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## IMPORTANT ONE LINERS

## NATIONAL

**Impeachment Motion Against Justice Verma / Yashwant Varma**

**In the News:** In **July 2025**, Parliamentarians across party lines submitted impeachment motions against **Justice Yashwant Varma** (Allahabad High Court judge, formerly Delhi HC), following a Supreme Court-appointed inquiry that uncovered substantial burnt and unaccounted cash at his Delhi residence. Notices were filed in both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha, triggering inquiries under constitutional provisions (Articles 124, 217, 218) beginning the formal removal process.

**Key Points:**

- **Impeachment Notice Filed:** On **July 21**, **145 Lok Sabha MPs**—including members from BJP, Congress, JDU, TDP, IDS, Shiv Sena (Shinde), CPM, and others—signed a motion. Similar support in Rajya Sabha reached **63 MPs**, exceeding the constitutional threshold ( $\geq 100$  Lok Sabha,  $\geq 50$  Rajya Sabha) required to initiate proceedings.
- **Constitutional & Legal Basis:** Removal of a High Court or Supreme Court judge is permitted only on grounds of "proved misbehaviour" or "incapacity" under Articles 124 and 218; the process is governed by the Judges (Inquiry) Act, 1968.
- **Trigger Allegation – Cash Row:** A fire at Justice Varma's official residence in March 2025 led to the recovery of large amounts of burnt currency. A three-judge in-house panel chaired by then-CJI Sanjiv Khanna concluded the allegations were credible enough to warrant removal. Justice Varma denied any involvement, calling it a conspiracy. He was transferred to the Allahabad High Court and stripped of judicial duties.
- **Parliamentary and Government Positions:** Union Parliamentary Affairs Minister **Kiren Rijiju** confirmed more than 100 MPs had signed the notice, and stated that the motion will proceed in the Lok Sabha. He emphasized that impeachment must be a collective parliamentary exercise, not a unilateral government decision.
- **Formation of Inquiry Committee:** Lok Sabha Speaker **Om Birla** is set to form a three-member judicial inquiry panel, per statutory norms under the Judges (Inquiry) Act. It is expected to include a Supreme Court judge or CJI, a high court CJ, and a distinguished jurist. Parallel motions exist in Rajya Sabha too.
- **Delay or Selective Process?:** Rajya Sabha Chairman **Jagdeep Dhankhar** accepted the original motion, causing controversy and triggering his abrupt resignation. Subsequently, the government opted to prioritize the Lok Sabha route, which critics—especially the Congress—called political and procedural pickiness. The Rajya Sabha motion has not been admitted.
- **Judicial Review:** Justice Varma has filed a petition in the Supreme Court challenging the inquiry report, claiming denial of fair hearing. The SC is scheduled to hear the petition on **July 28**, with Chief Justice Gavai having recused himself. Legal observers suggest that Parliament's impeachment process will likely proceed ahead of judicial review.

**Maharashtra Introduces 10% EWS Quota in Private Medical Colleges**

**In the News:** In **late July 2025**, the Maharashtra CET Cell quietly announced in its NEET admission brochure that the state is now implementing a **10% reservation for the Economically Weaker Section (EWS)** within the state-quota seats of **private unaided (non-minority) medical colleges**, starting from the 2025-26 academic year.

**Key Points:**

- **Eligibility Criteria:** This quota applies to **general-category candidates** whose **family income is below ₹8 lakh per annum**. The reservation covers 10% of the state-quota seats in private unaided medical colleges (excluding minority institutions).
- **Seat Numbers:** Maharashtra has **22 private medical colleges**, offering about **3,120 MBBS seats** under the general category. Hence, approximately **300 seats** are now designated for EWS candidates.
- **No Seat Expansion:** Unlike earlier EWS rollouts in government colleges (which came with a 25% increase in intake), private colleges have not been granted any increase in total seat capacity. The National Medical Commission (NMC) reportedly stated it has no plan for a seat hike at present.
- **Stakeholder Pushback:** Parents, students, and college associations voiced strong objections, citing the absence of prior consultation and warning that general-category applicants face significantly reduced opportunities and rising cut-offs.
- **Financial Concerns for Institutions:** Private colleges argue that fewer open-category seats will affect revenue, especially since EWS seats attract lower or subsidized fees. They may seek new fee categories or adjust fee structures under the Fee Regulatory Authority's guidelines to offset losses.

- **Legal & Regulatory Basis:** Critics point to Supreme Court directives and past High Court rulings stating that EWS reservations must not reduce existing category seats, and that any quota based on the open category must be accompanied by a proportional 25% increase in intake.

### Operation Mahadev: Indian Security Forces Neutralise Terrorists Of Pahalgam Attack

**In the News:** Indian security forces conducted Operation Mahadev, a joint mission involving the Army, CRPF, and Jammu & Kashmir Police in the Lidwas area near Dachigam National Park on the outskirts of Srinagar. This led to the neutralisation of three terrorists, including the alleged mastermind behind the April 22, 2025 Pahalgam terror attack. Among those killed were Suleiman Shah alias Hashim Musa, along with Abu Hamza and Yasir. Operation Mahadev was launched following over a 14-day intelligence-based tracking operation, during which an unusual satellite phone signal raised red flags.

#### Key Points:

- **Terror Attack Context:** On **April 22, 2025**, five terrorists carried out a mass shooting in Baisaran Valley, Pahalgam, killing **26 civilians** (primarily Hindu tourists and one local Muslim pony operator) and injuring **20**. The attackers were armed with AK-47s and M4 carbines and targeted victims based on religion. It remains one of India's **deadliest civilian attacks** since Mumbai 2008.
- **Intelligence & Tracking:** Operation Mahadev was triggered by **specific intelligence inputs**, including monitoring an unusual call from a Huawei satellite phone linked to the suspects. After about **two weeks of surveillance**, forces mobilized for the final operation.
- **Operational Execution:** In highly coordinated action near **Lidwas**, security forces engaged the terrorists, killing **three operatives**—including the chief planner, **Hashim Musa (Suleiman Shah)**—and recovered weapons. The operation involved ground clearance supported by reinforcement from CRPF and local police.
- **Operational Significance & Naming:** The name **"Operation Mahadev"** was chosen to reflect the sacred geography of the region—**Dachigam forest**, located along the Amarnath Yatra route, emblematic of Lord Shiva (Mahadev). This underscored the symbolic duty to protect the pilgrimage and respond decisively to terror threats.
- **Local Impact:** Family members of the victims expressed grieving relief: Adil Shah's brother publicly thanked the Indian Army and government for delivering justice. A surviving victim's wife said, *"The pain will not go, but at least some peace will come to us."*
- **Political & Parliamentary Response:** In India's Monsoon Session (late July 2025), **Operation Sindoor**—the broader anti-terror response including Mahadev—became a focal point of political debate. Opposition figures questioned intelligence failures that allowed terrorists to infiltrate **Baisaran valley** and remain undetected for over 100 days. Central national security and foreign policy were contested topics.

### India's Green Steel Revolution: What Is 25% Procurement Rule?

**In the News:** The Indian government is finalizing a policy to mandate that **25% of public procurement of steel** be low-emission "green steel," as part of its broader **Green Steel Mission** and decarbonization strategy. The mission, with an estimated outlay of **₹15,000 crore**, includes incentives via PLI schemes, renewable-energy mandates, and the use of green steel in government-funded infrastructure.

#### Key Points:

- **Procurement Mandate Goal:** The government plans to require that **25% of steel used by public agencies** (central ministries and related schemes) come from **green-rated steel**—certified low-carbon products meeting defined emission standards. This ensures green steel competes on volume and price in public tenders.
- **Green Steel Taxonomy and Ratings:** India defines **green steel** as steel emitting  $\leq 2.2$  tCO<sub>2</sub>e per tonne. Within that, a **five-star rating** applies to emissions  $\leq 1.6$  tCO<sub>2</sub>e/t; **four-star** for 1.6–2.0; **three-star** for 2.0–2.2. Steel emitting more than 2.2 tCO<sub>2</sub>e/t isn't eligible.
- **Tiered Purchasing Rules:** Under proposed guidelines, procurement targets may be broken down by star rating: for example, at least **20% procurement from three-star**, **5% from four-star**, and **1% from five-star** green-rated steel.
- **Policy Timeline & Scope:** The mandate is expected to apply from **fiscal year 2027-28 onward**, covering central government and centrally sponsored projects for a duration of approximately **8 years**. Projects above a threshold (e.g., steel worth over ₹1 crore) may fall under these requirements.

- **Market Leverage & Demand Creation:** Public procurement accounts for a significant portion (~22%) of India's steel demand. Mandating green steel creates guaranteed initial market volume, reducing investment risk for producers and encouraging scale-up of clean processes.
- **Green Steel Mission & Support Measures:** The government's **Green Steel Mission** (~₹15,000 crore) will implement PLI incentives, mandate renewable energy use in steel plants, and align with the National Green Hydrogen Mission. It aims to reduce the cost gap between green and conventional steel.

### Exercise Bold Kurukshetra 2025

**In the News:** The **14th** edition of the India–Singapore Joint Military Exercise, **Exercise Bold Kurukshetra 2025**, began on **28 July 2025** in **Jodhpur, Rajasthan**, and will continue until **4 August 2025**. The exercise aims to enhance interoperability between the Indian Army and the Singapore Armed Forces, especially under **United Nations mandates**.

