries, primarily in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and Oceania, facing similar developmental challenges and seeking greater representation in global decision-making.



India and Global South:

- a. **Challenge to Western dominance:** The Global South provides India with a platform to challenge Western dominance and promote a multipolar world order. India can work with other Global South nations through forums like the G77, Non-Aligned Movement, and IBSA to pursue its strategic interests.
- b. **Economic Growth:** The Global South represents a significant market for India, and South-South trade can drive economic growth and diversification for both. India's increasing trade with Africa, for instance, highlights this potential.
- c. **Playing key role in addressing climate change:** Climate change, healthcare access, and energy security are common concerns for the Global South, and India can play a key role in advocating for solutions and fostering cooperation among these nations.
- d. **Voice of Global South:** India's growing economy and diplomatic influence allow it to act as a voice for the Global South, advocating for its interests in international forums and pushing for reforms in global governance.
- e. **South-South Cooperation:** India can leverage its experience in development and technological advancements to collaborate with other Global South nations, fostering capacity building and knowledge sharing.

India is strategically navigating its role amidst shifting global power dynamics, particularly in the context of the Global South and Western turmoil. India is seeking to leverage its position as a key voice of the Global South while also maintaining strategic partnerships with Western nations. This involves balancing the need for economic development and global influence with the challenges posed by geopolitical tensions and economic uncertainties.

Governance and Polity

1. Vice-President of India Resigns from the post

Context: The Vice-president of India, Jagdeep Dhankhar resigned from his post, and submitted his resignation to President Droupadi Murmu. He is the third Vice-President in India's history to step down before completing his term, after V.V. Giri and R. Venkataraman.

Resignation of the Vice-president: Constitutional provisions and mandates

- **Articles 63 to 71 of the Constitution deal with the Vice President.**
- The Vice-President can resign by writing under his hand, addressed to the President, as per Article 67(a) of the Constitution. The resignation takes effect immediately once submitted.
- The Vice-President also serves as the ex-officio chairman of the Rajya Sabha. His resignation creates a temporary gap in parliamentary leadership.

- The Constitution does not provide for an acting Vice-President. However, in the Vice-President's absence, the Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha will preside over its proceedings.
- The election of the next Vice-President is to be held within 60 days of the expiry of the outgoing Vice-President's term. However, in the case of a mid-term resignation, unlike the President (where the vacancy must be filled within six months), there is no fixed time frame for electing a new Vice-President.
- The Election Commission of India conducts the election under the Presidential and Vice-Presidential Elections Act, 1952.

Articles Related to Vice-President at a Glance

Article No.	Subject-matter
63.	The Vice-President of India
64.	The Vice-President to be ex-officio Chairman of the Council of States
65.	The Vice-President to act as President or to discharge his functions during casual vacancies in the office, or during the absence, of President
66.	Election of Vice-President
67.	Term of office of Vice-President
68.	Time of holding election to fill vacancy in the office of Vice-President and the term of office of person elected to fill casual vacancy
69.	Oath or affirmation by the Vice-President
70.	Discharge of President's functions in other contingencies
71.	Matters relating to, or connected with, the election of Vice-President

Vice-President: Role and Responsibility

- The Article 63 of the Indian Constitution states that there shall be a Vice President of India, who is the second-highest constitutional authority after the President. The post is modeled on the American Vice President.
- Electoral College: Elected by MPs from both Houses of Parliament (elected and nominated members) but state legislators do not participate (Article 66).
- Voting Process: Conducted via proportional representation and single transferable vote, by secret ballot, overseen by a Returning Officer (usually the Secretary General of either House).
- Eligibility Criteria: Must be an Indian citizen, at least 35 years old, qualified for Rajya Sabha membership, not hold an office of profit, and should not be a member of Parliament or state legislature.
- Primary role of the Vice-President: acts as the ex-officio chairman of the Rajya Sabha
- Acts in place of the President in case the President is absent or ill. During this time the Vice-president enjoys same powers and benefits as that of the President.

Duration: Serves a five-year term (Article 67), and can continue beyond expiry until a successor takes office.

Resignation: May resign at any time via a written letter to the President (Article 67(a)).

Vacancy: Vacancies arise due to term expiry, resignation, removal, death, or disqualification. A new election must be held "as soon as possible" (Article 68).

Powers and functions:

- Presiding officer: Presiding Over Sessions:** The Chairman conducts proceedings in the Rajya Sabha, maintains order, and ensures discipline and decorum in the House.
- Power to suspend members:** under Rule 256 Procedure and Conduct of Business in the Rajya Sabha, the Chairman can suspend a member for the remainder of the session if the member's conduct is grossly disorderly or disregards the authority of the Chair.
- Maintaining Neutrality and Order:** As a non-member of the House, the Chairman is expected to remain impartial while allowing free and fair debates. They ensure equal participation and adherence to parliamentary norms.
- Casting Vote:** Though the Chairman does not vote in the first instance, they can cast a deciding vote in the event of a tie (Article 100).
- Referral to Committees:** The Chairman plays an administrative role by referring bills, motions, and resolutions to parliamentary committees for detailed consideration.
- Limitations Compared to Lok Sabha Speaker:** The Chairman does not preside over joint sittings of Parliament. The Chairman cannot certify a bill as a Money Bill (only the Lok Sabha Speaker can).
- In Case of Presidential Vacancy:** When the Vice President acts as or discharges the functions of the President, they temporarily stop performing duties as Chairman. The Deputy Chairman then takes over.

Difference between the election process of the President & Vice-President of India		
Issue	President's Election	Vice-President's Election
Who can vote?	All elected MPs & all elected MLAs from States. Number of voters for the 2017 election is 4896	Only MPs from both Lok Sabha & Rajya Sabha can vote. Number of voters for the 2017 election is 790
Can Nominated members vote?	No	Yes
Value of each vote	The value of each vote is based on a calculation that includes the population of the state as per the 1971 Census and the number of assembly seats in that state. The value of vote of a MLA of one state is different from the other. The value of vote of a MP is also different	The value of vote of each voter is ONE
Eligibility	Should be qualified for election as a member of Lok Sabha	Should be qualified for election as a member of the Rajya Sabha
Nomination Paper to be signed by	At least 50 voters as proposers and at least 50 voters as seconders	At least 20 voters as proposers and at least 20 voters as seconders

The Vice President of India holds a significant role in the Indian political system, acting as the ex-officio Chairman of the Rajya Sabha (Council of States) and also as the successor to the President in

case of vacancy or incapacitation. Their significance lies in upholding parliamentary integrity and constitutional principles, ensuring the smooth functioning of the legislative and executive branches.

2. SIR (Special Intensive revision) and Election Commission of India

In News: the ongoing SIR in Bihar, to update the electoral roll has come under fire. The Supreme Court is reviewing it, and has suggested the Election Commission of India to use Aadhar card, ration card etc.

Electoral Rolls:

- **Electoral Rolls:** An Electoral Roll (also known as a Voter List or Electoral Register) is the official list of all eligible and registered voters within a specific constituency.
- It is used to verify voter identities and ensure a fair and transparent electoral process during elections.
- The Electoral Rolls are prepared by the ECI under the Representation of the People Act (RP Act), 1950.
- It excludes non-citizens (Section 16) and includes citizens aged 18 or above who are ordinarily resident in the constituency (Section 19).

SIR: Special Intensive Revision

- SIR is a focused, time-bound house-to-house voters' verification process conducted by Booth Level Officers (BLOs) to update and correct the electoral rolls before major elections.
- It ensures that the voter list is accurate, inclusive, and free from discrepancies by allowing new registrations, deletions, and modifications.
- Section 21 of the RP Act, 1950 empowers the ECI to prepare and revise electoral rolls, including conducting a special revision at any time with recorded reasons.

Constitutional provisions:

- **Article 324** authorises the Election Commission of India to supervise and control the preparation of electoral rolls and conduct of elections.
- **Article 326** guarantees universal adult suffrage, allowing citizens aged 18 and above to vote, unless disqualified by law due to criminal conviction, unsound mind, or corruption.

Need for Special Intensive Revision of Electoral Rolls?

- Error-Free and Updated Voter List:** SIR helps remove ineligible voters, add newly eligible or previously missed voters, and correct errors in the electoral roll to ensure accuracy and prevent fraud. SIR facilitates re-registration of migrants and shifting populations and ensures voter lists align with updated constituency boundaries.
- Safeguarding Democratic Legitimacy:** SIR supports the idea of "one person, one vote" by removing ghost voters and duplicates, helping maintain public trust in the democratic system through careful checks.

- c. **Boosting Voter Participation:** SIR promotes civic participation through awareness drives and ensures accessible voter registration via door-to-door surveys and online options, especially benefiting marginalized groups.
- d. **Addressing Technological & Policy Upgrades:** SIR supports digital integration of electoral rolls and facilitates policy reforms like remote voting for migrants to enhance accessibility and efficiency.

Emerging Concerns from SIR:

- a. **Risk of Mass Disenfranchisement:** The exclusion of widely used IDs like Aadhaar, ration cards, or even voter IDs can disproportionately impact underprivileged voters. Traditionally, electoral rolls include individuals aged 18 and above based on their ordinary residence, but the current exercise also considers their place of birth.
- b. **Impact on Migrant Workers:** Frequent moves by migrant workers, students, and seasonal labourers make it hard to prove residence, risking their exclusion from voter lists due to difficulty in updating details.
- c. **Litmus test for citizenship:** Requiring documents like birth certificates or legacy data may act as a litmus test for citizenship raising concerns of systematic exclusion of marginalized and minority groups. Growing concerns exist that SIR may be applied discriminatorily, thereby undermining electoral integrity and equitable representation.
- d. **Lack of Public Consultation:** Top-down implementation and excessive documentation requirements risk undermining universal suffrage, especially for illiterate and homeless populations.

How to overcome these challenges?

- a. **Include Aadhar card as a verification document:** Although Aadhaar is not proof of citizenship, it remains the most accessible ID for marginalized communities and should be permitted for residency verification, supplemented by cross-verification with legacy data.
- b. **Political & Legal Consensus:** ECI should consult all stakeholders—including civil society—and run public awareness campaigns to clarify SIR rules and deadlines.
- c. **Technology driven change:** Use AI to spot unusual changes in voter lists (like many names removed from one area), keep voter data secure with blockchain, and create a live dashboard to track updates and prevent tampering during voter list verification.
- d. **Inclusivity Measures:** Organize special camps for marginalized groups (e.g., disabled, and tribals), provide multilingual helplines, and conduct post-revision sample surveys to ensure accurate enrollment and minimize exclusions.

Election Commission of India:

- The Election Commission of India (ECI) is an autonomous constitutional authority responsible for administering Union and State election processes in India.
- It was established in accordance with the Constitution on 25th January 1950 (celebrated as National Voters' Day). The secretariat of the commission is in New Delhi.
- The Constitution of India has vested in the Election Commission of India the superintendence, direction and control of the entire process for conduct of elections to

Parliament and Legislature of every State and to the offices of President and Vice-President of India.

- Originally the commission had only a Chief Election Commissioner. It currently consists of Chief Election Commissioner and two Election Commissioners.

Appointment & Tenure of Commissioners:

- The President appoints Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners.
- They have tenure of six years, or up to the age of 65 years, whichever is earlier
- They enjoy the same status and receive salary and perks as available to Judges of the Supreme Court of India
- The Chief Election Commissioner can be removed from office in like manner and on like grounds as a judge of the Supreme Court.

Functions of Election Commission in India

1. EC takes decision on every aspect of conduct and control of election from the announcement of election to the declaration of results.
2. It implements the code of conduct and punishes any candidate or party that violates it.
3. It can also order the government to follow some guideline, to prevent use and misuse of governmental power to enhance its chance to win elections, or to transfer some governmental officials
4. When on the election duty, government officers work under the control of the EC and not the government.
5. To give an advice to the President on some certain issues.

3. Removal of High Court Judge

In News: Recently, 145 Lok Sabha and 63 Rajya Sabha MPs signed a motion to impeach Justice Yashwant Varma, a High Court judge.

About High Courts:

- High Courts in India are the highest judicial authority in each state or Union Territory, overseeing subordinate courts.
- According to Article 231 of the Constitution, while each state generally has its own High Court, some states share a single court.

Appointment of Judges:

- The Chief Justice of a High Court is appointed by the President of India, who consults both the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and the Governor of the respective state.
- Other judges are appointed based on consultations between the President, the Governor, and the Chief Justice of the High Court. This collaboration ensures that judicial appointments are both transparent and uphold the integrity of the judicial system.

Qualifications of Judges:

- **Citizenship:** The candidate must be an Indian citizen.
- **Experience:** The candidate should have served as an advocate in one or more High Courts in India or held the position of a judge in subordinate courts in India for a minimum of 10 years.

Removal/Resignation:

- A High Court judge can resign by submitting a resignation letter to the President of India.
- A judge's office will be considered vacated if they are appointed to the Supreme Court or transferred to a different High Court.
- A High Court judge can be removed from office. This can happen if both Houses of Parliament pass a motion against the judge with an absolute majority and a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting, when sitting separately. The final decision is made by the President of India.

Jurisdiction and powers of High Court Judge:

- Writs:** Each High Court is empowered to issue writs such as habeas corpus, mandamus, prohibition, quo warranto, and certiorari. These writs are vital tools for safeguarding fundamental rights and addressing other legal matters.
- Supervisor to lower courts:** High Courts maintain supervisory authority over all lower courts and tribunals within their jurisdiction. This power ensures proper administration of justice and accountability at the state level.
- Authority to transfer case:** If a High Court determines that a case pending in a subordinate court involves a significant constitutional question, it can withdraw the case. The High Court may either directly resolve the case or provide a ruling on the constitutional issue, allowing the lower court to continue with the case in line with the High Court's judgment.
- Control over subordinate courts:** The High Court exercises control over district courts and their subordinates, including authority over promotions, transfers, and granting leave for judicial officers below the rank of District Judge.

Impeachment of judge:

Article 217(1)(b) of the Indian Constitution allows removal of a High Court judge only on grounds of:

- **Proven misbehavior, or**
- **Incapacity**

The removal process is the same for Supreme Court and High Court judges, and it requires Parliamentary action.

Steps for Impeachment

1. **Initiation of Motion:** A motion must be signed by 100 Lok Sabha MPs, or 50 Rajya Sabha MPs

It is submitted to the Speaker (Lok Sabha) or Chairman (Rajya Sabha).

2. **Admissibility Check:** The Speaker/Chairman decides whether to admit the motion.

3. **Formation of Inquiry Committee:** If admitted, a three-member inquiry committee is formed:

- A Supreme Court judge
- A Chief Justice of a High Court
- A distinguished jurist

The committee investigates and submits its report.

4. **Committee Report:** If the judge is found guilty of misbehavior or incapacity, the motion can proceed in Parliament.

5. **Parliamentary Vote:** The motion must be passed in both Houses of Parliament:

- By a two-thirds majority of members present and voting
- With support from at least 50% of the total strength of each House

6. **Presidential Assent:** If passed, the motion is sent to the President of India, who formally orders the removal of the judge.

Corruption in Judiciary impacts Public confidence in the Judicial system:

- **Erosion of Public trust:** Instances of corruption or misconduct in the judiciary severely damage public confidence in the legal system and undermine its legitimacy.

- **Accountability vs. Autonomy:** The case reignited debates about whether India's judiciary adequately balances independence with responsibility. Many critics argue that internal mechanisms often protect members rather than enforce accountability.
- **Institutional Reforms:** The controversy intensified demands for public disclosure of judges' assets—such measures have started, with Supreme Court judges now required to publish their financial details online. It also revived calls to revisit the collegium system in favor of more transparent and democratic processes.

4. Monsoon Session in Parliament 2025

Context: The 2025 Monsoon Session of Parliament began from July 21 and will continue till August 21. . During the session, the Bills of Lading Bill, 2025, which was passed earlier in the Lok Sabha, was approved by the Rajya Sabha.

Bills of Lading Bill, 2025

- A Bill of Lading (BoL) is a key document in maritime trade, serving as proof of goods loaded, a record of their details, and a title of ownership.
- The Bills of Lading Bill, 2025 seeks to replace the colonial-era Indian Bills of Lading Act, 1856, modernizing the legal framework governing shipping documents.
- The Bill affirms the BoL as conclusive evidence of shipment, clarifies rights and liabilities of receivers/transferees, and empowers the Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways for implementation.
- It aims to enhance legal clarity, reduce disputes, and align India's shipping laws with global trade standards to improve ease of doing business.

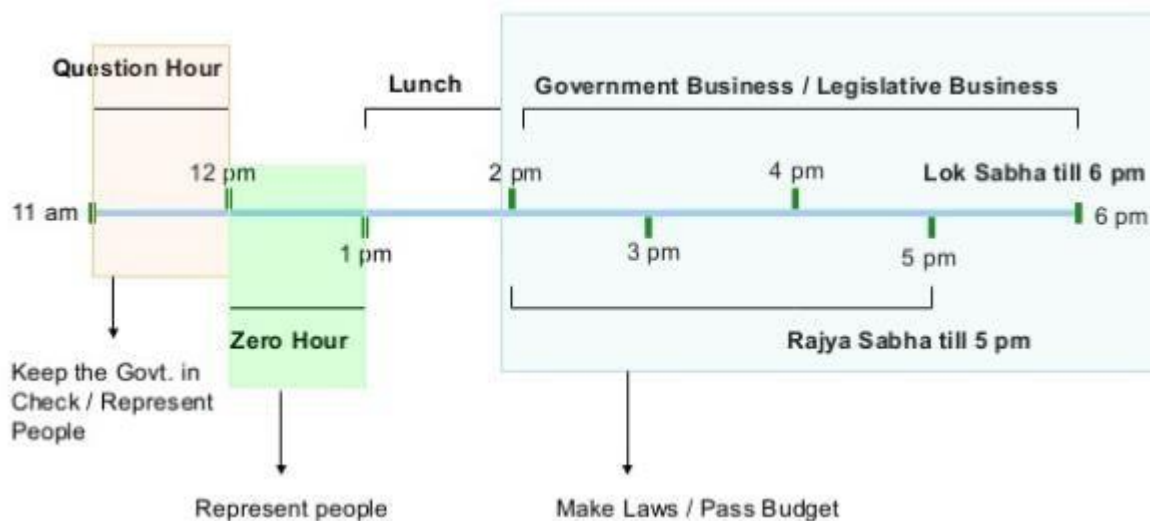
Sessions of Parliament: A session refers to the period between the first sitting and prorogation of a House. A recess is the interval between prorogation and reassembly of Parliament. Typically, there are 3 sessions in a year:

Budget Session (Feb–May)

Monsoon Session (July–August)

Winter Session (Nov–Dec)

Special Sessions: A Special Session of Parliament is convened outside the 3 regular sessions (Budget, Monsoon, Winter) to deliberate on urgent, exceptional, or historic matters of national significance like India-China war in 1962.



Powers of the Lok Sabha

- Makes Laws on matters included in Union List and Concurrent List. Can introduce and enact money and non money bills.
- Approves proposals for taxation, budgets and annual financial statements.
- Controls the executive by asking questions, supplementary questions, resolutions and motions and through no confidence motion.
- Amends the Constitution.
- Approves the Proclamation of emergency.
- Elects the President and Vice President and removes Judges of Supreme Court and High Court.
- Establishes committees and commissions and considers their reports.

Powers of Rajya Sabha

- Considers and approves non money bills and suggests amendments to money bills.
- Approves constitutional amendments.
- Exercises control over executive by asking questions, introducing motions and resolutions.
- Participates in the election and removal of the President, Vice President, Judges of Supreme Court and High Court. It can alone initiate the procedure for removal of Vice President.
- Can give the Union parliament power to make laws on matters included in the State list.

5. New Cooperative Policy

Context: India has unveiled the National Cooperative Policy 2025, aiming to strengthen the cooperative sector's role in inclusive development and economic growth for the next two decades.

Union Home Minister Amit Shah has unveiled a new national cooperative policy, replacing one in place for the past 23 years.

National Cooperative Policy 2025

Union Home and Cooperation Minister Amit Shah launched the National Cooperative Policy 2025 in New Delhi, replacing the earlier framework introduced in 2002.

Features of National cooperative policy 2025:

- a. **Objective:** It supports the Ministry of Cooperation's mandate of "Sahakar se Samriddhi" by aiming to strengthen cooperatives and expand their grassroots reach. The policy replaces the National Policy on Cooperatives in 2002 and sets the course for cooperative growth over the next two decades (2025–2045).
- b. **Merger of previous schemes:** The policy aims to leverage existing government schemes such as the Dairy Infrastructure Development Fund (DIDF), PM Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY), and the National Programme for Dairy Development (NPDD) to establish 2 lakh new multipurpose Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (M-PACS) within five years.
- c. **Inclusive Growth and Employment:** The policy aims to empower rural populations by making cooperatives more inclusive, focusing on Dalits, Adivasis, women, and youth, while strengthening their role in the wider economy.
- d. **Diversification and Education:** The policy pushes cooperatives to expand into over 25 sectors like dairy, fisheries, and foodgrain procurement. The policy promotes cooperative education via Tribhuvan Sahkari University, India's first national cooperative university.
- e. **Technological Advancements and Global Engagement:** The policy aims to modernise cooperatives to stay competitive in a fast-changing, tech-driven world. The policy sets up National Cooperative Exports Limited (NCEL) to help cooperatives access global markets, focusing on exports like rice and wheat.



Cooperatives:

- A cooperative is an autonomous association of persons united voluntarily to meet their common economic, social and cultural needs, and aspirations through a jointly-owned and democratically-controlled enterprise.
- They follow the principle of "one member, one vote", giving every member equal say, regardless of capital contribution.
- In India, the cooperative movement began in the late 19th century to tackle rural debt and exploitation. Key steps included the Cooperative Acts of 1904 and 1912.
- Post-independence, cooperatives became central to India's development, with institutions like National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) and National Cooperative Development Corporation (NCDC) supporting them.
- **The 97th Amendment, 2011 granted cooperatives constitutional status.**
- Article 19(1)(c) ensures the right to form cooperatives, while Article 43B promotes them as a Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP).
- Part IXB (Articles 243ZH - 243ZT) provides governance provisions for Cooperatives.
- State-level cooperatives fall under the State List, while multi-state cooperatives are governed by the Union List and the Multi-State Cooperative Societies (MSCS) Act, 2002.
- The Ministry of Cooperation was established in 2021 by transferring cooperation-related entries from the former Ministry of Agriculture, Cooperation, and Farmers Welfare.
- MSCS (Amendment) Act, 2023 improved governance and transparency of cooperatives.