#### Key Points:

- **Exercise Kick-off:** Exercise Bold Kurukshetra 2025 commenced on **28 July 2025** in Jodhpur and runs until **4 August 2025**. Previous reports indicate a start date of **27 July**, but the official timing marks **28 July** per the Ministry of Defence.
- **Participating Units:** The exercise sees the participation of India's **Mechanised Infantry Regiment** and Singapore's **42 Armoured Regiment of the 4 Singapore Armoured Brigade**.
- **Exercise Format & Focus:** It is a **table-top exercise and computer-based wargame**, designed to validate joint operational procedures in mechanized warfare and simulate **UN peacekeeping scenarios** under Chapter VII mandates.
- **Leadership & Ceremonials:** Colonel **Arjun Ganapathi**, Commanding Officer of the Mechanised Infantry Regiment, leads the Indian contingent, while Lieutenant Colonel **Khiew Zhi Yoong** heads the Singapore side. The opening ceremony includes a **symbolic handing over of the regimental flag**, signifying transfer of command to India for the exercise duration.
- **Conclusion & Showcase:** It will culminate in an **equipment display by the Indian Army**, highlighting India's mechanised capabilities and defence technology.

### PM Modi Launches 'Gyan Bharatam Mission' to Digitise Ancient Manuscripts

**In the News:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi launched the '**Gyan Bharatam Mission**', a national initiative to digitise and preserve ancient manuscripts, as announced during the 124th episode of *Mann Ki Baat*. The mission aims to survey, document, and conserve over **one crore** (10 million) ancient manuscripts held in institutions, museums, libraries, and private collections throughout India.

#### Key Points:

- **Mission Launch & Announcement:** PM Modi officially introduced the Gyan Bharatam Mission in his *Mann Ki Baat* broadcast on **July 27, 2025**, declaring the project a historic step towards safeguarding India's intellectual legacy.
- **Scope & Target:** The mission targets the digitisation and conservation of **more than one crore manuscripts** located across academic institutions, museums, libraries, and private repositories.
- **Creation of National Digital Repository (NDR):** Post-digitisation, all manuscripts will be consolidated into a publicly accessible **National Digital Repository**, enabling global access for students, educators, and researchers to India's knowledge traditions.
- **Budget Allocation & Institutional Restructuring:** The initiative was formalised in the **2025–26 Union Budget**, significantly increasing funding from ₹3.5 crore to ₹60 crore within the newly renamed Gyan Bharatam Mission (formerly National Mission for Manuscripts under IGNCA). The four-year Central Sector Scheme spanning **2024–31** has been allocated a total of ₹482.85 crore for comprehensive implementation.

### Exercise Drone Prahar

**In the News:** The Indian Army carried out **Exercise Drone Prahar** in Rayang, situated in Arunachal Pradesh's East Siang district. The drill was aimed at validating the integration of drone technology into tactical battlefield operations and enhancing situational awareness for commanders.

#### Key Points:

- **Exercise Launch & Location:** The exercise was conducted at the military station in **Rayang**, East Siang district, Arunachal Pradesh, under operational conditions reflecting realistic battlefield scenarios. It was observed by Lieutenant General Abhijeet S. Pendharkar, General Officer Commanding of Spear Corps.



- **Objective:** The primary goal was to validate the use of drones in tactical operations—specifically for **intelligence, surveillance, reconnaissance (ISR)** and **sensor-to-shooter coordination**, enhancing commanders' situational awareness and command reach.
- **Operational Execution:** Exercise scenarios included **real-time precision targeting** based on live surveillance feeds, layered drone surveillance, and dynamic decision-making support to ground commanders.
- **Technical Evaluations:** The drill also tested critical systems essential for drone integration, including **airspace deconfliction, secure communications**, and coordination protocols across various arms and services to ensure seamless interoperability.

### Indian Coast Guard's Fast Patrol Vessel 'Atal' Launched in Goa

**In the News:** Goa Shipyard Limited (GSL), a Defence Public Sector Undertaking under the Ministry of Defence, **launched 'Atal'**, the **sixth** Fast Patrol Vessel (FPV) in a series of eight indigenously designed and constructed ships for the Indian Coast Guard at Vasco-da-Gama, Goa.

#### Key Points:

- **Launch Ceremony:** 'Atal' (Yard No. 1275) was launched on July 29 at GSL's shipyard in Vasco-da-Gama, Goa. The event was graced by Smt Shilpa Agarwal, with Rozy Agarwal, IDAS, PIFA from Coast Guard Headquarters, serving as the chief guest.
- **Class & Sequence:** This vessel is the **sixth** in the **Adamy-class** series of eight Fast Patrol Vessels under construction for the Coast Guard by GSL, part of India's maritime security expansion program.
- **Specifications:** The FPV has a **length of 52 m**, a **beam of 8 m**, and a **displacement of approximately 320 tonnes**. Designed in-house by GSL, it includes over **60% indigenous content**.
- **Operational Roles:** 'Atal' is intended for **coastal patrol, island security, Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) monitoring, offshore asset protection**, as well as missions such as **anti-smuggling, anti-piracy, fisheries protection, and search and rescue**.
- **Propulsion & Design Innovation:** The vessel features a **controllable pitch propeller (CPP)** system for enhanced maneuverability—a first for its class in India.
- **Economic Impact:** The project has generated local employment opportunities, particularly through MSMEs and partner industries engaged in shipbuilding and ancillary services.
- **Fleet Expansion Plans:** The Coast Guard currently operates 151 ships and 76 aircraft, with plans to scale up to **200 vessels and 100 aircraft by 2030**, making India a leading maritime enforcement presence.

### Maharashtra to Celebrate MS Swaminathan's Birth Anniversary as Sustainable Agriculture Day

**In the News:** The Maharashtra government officially declared that August 7—Dr Mankombu Sambasivan Swaminathan's birth anniversary—will be observed annually as **Sustainable Agriculture Day** in the state. The decision honours his monumental contributions to agricultural transformation and food security.

#### Key Points:

- **Designation of August 7:** With a Government Resolution issued on July 30, 2025, Maharashtra will observe August 7 each year as Sustainable Agriculture Day, marking the birth centenary of Bharat Ratna-winner M.S. Swaminathan.
- **Tribute to Legacy:** The state honours Swaminathan, widely recognized as the **architect of India's Green Revolution**, whose innovations in high-yield wheat and rice varieties helped India achieve food self-sufficiency.
- **Bio-Happiness Centres:** All agricultural universities in Maharashtra have been directed to establish Dr. M.S. Swaminathan Bio-Happiness Centres. These centres will focus on themes like sustainable agriculture, climate adaptation technologies, and food security.
- **Statewide Commemoration Activities:** The agriculture commissioner will issue guidelines to organize events across Maharashtra on August 7. Awards named after Dr. Swaminathan will also be instituted to encourage excellence in sustainable farming practices.
- **Recognition of M.S. Swaminathan:** Born on August 7, 1925, Swaminathan passed away on September 28, 2023. He was posthumously awarded the **Bharat Ratna** in 2024. His vision of the "Evergreen Revolution"—sustainable productivity without ecological harm—garnered global recognition, including acknowledgement from the United Nations.

## India Revives Sawalkote Hydroelectric Project

**In the News:** The National Hydroelectric Power Corporation (NHPC), in collaboration with the Jammu & Kashmir Power Development Corporation, issued **international tenders** for the long-delayed **1,856 MW Sawalkote Hydroelectric Project** on the Chenab River—marking a major strategic shift following India's suspension of the Indus Waters Treaty (IWT) with Pakistan.

### Key Points:

- **Project Revival after Decades:** First conceived in the 1960s, the Sawalkote project lay dormant for over 40 years due to administrative hurdles, environmental clearances, and treaty-related objections from Pakistan. Its revival follows India placing the IWT in abeyance in April 2025.
- **Major Hydroelectric Capacity:** The project will generate 1,856 MW via a run-of-the-river design, featuring a 192.5 m gravity dam and eight 225 MW turbine units plus a 56 MW environmental flow station. Estimated cost: ₹22,704–22,705 crore.
- **Tendering and Timeline:** NHPC floated tenders internationally on July 29 (per NHPC notification) and by July 31 media reported bids open until September 10. Completion expected across two phases within about 113 months.
- **National Importance & Strategic Assertion:** The project has been classified as a matter of **national importance**, enabling fast-tracked approvals and bypassing prior notification to Pakistan under IWT. It signals India's intent to assert use of western river resources.
- **Regional Development Impact:** Located near Sidhu village, Ramban district (approx. 120 km from Jammu, 130 km from Srinagar), the project is expected to energize J&K's infrastructure and boost energy self-sufficiency. Around a dozen villages and hundreds of families will be affected and relocated.
- **Linked Hydropower Expansion:** Sawalkote is one of **six hydropower projects** being revived in J&K post-IWT suspension—including Pakal Dul (1,000 MW), Kiru (624 MW), Kirthai I & II (1,320 MW), Parnai (38 MW), and Ratle (850 MW)—together expected to add over 5,000 MW.
- **Legal & Diplomatic Context:** India suspended the Indus Waters Treaty in April 2025 following a terror attack in Pahalgam, arguing prior terms were one-sided. Suspension exempts it from notifying Pakistan or sharing water-data before advancing projects like Sawalkote.
- **Timeline & Organizational Roles:** NHPC assumed majority control through a BOOT model; J&K Power Development Corporation remains a partner. The Forest Advisory Committee has approved land transfer of around 847 hectares of reserved forest for the project. Completion is slated by around 2035.

## NHAI Sustainability Report 2023-24

**In the News:** The Ministry of Road Transport & Highways, led by Union Minister **Nitin Gadkari**, released the **National Highways Authority of India's (NHAI) second Sustainability Report for FY 2023-24**, showcasing key ESG milestones, including a reduction of carbon intensity even amid record highway expansion and a robust adoption of circular economy practices.

### Key Points:

- **Second Annual ESG Report:** NHAI's Sustainability Report 2023-24 is its second consecutive public ESG report, aligning highways expansion with *Mission LiFE* and India's circular economy goals.
- **Greener Construction Growth:** Despite a **20 % increase in highway project length** in FY 2023-24, NHAI **reduced its GHG emissions intensity** from **1.0 to 0.8 MT CO<sub>2</sub>e per km**, marking a strategic decoupling of growth from emissions.
- **Circular-Economy Inputs:** In FY 2023-24, NHAI used **over 631 lakh tonnes** of recycled materials—fly ash, waste plastic, reclaimed asphalt—as road-building inputs, significantly lowering raw material demand and landfill burden.
- **Roadside Afforestation:** Under the Green Highways Policy (2015), NHAI planted **≈ 56 lakh saplings** in FY 2023-24 (and **67.47 lakh** in early 2024-25), bringing the total plantation tally to **4.69 crore** trees to date.
- **Water-Body Rejuvenation & Soil Recovery:** Through the *Amrit Sarovar Mission*, NHAI restored **467 water bodies**, recovering **2.4 crore m<sup>3</sup> of soil** for reuse—resulting in estimated savings of **₹16,690 crore**.
- **Water-Use Reduction:** In water-stressed regions, **water use per unit of construction declined by 74 %**, illustrating operational efficiencies.
- **Worker Safety & Inclusion:** The report notes **100 % of direct and contract workers** are covered under NHAI's Occupational Health & Safety framework, with **zero reported discrimination incidents**, highlighting the Authority's commitment to workplace equity.
- **AI in Dispute Resolution:** The implementation of **Data Lake 3.0**, an AI-powered project-management platform, helped resolve **155 conciliation claims**—delivering estimated cost savings of **₹25,680 crore**.

- **High FASTag Penetration:** With **98.5 % FASTag adoption**, toll congestion and associated vehicular emissions have declined, improving air quality around toll plazas.
- **Wildlife-Sensitive Design:** NHAI digitised its 'Best Practice Guidance on Eco-friendly Measures' — promoting wildlife underpasses, ecoducts, vegetated buffers along linear corridors to minimise man-animal conflict.

### Project 17A Frigate Himgiri

**In the News :** Garden Reach Shipbuilders & Engineers (GRSE) formally delivered **Himgiri (Yard 3022)**—the **third ship** of the **Nilgiri-class (Project 17A)** of stealth guided-missile frigates—to the **Indian Navy** at its **Kolkata shipyard**, marking a milestone in Aatmanirbharta (self-reliance) in naval design and construction.

#### Key Points :

- **Ship & Yard Details :** *Himgiri* (Hull 3022) is the **third vessel in the Nilgiri-class (P-17A)** series and the very **first P-17A frigate assembled at GRSE**, joining its sister ships *Nilgiri* and *Udaygiri*.
- **Namesake & Legacy :** Named after the original **INS Himgiri**, a Leander-class frigate decommissioned in May 2005 after 30 years of distinguished service, *Himgiri* reincarnates its legacy with modern stealth, weapons and automation.
- **Design & Construction :** Conceived by the Indian Navy's **Warship Design Bureau** and overseen by its **Warship Overseeing Team (Kolkata)**, *Himgiri* was built using the **Integrated Modular Construction** model, aiding efficiency and timeline adherence.
- **Indigenous Content & Ecosystem Development :** With **≈ 75 % indigenisation**, the project mobilised **200+ MSMEs** at GRSE, created employment for **~4,000** personnel directly and **~10,000** indirectly—with an overall contract value of **₹21,833 crore**.
- **Strategic Milestone for Aatmanirbharta :** The delivery exemplifies India's shift toward self-reliance in warship design, engineering and production, reducing dependence on foreign platforms and technologies.
- **Weapon & Sensor Suite :** Equipped with **vertically-launched BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles**, **Barak 8 MR-SAM**, plus **76 mm SRGM main gun** and dual **CIWS** (30 mm & 12.7 mm), alongside MF-STAR radar, HUMSA-NG sonar and Shakti EW systems for comprehensive 3-domain combat capability.
- **Propulsion & Integrated Systems ;** Features a **CODOG propulsion system** (diesel + gas turbine) driving **Controllable-Pitch-Propellers**, managed in real-time by an advanced **Integrated Platform Management System (IPMS)**.
- **Specifications & Performance :** At **≈ 149 m length**, **beam ~16.9 m**, *Himgiri* displaces **6,342–6,670 t**, capable of **30 knots** top speed and full aviation operations via its enclosed helicopter hangar.
- **Fleet Expansion & Indo-Pacific Role :** The induction aids India's ambition to field a Navy of **170–175 warships by 2035**, reinforcing its maritime posture in the Indian Ocean and broader Indo-Pacific region.

### Renowned Economist and Author Meghnad Desai Passes Away at 85

**In the News :** Lord **Meghnad Desai**, the Indian-born British economist, author and Labour peer, **passed away at the age of 85**, marking the end of a celebrated intellectual journey bridging India and the UK. Prime Minister **Narendra Modi** expressed his condolences on X, calling him a "distinguished thinker, writer and economist" who helped deepen India-UK ties.

#### Key Points :

- **Passing & Date:** Lord Meghnad Desai died on **29 July 2025**, aged 85. While **The Economic Times** and **Wikipedia** report his place of death as **London**, **The Indian Express** cites sources indicating he passed in a **Gurugram hospital** prior to reports confirming it.
- **Early Life & Education:** Born in **Vadodara** on **10 July 1940**, Desai earned his **BA (1958)** and **MA in Economics (1960)** from the **University of Mumbai**, before completing his **PhD at the University of Pennsylvania in 1963** on a scholarship.
- **Academic Leadership at LSE:** Desai joined the **London School of Economics in 1965**, became **Professor of Economics in 1983**, and **Professor Emeritus** upon retirement in **2003**. He taught Marxian, development & macro-economics and founded LSE's **Centre for the Study of Global Governance** in 1992.
- **Political & Peerage Career:** Desai created **Baron Desai of St Clement Danes** in **June 1991**, becoming the first Indian-origin UK life peer. He served in the **House of Lords**, initially as a Labour peer, and resigned in **2020** over the party's failure to address antisemitism, choosing the **crossbenches** thereafter.
- **Publications & Recognition:** Author of **25+ books** and **200+ academic articles**, Desai's notable works include *Marx's Revenge*, *The Poverty of Political Economy* (2022), and his film-biography *Nehru's Hero: Dilip Kumar in the Life of India*. He received India's **Padma Bhushan** in **2008**. **India-UK Bridge & Global Impact:** Desai was a prominent voice in



strengthening India–UK intellectual and diplomatic ties. He chaired the **Gandhi Memorial Statue Trust** (London's Parliament Square Gandhi statue) and frequently commented on Indian policy reforms in global media

- **Personal Attributes & Legacy:** He was known for his fearless opinions, clarity of thought, and passion for cross-cultural dialogue. Friends and former students remember him as an engaging mentor and thinker who blended storytelling with scholarship.

**Tributes from Leaders:** Condolences poured in from across academia and public life. **PM Modi, Raghuram Rajan**, and the **British High Commission in India** lauded his contributions to economics, public policy and international relations.

### Indigenous Kavach 4.0 Safety System Commissioned

**In the News:** Indian Railways formally commissioned its indigenously developed Automatic Train Protection system, **Kavach 4.0**, on the **Mathura–Kota section** of the high-density Delhi–Mumbai rail corridor. This marks the **first deployment of Version 4.0** after approval by an **Independent Safety Assessor (ISA)** and underscores the nation's push toward modern, indigenous rail-safety infrastructure aligned with the "Atmanirbhar Bharat" initiative.

#### Key Points

- **First Section Commissioned:** The 324 km Mathura–Kota stretch became the first railway segment to host **Kavach 4.0 in live service**, approved by ISA after exhaustive trials. It aims to prevent train collisions and enhance operational safety.
- **Version Upgrades & Certification:** Kavach 4.0 was certified by **RDSO in July 2024**, and upgraded for safe operation at **up to 160 km/h motion** (approved in 2025). It introduces improved **positioning accuracy, signal-degree logic** for rail yards, **station-to-station optical-fibre communications**, and **direct interfacing with Electronic Interlocking** systems.
- **World-class Safety Integrity (SIL-4):** The system operates at **Safety Integrity Level 4**, the highest level defined in CENELEC standards. It enforces automatic braking, in-cab signalling, even in poor visibility conditions like fog.

**Telecom-scale Deployment:** Deployment requires building a complex telecom-style infrastructure:

- **RFID tags at ~1 km intervals** and near signals for precise train localization.
- **Optical fibre cables** spanning 5,856 km.
- **619 telecom towers** installed along the track.
- Integration with **station Kavach units** and **onboard Loco Kavach systems** with direct Brake Interface Units.

### New Textile Parks Under PM MITRA Scheme to Boost India's Textile Sector

**In the News:** The Government of India formally approved the establishment of **seven PM Mega Integrated Textile Region & Apparel (PM MITRA)** parks across Tamil Nadu, Telangana, Gujarat, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Maharashtra. These parks are anchored by a central **₹4,445 crore outlay** (FY 2021–22 to FY 2027–28), with a strategic goal of **attracting ₹70,000 crore in investments** and generating **roughly 20 lakh direct and indirect jobs**.