Importance of cooperatives:

Agricultural Support:

Cooperatives provide farmers with access to credit, seeds, fertilizers, and marketing support, improving agricultural productivity and livelihoods.

Financial Inclusion: They offer financial services to individuals and communities often excluded from the formal banking system, promoting access to credit and savings.

Entrepreneurship: Cooperatives foster entrepreneurship by providing a platform for individuals to pool resources and engage in collective economic activities

Inclusive Development: They help marginalized communities access housing, essential services, and improve social capital.

Rural Development: Cooperatives contribute to rural development by creating employment opportunities, promoting cottage industries, and improving living standards.

Women Empowerment: Organizations like SEWA (Self-Employed Women's Association) demonstrate how cooperatives empower women by providing economic independence.

Several prominent cooperative examples in India include AMUL, IFFCO, Lijjat Papad, and HOPCOMS

6. National Sports Policy

Context: The Union Cabinet chaired by the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi today approved the the National Sports Policy (NSP) 2025, a landmark initiative aimed at reshaping the country's sporting landscape and empowering citizens through sports.

The new policy supersedes the existing National Sports Policy, 2001, and lays out a visionary and strategic roadmap to establish India as a global sporting powerhouse and a strong contender for excellence at international sporting events, including the 2036 Olympic Games.

5 Key Pillars on which the policy is based:

a. Excellence on the Global Stage:

- Strengthen sports programs from the grassroots to elite levels, including mechanisms for early identification and nurturing of talent.
- Promote the establishment of competitive leagues and competitions, and develop sports infrastructure in both rural and urban areas.
- Build world-class systems for training, coaching, and holistic athlete support.
- Enhance the capacity and governance of National Sports Federations.
- Encourage the adoption of sports science, sports science, medicine, and technology to boost athletic performance.

Train and develop sports personnel, including coaches, technical officials, and support staff.

b. Sports for Economic Development

- Promote sports tourism and attract major international events to India.
- Strengthen the sports manufacturing ecosystem, and promote startups and entrepreneurship in the sector.
- Encourage private sector participation through Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and innovative funding initiatives.

c. Sports for Social Development

The policy emphasizes the role of sports in driving social inclusion by:

- Promoting participation among women, economically weaker sections, tribal communities, and persons with disabilities through focused programs.
- Revitalizing and promoting indigenous and traditional games.
- Positioning sports as a viable career option by integrating it into education, encouraging volunteering, and facilitating dual-career pathways.
- Engaging the Indian diaspora through sports.

d. Sports as a People's Movement

Aims and Objectives of this pillar:

- Drive mass participation and a culture of fitness through nationwide campaigns and community-based events.
- Launch fitness indices for schools, colleges, and workplaces etc.
- Enhance universal access to sports facilities.

e. Integration with Education (NEP 2020)

- Integrate sports into school curricula.
- Equip educators and physical education teachers with specialized training to promote sports education and awareness.

f. Strategic Framework

- **Governance:** Establish a robust regulatory framework for sports governance, including legal framework.
- **Private Sector Funding & support:** Develop innovative financing mechanisms and engage private sector participation through PPPs and CSR.

- **Technology & Innovation:** Leverage emerging technologies, including AI and data analytics, for performance tracking, research, and program implementation.
- **National Monitoring Framework:** Create a national framework with well-defined benchmarks, Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), and time-bound targets.
- **Model Policy for States:** The NSP 2025 will serve as a model for States and Union Territories, encouraging them to revise or formulate their own policies in alignment with national objectives.
- **Whole-of-Government Approach:** The policy calls for integration of sports promotion into the activities, schemes, and programs of all Ministries and Departments to achieve a holistic impact.

Challenges in India's sports ecosystem:

- **Poor Governance:** Indian sports suffers from poor governance, mismanagement as reflected in Indian Olympic Association (IOA)'s suspension by International Olympic Committee (2022), and persistent cases of sexual assault which eventually led down the wrestlers.
- **Lack of support to athletes:** Poor Athlete support like lack of good diet, cancellation of qualification over minor weight gain for Olympic over a minor weight issue, exposes gaps in scientific coaching and planning.
- **Cricket-Centric Sports Market:** Cricket dominates media, sponsorships, and funding. In 2023, cricket dominated 87% of India's sports market, leaving just 13% for all other sports like football, hockey, and badminton.
- **Low Athlete Representation:** Although India sent its largest-ever Olympic contingent of 117 athletes to the Paris 2024 Games, the number remains significantly lower than countries like the U.S. (594), France (572), and Australia (460).
- **Overemphasis on Academics:** Cultural pressure prioritizes academics over sports as a career. Parents and schools often treat sports as extracurricular, not essential. This limits early sports participation and physical literacy.

India's transformation in the sports sector needs more than policies, it needs accountability, implementation and sustainability. With NSP 2025 and the 2036 Olympic aspiration, India stands at a historic juncture. If backed by reforms, inclusivity, and investment, sports can emerge as a powerful engine of national development.

International Relations

7. India-USA

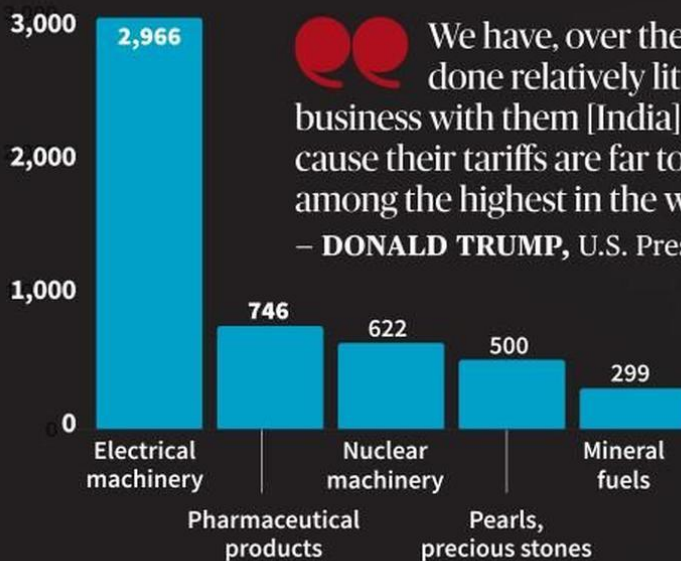
In News: USA imposed a 25% tariff plus additional penalty on Indian imports. The reason cited by the US President Donald Trump is India's tariff and non-tariff barriers and trade relations with Russia, especially in oil and weapons.



Fare amongst friends

The chart shows **India's top 5 exports** to the U.S. between January and May 2025

The U.S. Census Bureau reported that **India imported more** than it exported last year



We have, over the years, done relatively little business with them [India] because their tariffs are far too high, among the highest in the world
– **DONALD TRUMP**, U.S. President

Source: Ministry of Commerce and Industry

(Exports in \$ million)

Implications of US decision on India:

- While U.S. importers will pay the new tariffs directly, Indian products will become more expensive and less competitive in the U.S. market.
- At the national level, this could slow down India's GDP growth by 0.2%, lowering it from 6.6% to 6.4%, according to Bank of Baroda.
- The impact will be stronger in specific sectors like garments, precious stones, auto parts, leather goods, and possibly electronics. These industries may struggle to compete with countries like Vietnam, South Korea, and Indonesia, which face lower tariffs.

- To stay competitive, Indian exporters in these sectors will need to adjust their strategies, reduce costs, or explore new markets.

Questions the role of WTO:

- **Loss of credibility:** the US has imposed tariffs without prior discussion with the WTO, this unilateral imposition weakens the multilateral framework and goes against the spirit of WTO principles.
- **Weakening global trade framework:** The rise of geo-economics highlights how strategic interests are overpowering rule-based trade, weakening the post-WWII global trade framework. USA had imposed retaliatory tariffs on China as well.

Way out for India:

- Diversification of trade relations: India must navigate growing U.S. pressure while preserving its strategic autonomy—especially in critical sectors like defence and energy. This will also provide India with an opportunity to diversify its trade relations as well as reliability on other countries.
- The tariff shock could serve as a catalyst, pushing India to diversify its export markets and accelerate domestic manufacturing reforms. This is the right time for India to realize its potential of Make in Bharat.

Indian Exports:

The U.S. retained its position as India's largest trading partner for the fourth consecutive year (2024–25), with bilateral trade valued at \$131.84 billion, reflecting deepening economic and strategic ties.

- Exports of textiles, pharmaceuticals, auto parts, engineering goods, and IT services may face disruption based on final tariff lists.
- A 25-26% tariff puts India at a disadvantage compared to Indonesia (19%) and Vietnam (20-40%), though better than China (30-34%) & Bangladesh (35%).
- Pharma, electronics, and engineering may be hit by trans-shipment clauses, as many inputs are imported from China.
- A proposed 10% BRICS tariff on Russian oil buyers and extra duties on steel & aluminium could add to trade strain.
- Small exporters may face the risk of shutting down business as they may not be able to cover the cost.

INDIA-USA TRADE

WHAT DOES INDIA EXPORT TO UNITED STATES?



 InvestyWise
@investywise

Merchandise Export data for CY 2024
Source: Ministry of Commerce

Way forward:

- Strategic diplomacy:** Engage the U.S. through bilateral dialogue, using platforms like the Trade Policy Forum, QUAD and G-20 to seek tariff relief or carve-outs. Form coalitions with affected WTO members to build pressure multilateral.
- Invest in Value-Added Exports:** Shift from raw materials and low-end manufacturing to high-value sectors like electronics, semiconductors, pharmaceuticals, and green tech. Focus on branding, quality certification, and IP creation to reduce vulnerability to tariffs.
- Enhance Trade Resilience:** Build export insurance mechanisms and buffer funds to support MSMEs hit by sudden tariff shocks. Promote digital trade, services exports, and remote delivery models to bypass physical barriers.
- Strategic autonomy:** Enhance Trade Resilience and Build export insurance mechanisms and buffer funds to support MSMEs hit by sudden tariff shocks. Promote digital trade, services exports, and remote delivery models to bypass physical barriers.

The 25% tariff is both a challenge and an opportunity. While it exposes India's export vulnerabilities, it can also act as a wake-up call to push long-pending trade, industrial, and diplomatic reforms. A

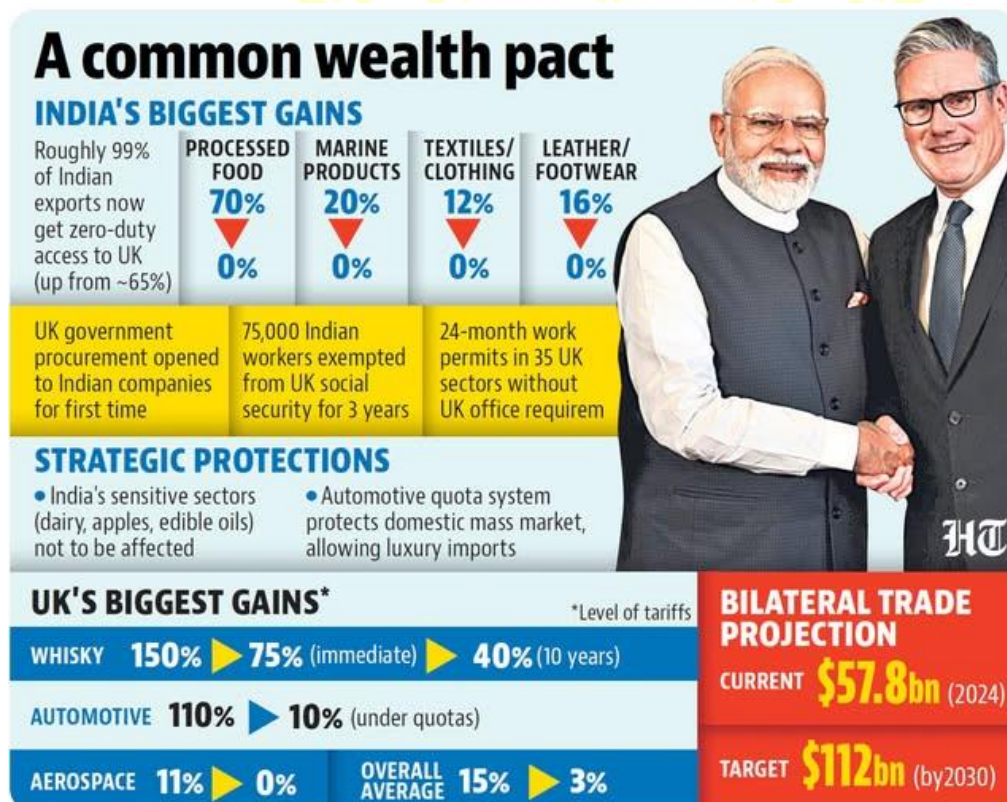
calibrated mix of diplomacy, diversification, and domestic capacity building is key to navigating this geoeconomic shift.

8. India-UK FTA



Context: India has formally signed the FTA officially known as the Comprehensive Economic and Trade agreement with the UK, during Prime minister's visit to London.

It represents a pivotal moment in bilateral relations, finally bridging the gap between promise and performance that has persisted since the 1990s.





FTA or the Free Trade Agreement: India meets UK

- a. **Trade and economic cooperation:** the Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement (CETA) is slated to boost bilateral trade. The bilateral trade between India and the UK increased to USD 21.34 billion in 2023-24. The FTA aims to remove tariffs on 99% of Indian exports.

- b. **Digital Trade and technology:** The India-UK Technology Security Initiative (TSI), launched in 2024, solidifies their joint focus on emerging technologies like AI, semiconductors, and cybersecurity. The ongoing partnership in AI research and development exemplifies the promise of this sector, with both countries focused on developing "safe, responsible, and human-centric" AI systems.
- c. **Defence and Security:** India and the UK have increased cooperation in defence, particularly in the Indo-Pacific region, where both share concerns about China's growing influence.
- d. **Climate Change and Green Energy:** The India-UK relationship has become increasingly pivotal in addressing climate change, with both nations committing to ambitious climate goals. India is targeting 65% of its electricity generation from renewable sources by 2030, while the UK is working toward achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. In this shared climate ambition, collaboration in green technologies—especially green hydrogen and climate finance—forms a critical pillar of their strategic partnership.
- e. **Indian Diaspora:** The Indian diaspora in the UK, comprising over 1.6 million people, serves as a significant bridge for people-to-people ties between both nations.

FTA: India-UK divergences:

- a. **Mobility of Professionals and Visas**
 - **India's Demand:** Easier visa access and relaxed rules for Indian professionals, students, and service providers (especially in IT, healthcare, and legal sectors).
 - **UK's Hesitation:** Reluctance to ease immigration controls due to domestic political pressures and post-Brexit migration sensitivities.
- b. **Rules on Digital Trade and Data Sovereignty**
 - **India's Concern:** Provisions on free cross-border data flow and source code protection may undermine India's digital sovereignty and regulatory autonomy.
 - **UK's Position:** Pushes for liberal digital trade norms to support its tech sector and protect proprietary software rights.
- c. **Tariff Reductions on Alcohol and Automobiles**
 - **UK's Demand:** Lower import duties on Scotch whisky, premium alcohol, and luxury cars.
 - **India's Concern:** Domestic industries (especially MSMEs, farmers, and local manufacturers) may be hurt by cheap imports, and there is strong political sensitivity around alcohol.

Way forward:

- a. **Balanced Negotiation** – Secure market access while protecting sensitive sectors like dairy and MSMEs.

- b. **Strategic Flexibility** – Offer limited concessions on tariffs (e.g., phased reduction) tied to reciprocal benefits.
- c. **Safeguard Digital Sovereignty** – Push for flexibility in data localization and source code disclosure norms.
- d. **Mobility Wins** – Prioritize easier visa access for Indian professionals and students.
- e. **Protect Policy Space** – Resist overly strict environmental/labour clauses that could act as non-tariff barriers.
- f. **Strengthen Dispute Mechanisms** – Support a fair, transparent investment protection framework without ISDS.
- g. **Build Domestic Capacity** – Prepare industries to compete globally through reforms, PLI schemes, and upskilling.

The India–UK FTA is a good chance to grow trade and attract investment. But India needs to protect its key sectors and digital rights. With a careful and balanced approach, the deal can help boost the economy without giving up on important national interests.

9. India-Maldives: Recalibrating relations

Context: India's Prime Minister attended the Maldives' 60th Independence Day as the Guest of Honour, marking a positive reset in India-Maldives relations after recent tensions.

Turning point: India's relations with the Maldives worsened after the new President took office in 2023 with an "India Out" message. He grew closer to China and asked Indian troops to leave. Things got worse after some Maldivian ministers made rude comments, leading to 'Boycott Maldives' movement in India, causing great harm to Maldivian economy.

Recently, both countries have held talks to improve ties. The Maldives is very important for India's ocean security and its **"Neighbourhood First"** policy because of its key location in the Indian Ocean.




Why the Maldives is important for India:

- Strategic Location:** The Maldives lies along key Indian Ocean shipping lanes. It is vital for India's maritime security and monitoring of Chinese naval activity.
- Neighbourhood First Policy:** Strong ties align with India's goal to build stable and friendly relations with its neighbours.
- Regional Influence:** Maintaining good relations with the Maldives helps India counter China's growing presence in the Indian Ocean region.
- Security Cooperation:** India helps train Maldivian forces, provides patrol vessels, and supports coastal surveillance to ensure regional safety.
- Disaster Relief and Development Aid:** India is a first responder in times of crisis (e.g., water shortages, COVID-19, tsunami) and provides aid for infrastructure and health.

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10 REASONS WHY MALDIVES IS IMPORTANT FOR INDIA



- 1** Strategically located in the Indian Ocean, Maldives archipelago comprising 1,200 coral islands lies next to key shipping lanes which ensure uninterrupted energy supplies to countries like China, Japan and India
- 2** Since China started to send naval ships to Indian Ocean roughly 10 years ago – and right up to Gulf of Aden for anti-piracy operations – Maldives' significance has steadily grown and now its at the heart of international geopolitics
- 3** As the pre-eminent South Asian power and a 'net security provider' in the Indian Ocean region, India needs to cooperate with Maldives in security and defence sectors.
- 4** China's massive economic presence in Maldives is a major concern for India. With the country now said to owe 70% of its external aid to China, India had to push back. The current political crisis might just have offered India the right opportunity.
- 5** A large section of population which supports the opposition parties like Nasheed's MDP wants India to act against Yameen.
- 6** Maldives is also a member of SAARC. It is important for India to have Maldives on board to maintain its leadership in the region. Maldives was the only SAARC country which seemed reluctant to follow India's call for boycott of SAARC summit in Pakistan after the Uri attack
- 7** Under Yameen, radicalization grew rapidly and it was often said that the archipelago accounted for one of the highest numbers of foreign fighters in Syria in terms of per capita. India can ill-afford a neighbor which fails to check Islamic radicalization.
- 8** India and Maldives share ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious and commercial links. India was among the first to recognize Maldives after its independence in 1965 and later established its mission at Male in 1972.
- 9** There are 25,000 Indian nationals living in Maldives (second largest expatriate community), Indian tourists also account for close to 6% of tourists Maldives receives every year.
- 10** India is also preferred destination for Maldivians for education, medical treatment, recreation and business. According to MEA, more and more Maldivians are seeking long term visa for pursuing higher studies/medical treatment in India.

Why India is important for the Maldives:

- a. **Economic Support:** India is a major source of tourists, investment, and development aid—key to the Maldives' economy.
- b. **Emergency Assistance:** India has repeatedly helped the Maldives during natural disasters, fuel shortages, and health emergencies.
- c. **Security and Defence Help:** India supports the Maldives in coastal security, capacity building, and training its defence forces.
- d. **Education and Healthcare:** Many Maldivians study or get medical treatment in India, strengthening people-to-people ties.
- e. **Connectivity and Trade:** India is a key trading partner and helps improve infrastructure, ferry services, and digital links.

Key outcomes of the Visit:

- a. **Strategic & Security Cooperation**
 - Both sides reviewed progress on the 2024 Economic and Maritime Security Partnership.
 - India reaffirmed its Neighbourhood First and MAHASAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) policies.
- b. **Economic & Digital Collaboration**

- Talks advanced on signing a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) and Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT).
- Agreements were reached on UPI, RuPay card, and local currency trade to support tourism and digital payments.

3. Financial Assistance

- India extended a \$550 million Line of Credit for infrastructure projects.
- India also helped reduce Maldives' debt burden by cutting annual repayments by 40%.

4. Infrastructure & Development

- Inauguration of major projects:
 - Roads and drainage in Addu City
 - 3,300 social housing units
 - 6 community development projects

5. Healthcare & Disaster Relief

- India donated 2 Aarogya Maitri Health Cubes (BHISHM)—mobile health kits that can treat 200 people in emergencies.

Why did Maldives change its stance for India?

- Economic crisis:** Maldives is facing a major economic downturn, with forex reserves falling to \$440 million. 'Boycott Maldives' movement in India also damaged revenue from tourism.
- Dependence on India:**
 - Indian tourists are vital to the Maldives' economy.
 - Strained relations led to a \$150 million loss in tourism.
 - India supplies key items like food, medicine, and construction materials.
- India's support in Crises:** India has been one of the first countries to respond to Maldives in times of crises like **Operation Neer** (2014 water crisis) and sending COVID-19 aid.
- Geopolitical balance:** The Maldives wants to balance relations with India and China, keeping ties strong with both major powers.
- Pragmatic approach:** The shift shows political realism—recognizing India's importance for economic help and regional security.

India-Maldives ties are recovering after a period of tension. For the Maldives, staying close to India is important for economic stability, security, and disaster support. For India, the Maldives remains key to its maritime strategy and regional influence.

10. India-Sri-Lanka Dockyard Deal

In News: India, through Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL), has acquired a controlling stake in Colombo Dockyard PLC (CDPLC) in Sri Lanka.

The deal, worth \$52.96 million, involves MDL buying a 51% stake and is MDL's first international venture.