#### Key Points

- **Seven Strategic Locations Selected:** Identified PM MITRA sites include: Tamil Nadu (**Virudhnagar**), Telangana (**Warangal**), Gujarat (**Navasari**), Karnataka (**Kalaburagi**), Madhya Pradesh (**Dhar**), Uttar Pradesh (**Lucknow**), and Maharashtra (**Amravati**).
- **Scale and Investment Ambition:** The scheme earmarks **₹4,445 crore in capital support** over seven years. It targets **₹70,000 crore of total investment** and creation of **~2 million jobs**.
- **Integrated "Fiber-to-Fashion" Value Chain:** Each park is designed to host the entire textile value chain—spinning, weaving, processing/dyeing, and garment manufacturing—within a contiguous area of over **1,000 acres with plug-and-play infrastructure**.
- **Financial Incentives Framework:**
  - **Development Capital Support (DCS):** Up to **30% of project cost**, capped at **₹500 crore** (greenfield) or **₹200 crore** (brownfield).
  - **Competitiveness Incentive Support (CIS):** Up to **₹300 crore per park**, to accelerate land/building development and onboarding anchor units.
- **Job Creation Potential per Park:** Each MITRA Park is expected to generate **~1 lakh direct jobs** and **~2 lakh indirect jobs**, intensifying employment opportunities in both manufacturing and ancillary services.
- **Skill Development Synergies:**
  - The **Samarth Scheme** supports demand-driven, placement-oriented training across the textile value chain (excluding fiber and weaving), with **80 centres already active in Haryana**.



- The **National Technical Textiles Mission**, backed by **₹1,480 crore (2020–26)**, nurtures innovation in the higher-value technical textiles segment.
- **State-Level Momentum:**
  - **Tamil Nadu's Virudhnagar Park:** A ₹1,900 crore (~US \$221 million) project on **1,052 acres**, slated for completion by **September 2026**, targeting 1 lakh jobs and export-grade infrastructure including zero-liquid-discharge effluent treatment, hostel accommodation and built-to-suit units.
  - **Madhya Pradesh's Dhar Site:** **1,550 acres to be offered in Q2 FY 2025–26 with ₹1 lakh crore investment aspirations and creation of 100,000 jobs; includes facilities such as logistics, healthcare and dormitories.**

### 71st National Film Awards (2023) – Officially Announced August 1, 2025

**In the News:** The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) publicly unveiled the winners of the **71st National Film Awards**, honoring Indian films certified between **1 January and 31 December 2023** by the Central Board of Film Certification. The announcement took place at the **National Media Centre**, New Delhi, following submission of the jury's report to Union Ministers **Ashwini Vaishnaw** and **Dr L Murugan**. The film **12th Fail** won Best Feature Film, while veteran actors **Shah Rukh Khan** and **Rani Mukerji** secured acting honours for the first time in their careers.

#### Key Points

##### Major Awards

- **Best Feature Film (Swarna Kamal):** *12th Fail* (Hindi), produced by Vidhu Vinod Chopra's RSVP, credited for its narrative blend of realism and emotional depth.
- **Best Actor in Leading Role (Rajat Kamal + ₹2 lakh):**
  - *Shah Rukh Khan* for *Jawan* (his first-ever National Film Award), celebrated for combining mass appeal and substance.
  - *Vikrant Massey* had a joint win for *12th Fail*, marking his first NFA and spotlighting his underdog, patriotic turn.
- **Best Actress in Leading Role:** *Rani Mukerji* for *Mrs Chatterjee Vs Norway*, awarded her first National Film Award for a deeply empathetic portrayal.

##### Direction & Popular Film

- **Best Direction:** *Sudipto Sen* for *The Kerala Story* (Hindi), a controversial yet impactful portrayal of identity and radicalisation.
- **Best Popular Film for Wholesome Entertainment:** *Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani* (Hindi), director *Karan Johar's* rom-com epic recognized for its high-octane spectacle and mass appeal

## INTERNATIONAL

### India-Singapore Joint Military Exercise 'Bold Kurukshetra 2025'

**In the News:** On **July 27, 2025**, the 14th edition of the India-Singapore joint military exercise **Bold Kurukshetra 2025** commenced in **Jodhpur, Rajasthan**, and will continue until **August 4, 2025**, as announced by India's Ministry of Defence.

#### Key Points:

- **Participating Units:** India is fielding its Mechanised Infantry Regiment, while Singapore is deploying the 42 Singapore Armoured Regiment of the 4 Singapore Armoured Brigade.
- **Exercise Format & Focus:** This iteration includes Table-Top Exercises and Computer-Based Wargames, designed to validate operational procedures for mechanised warfare under a United Nations mandate.
- **Command & Ceremony:** Indian contingent led by **Colonel Arjun Ganapathi** (Mechanised Infantry Regiment). Singaporean contingent led by Lieutenant Colonel Khiew Zhi Yoong (42 Singapore Armoured Regiment). Senior officers such as Brigadier Pritam (Commander, 340 (I) Mechanised Brigade) and **Colonel Wong Zeng Yu** (Commander, 4 Singapore Armoured Brigade) attended the opening.
- **Symbolic Handover:** The 42 Singapore Armoured Regiment handed over their **regimental flag** to the Indian formation, marking formal transfer of command during the exercise.
- **Closure & Display:** The exercise will culminate in an **equipment display by the Indian Army**, showcasing mechanised assets and fostering tactical learning.

## France to Recognise Palestinian State in 2025

**In the News:** French President **Emmanuel Macron** announced on **July 24, 2025**, that **France will officially recognise the State of Palestine at the UN General Assembly in September 2025**, making it the **first G7 nation** to do so. The move reflects France's longstanding commitment to a two-state solution amid the humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

### Key Points:

- **Official Recognition Timeline:** Macron confirmed via a letter to Palestinian President **Mahmoud Abbas**, and on social media platform X, that formal recognition will take place during the UN General Assembly in September 2025.
- **Symbolic Significance:** France becomes the first major Western and G7 country to officially recognise Palestinian statehood, marking a significant shift in diplomatic stance.
  - **International Reaction:**
    - **Israel** vehemently condemned the move. Prime Minister **Benjamin Netanyahu** called it a reward for terrorism, while Defense Minister **Israel Katz** termed it disgraceful.
    - **United States Secretary of State Marco Rubio** described the decision as “reckless” and harmful to peace efforts. The U.S. similarly criticized the timing amid the Gaza conflict.
    - In contrast, **Saudi Arabia, Ireland, Spain**, and other European nations welcomed the move as historic and constructive.
- **Pressure on Allies:** Macron's announcement has increased diplomatic pressure on the UK and Germany to follow suit. UK Prime Minister **Keir Starmer** faces mounting pressure from cabinet members and MPs to recognise Palestine. Germany has remained non-committal so far.
- **Diplomatic Strategy Context:** France's initiative comes ahead of the **UN-hosted International Conference on Gaza and two-state solution** scheduled for **July 28–29, 2025** in New York, where diplomatic momentum is building.

## EU and US Seal Landmark Trade Deal with 15% Tariffs

**In the News:** The **United States and the European Union** sealed a **landmark trade agreement** to avert a looming tariff war, agreeing to a **15% U.S. import tariff** on most EU exports—down from a previously threatened 30% rate. The deal was announced following a high-level meeting between U.S. President Donald Trump and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen at Turnberry, Scotland.

### Key Points:

- **Tariff Agreement:** The U.S. will impose a **15% baseline tariff** on EU goods—including **automobiles, pharmaceuticals, semiconductors**, and related industrial products—effective August 1, replacing earlier proposals for tariffs up to 30%.
- **Scope & Sectoral Carve-Outs:** Tariffs on **steel, aluminum, and copper** remain at 50%, though future quota-based reductions are planned. Select goods—such as **aircraft parts, some agricultural products, and certain medical devices**—are to be exempted from duties on both sides under a reciprocal framework.
- **Commitments & Investments:** The EU has pledged to invest **\$600 billion in the U.S. economy** and purchase **\$750 billion in U.S. energy products** by 2028. The agreement also includes plans for major EU acquisition of **American military equipment**, and elimination of tariffs on many U.S. industrial exports.
- **Asymmetry & Economic Criticism:** Analysts warn the deal is **uneven**: U.S. exports to the EU face no reciprocal tariffs, while EU exporters bear the full 15%. The agreement is expected to raise consumer prices in the U.S. (estimated average household income loss of ~US \$2,400) and may shave about **0.2% off EU GDP**.
- **Political and Strategic Context:** The EU's acceptance of higher tariffs is partly seen as a trade-off for maintaining strong **U.S. security support**, particularly regarding NATO and defense cooperation amid Russian threats. Critics in Europe call the deal a sign of EU strategic weakness.
- **Future Negotiations & Uncertainties:** Diverging interpretations have already emerged—especially around pharmaceutical tariffs and the binding nature of investment commitments. The U.S. claims immediate effect, while EU officials say key elements await clarification and further legislative support.

## Turkey Unveils Gazap: The World's Most Powerful Non-Nuclear Bomb

**In the News:** Turkey unveiled **Gazap** ("Wrath" in Turkish), its most powerful non-nuclear aircraft bomb at the 17th International Defence Industry Fair (IDEF 2025) in Istanbul. The 970 kg thermobaric fragmentation weapon has been hailed as one of the most devastating conventional bombs ever built.

### Key Points:

- **Bomb Unveiling & Design:** Gazap is a **970 kg (2,000 lb) MK-84-class aircraft bomb** with an advanced thermobaric warhead, showcased alongside the NEB-2 "Hayalet" bunker-buster at IDEF 2025.
- **Fragmentation & Devastation:** Engineered for maximum lethal impact, Gazap disperses **10,000 fragments within a 1 km radius**, achieving **10.16 fragments per square meter**, compared to  $\sim 3/\text{m}^2$  in standard MK-series bombs—making it **three times more powerful** than its conventional counterparts.
- **Thermobaric Overpressure & Heat:** The bomb's thermobaric design generates **temperatures up to  $\sim 3,000^\circ\text{C}$** , melting steel, concrete, and human tissue instantly. It creates a massive overpressure wave, followed by a 160-meter wide smoke and debris cloud visible in test footage.
- **Deployment Platforms:** Compatible with Turkey's **F-16 and legacy F-4 aircraft**, with plans underway to adapt Gazap for drone deployment in the future.
- **Concurrent Military Advances:** Alongside Gazap, Turkey introduced the **NEB-2 Ghost (Hayalet)**, capable of penetrating **up to 7 meters of C50 reinforced concrete**, and the hypersonic **Tayfun Block 4 missile**, showcasing its deep-strike and strategic weapons development ambitions.
- **Strategic Implications:** Military analysts consider Gazap a **step below nuclear weapons** in destructive capacity. The introduction of such a weapon highlights Turkey's increasing defense self-reliance and technological advancement, and has raised strategic concerns in regions like South Asia—especially given Turkey's growing defense ties with Pakistan.

## Thailand And Cambodia Truce Agreement

**In the News:** Thailand and Cambodia signed an **immediate and unconditional ceasefire (truce agreement)** to halt five days of intense fighting along their disputed border. The accord, reached during peace talks in Putrajaya, Malaysia under the mediation of Malaysian PM Anwar Ibrahim and diplomatic pressure from U.S. President Donald Trump, took effect at midnight local time.

### Key Points:

- **Truce Agreement & Mediation:** The ceasefire was agreed during Malaysian-hosted talks including Prime Ministers Hun Manet (Cambodia) and Phumtham Wechayachai (Thailand), with significant involvement from the U.S. and China. It was declared "immediate and unconditional" and intended to stop the border conflict that had escalated rapidly in late July 2025.
- **Conflict Overview & Human Cost:** Hostilities began around July 24, 2025, following cross-border incidents between Cambodian and Thai soldiers. The clashes killed at least **43 people** and displaced over **300,000 citizens** on both sides of the border.
- **Terms & Implementation Mechanisms:** The truce required both sides to halt troop movement, cease strikes, and facilitate the return of casualties. Military commanders were scheduled to meet immediately, followed by a regional Committee session on **August 4** in Cambodia. Additionally, mechanisms for monitoring compliance through international observers were established ([turn0news20] [turn0news16] [turn0news14]).
- **Early Compliance & Alleged Violations:** While shelling ceased and calm returned to many border areas, Thailand accused Cambodian forces of multiple ceasefire violations—such as firing rifles and grenade launchers—particularly in Sisaket Province. Cambodia denied these claims and reaffirmed its full adherence to the agreement, urging independent monitoring to build mutual confidence.
- **Strategic Leverage & Diplomatic Catalyst:** Analysts highlight that U.S. pressure — specifically a threatened **36% trade tariff** on both countries — was instrumental in compelling negotiations. President Trump later touted the ceasefire as a diplomatic success linked to trade leverage.
- **Regional Implications & Future Risks:** The truce halts the worst Thailand–Cambodia violence in over a decade, but unresolved territorial disputes and nationalist politics continue to pose risks. ASEAN's muted response, China's neutral stance, and internal power dynamics complicate long-term peace. Ongoing diplomatic engagement and sustained monitoring are seen as essential for durable resolution.

## India Hosts 2nd BIMSTEC Ports Conclave

**In the News:** India hosted the **2nd BIMSTEC Ports Conclave** in **Visakhapatnam**, under the theme “Navigating the Future: Blue Economy, Innovation & Sustainable Partnerships.” The two-day event was inaugurated by Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways, **Sarbananda Sonowal**, and brought together delegates from all seven BIMSTEC member states.

### Key Points:

- **Conclave Theme & Host:** The event, held at Visakhapatnam Port Authority facilities, focused on advancing the *Blue Economy*, innovation in port infrastructure, and sustainable partnerships across the Bay of Bengal region.
- **Multi-Stakeholder Participation:** Participating delegations included government officials, maritime experts, port authorities, private-sector leaders, and regional development partners from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Myanmar, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Thailand, and India.
- **Strategic Discussions:** Sessions addressed harmonisation of customs procedures, port-linked industrial zones, cruise tourism development, digital integration, logistics corridors, industry-academia collaboration, maritime workforce upskilling, and promotion of green shipping.
- **Operationalising AMTC:** A key emphasis was placed on ratifying and operationalising the **BIMSTEC Agreement on Maritime Transport Cooperation (AMTC)**, signed at the sixth BIMSTEC Summit, to boost intra-regional trade, tourism, and skill development.
- **Establishment of Maritime Centre:** India announced the creation of a **BIMSTEC Sustainable Maritime Transport Centre** under the Indian Ocean Centre of Excellence for Sustainable Maritime Transport (IOCE-SMaRT) at Powai, Mumbai—to support implementation of AMTC and foster digital and green maritime initiatives.
- **Kaladan Corridor Highlight:** The **Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project**, linking India’s Northeast with Myanmar and the Bay of Bengal, was showcased as a flagship corridor for enhancing regional connectivity under the Act East and Neighbourhood First policies.
- **India’s Strategic Vision:** Union Minister Sonowal underscored BIMSTEC’s potential in unleashing the Blue Economy and India’s commitment to transform the Bay of Bengal into a sustainable trade, tourism, and logistics hub using PPPs, port-led industrial clusters, and workforce development.
- **Regional Integration Goals:** The conclave aligned with India’s **Sagarmala Programme**, Act East, and Neighbourhood First strategies—supporting port-led growth, seamless logistics, and enhanced regional integration across South and Southeast Asia.

## United Kingdom Set to Recognise Palestinian State

**In the News:** UK Prime Minister **Keir Starmer** announced that the United Kingdom will formally recognise the **State of Palestine** at the **United Nations General Assembly in September 2025**, **unless Israel takes key actions**, including agreeing to a ceasefire in Gaza, easing the humanitarian crisis, and committing to a long-term two-state peace process. Starmer described Palestinian statehood as an “inalienable right” and signaled this recognition as a strategic diplomatic move to support peace efforts.

### Key Points:

- **Conditional Recognition:** The UK pledged to recognise Palestine unless Israel:
  - Agrees to a ceasefire in Gaza,
  - Reopens humanitarian aid access (e.g. ≥500 aid trucks daily),
  - Pledges no annexation of the West Bank,
  - Commits to meaningful peace negotiations toward a two-state solution.
- **Addressing Hamas Role:** Starmer emphasized that Hamas must release all hostages, disarm, agree to no future governance in Gaza, while the recognition would reflect Britain's long-standing support for a viable, sovereign Palestinian state alongside Israel.
- **International Context:** The UK’s move follows **France’s recent pledge** to recognise Palestine at the same UN session. If implemented, the UK and France would be first among G7 permanent UN Security Council members to recognise statehood, increasing diplomatic pressure on Israel.
- **Legal and Political Debate:** A coalition of UK legal experts raised concerns that unilateral recognition may breach international law, arguing that Palestine currently does not meet all criteria of statehood under the Montevideo Convention (clear territory, functional government, diplomatic capacity).



- **Domestic Reaction:** Polls show UK public support is divided: about **28% support unconditional recognition**, **24% favour recognition with conditions**, and **16% oppose it**, while the remainder remain unsure. Meanwhile, Israeli officials and families of hostages condemned the move as rewarding terrorism and undermining hostage negotiations..
- **Strategic Objectives:** According to the UK government, the timing in September is intended to maximize impact within global forums and support the viability of a two-state solution in light of stalled peace diplomacy and worsening conditions in Gaza.

### State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2025

**In the News:** The United Nations released its annual State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World (SOFI) 2025 report, presenting critical global updates for 2024 and highlighting the impact of food price inflation on access to healthy diets and nutrition.