This acquisition is strategically significant for India, strengthening its maritime presence in the Indian Ocean region and potentially countering China's growing influence.

Mazagon Dock to acquire controlling stake in Sri Lanka's Colombo Dockyard



What is the Deal?

MDL is acquiring a controlling stake (51%) in CDPLC, Sri Lanka's largest shipbuilding and repair facility. The acquisition is a combination of primary subscription and secondary purchases from Onomichi Dockyard Co. of Japan, which previously held a 51% stake.

Strategic Importance:

- **Indian Ocean Presence:**

CDPLC's location near the Port of Colombo gives MDL a strategic foothold in a key maritime corridor.

- **Countering China:** The acquisition is seen as a move to counter China's increasing influence in Sri Lanka, particularly its strategic investments in ports like Hambantota.
- **Regional Maritime Power:** This deal positions India as a stronger maritime force in the region, expanding its reach beyond its shores.

Benefits for India:

- **Enhanced Maritime Capabilities:** The acquisition strengthens MDL's shipbuilding and repair capabilities and provides access to new markets.

- **Strategic Location:** Colombo Dockyard's location allows MDL to expand its operations and strengthen its presence in the Indian Ocean Region.

Health

11. State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2025

In News: The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) 2025 report, shows global hunger dipped to 673 million, but India still has the highest number of wasted children under five.

Global Trends in Hunger & Food Insecurity

- In 2024, hunger eased slightly, with 8.2% of the global population—about 673 million people—experiencing chronic hunger, down from 8.5% in 2023.
- Despite the modest progress, hunger remains above pre-pandemic levels, indicating recovery is incomplete
- Looking ahead, 512 million people could still be undernourished by 2030, with nearly 60% of them likely residing in Africa.

Regional Disparities

- Southern Asia and Latin America & the Caribbean saw improvements
 - Undernourishment fell from 7.9% (2022) to 6.7% (2024) in Southern Asia.
 - In Latin America & Caribbean, it declined from 6.1% (2020) to 5.1% (2024)
- **Hunger increased in Africa and Western Asia**
 - In Africa, 307 million people (over 20% of the population) were hungry in 2024.
 - In Western Asia, 39 million people (about 12.7%) faced hunger

Food Insecurity & Diet Affordability

- Around 2.3 billion people globally—28% of the population—experienced moderate to severe food insecurity in 2024.
- The number of people unable to afford a healthy diet dropped from 2.76 billion (2019) to 2.60 billion (2024), but remains high.
- This improvement is uneven: Africa and low/lower-middle-income countries saw rising numbers unable to afford nutritious diets, reaching 1 billion in Africa.

India's state of food and nutrition:

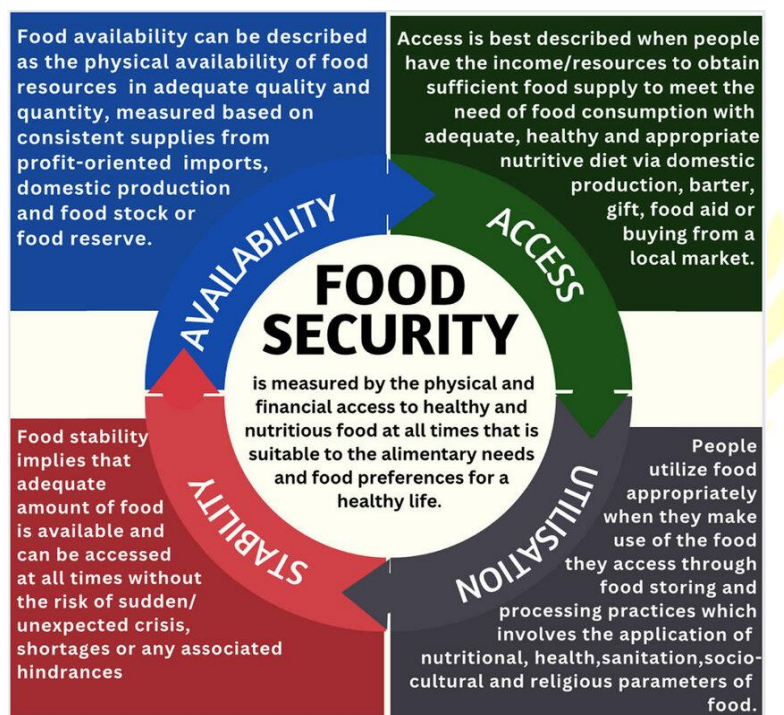
- Undernourishment
- India still has one of the largest undernourished populations in the world, though progress is being made.
- The percentage of undernourished people in India is gradually declining, but absolute numbers remain high due to population size.

Food Insecurity

- A significant portion of the Indian population faces moderate to severe food insecurity.
- Factors include poverty, price shocks, climate-related crop failures, and uneven food distribution.

Affordability of Healthy Diets

- Over 70% of Indians are unable to afford a healthy diet, as per FAO estimates.
- Rising food prices, particularly in proteins, fruits, and vegetables, make nutritious food inaccessible to many, especially in rural areas.



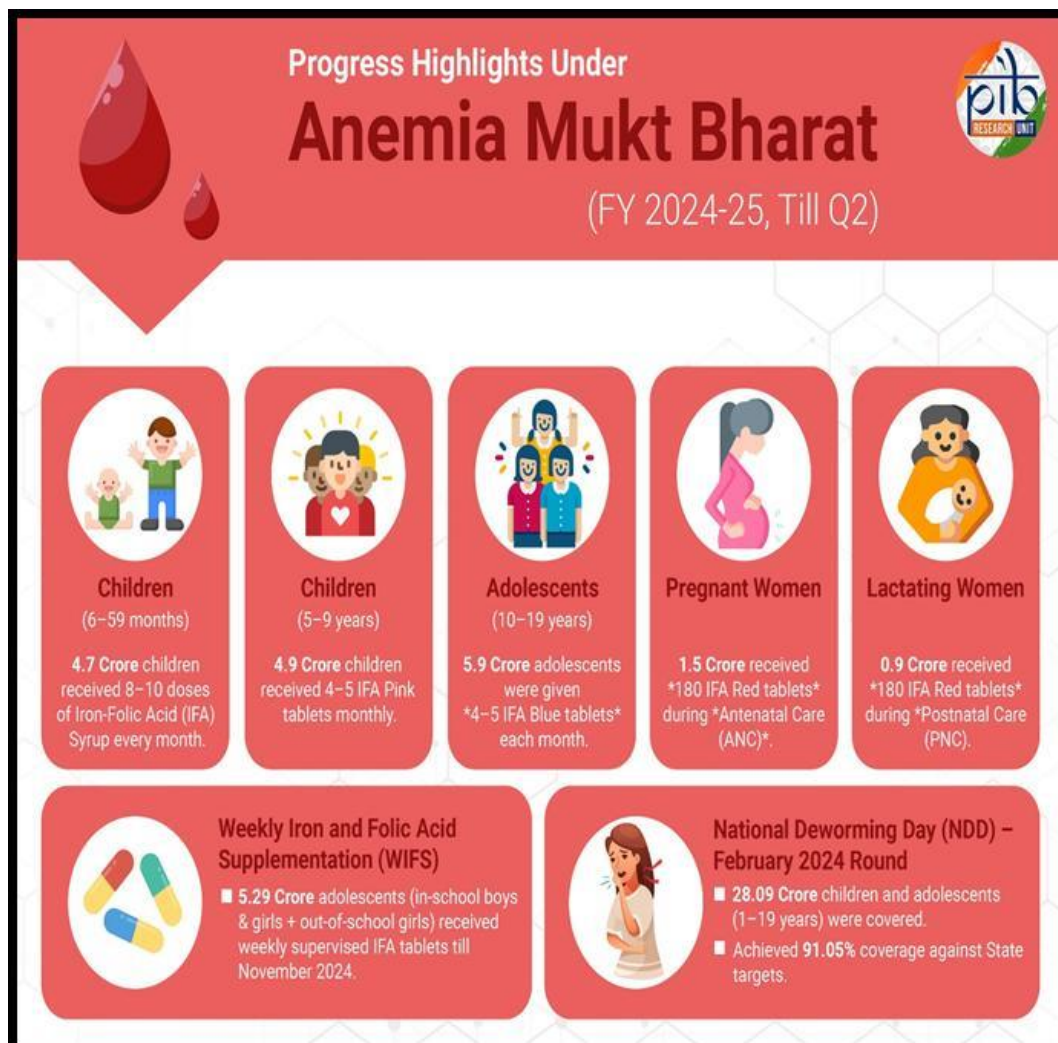
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Child Wasting and Stunting: India has the world's highest child wasting rate (18.7%) with over 21 million children.

37.4 million children under five are stunted, showing chronic undernutrition.

Anaemia in Women: Over 53.7% of women aged 15–49 in India suffer from anaemia (203 million in total). India ranks 4th globally in anemia prevalence, behind Gabon, Mali, and Mauritania.



Challenges to Food and Nutrition in India:

- Poverty and Inequality:** Malnutrition is still common among poor, rural, and tribal communities, who lack access to nutritious food and basic services.
- Poor Diet Quality:** Many people get enough calories, but not enough fruits, vegetables, or protein-rich foods, leading to hidden hunger (micronutrient deficiencies).
- Rising Food Prices:** The cost of healthy foods like milk, pulses, and fruits is high, making it hard for many families to afford a balanced diet.
- Weak Health Services:** Basic health support like pregnancy care, anaemia checks, and nutrition advice is often missing, especially in rural health centres.
- Shift to Unhealthy Foods:** With urbanization and rising incomes, people are eating more processed and junk food, causing a rise in obesity and related health problems.

India needs to tackle both undernutrition and rising obesity by making healthy food affordable, improving health services, and focusing on the needs of poor and rural communities. A balanced, inclusive approach is key to ensuring nutrition for all.

Geography

12. Mapping Flash-Floods prone Hotspots

Context: According to Union Jal Shakti, these sudden and severe floods, mostly caused by heavy rainfall, are happening more often due to rising global temperatures — increasing from 132 incidents in 2020 to 184 in 2022.

Despite the mounting threat, there remains a lack of detailed research to pinpoint the most vulnerable regions, hampering the effectiveness of mitigation strategies like early warning systems.

Recent studies on flash floods in India:

- The study, ‘Drivers of flash floods in the Indian sub-continental river basins’, identifies the Himalayas, western coast, and Central India as key hotspots, using hydrological and geomorphological data to map sub-basin susceptibility.
- In the Himalayas, steep terrain and elevation drive flood risk, while in the West Coast and Central India, rapid runoff—termed “flashiness”—plays a key role.
- The study finds that nearly 75% of flash floods result from a combination of extreme rainfall and already saturated soil, with only 25% due to precipitation alone.
- Even previously low-risk basins are witnessing rising extreme rainfall, suggesting that climate change may create new flash flood zones in the future.

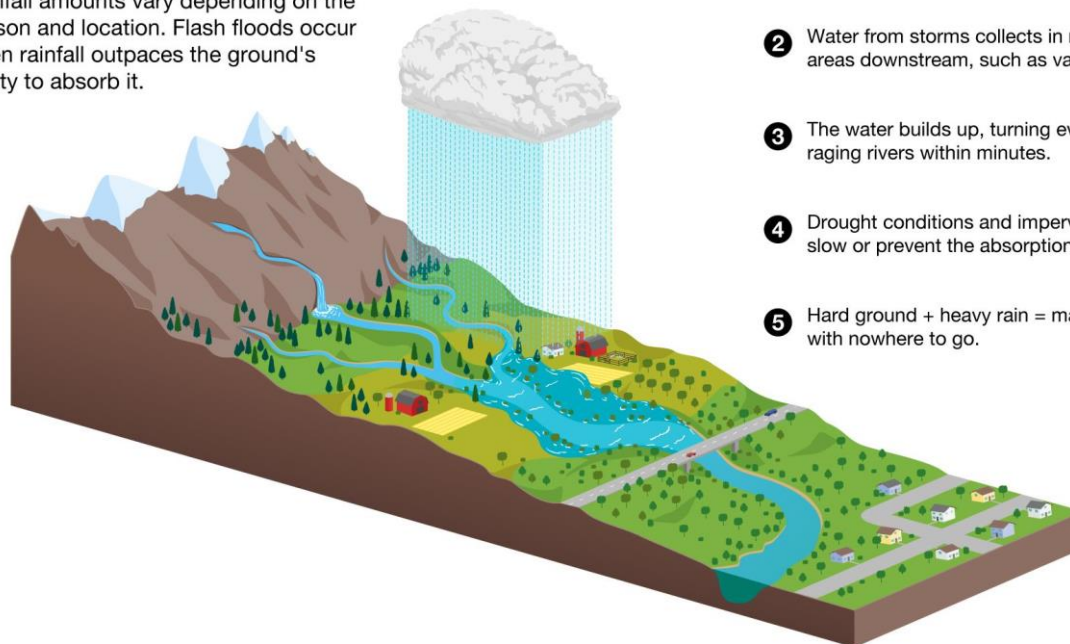
Reasons for Flash Floods in India:

- A recent study shows that only 25% of flash floods in India are caused only by extreme rainfall. In most cases, floods happen due to a mix of heavy rain and already saturated soil. When the ground is wet, it can’t absorb more water, leading to quick runoff and flooding.
- Surprisingly, just 23% of extreme rain events lead to flash floods within six hours. Instead, longer spells of both light and heavy rain are more likely to cause these floods.
- The study also found regional differences:
 - On the west coast and in Central India, small river basins respond quickly to rain because they are highly “flashy,” meaning water levels rise very fast.
 - In the Himalayas, the steep slopes make the region even more flood-prone.
 - Even within the Ganga river basin, risk levels vary. The southern Himalayan sub-basins are more vulnerable, while central parts face lower risk.

This shows that local terrain and weather patterns play a big role in flash flood risk.

How a flash flood develops

Rainfall amounts vary depending on the season and location. Flash floods occur when rainfall outpaces the ground's ability to absorb it.



- 1 Rain falling upstream, even several miles away, eventually flows downhill.
- 2 Water from storms collects in narrow, low-lying areas downstream, such as valleys and canyons.
- 3 The water builds up, turning even dry channels into raging rivers within minutes.
- 4 Drought conditions and impervious surfaces can slow or prevent the absorption of water into the soil.
- 5 Hard ground + heavy rain = massive runoff with nowhere to go.

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How climate change intensifies Flash Floods?

- a. **Extreme rainfall:** Climate change increases global temperatures, which allows the air to hold more moisture. This leads to sudden, intense downpours—a key trigger for flash floods.
- b. **Prolonged Wet soil:** Warmer temperatures can cause frequent or prolonged rainfall, leaving the soil saturated. When more rain falls on already wet ground, water runs off quickly, causing floods.
- c. **Melting glaciers:** In mountainous regions like the Himalayas, warming leads to glacier and snow melt, which adds more water to rivers, increasing flood risk during heavy rains.
- d. **Changing weather patterns:** Climate change disrupts monsoons and storm tracks, making rainfall less predictable and increasing chances of cloudbursts or unseasonal heavy rains.

Mitigating the challenge of flash floods:

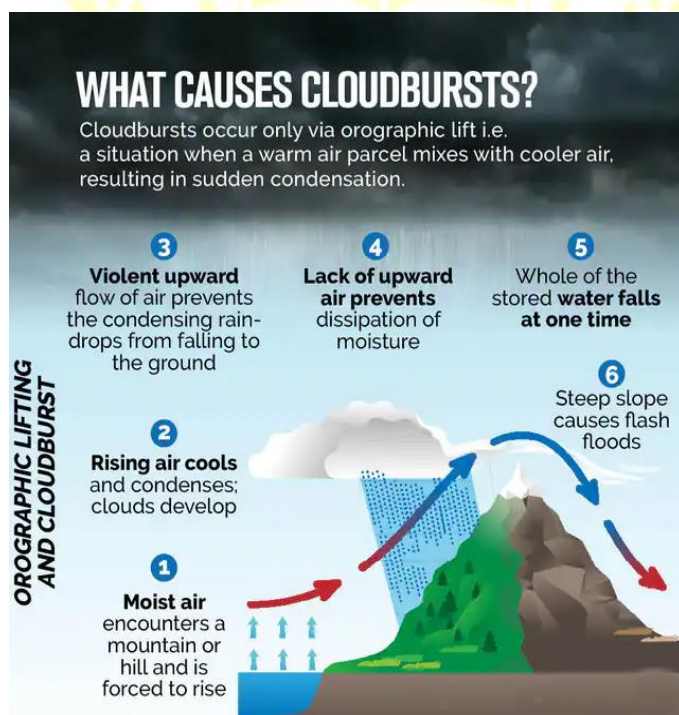
- a. **Early Warning & Monitoring:** Improve forecasting systems using satellite data and AI to predict flash floods early. Install local alert systems in high-risk areas, especially near rivers and mountains.
- b. **Strengthen Infrastructure:** stronger embankments, flood-resistant roads, and safe drainage systems. Use permeable surfaces and rainwater harvesting in urban areas to reduce runoff.
- c. **Restore ecosystem:** Protect and restore wetlands, forests, and riverbanks, which absorb excess water. Avoid construction in floodplains and ecologically sensitive zones.

- d. **Community preparedness:** Conduct flood drills, awareness campaigns, and training for local communities. Create emergency response teams at the village and district level.
- e. **Quick relief after the disaster:** Ensure quick relief: clean water, food, shelter, and medical help. Provide compensation and help people rebuild homes and livelihoods.
- f. **Long term planning:** Include flash flood risk in urban planning, land use policy, and development projects. Promote climate-resilient agriculture in flood-prone areas.
- g. **Use of technology:** Develop real-time flood dashboards, mobile alerts, and GIS mapping for faster decision-making.

The study stresses the need for region-specific solutions based on local terrain and soil, not just rainfall.

This can help improve early warnings, disaster readiness, and long-term planning.

It also calls for climate-resilient infrastructure, better land-use planning, and integrated flood management to reduce the impact of rising extreme weather events.



13. Revival of Lotus in Wular Lake

In News: Lotus flowers are blooming in Kashmir's Wular lake after nearly three decades. This is a positive sign for local communities for whom the lake is a source of livelihood. The edible stem of the lotus, known as nadru, is a delicacy that sells for a good price in the market.



How did the Lotus disappear?

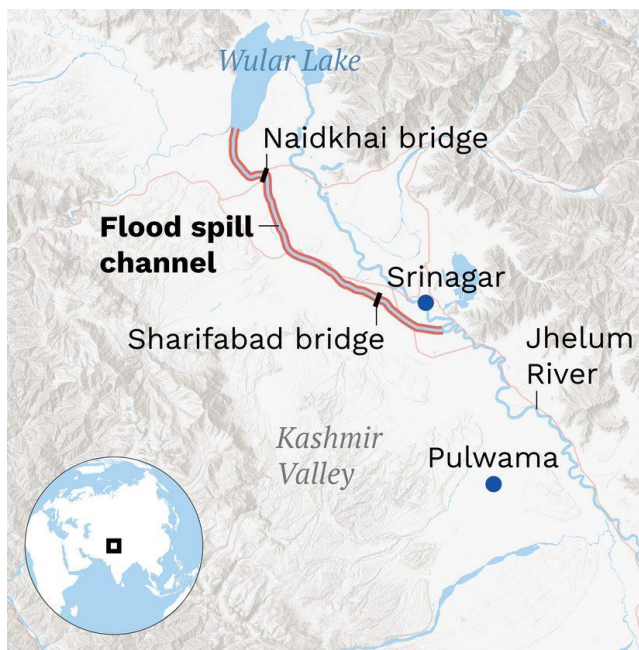
The lotus plants of Wular had disappeared in September 1992, when a catastrophic flood hit the Valley. Water from the Jhelum River had gushed into Wular, carrying vast amounts of silt. The sediment settled across the lakebed, choking aquatic plants and devastating the delicate ecology of the lake. The damage endured for decades, making the lake infertile and stagnant.

In 2020, the Wular Conservation and Management Authority (WUCMA) launched a plan aimed at reviving the lake. They focussed on dredging—the laborious process of removing accumulated silt and debris from the lakebed to improve water depth and flow.

However, the threats linger: illegal encroachments, waste dumping, and changes related to global warming endanger the fragile revival. Experts stress that sustaining the progress requires strict ecological monitoring, local participation, and government support.

About Wular Lake:

- It is the largest freshwater lake in India and the second largest freshwater lake in Asia.
- Location: It is located in the Bandipore district of Jammu and Kashmir.
- It is fed by the Jhelum River.



- The lake lies at an altitude of 1,580 m on the **foothills of Haramuk Mountain**.
- It is spread over a total area of 200 sq.km., covering almost 24 km in length and 10 km in breadth.
- The lake basin was formed as a result of tectonic activity.
- It is also said to be a remnant of Satisar Lake that existed in ancient times.
- This lake also has a small is land in its centre called the ‘Zaina Lank’. This island was constructed by King Zainul-Abi-Din.
- In 1990, it was designated as a Wetland of International Importance under the Ramsar Convention.

Ecological significance of Wular Lake:

- Wular Lake plays an important part in the hydrographic system of Kashmir Valley.
- The lake also forms a huge absorption basin for annual floodwater. A number of local water bodies like Bohnar, Erin, Madamati and Ningal also drain their waters in the lake.
- Wular Lake and its associated wetlands are important habitats for migratory birds as well. Migratory birds like Egret, Shoveler, Common Pochard and Mallard can be spotted here.
- Wular Lake is also an important fish habitat and fishes from the lake make up a major part of the diet of the people in Kashmir Valley.

14. BITRA Island Lakshadweep

In News: Bitra Island is the smallest inhabited island in Lakshadweep, India, and is currently in the news due to a proposed acquisition by the government for defense purposes.



The government is considering acquiring the island for the establishment of a defense outpost, potentially alongside existing naval bases like INS Dweepakshak (Kavaratti) and INS Jatayu (Minicoy).

Local Concerns:

- The proposed acquisition has sparked controversy, with some locals and politicians expressing concerns about displacement and the lack of local consultation, thus accusing the government of violating people's democratic rights.
- Civilian resettlement could threaten the socio-cultural fabric of the native community. The island has had a permanent population for decades, making forced displacement contentious.

Geopolitical Significance:

Lakshadweep's location in the Arabian Sea makes it vital for India's maritime security, especially in view of growing Chinese influence in the Indian Ocean.

Defence Infrastructure Expansion:

Aligns with India's push to enhance blue water naval capability and island-based defence outposts.

The proposed takeover of Bitra Island highlights India's defence priorities but also raises important ethical, legal, and democratic questions. Balancing national security with local rights and cultural heritage will be key. This issue could soon spark debate in Parliament and may even reach the courts.

15. India's GLOF Preparedness

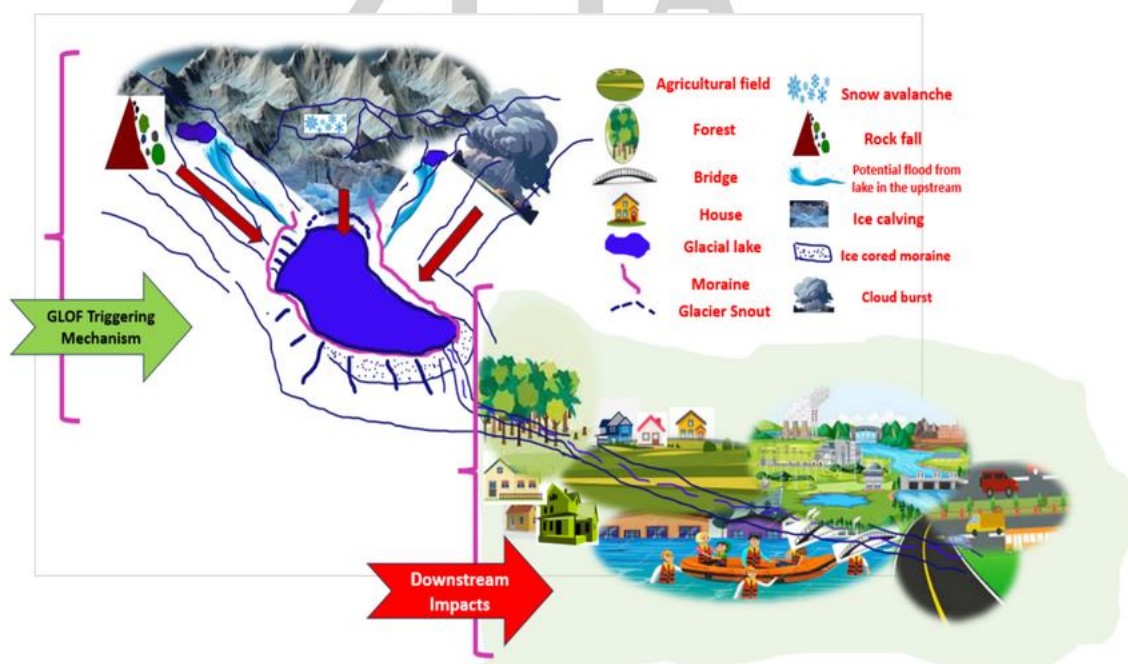
In News: Following recent Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF) disasters in the Himalayas, India has launched a national programme focused on monitoring, risk reduction, and preparedness. The initiative includes early warning systems, risk assessments, and scientific expeditions to better understand and manage GLOF threats.

What happened?

- On July 8, 2025, a severe GLOF hit Nepal, destroying a China-built bridge and shutting down several hydropower plants.
- The disaster showed the growing danger of glacial melt in the Himalayas, worsened by global warming and earthquake risks.
- India, with over 7,500 glacial lakes across 11 river basins, faces serious threats to infrastructure, livelihoods, and ecosystems from similar events.
- To respond, the Indian government, via the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), has launched a multi-pronged plan focusing on:
 - Early warning systems
 - Risk assessment and mitigation
 - Community awareness and preparedness

GLOF risk in Himalayas:

- GLOFs occur when unstable glacial lakes, formed due to melting glaciers, suddenly burst, releasing massive volumes of water downstream. In the Indian Himalayan Region (IHR), two major types of glacial lakes are found:
 - Supraglacial Lakes: Formed on the glacier surface, vulnerable to summer melting.
 - Moraine-Dammed Lakes: Formed at the glacier toe and dammed by loose debris, highly prone to collapse due to avalanches or ice-core instability.
- According to the National Remote Sensing Centre, India is home to around 28,000 glacial lakes, with most situated above 4,500 metres, making ground access difficult and monitoring sparse.



India has already experienced several GLOF disasters, such as:

- Chorabari GLOF (2013): Triggered the Kedarnath tragedy with cascading floods and landslides, killing hundreds.
- South Lhonak GLOF (2023, Sikkim): Destroyed the 1,250 MW Chungthang dam, raising the Teesta riverbed and decreasing its water-carrying capacity.

Challenges:

- Rising temperatures can trigger glacial outflow by destabilizing glacial structures.
- The lack of weather and water monitoring stations in high-altitude areas has left most glacial lakes unmapped and unguarded.

India's National GLOF Risk Reduction Programme (2024–25)

- Budget: \$20 million
- Lead Agency: National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) under the Committee on Disaster Risk Reduction (CoDRR)
- Focus: Tackling the rising risk from 195 high-risk glacial lakes, classified into four vulnerability levels

Advanced tools and Technologies deployed to de-escalate the challenges of GLOF:

- Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR) Interferometry: Used for micro-level monitoring of slope stability and lake expansion, accurate up to a centimetre.
- Electrical Resistivity Tomography (ERT): Helps detect subsurface ice cores that could lead to dam failure.
- Bathymetry and UAV Surveys: Assess lake volume and surrounding terrain.
- Apart from technical tools, India has turned to ground-level institutions like the Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) for manual early warnings.
- Given their high-altitude deployments, ITBP personnel are now being trained to detect visible signs of GLOF risk.
- Community partnership is also crucial in mitigating these challenges.

16. World Population day

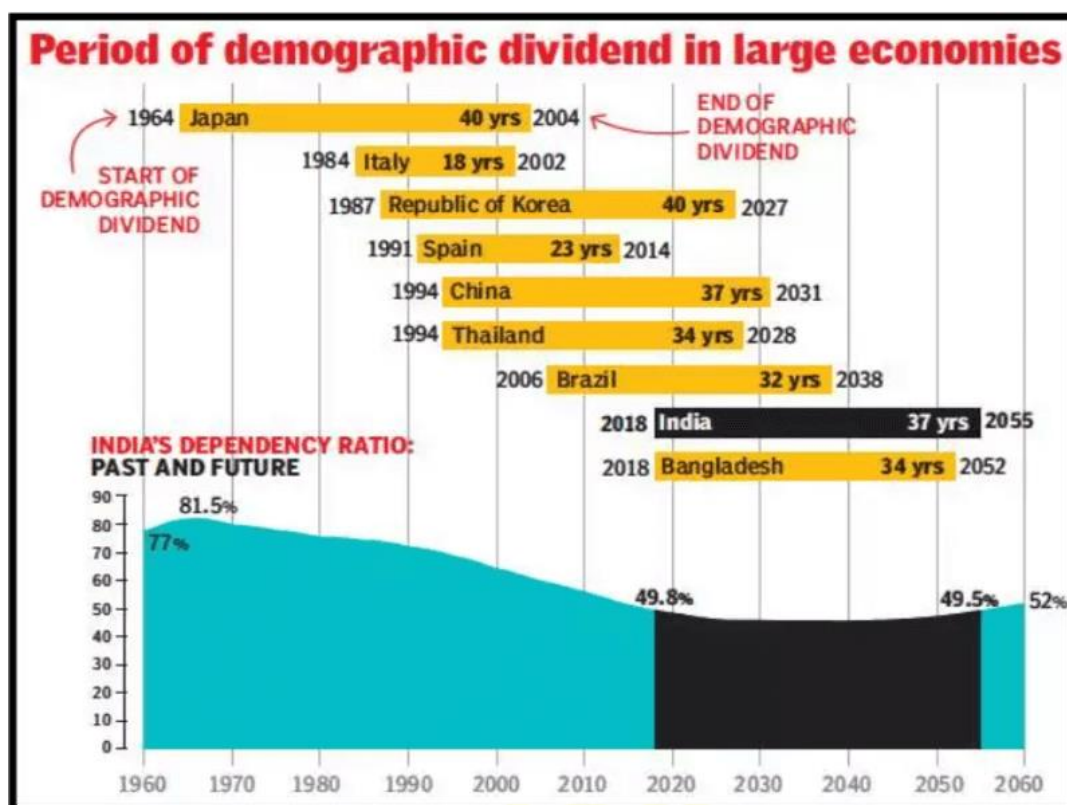
In News: World Population Day, observed on 11th July, was established by the UN in 1989 to raise awareness about population issues and reproductive health rights.

Theme 2025: Empowering young people to create the families they want in a fair and hopeful world.

Status of Youth in India:

- According to UNICEF, India has the world's largest youth population, with 371 million people in the 15 to 29 age group.
- As per the Technical Group on Population Projections (2021), youth (15–29 years) accounted for 27.2% of the population in 2021, but are projected to decline to 22.7% by 2036.
- Department of Youth Affairs, under the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports, is the nodal agency for youth-related policies and programs.

Demographic dividend: A large youth population enhances workforce participation and reduces dependency ratios, creating a demographic dividend for growth.



Choice, control and capitalism:

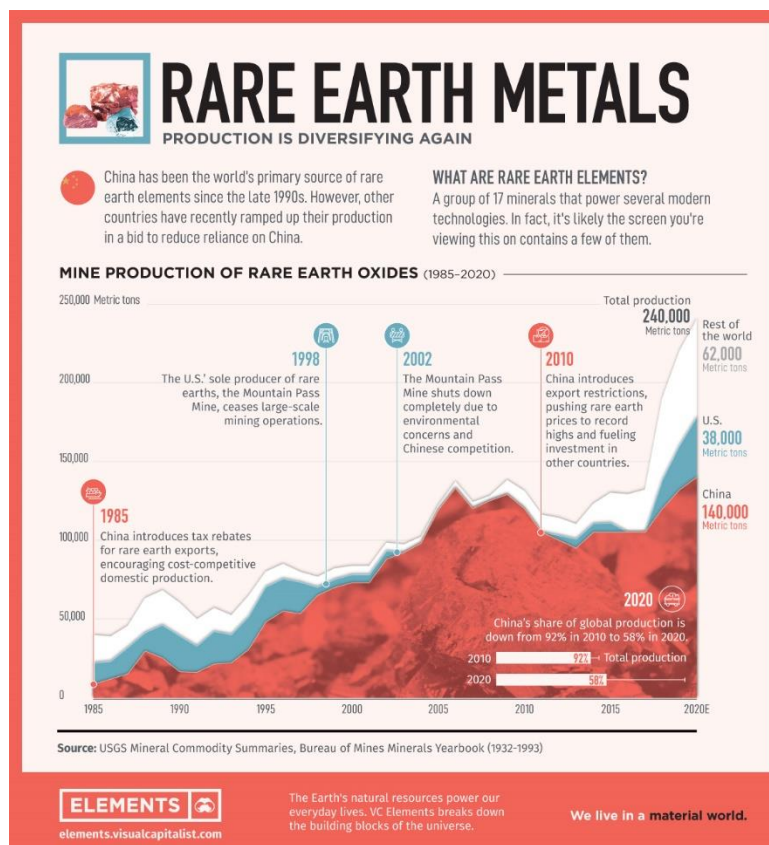
To truly harness India's demographic dividend, policies must go beyond broad reforms and focus on micro-vulnerable groups — such as rural youth, informal workers, women, and marginalized communities.

- **Choice:** Ensure that individuals, especially from weaker sections, have real options in education, skills, healthcare, and employment.
- **Control:** Empower them with access to land, credit, digital tools, and legal rights — allowing greater control over their lives and livelihoods.
- **Capitalism:** Promote inclusive economic participation by integrating these groups into the market economy through entrepreneurship support, microfinance, and targeted skilling.

Without inclusion of the most vulnerable, the demographic dividend could become a demographic burden.

Empowering every citizen to choose, control, and contribute is key to sustainable, equitable growth.

17. Rare Earth Treasures in Rajasthan



Context: Surveys by the Geological Survey of India (GSI) and Atomic Minerals Directorate (AMD) have revealed large reserves of rare earth minerals in Bhati Kheda, Siwana tehsil, Balotra, Rajasthan.

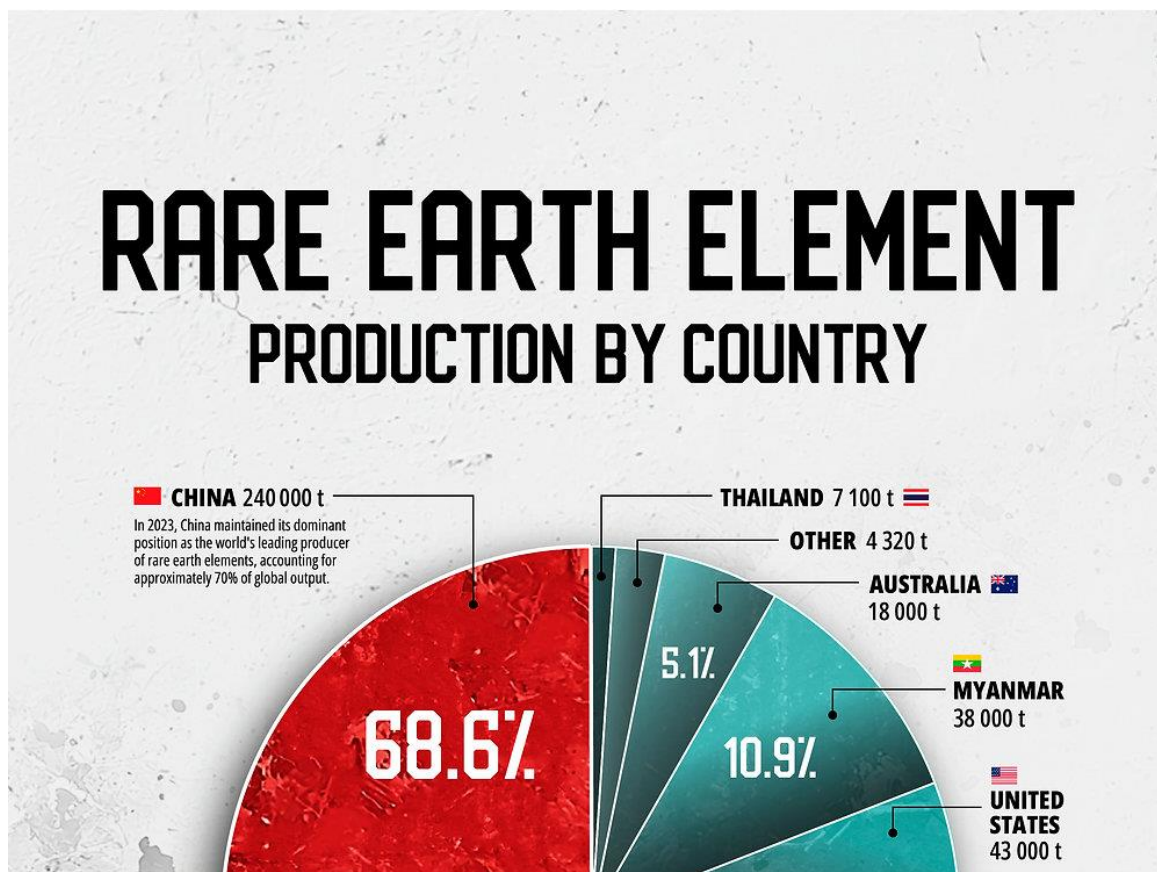
Rare Earth Reserves in Rajasthan:

- **India's First Hard Rock Rare Mineral Block:** Bhati Kheda in Balotra holds significant reserves of rare earth minerals, confirming the presence of 17 high-demand elements critical for modern technologies.
- It is set to become the country's first block to contain rare earth minerals in hard rock granite, a more challenging form for mineral extraction.
- The G2 level survey confirms the large reserves of these minerals, making it a significant find.

Rare Earth Minerals:

- Rare earth minerals are minerals that contain one or more rare earth elements (REEs) as a major metal constituent.

- Rare earth elements refer specifically to 17 metallic elements: the 15 lanthanides on the periodic table, plus scandium and yttrium.
- These elements are used heavily in high-tech electronics, magnets, renewable energy technologies, and defense.



IAS

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In News (Prelims Focus)

Green Gold of Ghana

The Sugarloaf pineapple from Ghana is known as "Green Gold" due to its high market value, sweet taste, and growing importance as an export crop, especially to Europe.

What Makes Sugarloaf Pineapple Special?

Exceptionally Sweet & Juicy

- Much sweeter than regular pineapples

- Low acidity, so it's gentle on the stomach
- No sharp aftertaste, making it popular among children and elderly

Edible Core

- The core is soft and sweet, unlike most pineapples where it's tough
- This reduces waste and adds value
- Fragrant Aroma & Tender Flesh
- Has a mild, pleasant fragrance and white to pale yellow flesh

Unique Appearance

- Stays green even when ripe, unlike yellowing common pineapples
- This causes confusion sometimes but is part of its identity



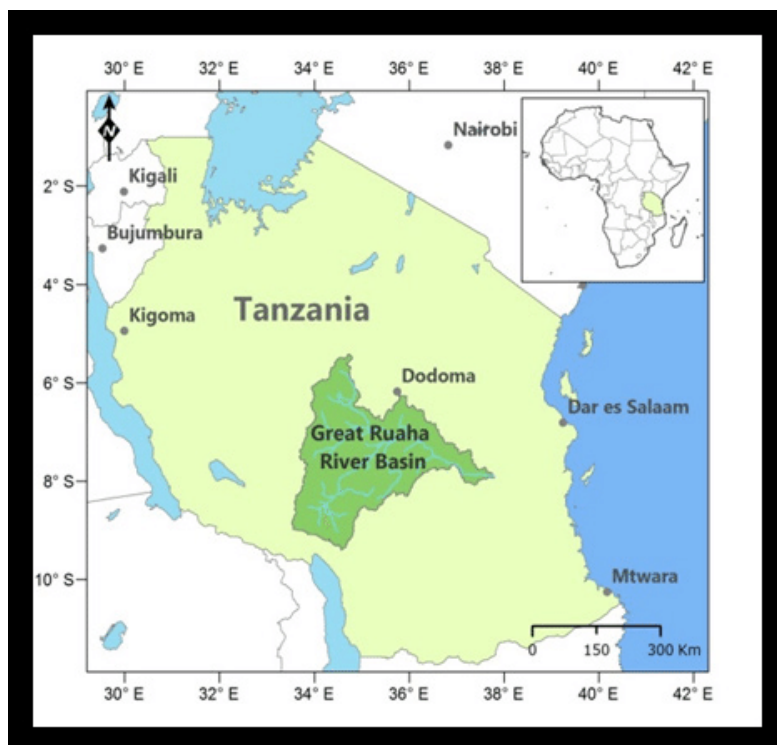
The Great Ruaha River

In News: The Great Ruaha River is in the news due to its alarming desiccation caused by climate change and mismanagement.

About Ruaha River:

- It is located in south-central Tanzania.

- It is among the major rivers of Tanzania and serves as a significant tributary of the Rufiji River, which forms the largest river basin in the country.
- It flows eastward through the Ruaha National Park and Usangu wetlands before merging with the Rufiji River.



Indian Society, Culture and History

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18. Dowry Deaths in India

Context: A rise in dowry-related deaths in states like Uttar Pradesh, Chandigarh, and Tamil Nadu shows that this illegal practice is still widespread. Many women still face harassment, violence, and even take their own lives because of dowry demands. Police investigations are slow, and convictions are uncommon, making it harder to get justice.

Dowry Death

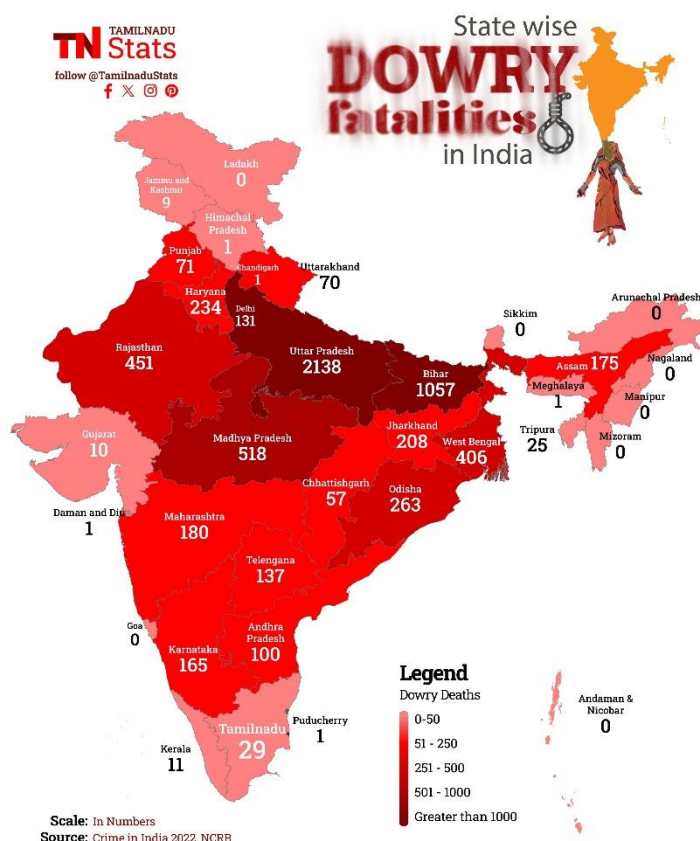
According to the **Section 80 of Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS)** A woman's death by burns, injury, or in unnatural circumstances within 7 years of marriage is considered dowry death if she faced cruelty or harassment over dowry soon before her death.

Punishment: Minimum 7 years imprisonment, extendable to life.

Cruelty

Under **Section 86 of the BNS**, cruelty is defined as any willful conduct likely to drive a woman to commit suicide or cause serious harm to her physical or mental health.

It also includes harassment intended to force her or her family to meet unlawful demands for money or property, or harassment due to their failure to meet such demands.