#### Key Points :

- **Global Hunger Trends:** Approximately **673 million people (8.2% of the world population)** experienced hunger in 2024, down from 8.5% in 2023 and 8.7% in 2022, reflecting the third consecutive annual decline.
- **Regional Disparities:**
  - **Africa:** Over **307 million people** (20% of the region's population) faced hunger in 2024, making it the area with the most severe food insecurity.
  - **Western Asia:** Hunger prevalence reached **12.7%** (~39 million people), with ongoing conflict and displacement driving the trend.
  - **Southern Asia**, including India, saw hunger rates decline, supported by stronger food security programs and improved agricultural productivity.
- **Food Insecurity Beyond Hunger:** Roughly **2.3 billion people (28%)** were moderately or severely food insecure in 2024, lacking consistent access to sufficient food.
- **Affordability of Healthy Diets:** High global food price inflation eroded purchasing power, especially for low-income groups, keeping around **2.6 billion people** unable to afford a healthy diet. Though improved from 2.76 billion in 2019, the figure remains high.
- **Policy Response & Best Practices:** Governments that implemented targeted social protection (e.g., food subsidies, school feeding, cash transfers) and boosted resilient agricultural systems helped mitigate the adverse effects of inflation on nutrition access.
- **Nutrition Statistics & Challenges:**
  - While chronic hunger is declining globally, malnutrition persists: stunting, wasting, and micronutrient deficiencies remain high, especially in low-income regions.
  - Low availability and affordability of diverse food groups like fruits, legumes, nuts, and vegetables continue—impacting quality of diets worldwide.
  - Global adult obesity prevalence rose to **16% in 2022**, up from 12% in 2012, reflecting a dual burden of under- and overnutrition.
- **Drivers of Food Insecurity:**

Multiple systemic factors are impeding progress:

  - Conflict and violence disrupt local food systems, displace populations, and limit aid delivery.
  - Climate shocks—droughts, floods, heatwaves—reduce agricultural yields.
  - Economic pressures: inflation, debt, and currency devaluation reduce food access in poorer countries.
- **Notable Crises: Gaza Strip** is undergoing a severe famine crisis, with acute malnutrition, food consumption collapse, and child mortality rising sharply. Humanitarian access remains severely restricted. **Sudan**, particularly North Darfur and IDP camps, saw confirmed famine conditions (IPC Phase 5), with over **522,000 child deaths from malnutrition** amid civil conflict and aid blockades.
- **Outlook for 2030:** The SOFI 2025 report underlines that the world is not on track to achieve **SDG Target 2.1 (end hunger)** or **SDG 2.2 (eliminate malnutrition)** by 2030 without transformative action.

### Trump Imposes 25% tariff on India

**In the News:** U.S. President Donald Trump announced the imposition of a 25% tariff on all goods imported from India, effective August 1, accompanied by an unspecified additional "penalty" — citing India's purchases of Russian military equipment and oil, as well as its high tariff barriers against American goods.

#### Key Points:

- **Tariff Announcement & Timing :** Trump declared that India will face a **25% tariff**, plus extra penalties due to its continued energy and defense ties with Russia. The deadline for India to agree to terms or avoid further escalation is set for **August 1..**
- **Reasons Cited by the U.S. :** Trump accused India of having some of the **world's highest tariffs and "obnoxious non-monetary trade barriers"**, and criticized its role as a major buyer of Russian oil and armaments amid the war in Ukraine.
- **Negotiations Still Underway :** Despite the tariff announcement, Trump indicated that trade negotiations with India are ongoing and could still result in a deal by the end of the week .
- **Impacted Sectors & Exports :** Major export sectors at risk include **textiles, chemicals, ceramics, gems & jewelry, pharmaceuticals, and electronics**. These industries fear sharply reduced competitiveness in the U.S. market due to the new levy.
- **Indian Response & Political Reaction :** The Government of India stated it is examining the implications and reaffirmed its commitment to a "fair, balanced and mutually beneficial" trade agreement. Indian political parties, including Congress, denounced Trump's action as unjustified and warned of economic fallout for exporters .
- **Strategic Implications & Diversification :** Industrialists like Harsh Goenka see the tariff crisis as an opportunity for India to diversify trade links—with a pivot toward **Europe and ASEAN** markets to reduce U.S. dependency [\[\[turn0news17\]\]](#)<sup>2</sup>. Analysts also note the move may affect India's role in the **"China-plus-one"** supply chain strategy, even as it retains attractiveness due to its size and lower dependence on China.

**Legal & Legislative Backdrop :** The tariff announcement follows a broader pattern of Trump's unilateral use of emergency powers under IEEPA, which last year led to legal challenges. In May 2025, the U.S. Court of International Trade ruled such tariff measures exceeded presidential authority—but enforcement remained subject to appeals [\[\[turn0search44\]\]](#) [turn0search42](#). In parallel, the U.S. Senate has introduced the **Trade Review Act of 2025** to constrain executive trade powers, raising potential legal pushback against the new tariff decision .

### USA Will Explore Pakistan Oil Reserves Amid India Trade Deal

**In the News:** U.S. President Donald Trump announced a new trade agreement with Pakistan that includes U.S. support to develop Pakistan's massive oil reserves in exchange for reduced tariffs on Pakistani exports. Trump also hinted that Pakistan may one day export oil to India .

#### Key Points:

- **Trade-Energy Deal Framework:** The agreement allows U.S. involvement in exploring and developing Pakistan's largely undeveloped oil reserves, particularly in provinces like Balochistan, Sindh, Punjab, and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa.
- **Tariffs and Economic Incentives:** As part of the package, Pakistan will receive lowered U.S. import tariffs, bolstering its export competitiveness. Bilateral trade between Pakistan and the U.S. stood at around \$7.3 billion in 2024.
- **U.S. Rhetoric & India Implication:** Trump explicitly suggested that "maybe they'll be selling oil to India some day," signaling a possible shift in South Asian energy dynamics.
- **India-U.S. Trade Tensions:** The announcement coincided with the U.S. imposing a 25% tariff on Indian imports starting August 1 (later clarified to August 7), sending a strong message amid ongoing India trade negotiations.
- **Limited Pakistani Oil Reserves:** Analysts question the scale of Pakistan's oil holdings—its proven reserves are estimated at just 234–353 million barrels, ranking it around the 50th globally. Critics call the phrasing "massive" potentially overstated.
- **Geopolitical Strategy:** The deal appears to be a strategic move by the U.S. to deepen influence in South Asia, balancing China and signalling strong ties with Pakistan—possibly at India's diplomatic expense.
- **Pending Details:** No specific exploration or drilling sites have been disclosed yet. The U.S. is reportedly in the process of selecting an American oil company to lead the initiative.

### State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2025

**In the News:** The **SOFI 2025** report, jointly produced by FAO, UNICEF, WFP, WHO, and IFAD, was released on **July 28, 2025**. It warns that **high food price inflation** continues to erode purchasing power—especially among low-income groups—pushing

hundreds of millions toward hunger and malnutrition. The report calls for urgent action to get SDG 2 (Zero Hunger by 2030) back on track.

#### Key Points:

- **Hunger levels and trends:** In 2024, **673 million people** ( $\approx 8.2\%$  of the world's population) faced hunger—a slight decline from 2023, yet still significantly above pre-COVID levels (between 638–720 million).
- **Drivers of food insecurity:** Persistent food price inflation—stemming from COVID-era fiscal-monetary stimulus, supply-chain disruption, the Ukraine war, rising energy/fertilizer costs, and climate-induced crop failures—is undermining access to nutritious diets.
- **Regional disparities:** Hunger is increasing in most parts of **Africa** and **Western Asia**, with over **20%** of Africa's population undernourished and nearly **60%** of the world's hungry projected to reside there by 2030. Meanwhile, **South and Southeast Asia** and **Latin America** showed improvements thanks to stronger food policies and social programs.
- **Nutrition trends and SDG 2 outlook:** Although undernutrition and child stunting have improved modestly in some regions, global progress toward **SDG 2** remains off-track. Obesity and micronutrient deficiencies persist alongside hunger, highlighting the double burden of malnutrition. The report estimates **512 million people** will remain chronically undernourished by 2030 if no course correction occurs.
- **Impact on children:** Rising food prices and poverty are fueling **child malnutrition**, including wasting and stunting. Hunger hotspots—such as Gaza, Sudan, South Sudan, Haiti, and Mali—face elevated famine risk. Despite aid efforts, funding cuts and conflict hamper nutrition interventions.
- **Policy solutions and resilience:** The report calls for coordinated policies spanning resilient food systems, social protection, investments in agriculture, climate-smart infrastructure, and improved transparency. A “One Health” approach that integrates human, animal, and environmental health is emphasized. Strengthening institutional innovation and reducing barriers to healthy diet access are also prioritized.

### India and UAE Sign Agreement on Maritime Security and Safety Cooperation

**In the News:** The Indian Coast Guard (ICG) and the UAE National Guard Command signed a **Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS)**-approved Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in New Delhi during the 13th Joint Defence Cooperation Committee (JDCC) meeting. The agreement aims to strengthen bilateral maritime cooperation to ensure a safe, secure, and sustainable maritime environment in the region.

#### Key Points:

- **Strategic MoU Signing:** The MoU between ICG and UAE National Guard Command was signed during the JDCC meeting by DG Paramesh Sivamani (ICG) and Brigadier Staff Khalid Obaid Thani Al Shamsi in the presence of top-level defence officials.
- **Scope of Cooperation:** This partnership—India's 10th maritime pact with friendly nations—focuses on core Coast Guard functions:
  - Maritime Search & Rescue (M-SAR)
  - Combating transnational maritime crimes
  - Maritime Law Enforcement (MLE)
  - Marine Pollution Response (MPR)
  - Joint capacity-building and professional exchange
- **Defence Framework-Level Support:** The agreement was approved by India's CCS, reinforcing its alignment with the Government of India's SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) vision.
- **Broader Defence Agenda:** The signature took place during the 13th JDCC—held at secretary level for the first time—which also established commitments to enhance military training cooperation, information sharing, and joint defence industry initiatives like small arms manufacturing and AI-enabled technologies development.
- **Operational Enhancement via Information Sharing:** As part of the agreement, India and the UAE will cooperate on maritime security through **real-time information sharing**, improving situational awareness and coordinated response to threats.
- **Context of Deepening Ties:** The MoU is part of a larger push to elevate India-UAE defence collaboration across multiple domains—including Army, Navy, and inaugural Air-to-Air Staff Talks held July 28–29, 2025. India will also attend the Dubai Air Show in November 2025 to further boost defence industry engagement.

## ENVIRONMENT

### Ramsar COP15 Advances Global Wetland Conservation Efforts

**In the News:** From July 23–31, 2025, over 3,000 delegates from 172 countries convened in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe, for the 15th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention (COP15). The summit addressed accelerating wetland loss and adopted major initiatives to steer global wetland conservation efforts.

#### Key Points:

- **PD: Significant Wetland Decline & Economic Risk:** Since 1970, wetlands have declined by about 35%, three times faster than forest loss. Without urgent action, 20% more could vanish by 2050, potentially resulting in US \$39 trillion of lost ecosystem services (clean water, flood mitigation, food, carbon storage) that now contribute over 7.5% of global GDP.
- **Victoria Falls Declaration:** COP15 adopted the Victoria Falls Declaration, a new policy framework committing nations to integrate wetlands into climate action, development plans, and restoration efforts.
- **Global Wetland Restoration Fund:** Delegates proposed the establishment of a **Global Wetland Restoration Fund**, aimed at mobilizing long-term financing to support wetland preservation and rehabilitation.
- **Strategic Plan 2025–2034:** A new long-term Strategic Plan for the Ramsar Convention was finalized, setting global targets and priorities for freshwater ecosystems over the next decade.
- **Role of Wildlife in Ecosystem Health:** Experts emphasized that restoration must go beyond hydrology and vegetation—it must **include wildlife populations** like elephants, hippos, fish, and waterbirds that help maintain wetland ecological function.
- **Zimbabwe's Ramsar Leadership:** Zimbabwe assumed a **three-year presidency of the Convention**, spotlighting its own Ramsar Sites—like Victoria Falls—and positioning itself to drive global wetland action forward.
- **Global Wetland Outlook 2025 Report:** The GWO 2025 update was launched, offering the most comprehensive data yet on global wetland loss, ecological condition, economic valuation, and restoration pathways.

### Kaziranga Ranks Third Globally in Tiger Density

**In the News:** Figures from the “**Status of Tigers in Kaziranga, 2024**” survey revealed that **Kaziranga Tiger Reserve** in Assam now ranks **third globally in tiger density**, with a population density of **18.65 tigers per 100 sq km**. This achievement was marked on **International Tiger Day** and represents a significant milestone in Indian wildlife conservation.

#### Key Points:

- **Tiger Density & Global Ranking:** Kaziranga has reached the world's **third-highest tiger density**, trailing only **Bandipur Tiger Reserve** in Karnataka (19.83 per 100 sq km) and **Corbett National Park** in Uttarakhand (19.56 per 100 sq km).
- **Population Growth:** The count of adult tigers rose from **104 in 2022** to **148 in 2024**, including **83 females**, **55 males**, and **10 individuals of undetermined sex**.
- **Survey Methodology & Effort:** The 103-day survey, conducted between December 2023 and April 2024 under **NTCA Phase IV protocols**, used **293 camera traps** across **1,307 sq km**, resulting in **4,011 tiger images** over **13,157 trap-nights**.
- **Expansion of Habitat Coverage:** For the first time, the **Biswanath Wildlife Division** was included in sampling, contributing **27 tigers**. Meanwhile, Eastern Assam Wildlife Division's count increased from 104 to 115, and Nagaon Division remained steady at six tigers. This expansion added **200 sq km** under protection—including parts of Burhachapori–Laokhowa sanctuaries—enhancing tiger movement and reproduction potential.
- **Advanced Monitoring & Anti-Poaching Technologies:** The reserve leveraged modern tools—**camera traps**, **drones**, **M-STripES**, and “**Electronic Eye**” **surveillance systems**—to boost real-time tracking, habitat monitoring, and anti-poaching efficiency.
- **Community & Staff Involvement:** Key contributors include dedicated forest staff—such as **113 female rangers** known as “**Van Durgas**”—along with local community participation in monitoring, biodiversity counting, and conservation outreach.

### Kaziranga Bird Census: Tracking Grassland Birds Through Acoustic Monitoring

**In the News:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in the July 2025 edition of his Mann Ki Baat radio programme, highlighted India's **first-ever grassland bird census** carried out in **Kaziranga National Park**, Assam. Conducted using acoustic sound-recording



devices analyzed with artificial intelligence, the survey identified **43 grassland bird species**, including several rare and endangered ones, without disturbing their habitat. It was carried out across **185 sites between March 18 and May 25, 2025**.

#### Key Points:

- **Pioneering Census in India:** For the first time in the country, a targeted grassland bird census was implemented in Kaziranga National Park & Tiger Reserve. It recorded 43 species, including 1 Critically Endangered, 2 Endangered, and 6 Vulnerable species, all per IUCN Red List criteria.
- **Advanced Methodology:** The survey employed passive acoustic monitoring during the birds' breeding season (March–May). Recorders placed in tall trees near grasslands captured bird vocalizations. The audio data were processed using spectrogram analysis and AI-based tools such as BirdNET for species identification. Survey coverage included 29 locations over three-day cycles using six recorders.
- **Focus on Threatened & Endemic Species:** The census prioritized 10 globally threatened or Brahmaputra floodplain-endemic species—including Bengal Florican, Swamp Francolin, Finn's Weaver, Black-breasted Parrotbill, and others.
- **Conservation Breakthrough:** A notable discovery was a breeding colony of **over 85 nests** of the endangered **Finn's Weaver**, indicating viable grassland habitat and effective management.
- **Ecological Insight:** Grassland birds were described as vital indicators of floodplain ecosystem health—akin to a BMI for human health. Their presence reflects habitat integrity in the Brahmaputra wetlands.
- **Threats Ahead:** Assam has lost approximately **70% of its grasslands** over the last four decades due to overgrazing, land conversion, ecological succession, and the effects of climate change. These trends threaten the survival of grassland specialist species, some of which are endemic.

#### Central Empowered Committee Report on CAMPA

**In the News :** The Supreme Court-mandated Central Empowered Committee (CEC) submitted its annual impact assessment of the **Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management & Planning Authority (CAMPA)**, highlighting that **while India fulfilled 85 % of its afforestation target, only 67.5 % of CAMPA funds** were actually spent.

#### Key Points :

- **Afforestation Outcome Still Short of Aim:** Between FY 2019-20 and FY 2023-24, India raised **1,78,261 hectares** of compensatory afforestation, reaching about **85 % of its 2,09,297 hectare** national goal.
- **Funds Underutilised Despite Availability:** Out of approximately **₹38,516 crore approved**, only **67.5 % of CAMPA allocations** were put to use.
- **Major Inter-State Disparities :**
  - Gujarat, Mizoram, Madhya Pradesh, and Chandigarh achieved **100 % afforestation** and nearly full fund use.
  - Tamil Nadu utilised just **67.9 % of its allocation**, while **Delhi managed only 26.9 %**.
- **Statutory & Historical Background:** CAMPA was institutionalised via the **CAF Act, 2016** and **CAF Rules, 2018**, stemming from the **2002 Supreme Court directive** in *T.N. Godavarman v. Union of India* (1995), which first set up CEC and CAMPA as oversight mechanisms.
- **Funding Structure & Oversight:** CAMPA guidelines stipulate **90 % allocation to States/UTs**, with the Centre retaining **10 % for capacity building**. Both state and national CAMPA boards are subject to **annual CAG audit**.
- **Operational Chokepoints:** Delays in annual plan submission, phased fund releases, inconsistent monitoring (including sapling survival), and absence of dedicated CAMPA offices are flagged as key hurdles.
- **Ecological & Equity Concerns:** A shift toward **monocultures**, fund diversions to schemes like the Green India Mission, and sidelining of tribal and forest community participation pose risks to both biodiversity and social justice.
- **Recommendations for Strengthening CAMPA:** The CEC urges structural reforms:
  - A central, ecologically viable land bank for better afforestation siting
  - Tighter timelines and public disclosure of fund flows
  - Civil-society and tribal-led third-party monitoring for accountability
  - Alignment with IPCC guidance to avoid “net ecological loss.”

#### Environment Protection (Management of Contaminated Sites) Rules, 2025

**In the New:** The Union Environment Ministry, under a notification (G.S.R. 3401 (E)), issued the Environment Protection (Management of Contaminated Sites) Rules, 2025 under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986—marking India's first binding legal framework for identifying, assessing, and remediating chemically contaminated sites across the country.

**Key Points:**

- **Legal Basis & Objective:** Notified under Section 3 of the EPA, 1986, these Rules codify a mandatory, science-based process for locating, classifying, assessing, and cleaning up legacy chemical-contaminated sites that threaten soil, groundwater and ecosystems.
- **Scope & Contaminants Covered:** Schedule I lists **189 hazardous substances** (e.g. halogenated aromatics, PAHs, pesticides, certain metals and PFAS) with **land-use-based response levels** for agricultural, residential, commercial and industrial zones.
- **Exclusions:** The Rules do **not apply** to contamination from radioactive waste (Atomic Energy Act), mining-related pollution, marine oil spills, or authorised municipal solid-waste dumps—**unless** a hazardous substance listed under Schedule I exceeds its response level.
- **Identification Mechanism:** Local bodies or District Administrations must bi-annually upload **suspected contaminated sites** to the **CPCB's online portal**, based on industrial history, public complaints or dump-site memories. SPCBs (or reference bodies) must complete **preliminary assessment within 90 days**, followed by a detailed survey within the next 90 days before confirming contamination.
- **Public Disclosure & Consultation:** Once a site is preliminarily classified, SPCBs must issue **public notices**, impose land-use restrictions and **invite stakeholder comments within 60 days**. The final list is published on the portal and in local media.
- **Responsible Person & Liability:** Within 90 days of confirmation, SPCBs must designate the '**responsible person**'—including transferees—who must prepare ("polluter pays") and fund a remediation plan. Where the polluter is untraceable or insolvent, the SPCB or State/Union government must manage cleanup.
- **Remediation Plan & Timeline:** A **reference organisation** (empanelled by CPCB and meeting eligibility criteria) must draft a site-specific remediation plan. SPCBs must approve it within 90 days and forward it to the CPCB. If no responsible person is found, SPCBs must prepare and implement the plan within 6 months.
- **Oversight Structure:** A **Central Remediation Committee** chaired by CPCB with representatives from key ministries, SPCBs and independent experts reviews remediation progress. State-level committees must mirror its functions. CPCB maintains a **geospatial, publicly accessible portal** tracking all phases of each site. **Financing & Cost Recovery:** The **Environmental Relief Fund** (under the Public Liability Insurance Act, 1991) and state governments initially finance assessment; polluters must reimburse costs within 3 months.
- **Post-remediation Certification & Compensation:** SPCBs or CPCB-appointed reference organisations verify site cleanup; SPCB issues the **Remediation Completion Order** only after Central Remediation Committee approval. **Environmental compensation** may be levied separately if the responsible party fails to act or poses health or environmental risk.