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Reasons for dowry deaths:

- Social/cultural practice:** Dowry, though illegal since 1961 under the Dowry Prohibition Act, continues to be treated as a social practice. Many families still see it as an essential part of marriage, often disguised as "gifts." In some sections of society, a girl's worth is judged not by the life she builds, but by the dowry she brings.
- Patriarchal bias:** Dowry is often used to assert control over women, who are perceived as a burden upon marriage. The demands from husbands and in-laws for additional dowries are rooted in patriarchal attitudes that value women as commodities.
- Moral conditioning of women:** women are conditioned to remain silent about abuse, which means the report of any assault is not reported.

Additionally, in many families abuse related to dowry is normalized which again leads to unreported assaults and abuse.

- d. **Economic pressure:** Rising economic pressures contribute to the demand for higher dowries. The growing consumerism, social media influence, and the desire for a 'grand wedding' create an environment conducive to dowry expectations.

Challenges in dowry related cases and their investigation:

- a. **Slow investigation of reported matters:** Only around 4,500 out of 7,000 dowry deaths reported each year lead to charge sheets. The rest remain stuck due to investigations being delayed, mishandled, or disposed of due to lack of evidence or false complaints.
- b. **Overburdened Judiciary:** Even after charge sheets are filed, over 90% of cases face delays in courts. With limited convictions (around 100 annually), cases often remain unresolved for years, leading to a sense of impunity among perpetrators.
- c. **Under-reporting of cases:** Many dowry-related deaths go unreported due to fear of stigma, lack of legal awareness, and pressure from both society and family.

Way forward:

- a. **Empower the women:** Empowering women financially is key to breaking the cycle of dowry violence. Laws like the Prevention of Child Marriage Act, 2006 and Right to Education Act, 2009 must be strictly enforced to keep girls in school and delay early marriage. Schemes like **Beti Bachao Beti Padhao, Sukanya Samriddhi Yojana, Mudra Yojana, and the National Skill Development Mission** can give women the tools, savings, and skills needed for independence.

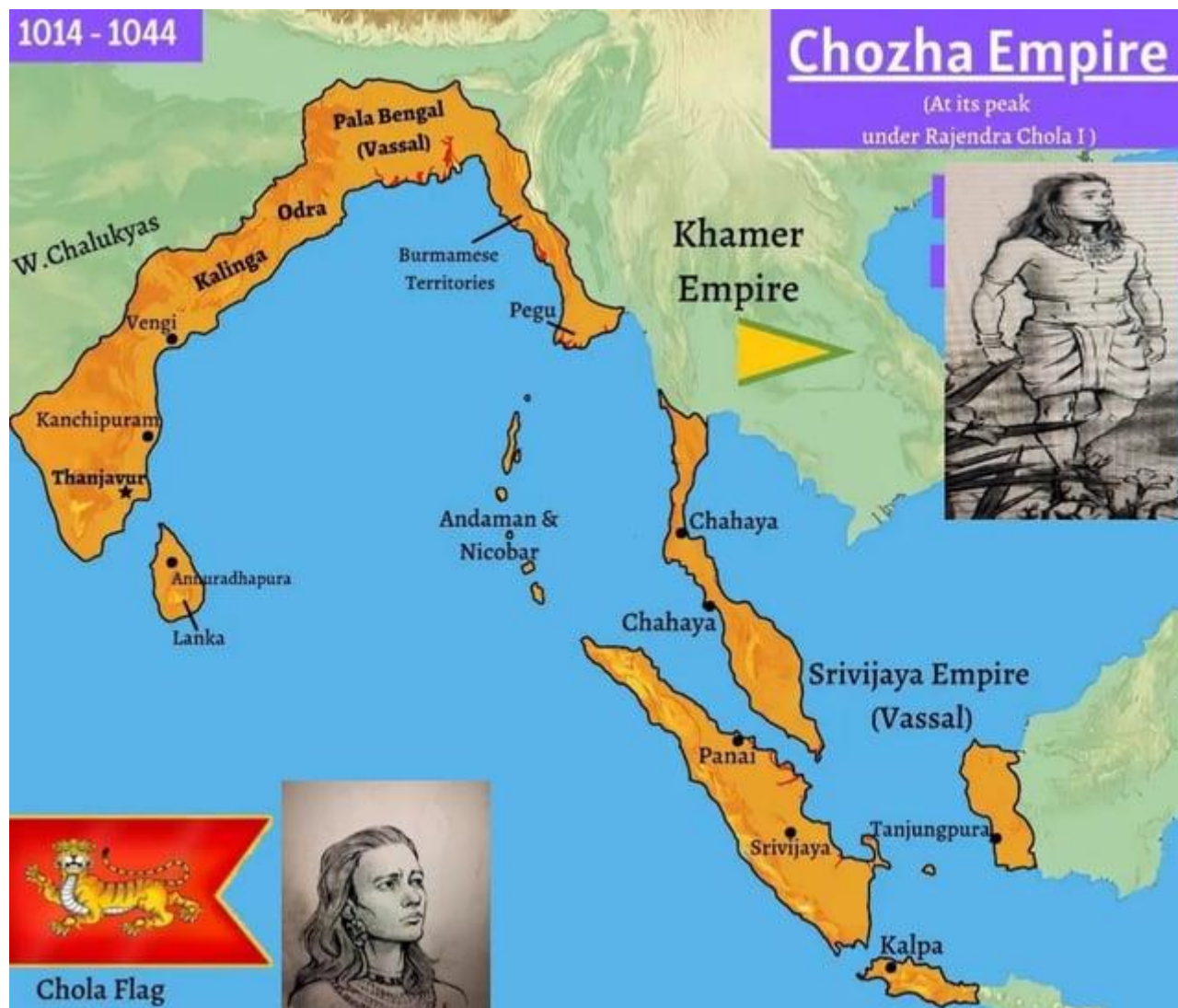
When women earn and control resources, they're better able to resist abuse and build their own future.

- b. **Making reporting easier for women:** Use tech-based platforms (apps, WhatsApp helplines) to allow anonymous complaints and track police response. Provide legal anonymity and protection for whistleblowers within families or communities. Safer reporting helps more women come forward.
- c. **Establishing women shelters, counselling facilities etc.** for distressed women: women need support to leave an abusive relationship. Every district must have women shelters and counselling facilities to help them.
- d. **Fast-tracking of cases:** Setting up fast-track courts dedicated to dowry death cases would expedite trials and reduce the delay in the justice system.
- e. **Increase Awareness and Legal Support:** Victims of dowry harassment should be provided with easier access to legal aid and counseling. Social awareness campaigns targeting the negative impacts of dowry could help change societal attitudes over time, reducing dowry-related violence.

Dowry deaths show that women still face violence and unfair treatment in many parts of India. Even though dowry is illegal, weak law enforcement and slow justice let it continue. To stop this, we need stricter action, faster trials, and a change in how society sees women and marriage.

19. Lessons from the Past- CHOLAS

In News: Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Gangaikonda Cholapuram during the Aadi Thiruvathirai festival in Tamil Nadu got attention because it quietly sent a political message and highlighted the history of the Chola dynasty, especially the achievements of Rajendra Chola I.



(in Tamil 'L' is also pronounced as 'ZH')

How can the Chola administration guide modern local governance?

- **Land and Revenue Management:** The Cholas did detailed land surveys and used fair taxes based on land type.

Today, digital land records and mapping tools like GIS can help with better city planning and fair tax collection.

- **Strong Infrastructure:** They built long-lasting public buildings using advanced techniques.

For example, the Brihadisvara Temple was built to last and resist disasters – a good model for today's infrastructure.

- **Local Self-Governance:** The Cholas had village assemblies like Sabhas and Urs that managed local affairs.

This is similar to India's Panchayati Raj system under the 73rd and 74th Amendments, which promotes local decision-making.

- **Efficient Local Administration:** Chola institutions handled taxes, public works, and dispute resolution. They offer a good example of transparent, people-friendly local governance.

Why is Chola water management still important today?

- Sustainable Water Use:** The Cholas built tanks, canals, and reservoirs to save rainwater and support farming all year. Tamil Nadu can revive old tanks to support farming in a changing climate.
- Managing Rivers Together:** They managed the Cauvery river system with smart planning. Modern projects like Namami Gange can learn from this for better river management.
- Community Involvement:** Local people helped maintain water systems, ensuring they worked well. Today, village-level water groups under Panchayati Raj can help manage water better.

What can temple architecture teach us about earthquake safety?

- Stable Shape:** Chola temples had a wide base and pyramid-like top to stay stable during earthquakes. The Brihadisvara Temple is a good example – it has lasted through many quakes.
- Smart Stone Fitting:** Stones were joined without cement, allowing them to move slightly during tremors. The Airavatesvara Temple shows how tightly-fitted stones can make buildings stronger.
- Built with Earthquakes in Mind:** They chose locations and designs that matched the local geology. That's why many temples in South India are still standing after centuries.
- How does invoking the Chola legacy influence today's politics?** National Pride: Talking about the Cholas highlights India's rich history and ancient global power. Leaders use their stories – like trade and temples – to boost India's image.
- Connecting with Tamil Nadu: Celebrating the Cholas appeals to Tamil pride.** For example, PM Modi visiting Gangaikonda Cholapuram during a local festival sent a political message to the region.

The Chola dynasty still teaches us valuable lessons today. Their smart governance, local democracy,

sustainable development, and strong infrastructure give us a model to follow. From water management to

earthquake-safe buildings, and from local self-rule to national pride, the Cholas offer a blueprint for modern India.

20. USA Pulls out of UNESCO

In News: United States announced its decision to withdraw from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), just two years after rejoining in 2023, citing alleged bias against Israel.

UNESCO:

UNESCO stands for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization.

It is a specialized agency of the United Nations, created to promote peace, sustainable development, and intercultural dialogue through education, science, culture, and communication.

History:

- **Founded:** November 16, 1945, after World War II
- **Reason for Creation:** To prevent future wars by promoting mutual understanding among nations through knowledge, cultural respect, and education.
- **Founding Belief:** Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed.



Headquarters and Membership

- Headquarters: Paris, France
- Member States: 194 member states and 12 associate members (as of 2025)
- **Official Languages:** Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, Spanish

Roles and Functions:

- **Promote Education for All**

- Ensure that everyone, regardless of age, gender, or background, has access to quality education.
- Focuses on lifelong learning, literacy, gender equality, and inclusive education.
- Leads global efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) – **“Quality Education for All.”**
- **Foster Freedom of Expression**
 - Protects the right to speak freely, access information, and participate in open communication.
 - Supports media freedom, journalist safety, and responsible use of digital platforms.
- **Protect Cultural Heritage and Diversity**
 - Safeguards tangible heritage (monuments, sites) and intangible heritage (traditions, festivals, languages).
 - Promotes cultural diversity and creativity as sources of identity, dialogue, and innovation.
 - Fights illegal trafficking of cultural objects and supports heritage preservation.
- **Advance Scientific Cooperation**
 - Encourages international collaboration in science, technology, and innovation to solve global problems.
 - Promotes ethical science, sustainability, and inclusive access to scientific knowledge.
 - Supports programs on climate change, biodiversity, water, and AI ethics.
- **Support Peacebuilding and Sustainable Development**
 - Uses education, science, and culture to promote peace, human rights, and non-violence.
 - Builds bridges between cultures and civilizations to reduce conflict.
 - Supports the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) through local and global partnerships.

US Quitting UNESCO: This is the third time that the United States has left UNESCO, and the second time during a Trump administration.

Timeline of USA’s engagement with UNESCO:

1945: The US is a founding member of UNESCO.

1984: The Reagan administration withdraws, citing mismanagement and alignment with Soviet interests.

2003: The US rejoins UNESCO under the George W. Bush administration.

2011: The US cuts funding to UNESCO after the agency votes to include Palestine as a member state.

2017: The Trump administration withdraws again, citing anti-Israel bias.

2023: The Biden administration rejoins UNESCO, aiming to counter China's growing influence.

2025 (July): The US announces its withdrawal from UNESCO, effective December 2026.

The US withdrawal has significant implications, including:

Financial Impact: The US is a major contributor to UNESCO, and its withdrawal creates a budget gap that could affect various programs.

Geopolitical Shifts: China may gain more influence within UNESCO, potentially reshaping the organization's agenda.

Impact on Cultural Diplomacy: The US departure could weaken its soft power and influence on global cultural and educational initiatives.

Tribes in India

21. Arunachali Tribe farming fish and rice together

The Apatani Tribe in Arunachal Pradesh practices a unique form of integrated farming where they cultivate rice and fish together in the same field. This method is known as 'Apatani paddy-cum-fish cultivation'.

- It is an efficient way to manage land and resources.
- The Apatani people have developed sophisticated techniques for water management, using bamboo pipes and terraced fields to create a self-irrigating system.

Main features of the Farming technique



What If You Could Farm Fish & Rice Together? This Arunachal Tribe Has Been Doing It Sustainably For 60+ Years!

www.thebetterindia.com

@thebetterindia

- a. **Integrated Farming system:** The Apatani system is renowned for its simultaneous cultivation of rice and fish in the same paddy fields. Fish, usually common carp, are introduced into the fields after the rice seedlings are transplanted.
- b. **Water Management:** The tribe has developed a sophisticated system of water channels and bamboo structures to manage water flow from mountain streams to terraced paddy fields. This ensures optimal water levels for both rice and fish
- c. **Sustainable practice:** The Apatanis avoid the use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides, relying instead on natural methods to maintain soil fertility and pest control.
- d. **Biodiversity conservation:** The system integrates various elements like rice, fish, and sometimes agroforestry, contributing to the overall biodiversity of the area.
- e. **Social forestry:** They also engage in sustainable social forestry, managing forests for timber, fuel, and other resources.

Benefits:

- a. **Increased Productivity:** The fish help control weeds and pests in the rice fields, aerate the soil, and contribute to its fertility through their droppings, leading to higher rice yields
- b. **Nutritional Benefits:** The system provides a balanced source of nutrition, with rice as a staple and fish as a protein source.
- c. **Economic benefits:** The Apatanis can harvest both rice and fish, generating income from both crops.
- d. **Ecological benefits:** The system promotes soil and water conservation, biodiversity, and minimizes the need for external inputs.

22. Hatii Tribe

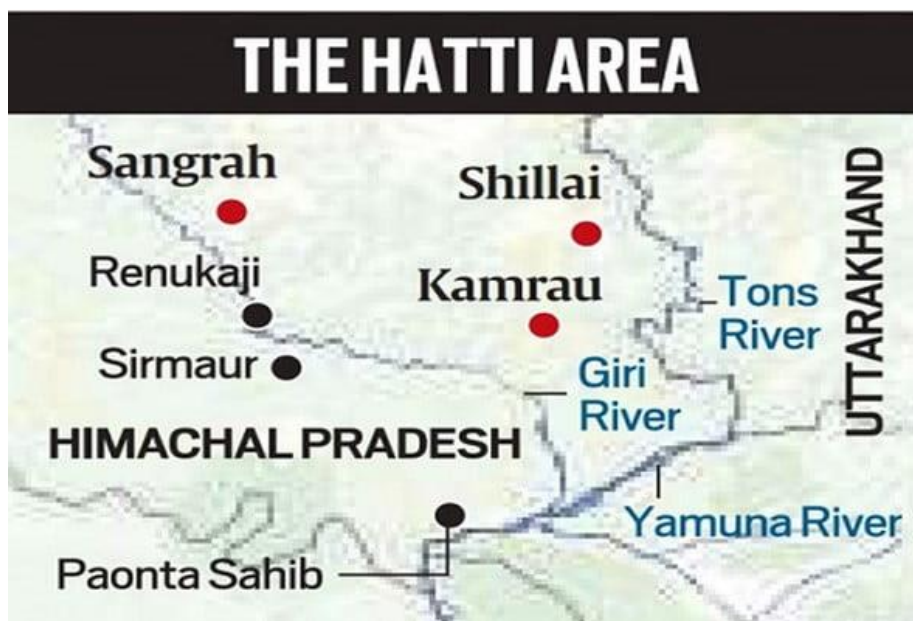
In News: Two Brothers married the same woman in Himachal. The age old custom of Hatti Tribe.

The Hatti community, recognized as a Scheduled Tribe (ST) in Himachal Pradesh, is a tribal community inhabiting the border region between Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand

They are known for their traditional haats (markets) where they sell produce, meat, and wool, and for their unique cultural practices, including the traditional council called "khumbli" and the custom of polyandry, locally known as "Jodidara".

Geographical Location:

They reside in the Trans-Giri area of Himachal Pradesh and the Jaunsar Bawar region of Uttarakhand, along the Himachal-Uttarakhand border, near the Giri and Tons rivers, both tributaries of the Yamuna.



Traditional Occupation:

The Hattis traditionally sell home-grown crops, vegetables, meat, and wool at local haats (markets), which is how they derived their name.

Social Structure:

They have a close-knit community structure and are governed by a traditional council called "khumbli" which decides community matters.

Cultural Practices:

The Hatti community is known for its distinct traditions, including the white headgear worn by men on ceremonial occasions, and the practice of polyandry (Jodidara).

Polyandry:

This custom, where one woman marries multiple brothers, is a significant cultural practice though it is illegal under Indian law.

Ethnographic Studies:

Several studies, including ethnographic research, have documented the culture and social institutions of the Hatti community, including their caste, kinship, marriage, political organization, and religion.

Agriculture

23. India must support CIMMYT (International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center) and the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI).

In News: The International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center (CIMMYT) is facing a serious lack of funds due to exit of USAID and is now asking India for help to continue its global agricultural research work.

What Happened?

- USAID, which played a key role in supporting such agricultural advances, was shut down by the Trump administration from July 1.
- Its closure has affected institutions like CIMMYT, a major centre for maize and wheat research.
- Initially funded by Mexico and the Rockefeller Foundation, CIMMYT later relied heavily on USAID, which contributed \$83 million of its \$211 million funding in 2024.
- With USAID now shut, CIMMYT is turning to India—one of its biggest beneficiaries—for future support.

CIMMYT

Mexico-headquartered International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center or CIMMYT is a major centre for maize and wheat research.

Founded: It was founded in 1966 and headquartered in Mexico.

Origin: It evolved from a Rockefeller Foundation project with Mexican government support in the 1940s-50s.

Key Contributions:

- Led by Dr. Norman Borlaug, CIMMYT was central to the Green Revolution in Asia.
- It developed high-yielding, semi-dwarf wheat varieties such as Lerma Rojo 64A, Sonora 64, and Mayo 64.
- It collaborated with Indian scientists to create Kalyan Sona (1967), Sonalika (1968), and later PBW 343 (1995).

Current Impact:

- CIMMYT-derived varieties are grown on over 60 million hectares globally.

In India, 50% of wheat cultivated is from varieties released post-2019 through CIMMYT–ICAR collaboration.

Why should India support CIMMYT?

- a. **Protecting India's Agricultural Interests:** India grows wheat on 32 million hectares (2024).

6 of the top 10 wheat varieties used in India come from CIMMYT and cover over 15 million hectares. Supporting CIMMYT means supporting India's own farmers and food production.

- b. **Tackling Climate Challenges:** Rising March temperatures in north India are hurting wheat yields.

Just a 1°C rise in night temperature can reduce wheat yields by 6%. CIMMYT develops heat-tolerant, high-yield wheat, which is essential for India's food security in a changing climate.

- c. **Boosting India's Global Role:** By funding CIMMYT, India can show leadership in South-South cooperation. It gives India more say in global agricultural research and policy. India can also help train and support farmers in Africa and other developing regions using its own agricultural expertise.

- d. **Strong Human Connections:** Many Indian scientists work at CIMMYT offices worldwide.

About 10% of CIMMYT's global workforce is Indian. Supporting CIMMYT helps Indian talent contribute to global agricultural solutions.

However, this support must complement—not replace—investment in India's own agricultural research system.



ZETA
Environment

24. Global Wetland Outlook 2025

In News: The Global Wetland Outlook (GWO) 2025, released by the Secretariat of the Ramsar Convention (1971), highlights that Africa's wetlands are among the most degraded in the world.



Key Highlights:

- a. **Coverage:** Wetlands (like lakes, rivers, mangroves, coral reefs, etc.) cover 1,800 million hectares worldwide. They include inland freshwater, coastal, and marine ecosystems. Data is uncertain due to inconsistent tracking.
- b. **Loss and Degradation:** Since 1970, we've lost 22% of global wetlands (~411 million hectares). Worst losses are in Africa, Latin America, and the Caribbean. Wetlands in Least Developed Countries are in the poorest condition.
- c. **Value of wetlands:** Wetlands provide food, water purification, flood protection, carbon storage, and cultural value.

They generate about \$39 trillion in ecosystem services—7.5% of global GDP, while covering only 6% of Earth's surface. In some African nations, over 60% of GDP comes from nature-based sectors.

- h. **Funding Gap:** Biodiversity funding is just 0.25% of global GDP—far too low to protect wetlands.

Wetland Conservation:

Urgent action is needed to meet the **Kunming-Montreal Biodiversity Targets**:

- **Restore 30%** of degraded ecosystems (Target 2)
- **Protect 30%** of land, water, and seas (Target 3)

This means restoring **123–350 million hectares** of wetlands and properly managing **428 million hectares**.

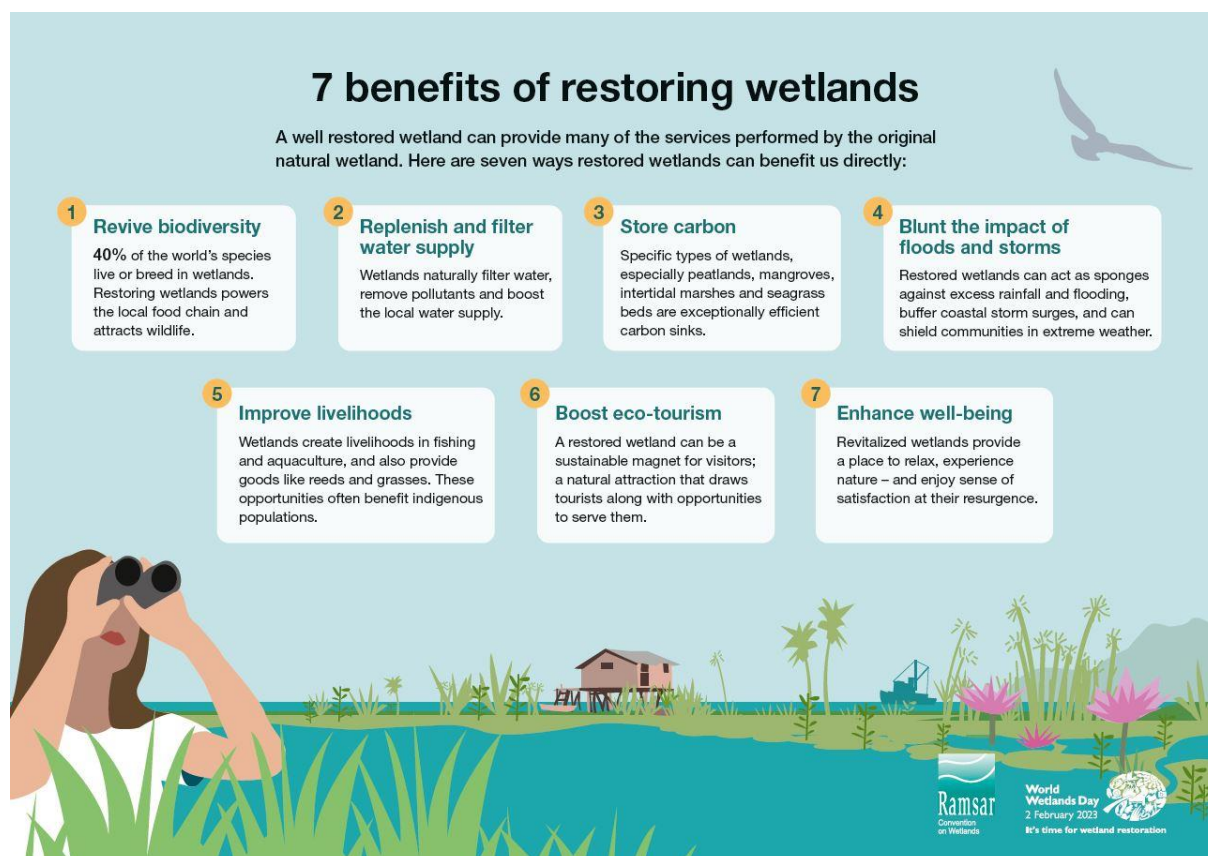
Supports **climate goals** (UNFCCC) and **SDG 6.6** on water ecosystems.

Conservation is cheaper than restoration, which can cost **\$1,000–\$70,000 per hectare** each year.

Urge **governments and private sector** to invest in wetlands as **Nature-Based Solutions (NbS)** for:

- Disaster protection
- Climate resilience
- Water security

Need to **build capacity** and plan for **long-term wetland investment** globally.



About Wetlands:

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Wetlands are areas where water is the primary factor controlling the environment and the associated plant and animal life. They occur where the water table is at or near the surface of the land, or where the land is covered by water.

25. UN Food Systems Summit +4 Stocktake (UNFSS+4)

In News: call for reform in the global food systems was made at the UN Food Systems Summit +4 Stocktake (UNFSS+4) in Addis Ababa (Ethiopia).

The UN Food Systems Summit was launched in 2021 for ensuring more resilient, inclusive, and sustainable food systems.



About Food Systems

Food systems include all actors and activities involved in the production, processing, distribution, consumption, and disposal of food originating from agriculture, forestry, fisheries, etc.

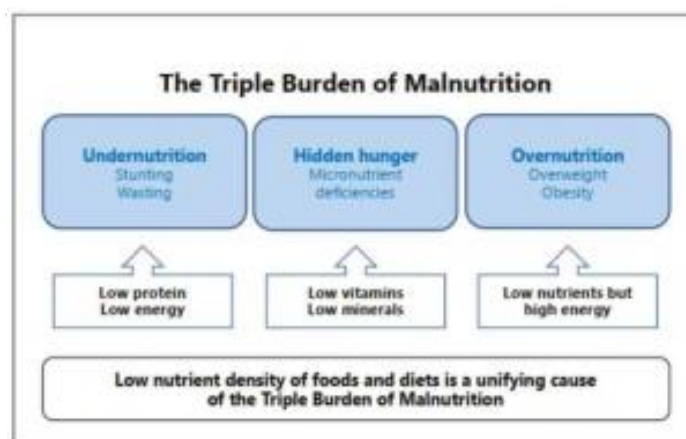
Importance

- **Social:** Linked with all SDGs (Zero Hunger, Health, Biodiversity). 783 million people are chronically hungry.
- **Economic:** Major source of employment and income for agricultural households.
- **Environmental:** 30% of global greenhouse gas emissions, 80% of biodiversity loss 70% of freshwater use
- **Hidden costs:** \$11.6 trillion annually in social, economic, and environmental damages.

Why Food Systems Are Failing?

- Climate Shocks:** Extreme weather events disrupt crops & supply chains.
 - Frequent Disasters:** Droughts, floods, cyclones, and heatwaves are becoming more frequent and intense due to climate change.
 - Impact on Production:** Crop failures, livestock deaths, and reduced fish stocks directly threaten food security.
 - Supply Chain Disruptions:** Transport routes, storage facilities, and markets are often damaged, delaying distribution and causing post-harvest losses.
 - Example: Horn of Africa drought (2020–22) left 23 million people food insecure.
- Rising Debt:** LDCs' debt burden rose from 3.1% (2010) to 12% (2023), reducing investment in food, health, and education.
 - Shrinking Fiscal Space:** LDCs' debt service rose from 3.1% of revenues (2010) to 12% (2023).

- **Reduced Public Investment:** Less money available for rural infrastructure, health, nutrition, and agricultural research.
 - **Vulnerability to Imports:** Many countries are forced to import food at high costs, worsening trade deficits.
 - **Debt–Hunger Cycle:** Rising food import bills force countries to borrow more, worsening fiscal crises.
- c. **Weak Infrastructure:** Nearly 1/3rd of food is lost or wasted due to poor storage, transport, and markets.
- **Food Losses:** Around 14% of food produced is lost between harvest and retail, and another 17% wasted at consumer level (FAO).
 - **Poor Storage & Cold Chains:** Lack of refrigerated transport and warehouses leads to spoilage, especially of perishable fruits, vegetables, dairy, and fish.
 - **Market Access Issues:** Small farmers often cannot access urban or export markets due to poor connectivity and middlemen dominance.
- d. **Inequities:** Women, youth, and small farmers face low access to finance, markets, and technology.
- **Women Farmers:** Women contribute up to 50% of agricultural labour in developing countries but have limited land ownership, credit access, and decision-making power.
 - **Youth & Smallholders:** Lack access to modern technology, training, and start-up capital → stuck in low productivity cycles.
 - **Urban–Rural Divide:** Urban consumers enjoy diversified diets, while rural poor often depend on subsistence farming and lack food diversity.
 - **Nutrition Inequality:** “Triple burden of malnutrition” – coexistence of hunger, micronutrient deficiencies, and obesity.



Food systems are failing because they are climate-vulnerable, debt-stressed, structurally weak, and socially unequal. Without urgent reforms, they will continue to deepen global hunger, poverty, and ecological destruction.

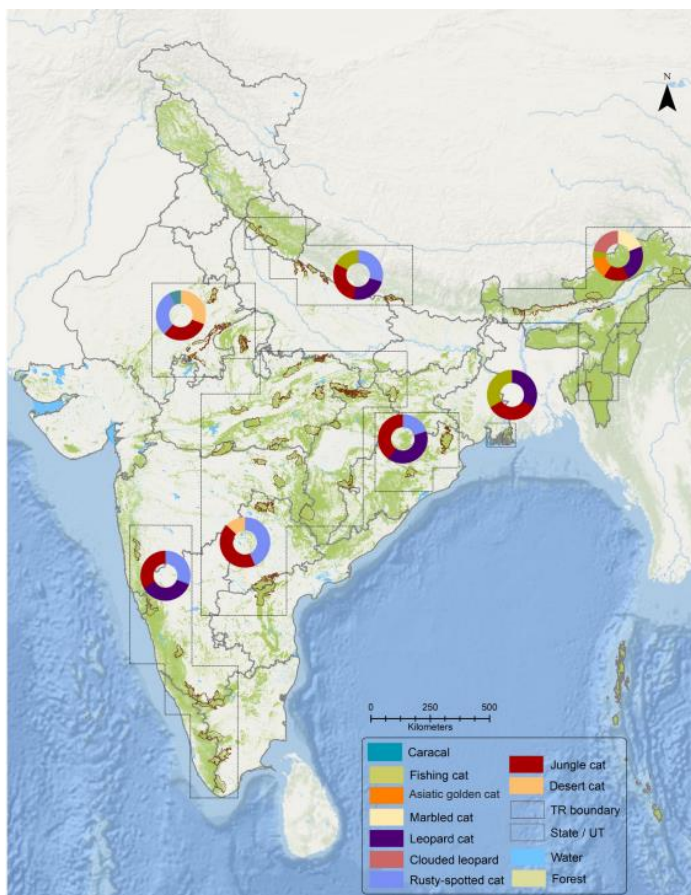
What can be done to fix the food system?

- a. **Climate-Resilient Agriculture:** Crop diversification, drought-resistant seeds, regenerative farming, agroforestry.
- b. **Early warning system:** Tech-enabled weather forecasting, disaster preparedness for farmers.
- c. **Strengthening Infrastructure & Reducing Food Losses:** Build warehouses, cold storages, and rural collection centers, Improve Connectivity, Rural roads, digital platforms, and e-markets (like e-NAM in India).
- d. **Circular Economy:** Use food waste for bioenergy, composting, and animal feed.
- e. **Debt Relief & Financial Support:** Provide relief for Least Developed Countries (LDCs) to free resources for food security, Promote microfinance, farmer cooperatives, and digital lending.
- f. **Addressing Inequities:** Empower Women Farmers, Ensure land rights, credit access, and training. Support agri-tech start-ups, skill development, and entrepreneurship in food systems.
- g. **Global Governance & Trade Reforms:** Reform WTO farm subsidies and export bans that hurt poorer nations, Share technology, seeds, and best practices among developing countries.
- h. **Sustainable Consumption & Awareness:** Dietary Shifts: Encourage sustainable diets (less food waste, balanced nutrition, reduced meat overconsumption). Campaigns on food waste

Building resilient food systems requires climate-smart farming, strong infrastructure, financial relief, equity for women & youth, fair trade reforms, and sustainable consumption patterns, supported by global cooperation and local empowerment, reduction and healthy eating.

26. Global Tiger day: Status of Small Cats in Tiger landscape of India

In news: On Global Tiger Day **July 29** 2025, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change released the report “Status of Small Cats in Tiger Landscapes of India”, highlighting findings from the 2018 & 2022 All India Tiger Estimation (AITE) to track 9 small cat species across tiger habitats.



About Report?

A first-of-its-kind scientific report has assessed the distribution, habitat, and ecological status of nine small wild cat species in India's tiger-range landscapes, using data from the All-India Tiger Estimations of 2018 and 2022.

Key highlights:

- This is India's first-ever nationwide study focusing on nine small cat species, including jungle cat, rusty-spotted cat, leopard cat, fishing cat, desert cat, clouded leopard, marbled cat, Asiatic golden cat, and caracal—conducted across tiger-range forests using data from the All-India Tiger Estimation surveys (2018 & 2022).
- Researchers analyzed 57,000+ camera-trap locations spanning 18 states, yielding 24,800+ photos and over 17,000 individual cat detections.

Species	Estimated Range (km ²)	Habitat Type & Status
Jungle Cat	96,275	Most widespread; adaptable across dry to moist habitats; stable occupancy (~46%) in both surveys

Species	Estimated Range (km ²)	Habitat Type & Status
Rusty-Spotted Cat	70,075	Declining occupancy (~21% drop); prefers mixed deciduous forests; strongholds remain in central India
Leopard Cat	32,800	Found in Himalayan foothills, NE, Sundarbans, Western Ghats; showing local declines
Desert Cat	12,500	Restricted to semi-arid and dry forests of western/central India
Fishing Cat	7,575	Wetland specialist – Terai, NE, mangroves; vulnerable to wetland loss
Clouded Leopard	3,250	Rare; canopy-dwelling in dense NE India forests
Marbled Cat	2,325	Extremely elusive; confined to dense NE forests
Asiatic Golden Cat	1,850	Restricted to evergreen forest patches in NE India
Caracal	No detection	Historically found in NW/Central India; absence during the survey period is concerning

Ecological finding:

- **Generalists thrive:** Jungle and rusty-spotted cats adapt to varied forests, even near human areas.
- **Habitat specialists:** Fishing, leopard, and clouded cats depend on wetlands and dense forests.
- **Rare species:** Marbled and golden cats survive only in intact, high-canopy forests of NE India.
- **Human impact:** Most small cats decline with human activity, except adaptable jungle cats.
- **Landscape need:** Conservation must cover both core tiger reserves and surrounding buffer zones.

Role of conservation:

- **First baseline mapping:** Pan-India data on 9 small cat species for targeted conservation.
- **Protected areas matter:** Higher presence inside reserves shows Project Tiger's umbrella effect.
- **Ecosystem indicators:** Small cats reflect habitat quality and ecological balance.
- **Beyond tigers:** Need to monitor lesser-known but vital carnivores.

- **Regional focus:** NE forests, Terai wetlands, and Central India dry forests need priority action.

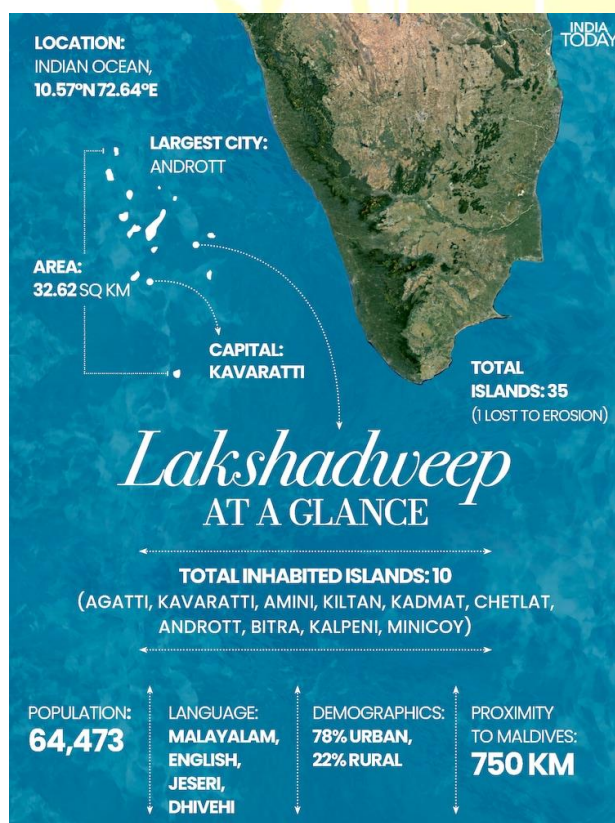
Way forward:

- **Include small cats in planning:** Cover reserves, buffers, and corridors.
- **Track beyond tigers:** Regularly monitor small carnivores in national surveys.
- **Protect wetlands & mangroves:** Safeguard key fishing cat habitats.
- **Habitat-specific measures:** Tailored policies for desert, marbled, and other specialists.
- **Raise awareness:** Add small cats to education, eco-clubs, and campaigns.

The report highlights that small cats are indicators of ecosystem health. Their presence or absence shows the quality of forests, vegetation, and habitats. To protect them, the Environment Ministry has started conservation programs in select tiger reserves.

27. Coral Cover in Lakshadweep saw 50% decline in 24 years

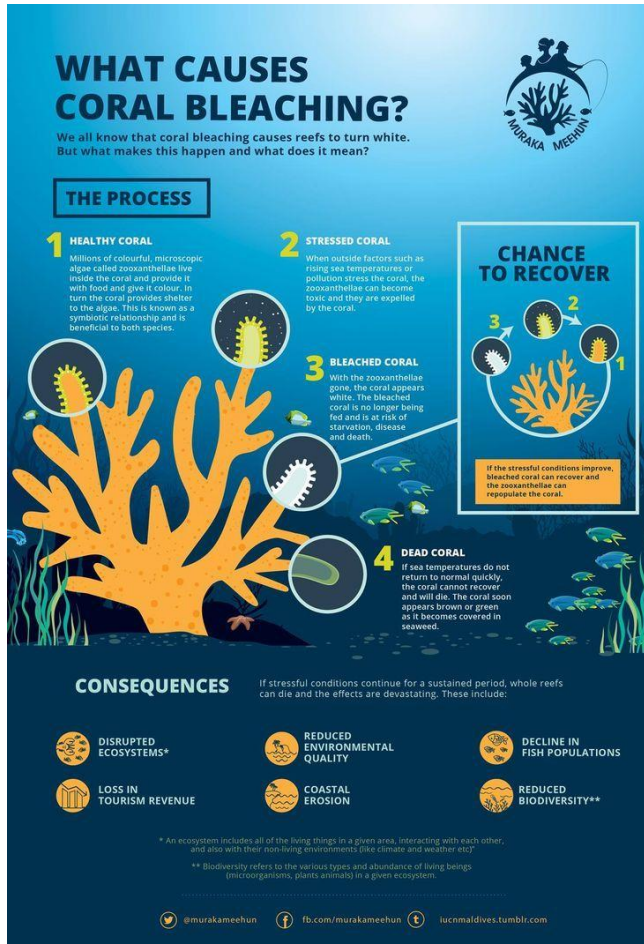
Context: A recent study reveals that coral cover in Lakshadweep has decreased by approximately 50% over a 24-year period. Specifically, coral cover declined from 37.24% in 1998 to 19.6% in 2022.



Key highlights of the study

- **Reduced recovery:** Coral recovery rates fell by 50% over 24 years.

- ENSO impact: Major coral decline and partial recovery followed El Niño events in 1998, 2010, and 2016.

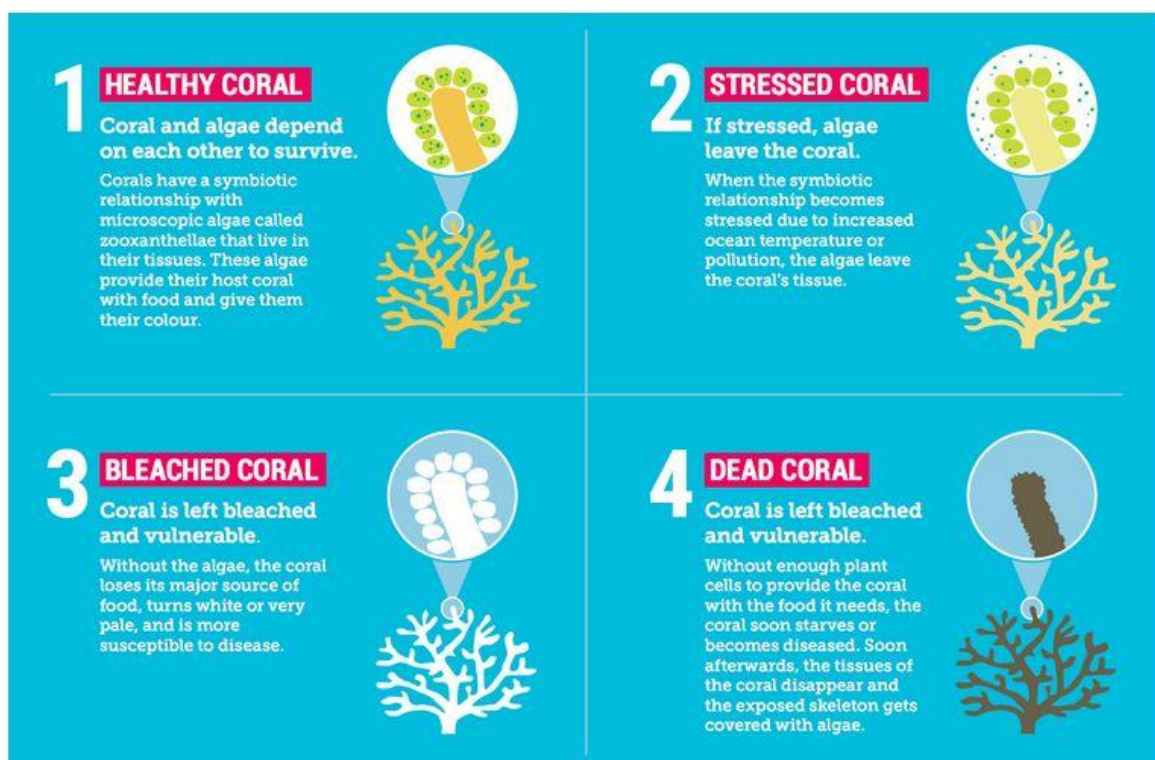


Reasons

- Coral bleaching:** Lakshadweep experienced three major ENSO-linked bleaching events in 1998, 2010, and 2016. These events, triggered by rising sea temperatures, caused corals to expel their symbiotic algae, leading to coral bleaching and mortality.
- Reduced recovery:** While coral mortality decreased with each subsequent bleaching event, the overall ability of the reefs to recover has also declined. This means that even though fewer corals died during the later bleaching events, the reefs took longer to bounce back.
- Less bleaching events needed:** The study highlighted that coral recovery accelerates only after a period of six years or more without bleaching events. This suggests that the frequency of bleaching events is preventing the reefs from fully recovering, leading to a net loss in coral cover.
- Global warming:** The primary driver of these marine heatwaves is climate change and the associated increase in sea surface temperatures. The study emphasizes the need for global action to address climate change to protect coral reefs.
- Local action:** The study also provides a framework for prioritizing reef areas for protection and recovery within Lakshadweep. However, it acknowledges that local efforts alone are not sufficient and that global climate action is crucial.

Importance of corals

- Home to important filter feeders: Like sponges, that filter toxins and contaminants out of the oceans.
- Support diverse ecosystems: Cover only 1% of the world's oceans, but provide habitat for at least 25% of the world's marine life.
- Other: Tourism and recreation, fishing, Source of oxygen, help in drug development, etc.



Science and Technology
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28. B-2 Spirit Stealth Bomber

Context: The B-2 Spirit, a stealth bomber developed by Northrop Grumman for the U.S. Air Force.



B2 BOMBER

NORTHROP GRUMMAN B-2 SPIRIT
STEALTH BOMBER



The Northrop B-2 Spirit, also known as the Stealth Bomber, is an American heavy strategic bomber, featuring low-observable stealth technology designed to penetrate dense anti-aircraft defenses.

The bomber can drop conventional and thermonuclear weapons, such as up to eighty 500-pound class (230 kg) Mk 82 JDAM GPS-guided bombs, or sixteen 2,400-pound (1,100 kg) B83 nuclear bombs.

The B-2 is the only acknowledged in-service aircraft that can carry large air-to-surface standoff weapons in a stealth configuration.

Features:

a. Stealth Technology and Design:

- **Low Observable (Stealth) Technology:** The B-2's design minimizes its radar cross-section, making it virtually invisible to radar.
- **Radar-Absorbent Material (RAM):** The aircraft's surface is coated with RAM to further reduce radar detection.
- **Flying Wing Configuration:** The unique flying wing design eliminates a fuselage and tail, reducing radar reflections.
- **Exhaust Suppression:** Engine exhaust is shielded and cooled to minimize infrared signatures.

b. Range and payload

- **Unrefueled Range:** The B-2 can fly over 6,000 nautical miles (11,100 km) without refueling.
- **Aerial Refueling:** With aerial refueling, it can achieve a virtually global reach.
- **Payload:** It can carry over 40,000 pounds (18,144 kg) of conventional and nuclear weapons.

- **Massive Ordnance Penetrator (MOP):** The B-2 is the only aircraft capable of carrying the MOP, a powerful bunker-buster bomb.

Significance for India:

- a. **Stealth Technology:** The B-2's primary advantage is its stealth, allowing it to penetrate enemy airspace undetected by radar. This capability is crucial for delivering precision strikes against critical targets, minimizing the risk of interception.
- b. **Strategic Deterrence:** The B-2 bomber can carry many types of weapons, including nuclear bombs, and fly long distances without being easily detected. This makes it a strong tool for the U.S. to show power and strike targets safely. India is interested in having a similar bomber to meet its own needs—such as deterring threats and increasing its influence in the region.
- c. **Influence on India's ULRA Project:** India's ULRA bomber project, developed by DRDO and HAL, is inspired by bombers like the B-2 (USA) and Tu-160 (Russia). It aims to have long range, carry heavy weapons, and use stealth technology like those advanced aircraft.
- d. **Potential for Enhanced Strike Capabilities:** While India doesn't currently possess a long-range strategic bomber like the B-2, the B-2's capabilities highlight the potential for India to enhance its strike capabilities. This could be achieved through the ULRA project or by acquiring similar technology through other means.

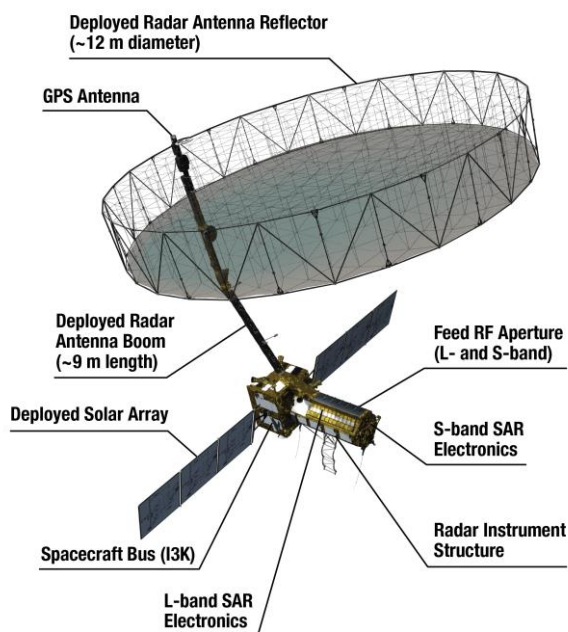
India and Stealth Bombers :

- Stealth bombers like the B-2 are very expensive and need major infrastructure.
- India's strategic needs and global ties will shape its decisions on long-range bombers.
- While the B-2 isn't directly suited to India's current posture, it serves as a benchmark for India's ULRA project and shows the value of stealth and long-range strike capabilities.

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29. NISAR satellite: NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar

In News: NISAR Satellite was Launched by ISRO on July 30 from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre on India's southeastern coast, NISAR will track the motion of ice sheets and glaciers, the deformation of land due to earthquakes, volcanoes, and landslides, and changes in forest and wetland ecosystems down to fractions of an inch.



About NISAR:

- NASA-ISRO SAR (NISAR) is a Low Earth Orbit (LEO) observatory being jointly developed by NASA and ISRO.
- NISAR will map the entire globe in 12 days and provide spatially and temporally consistent data for understanding changes in Earth's ecosystems, ice mass, vegetation biomass, sea level rise, ground water and natural hazards including earthquakes, tsunamis, volcanoes and landslides.

Features:

- NISAR, It carries **L and S dual band Synthetic Aperture Radar (SAR)**, which operates with Sweep SAR technique to achieve large swath with high resolution data.
- NISAR is the world's first Earth-observing satellite with dual-frequency synthetic aperture radar (SAR).
- L-band radar (1.257 GHz) from NASA can penetrate dense forests and soil layers to detect ground deformation and subsurface movement.
- S-band radar (3.2 GHz) from ISRO is optimised for surface-level changes like crop growth, biomass estimates, and water levels.
- This dual-frequency advantage allows for all-weather, day-and-night imaging, even through clouds, smoke, or vegetation cover.... Read more at: <https://vajiramandravi.com/current-affairs/nisar-satellite-a-landmark-nasa-isro-collaboration/>
- The SAR payloads mounted on Integrated Radar Instrument Structure (IRIS) and the spacecraft bus are together called an observatory.

- Jet Propulsion Laboratories and ISRO are realizing the observatory which shall not only meet the respective national needs but also will feed the science community with data encouraging studies related to surface deformation measurements through repeat-pass **InSAR technique**.
- NISAR's radar swath width is 240 km, allowing it to scan large areas in one go.
- It offers a spatial resolution of 3-10 metres and vertical displacement mapping accuracy down to centimetres, enabling early detection of phenomena like land subsidence in cities.
- Every spot on Earth will be revisited once every 12 days, providing consistent monitoring.

Application:

NISAR is designed to support research and operations across six broad themes:

- a. Solid Earth Processes – Tracking earthquakes, landslides, and land deformation.
- b. Ecosystems – Monitoring forests, woody biomass, and biodiversity.
- c. Ice and Snow Dynamics – Measuring glacial movements and polar ice thickness.
- d. Coastal and Ocean Monitoring – Tracking shoreline erosion, oil spills, and storm surges.
- e. Disaster Response – Providing near-real-time damage maps after floods, quakes, or cyclones.
- f. Agriculture and Infrastructure – Supporting food security and monitoring subsidence near dams, roads, and reservoirs.

For India:

While NISAR will operate globally at the L-band, **ISRO will routinely operate the S-band radar over Indian territory, enabling:**

- Enhanced biomass and soil moisture mapping
- Improved agricultural forecasting
- Ionospheric noise correction for high-precision imagery

All of this aligns with India's national needs in agriculture, disaster management, forestry, and rural development.

NISAR will be placed in a sun-synchronous polar orbit at an altitude of 747 km.

The mission exemplifies balanced international collaboration:

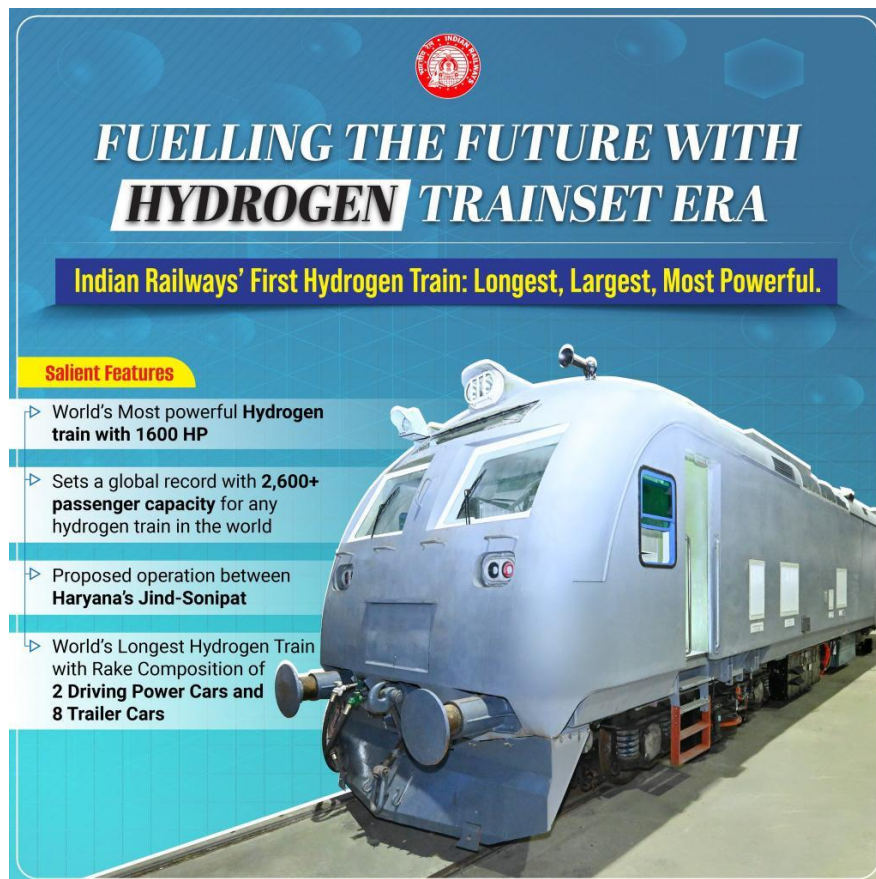
- ISRO contributed the spacecraft bus, the entire S-band radar system, Ka-band telemetry systems, and launch support via GSLV Mk-II.
- NASA provided the L-band radar, radar structure, antenna, onboard avionics, and high-capacity data systems.

30. Hydrogen Coach

In News: Indian Railways has successfully tested its first hydrogen-powered coach at the Integral Coach Factory (ICF) in Chennai, as part of its "Hydrogen for Heritage" initiative.

The project involves converting two 1600 HP diesel power cars into Hydrogen Fuel Cell systems and setting up a 3,000 kg hydrogen refuelling station at Jind, Haryana.

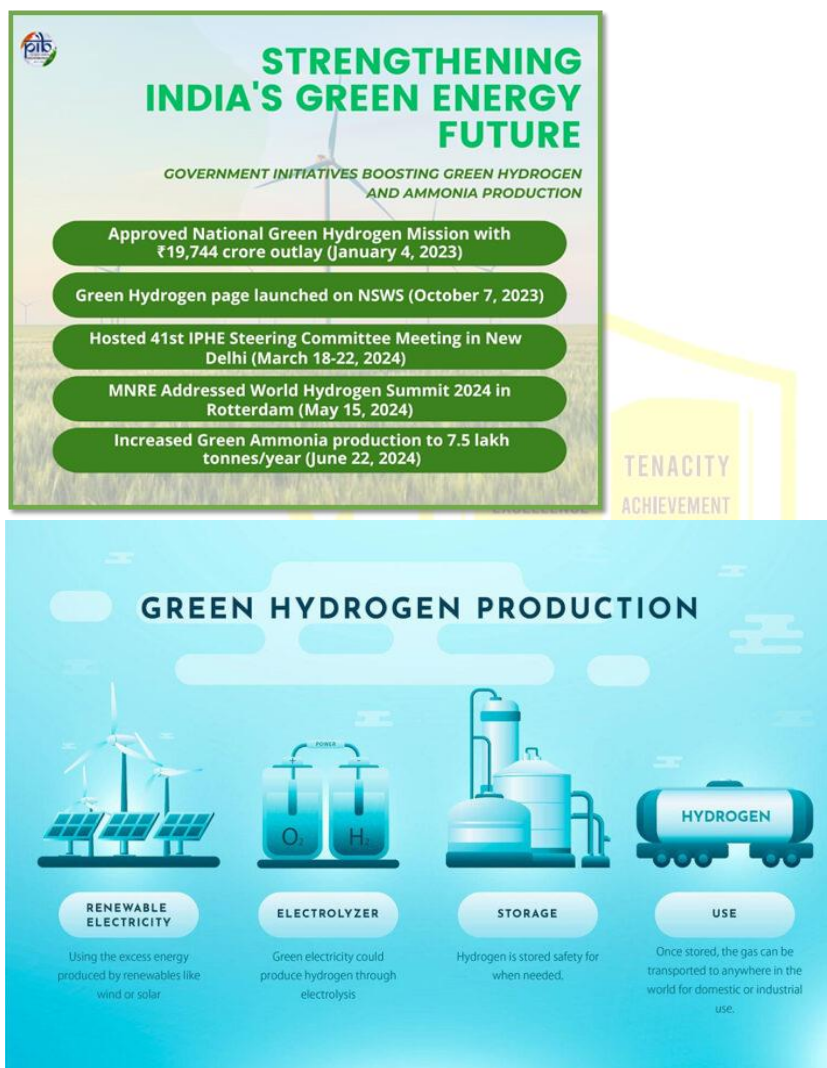
The design and testing are being carried out by the Research Designs and Standards Organisation (RDSO).



Advantages:

- Hydrogen as fuel:** Hydrogen possesses one of the highest energy-to-weight ratios among known fuels, making it exceptionally well-suited for heavy-duty transportation sectors. Furthermore, it is versatile and can be used in fuel cells, internal combustion engines, or as a feedstock in industrial processes.
- Zero Emission Energy Carrier:** When used in fuel cells, hydrogen emits only water vapor as a byproduct, making it a critical enabler of clean mobility and industrial decarbonization.
- More power, more productivity:** Hydrogen can store extra electricity from solar and wind power using a process called electrolysis. This helps in balancing the power grid, reduce peak demand, provide 24/7 (round-the-clock) power, making energy more reliable and sustainable.
- Green Hydrogen:** enables deep decarbonization of hard-to-abate sectors such as steel manufacturing, cement production, oil refining, fertilizers, and chemical industries, where direct electrification is either technically or economically unfeasible.

Hydrogen is central to India's strategy to achieve energy independence and Net Zero emissions by 2070. India's National Green Hydrogen Mission aims to make the country a global hub for green hydrogen production and export, positioning India as a key player in the emerging hydrogen economy.



31. Vera C. Rubin Observatory

In News: The Vera C. Rubin Observatory in Chile has unveiled its first breathtaking images using a massive 3,200-megapixel digital camera—the largest ever built for astronomy.

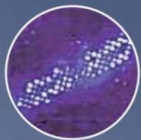
These early images include:

- Nebulas in vivid detail, like the Trifid and Lagoon—star-forming regions captured using a composite of hundreds of exposures over seven hours.
- The dense Virgo Cluster, revealing millions of distant galaxies packed together.
- Over 2,100 previously unknown asteroids, including some near-Earth objects (none posing a threat), detected in just 10 hours.



WHAT OBSERVATORY IN CHILE WILL EXPLORE

Rubin's Simonyi Survey Telescope, which has the world's largest camera, can observe an area of the sky equivalent to 40 full moons arranged in a line



MILKY WAY STRUCTURE

Rubin will create a detailed map of our galaxy to ascertain how it was formed.



DARK MATTER & DARK ENERGY

It will help scientists better understand the nature of these substances.



SOLAR SYSTEM CENSUS

Rubin is expected to discover millions of new asteroids and comets.



THE CHANGING SKY

It will build the most detailed time-lapse view of the cosmos ever generated.

THE OBSERVATORY

It is named after American astronomer Vera C Rubin (*seen on right*), who provided evidence about dark matter for the first time in the 1970s.



Why It Matters

- The Vera C. Rubin Observatory is built to **carry out the Legacy Survey of Space and Time (LSST)—a 10-year mission to capture images of the entire southern night sky every few nights.**
- Equipped with a powerful 8.4-meter telescope and a 3,200-megapixel camera, it will:
- **Detect supernovas, comets, asteroids, and other short-lived cosmic events in real time.**
- Help scientists map dark matter, study dark energy, and search for hidden objects like the mysterious Planet Nine.
- Act as a powerful "discovery machine", revolutionizing our understanding of the universe.

The first images from the Rubin Observatory are clear, detailed, and wide-angled. They mark the start of a new era in astronomy. With its powerful camera, the observatory will capture the changing universe and help uncover many space mysteries in the coming years.

In NEWS

Maharashtra Security Bill

Context: The Maharashtra Assembly passed the Maharashtra Special Public Security (MSPS) Bill 2024, through a voice vote which seeks to curb the unlawful activities of Left Wing Extremist (LWE) organisations and similar groups.

The Bill will now be introduced in the Legislative Council. Upon approval, it will be sent to the Governor for assent, becoming law thereafter.

Once enacted, **Maharashtra will become the fifth state after Chhattisgarh, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, and Odisha to pass a public security law targeting LWE.**

Purpose of the MSPS Bill (Maharashtra)

- Aimed at tackling the urban spread of Naxalism, especially in Gadchiroli and Gondia.
- The government says Naxalism has moved into cities, using front organisations for logistics and shelter, and current laws aren't enough.

The state can declare any organisation unlawful.

Four punishable offences:

- Being a member of an unlawful group
- Raising funds for such groups
- Managing or helping manage the group

- Committing unlawful activities

Punishment:

- Jail: 2–7 years
- Fines: ₹2–5 lakh
- The harshest: 7 years + ₹5 lakh for unlawful acts.
- All offences are cognizable (police can arrest without warrant) and non-bailable.



SPL PUBLIC SECURITY BILL TWEAKED

- > The Maharashtra Public Security Bill tabled in July 2024; it is termed 'repressive' and 'anti-people' as it gives state govt sweeping powers to crack down on Naxal or leftist activities
- > In Dec 2024, a 26-member joint select committee, headed by BJP minister Chandrashekar Bawankule and comprising legislators from all political parties, is set up to review bill
- > This committee dilutes the objectives and some of the provisions of the bill based on the **1,200-plus suggestions** and objections received from citizens and social organisations
- > Opposition legislators on the committee include Nana Patole, Vijay Wadettiwar, and Satej Patil from Congress, Jitendra Awhad and Shashikant Shinde from NCP (SP), and Ambadas Danve and Bhaskar Jadhav from Shiv Sena (UBT)
- > Legislative assembly passes the re-drafted bill on Thursday

‘Draconian law’

Activists claim the Maharashtra Special Public Security Bill loosely defines ‘unlawful activity’, and will be prone to ‘malicious misuse’ by the police

Section	Offence
Section 8 (1)	Up to three-year jail term, ₹3 lakh fine for members of ‘unlawful organisations’
Section 8 (2)	Up to two-year jail term, ₹2 lakh fine for contributing to or harbouring any member of ‘unlawful organisations’
Section 8 (3)	Up to three-year jail term, ₹3 lakh fine for managing or assisting the management of ‘unlawful organisations’
Section 8 (4)	Up to seven-year jail term, ₹5 lakh fine for committing or attempting to commit unlawful activity of ‘unlawful organisations’
Section 9 (2)	If declared unlawful, officials may take possession of the notified place and evict any person found within
Section 10 (1)	If declared unlawful, officials may take possession of all money, securities or assets found in the notified place
Section 16 (1)	All offences are cognisable and non-bailable

Unlawful activity:

Unlawful activity generally refers to actions that violate the law. Specifically, in India, the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (UAPA) defines it as any action that threatens the sovereignty, unity, or integrity of India. This can include actions like advocating, abetting, or inciting unlawful activities, or assisting any declared unlawful association.

India-Nepal Mutual Legal Assistance (MLA) in Criminal Matters Agreement

Context: India and Nepal also have decided to expedite the revision of their 1953 Extradition Treaty, which is seen as outdated. This agreement, along with discussions on a revised extradition treaty, was a key outcome of Home Secretary-level talks held in New Delhi.

In the absence of an updated Extradition Treaty, legal and administrative challenges have hindered smooth transfer of criminals between India and Nepal.



MLA Agreement:

- The finalized MLA agreement aims to formalize and standardize procedures for cooperation in criminal matters, enabling officials to share evidence and information more effectively. MLA Agreement help countries request evidence, share intelligence, and support investigations. India has signed such treaties with 42 countries including the U.S. (2005), Israel (2015), etc.

The Ministry of Home Affairs is the central Authority

Extradition: An extradition is the surrender by one State to another of a person desired to be dealt with for crimes which he has been accused of or convicted for and which are justifiable in the courts of the other states.

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) is the central authority.

Benefit of the Agreement:

It will formalize and standardize procedures for cooperation in criminal matters.

The officials will have a clear legal mandate to share evidence and information. This leads to faster investigations and prosecutions.

What were the Challenges Faced in the Absence of MLA Agreement

- Open Border Exploitation:** India & Nepal share an open border (1,751 km) & Groups like the Indian Mujahideen used Nepal as a transit or hideout route, with operatives fleeing India via Nepal to third countries.

- **Criminal Safe Havens:** Nepal until now has been the only neighboring country (aside from Bhutan) without an MLA with India, which inadvertently made it attractive to criminals as a safe haven.

E.g., Nepal has occasionally arrested Pakistani nationals involved in fake Indian currency rackets.

Reciprocity Uncertainty: Without a binding treaty, cooperation often relied on assurances of reciprocity and there were no guarantees.

Integrated Biodiversity Assessment Tool (IBAT) Alliance

In News: The IBAT Alliance, a coalition of leading global conservation bodies, announced a record \$2.5 million investment in biodiversity data for the year 2024, more than double the amount in 2023.

The Integrated Biodiversity Assessment Tool (IBAT) Alliance is a collaboration of major conservation organizations that provides a web-based platform for accessing and using biodiversity data to inform decision-making. It was launched in **2008 at the IUCN World Conservation Congress**.

IBAT combines data from sources like the IUCN Red List, the World Database on Protected Areas, and the World Database on Key Biodiversity Areas. This allows users to assess biodiversity risks and opportunities, especially for projects, supply chains, and investments.

Objective: It was launched to enable the private sector, government, and civil society to integrate biodiversity into planning and risk management processes.

Members: The IBAT Alliance is a coalition of 4 major global conservation organizations:

- BirdLife International
- Conservation International (CI)
- International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
- UN Environment Programme World Conservation Monitoring Centre (UNEP-WCMC)

YOUR ZEAL • OUR EXPERTISE

World Bank Places India among World's Most Equal Societies

In News: In its Spring 2025 report, the World Bank ranked India as the 4th most equal country in the world.

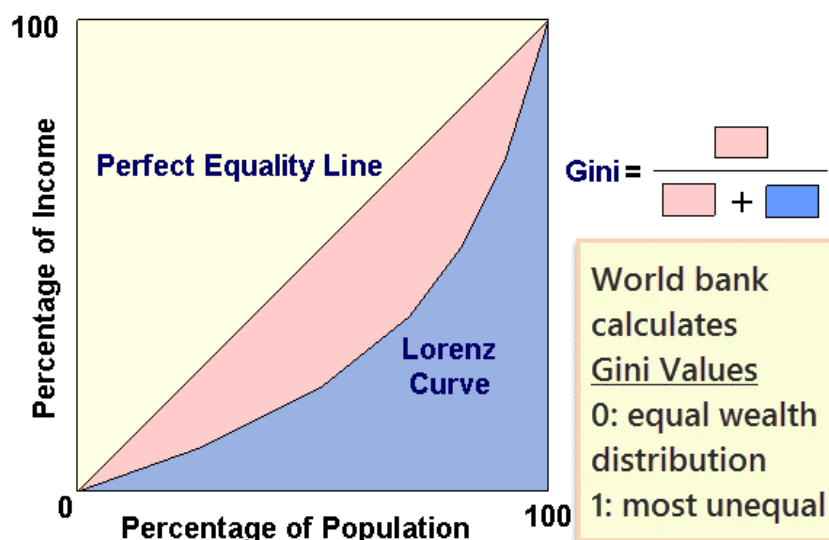
However, other global studies show that inequality in India is still a big issue.

These differences happen because each study uses different methods, indicators, and time periods.

This shows that equality in India is complex and can't be measured in just one way, especially in such a large and diverse country.

GINI Index:

The World Bank data reveals that India ranked fourth globally in terms of income equality, with a Gini Index score of 25.5 in 2022-23. This represents a significant improvement from the 28.8 score recorded in 2011-12, demonstrating a consistent downward trend in consumption-based inequality over the past decade



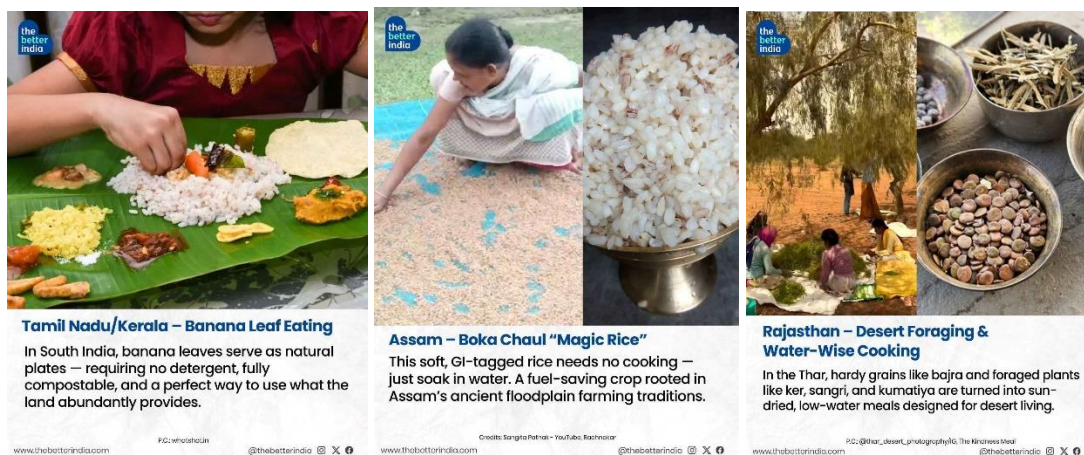
YOUR ZEAL • OUR EXPERTISE

A higher Gini index indicates greater inequality, while a lower index suggests more equitable distribution

Indian states and sustainable food practices

India boasts a wealth of sustainable food practices deeply rooted in its diverse regional cuisines. Ten states, each with unique traditions, offer examples of how to minimize waste, utilize local and seasonal ingredients, and preserve food effectively.

1. **Goa:** Goan fish curry, a staple of the region's cuisine, often utilizes locally sourced fish and traditional ingredients like coconut milk and tamarind. Sourcing fish from local fishermen and using fresh, regional ingredients promotes sustainable practices and supports the local community.
2. **Kerala:** Home gardens in Kerala showcase a diverse range of plant species and are designed to maximize land use and ecological benefits. Some traditional varieties **like Pokkali rice are adapted to saline water and grown organically with no chemical use**. Homegardens also play a crucial role in carbon sequestration and biodiversity conservation.
3. **Rajasthan:** The arid conditions of the Thar Desert have inspired water-wise cooking practices in Rajasthan. Hardy grains like bajra and locally foraged plants such as ker, sangri, and kumatiya are incorporated into sun-dried, low-water dishes. Additionally, drought-resistant crops like millets (jowar, bajra, ragi) and pulses are cultivated, ensuring food security in the face of water scarcity. Legumes, with their nitrogen-fixing capabilities, are also vital in this region, improving soil health and reducing the need for chemical fertilizers.
4. **Uttarakhand:** Traditional farming methods in Uttarakhand prioritize local and seasonal ingredients and practices like polyculture (Barahnaja) – growing multiple crops like millets, pulses, and oilseeds together on the same field to enhance soil health and pest control.
5. **Himachal Pradesh:** Farmers in Himachal Pradesh have developed various traditional soil and water management practices, including:
 - * Terraced farming: Prevents landslides, optimizes water use, and increases agricultural productivity.
 - * Organic manuring and composting: Utilizes farm and animal waste to enrich soil fertility and improve soil structure.
 - * Mulching: Conserves soil moisture, suppresses weeds, and adds organic matter to the soil.
 - * Dew harvesting: Collects dew drops to enhance seedbed moisture for rainfed crops.
 - * Kuhl: Traditional community-based irrigation systems diverting water from natural streams
6. **Gujarat:** Traditional practices in Gujarat involve zero-waste cooking and utilizing every part of the plant. Vegetable peels and other scraps are often incorporated into chutneys and other dishes.
7. **West Bengal:** The use of fermentation is widespread for food preservation in West Bengal. Traditional fermented foods and beverages are an integral part of the local culture and offer various health benefits.
8. **Tamil Nadu:** The cultivation of drought-tolerant and nutritious millets like finger millet (ragi), pearl millet (kambu), and **little millet (samai) is promoted in Tamil Nadu**. Millet farming contributes to sustainable agriculture by improving soil health, reducing water usage, and enhancing resilience to climate change impacts.



These examples showcase the rich tapestry of sustainable food practices embedded within India's culinary traditions and highlight the importance of recognizing and preserving this valuable wisdom.

Government Schemes

Scheme Name	Objective	Key Features
Senior Citizen Welfare Schemes	Support for elderly citizens	₹6,000 monthly pension, free train travel, healthcare, smartphones, insurance, and priority access. Applications opened on 1 July 2025.
Employment-Linked Incentive (ELI)	Job creation and formal employment	₹1 lakh crore scheme, ₹15,000 wage subsidy per worker, ₹3,000/month employer incentive. Valid from Aug 2025–July 2027.
PM-E-DRIVE (E-Truck Scheme)	Promote clean freight transport	Subsidy up to ₹9.6 lakh per e-truck, scrappage required, includes funds for charging infrastructure.
Krishi Samruddhi Yojana (Maharashtra)	Boost agriculture and farmer income	₹5,000 crore/year for 5 years, support for micro-irrigation, organic farming, digital centers. Priority to women and SC/ST farmers.
PM Viksit Bharat Rozgar Yojana (PM-VBRY)	Encourage formal jobs	₹15,000 benefit for first-time EPFO workers earning up to ₹1 lakh/month. Paid in two installments. Launched 1 August 2025.
PM-eBus Sewa Scheme	Green urban mobility	Deployment of electric buses in cities. Central support for vehicle and infrastructure costs.
BSNL Tower Expansion	Improve digital access in remote areas	Installation of 400 new BSNL towers in Naxal-affected areas to boost 4G coverage and connectivity.


32. **Research development and innovation (RDI) scheme**

In News: Union Cabinet approved a Rs 1-lakh crore Research Development and Innovation (RDI) scheme that aims to incentivise the private sector to invest in basic research that would translate into innovative products and technologies.

It is an initiative of the **Ministry of Science and Technology** to **boost private sector investment** in basic and applied research to drive the development of innovative technologies and products.

Objectives:

- Promoting private R&D and innovation, especially in sunrise sectors such as biotechnology, robotics, drones, and climate change;
- Financing transformative projects aimed at achieving a higher level of technology readiness;
- Supporting the acquisition of critical or strategically important technologies; and
- Establishing a Deep Tech Fund of Funds as an alternative financing channel for startups in the deep tech sector.



Research Development and Innovation (RDI) Scheme
Cabinet approves RDI Scheme with corpus of ₹ 1 lakh Cr

- Scheme aims to provide long-term financing or refinancing with long tenors at low or nil interest rates to spur private sector investment in RDI
- Designed to overcome the constraints and challenges in funding of private sector
- Seeks to provide growth & risk capital to sunrise and strategic sectors to facilitate innovation

CABINET DECISION
14 July, 2025

33. **Dhan Dhanya Krishi Yojana**



- Dhan Dhanya Krishi Yojana is a government scheme aimed at increasing agricultural productivity in 100 low crop productivity districts.
- Under this scheme, farmers will be provided an annual outlay of Rs 24,000 crore for 6 years.
- The scheme will benefit 1.7 crore farmers and will integrate 36 schemes of 11 ministries

Objectives:

- Increasing Productivity:** The main focus of the scheme is to improve agricultural productivity, thereby increasing the income of farmers.
- Promoting crop diversification:** The scheme will encourage farmers to grow different types of crops, thereby reducing risk and increasing sources of income.
- Improving irrigation and storage:** The scheme will also focus on improving irrigation facilities and storage capacity, which will help farmers in better crop management.
- Ensuring access to credit:** The scheme will also focus on providing easy access to loans to farmers, which will help them develop their agricultural activities.

Implementation and Monitoring:

This scheme will be implemented through the formation of committees at district, state and national levels. The District Dhan Dhanya Committee will finalise the District Agriculture and Allied Activity Plan, in which progressive farmers will also be members. The progress of the scheme will be monitored on a monthly basis and reviewed by NITI Aayog.

34. ADeETIE scheme (Assistance in Deploying Energy Efficient Technologies in Industries & Establishments)

It is a ₹1000 crore initiative by the Ministry of Power, implemented by the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (BEE). It aims to support Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) in adopting energy-efficient technologies through interest subvention and technical support.

The scheme will be rolled out in phases, starting with 60 industrial clusters, and will span three years (FY 2025-26 to FY 2027-28).

Objective: It aims to accelerate the adoption of advanced energy-efficient technologies across India's Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) sector.

- It can help MSMEs reduce energy consumption by 30–50%, improve efficiency, and contribute to green energy corridors.
- It will be implemented for three years (FY 2025-26 to FY 2027-28) and will also cover 14 energy-intensive sectors, including chemicals, food processing, textiles, and steel re-rolling.

Features:

- MSMEs can avail 5% interest subvention for Micro & Small Enterprises and 3% for Medium Enterprises on loans for adopting energy-efficient technologies.
- The scheme is structured to provide end-to-end hand holding through subvention on loans, Investment Grade Energy Audits (IGEA), Detailed Project Reports (DPRs), and post-implementation Monitoring and Verification (M&V).
- ADEETIE portal was launched to facilitate the financing process for the beneficiaries.

35. The Pradhan Mantri Virasat Ka Samvardhan (PM VIKAS) scheme

The Pradhan Mantri Virasat Ka Samvardhan (PM VIKAS) scheme, launched by the Ministry of Minority Affairs, aims to empower minority communities through skill development, entrepreneurship, and education, while also preserving and promoting traditional arts and crafts.

It's a central sector scheme converging five erstwhile schemes, focusing on skill training, formal education, and livelihood opportunities for minorities and artisans

Objectives:

- a. **Skill Development and Entrepreneurship:** Provides skill training in need-based courses, aiming to improve employability and generate better livelihood opportunities.

- b. **Formal Education:** Offers formal education and certification up to the 8th, 10th, and 12th standards through open schooling for school dropouts.
- c. **Preservation of Cultural Heritage:** Focuses on preserving and promoting traditional art and craft forms, including documentation and propagation of related literature.
- d. **Empowerment of Women:** Provides leadership and entrepreneurship support to women from minority and artisan communities.
- e. **Art and Craft Villages:** Aims to develop model and sustainable art and craft villages.

PRADHAN MANTRI VIRASAT KA SAMVARDHAN (PM VIKAS)



Focusing on upliftment of minorities through **skill development, entrepreneurship & leadership of minority women, & educational support**



Reports and Indexes

36. Voluntary National review (VNR) NITI Aayog

In News: Vice Chairman, NITI Aayog, Shri Suman Bery, on 23 July 2025, presented **India's Third Voluntary National Review (VNR) Report on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** at the Ministerial Segment of the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) on SDGs convened by the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations.

VNR:


This VNR marks India's third submission to the HLPF, reaffirming the country's sustained commitment to the UN 2030 Agenda for SDGs.

India's VNR 2025 captures a decade of decisive policy action and transformative results across multiple dimensions of sustainable development:

- **Poverty Alleviation:** Around 248 million individuals estimated to have escaped Multidimensional Poverty (MPI).
- **Food Security:** PM Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana has ensured nutritional support for millions.
- **Health and Nutrition:** POSHAN Abhiyaan and Ayushman Bharat have expanded access to quality nutrition and healthcare.
- **Clean Energy:** Programmes like the National Green Hydrogen Mission, PM-KUSUM, and PM Surya Ghar Muft Bijli Yojana are strengthening India's transition to clean energy.
- **Innovation and Growth:** India is now the third-largest start-up ecosystem in the world.
- **Infrastructure and Industry:** Schemes such as PM Gati Shakti, Make in India, and the National Industrial Corridor Development Programme are building next-generation infrastructure.
- The report highlights India's leadership in building Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) grounded in the Jan Dhan–Aadhaar–Mobile (JAM) trinity, which has become a global model for inclusive, transparent, and efficient service delivery.


Other components:


- Tools such as the SDG India Index, North-Eastern Region District SDG Index, and the National Multi-dimensional Poverty Index, India continues to strengthen its data-driven governance and localise SDG implementation. Initiatives like the Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP) and Aspirational Blocks Programme (ABP) ensure last-mile saturation of government services.
- India's VNR 2025 further highlights its growing contribution to South-South Cooperation, reflecting its role as a trusted development partner through capacity-building and institutional support to fellow developing countries.
- **Agenda 2030 is aligned with India's long-term vision of Viksit Bharat @2047 – a developed India by its 100th year of independence** - underscoring an integrated development strategy grounded in inclusion, innovation, and institutional strength.

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ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

INDIA'S VOLUNTARY NATIONAL REVIEW 2025

While global progress towards Agenda 2030 lags, India is making steady gains. The 2025 VNR report, prepared through participatory discussions led by NITI Aayog and supported by United Nations in India, highlights India's progress and resilience during a period marked by multiple global crises.



 **SCAN FOR
DETAILS**

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37. **Henley Passport Index 2025**

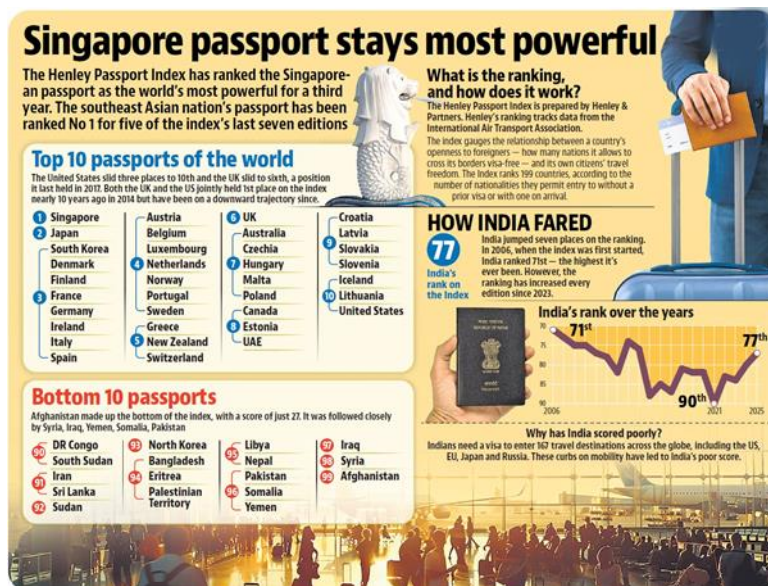
In News: According to the Henley Passport Index 2025, the Indian passport has jumped eight spots, moving from 85th to 77th rank, now offering visa-free access to 59 countries.

About Henley Passport Index:

- The Henley Passport Index is a global mobility ranking that measures the number of destinations a passport holder can access without a prior visa.
- It is widely used to assess the travel freedom and diplomatic strength of a country.
- The index is compiled by Henley & Partners, a global citizenship and residence advisory firm.
- It is based on data from the International Air Transport Association (IATA), supplemented by in-house research.
- Passports are ranked by the number of countries accessible without a pre-arranged visa (including visa-free, visa-on-arrival, or electronic travel authorizations).
- 227 destinations are considered in total.

Top Performers:

- Singapore ranks 1st with visa-free access to 193 countries.



- Japan and South Korea share 2nd position with access to 190 destinations.
- Several European nations—Germany, France, Italy—dominate the top 5.

Major Climbers:

- UAE surged from 42nd to 8th place in a decade.
- China jumped from 94th to 60th since 2015.
- Saudi Arabia gained access to 91 destinations, up by 4 in 2025.

Lowest Rank: Afghanistan remains at the bottom, offering access to only 25 destinations.

Declining Powers: USA fell to 10th place; UK stands at 6th, both losing past top ranks.

India's Global Index Rankings (2024–2025)

Index	Published By	India's Rank	Key Highlights
Climate Change Performance Index 2025	Germanwatch, New Climate Institute, CAN International	10th	Tracks GHG emissions, renewable energy, energy use, and climate policy.
QS World Future Skills Index 2025	Quacquarelli Symonds (QS)	25th	Measures skills preparedness: academic, economic transformation, future of work.
Henley Passport Index 2025	IATA	77th	Based on visa-free access to countries (India has access to 59 destinations).

Index	Published By	India's Rank	Key Highlights
Global Firepower Index 2025	Global Firepower	4th	Ranks countries by conventional military strength (land, air, and naval).
Air Quality Life Index 2024	EPIC, University of Chicago	Not Ranked	Delhi: most polluted city (PM2.5 – 84.3 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$); shows air pollution's impact on life expectancy.
Global Terrorism Index 2024	Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP)	14th	Ranks based on impact of terrorism (incidents, fatalities, injuries, hostages).
Global Innovation Index 2024	World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)	39th (of 133)	Assesses innovation ecosystem performance.
Global Hunger Index 2024	Concern Worldwide & Welt Hunger Hilfe	105th (of 127)	Based on undernourishment, child stunting/wasting, and child mortality.
World Competitiveness Index 2024	International Institute for Management Development (IMD)	39th	Assesses a country's ability to create sustainable economic value.
Global Peace Index 2024	IEP	116th (of 163)	Evaluates peace based on safety, conflict, and militarization.
World Press Freedom Index 2024	Reporters Without Borders (RSF)	162nd	Assesses media freedom and journalist safety.
World Air Quality Report 2024	IQAir	3rd	India: 3rd most polluted; Delhi is world's most polluted capital.
International IP Index 2024	U.S. Chamber of Commerce	42nd (of 55)	Evaluates IP protection and innovation environment.
Global Soft Power Index 2024	Brand Finance	29th	Ranks countries based on global influence, diplomacy, and reputation.
Human Development Index 2023–24	UNDP	134th (of 193)	Based on health, education, and standard of living.
Gender Inequality Index 2022	UNDP	108th (of 193)	Measures gender disparities in health, empowerment, and labour force.

Index	Published By	India's Rank	Key Highlights
Global Gender Gap Index 2025	World Economic Forum (WEF)	131st (of 148)	Assesses gender equality in health, education, economy, and politics.
Future Possibilities Index 2024	Newsweek Vantage & Horizon Group	35th	Reflects readiness for global transformations and future trends.
World Happiness Report 2024–25	UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN)	126th	Based on citizens' life evaluations and well-being indicators.
SDG Index 2025	UN SDSN	99th	Tracks progress on Sustainable Development Goals.
Corruption Perceptions Index 2023	Transparency International	93rd (of 180)	Measures perceived public sector corruption.
Rule of Law Index 2024	World Justice Project	79th	Evaluates justice system and legal integrity.
Global Liveability Index 2024	Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU)	Delhi & Mumbai: 141st	Assesses living conditions in global cities.
Multidimensional Poverty Index 2024	UNDP & Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI)	–	India has 234 million poor (highest in world); MPI covers health, education, assets.
Energy Transition Index 2024	World Economic Forum	63rd (of 120)	Measures transition to secure, sustainable, and affordable energy.
Global Talent Competitiveness Index	INSEAD	103rd (of 134)	Assesses ability to grow, attract, and retain talent.
Global Retirement Index 2024	Natixis Investment Managers	43rd (last)	Evaluates retirement security and financial health.

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(Public Administration)



Gaurav Singh

Thank you, Monish Sir, for your consistent guidance. Your daily feedback on my GS 2 and GS 4 answers helped me identify gaps and improve steadily. Greatful for your time and support.

- Madhav Agarwal, AIR 16

Expressing my gratitude to Monish Sir. I wrote daily GS 2 and GS 4 answers before prelims under his guidance. It helped me to identify mistakes early on.

- Suramya Sharma, AIR 281

Monish Sir helped me improve the quality of my answers. The personal attention given by Sir on my answer copies with detailed feedbacks helped me a lot. I thank Sir for my success.

- Gaurav Singh, AIR 859