**India's Resolution on the Wise Use of Wetlands Adopted at Ramsar COP15**

**In the News:** On **30 July 2025**, at the conclusion of the **15th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties (COP15)** to the **Ramsar Convention on Wetlands**, held in **Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe**, India's resolution titled "**Promoting Sustainable Lifestyles for the Wise Use of Wetlands**" was formally adopted by all **172 Contracting Parties** along with **6 International Organisation Partners**—marking the **first-ever** Indian-led resolution embraced by the global Ramsar community .

**Key Points**

- **Resolution Title:** "Promoting Sustainable Lifestyles for the Wise Use of Wetlands"—India's maiden resolution to the Ramsar Convention.
- **Adoption Details:** Garnered unanimous support from all **172 Parties** plus **6 co-developing international institutions**, and was endorsed in the COP15 plenary session on **30 July 2025**.
- **Core Message:** Underlines the critical role of **individual and societal lifestyle choices** (e.g., sustainable consumption, resource conservation, waste minimization) as drivers for **wetland conservation**—advocating a **pro-planet behavioural shift** in line with India's **Mission LiFE** (Lifestyle for Environment) .
- **Whole-of-Society & CEPA:** Calls for a **multi-stakeholder engagement**—including governments, civil society, communities, academia, and private sectors—backed by targeted **Communication, Education, Participation & Awareness (CEPA)** interventions, echoing **Ramsar Resolution XIV.8** and the **UNEA 6/8 (2024)** sustainable lifestyle mandate .
- **Integration into Planning & Finance:** Recommends embedding **lifestyle-centred** interventions in **wetland-management plans, investment portfolios, and development programmes**, empowering public-private collaboration, education-at-all-levels, and evidence-based local action .

- **Alignment with Global Frameworks:** Anchored in **Ramsar resolution XIV.8**, the **10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption & Production (10YFP)**, and India's **Mission LiFE** (launched at **UNFCCC COP26**) as its behavioral-change engine.
  - **India's National Wetland Actions:**
    - **Mission Sahabhagita & Save Wetlands Campaign** mobilized over **2 million citizen-volunteers**, mapping **170,000 wetlands** and demarcating **120,000 boundaries** in the last three years.
    - Within **1 year**, India restored **68,827 small wetlands** through a GIS-enabled, participatory programme linked with **Amrit Sarovar, Mission Sahabhagita**, and cross-sector convergence.
- **India's Global Position:** India has declared **91 Ramsar-wetlands**, covering **1.36 million hectares**—the **largest such network in Asia**, and the **third-largest globally**.
  - **COP15 Wider Outcomes:**
    - Formal adoption of **13 resolutions**, including ones on **migratory bird flyway conservation**, **river dolphin and freshwater restoration policies**, and **refinement of Ramsar site criteria** using IUCN Red List data.
    - Launch of the **5th Ramsar Strategic Plan (2026–2035)** featuring **4 goals** and **18 measurable targets**, to be monitored by STRP (Scientific & Technical Review Panel).

### Ashtamudi Wetland Conservation

**In the News:** The **Kerala High Court** ruled on a Public Interest Litigation, ordering the State Government and the **State Wetland Authority Kerala (SWAK)** to establish a dedicated **Ashtamudi Wetland Management Unit** within two months. The unit must hold its inaugural meeting promptly, develop a **standard operating procedure (SOP)**, and complete a site-specific **Integrated Management Plan (IMP)** within six months—with an interim draft in the meantime. It must also host a public feedback platform, including audio-visual reporting tools, on its website to facilitate local involvement.

#### Key Points

- **Ramsar Site with International Significance:** Ashtamudi Lake—a palm-shaped estuarine wetland in Kollam district—was designated a **Ramsar Wetland of International Importance in 2002**. It spans  $\sim 61 \text{ km}^2$  and supports unique mangrove ecosystems, migratory birds, fisheries and inland navigation; yet it has been closely monitored due to mounting ecological stress.
- **Legal Mandate Under Environment Laws:** The **National Green Tribunal (NGT)** imposed a ₹10 crore penalty on Kerala in 2023 for non-compliance with the **Wetlands (Conservation & Management) Rules, 2017**, citing industrial and residential pollution, untreated sewage, solid-waste dumping, and encroachment into the lake's natural basin.
- **Severe Ecological Stress:** Surveys (2019–2021) revealed fecal coliform counts well above permissible norms, dissolved oxygen levels dipping below biological norms at several stations, and **loss of mangroves and fish-breeding habitats**. The lake's area has reportedly shrunk from  $\sim 61 \text{ km}^2$  to under  $\sim 34 \text{ km}^2$  due to dredging, sedimentation, sand-mining and unregulated shoreline development.

**Withdrawal of Old IMP / New One in Progress:** Kerala's previously approved **Integrated Management Action Plan** has lapsed. A revised IMP is being prepared under the **National Plan for Conservation of Aquatic Ecosystems (NPCA)**, in collaboration with **Wetlands International South Asia** and expert agencies, incorporating hydrology, ecology, human-dimension and pollution control strategies.

#### ○ AWARDS AND HONOURS

### ISRO Chief Dr. V. Narayanan Honoured with GP Birla Memorial Award

**In the News:** On **July 25, 2025**, Dr. V. Narayanan—Chairman of ISRO and Secretary of the Department of Space—was conferred with the prestigious **G. P. Birla Memorial Award 2025**, also known as the Lifetime Achievement Award, in recognition of his leadership and significant contributions to India's space programme. The award was presented by **Nirmala Birla**, Chairperson of the G. P. Birla Archaeological, Astronomical and Scientific Institute, during a ceremony in Hyderabad.

#### Key Points



- **Recipient Profile:** Dr. V. Narayanan, serving as ISRO Chairman and Secretary, began his tenure on **January 14, 2025**, succeeding S. Somanath. A veteran cryogenic and rocket propulsion scientist, he played a key role in developing indigenous cryogenic engine systems for India's GSLV Mk-III and Chandrayaan missions.
- **Reasons for Recognition:**
  - Leadership in advancing India's cryogenic propulsion technology
  - Under his guidance, ISRO expanded its launch and deep-space mission capabilities
  - Spearheaded planning of multiple strategic missions including Gaganyaan, Chandrayaan-4/5, and India's own space station roadmap.
- **Award Legacy:** The G. P. Birla Memorial Award is one of India's most esteemed honors in science and technology, previously awarded to luminaries such as Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, Dr. V. K. R. V. Kasturirangan, and Nobel laureate Dr. Venkatraman Ramakrishnan.
- **Lecture & Vision Presentation:** At the award ceremony, hosted as the **GP Birla Memorial Lecture on Indian Space Programme – Accomplishments, Challenges, and Future Perspectives**, Dr. Narayanan presented India's ambitious vision: tripling the number of operational satellites—from about 55 to over 150—within the next three years, building a space station with the first module by 2028 and full deployment by 2035, and ramping up launch cadence, including NISAR by July 30.

### Sansad Ratna Awards 2025: Honouring Parliamentary Excellence

**In the News:** At the **15th edition of the Sansad Ratna Awards** held in **New Delhi** (New Maharashtra Sadan), **17 Members of Parliament** and **two parliamentary standing committees** were conferred the Sansad Ratna Awards for their exceptional performance in the Lok Sabha. The ceremony included four **Special Jury Awards** recognizing consistent and outstanding contributions across multiple parliamentary terms.

#### Key Points:

- **Award Recipients:** Seventeen MPs from diverse political parties and states were honoured. Four received Special Jury Awards for sustained excellence since the 16th Lok Sabha: **Bhartruhari Mahtab** (BJP, Odisha), **N.K. Premachandran** (RSP, Kerala), **Supriya Sule** (NCP-SP, Maharashtra), and **Shrirang Appa Barne** (Shiv Sena, Maharashtra).
- **Notable MPs Honoured:** Other awardees included **Ravi Kishan** (BJP, UP), **Nishikant Dubey** (BJP, Jharkhand), **Smita Uday Wagh**, **Medha Kulkarni**, **Praveen Patel**, **Bidyut Baran Mahato**, **Dilip Saikia**, **Varsha Gaikwad**, **Naresh Mhaske**, **Arvind Sawant**, and **C.N. Annadurai** (DMK).
- **Special Mentions:**
  - **Ravi Kishan**, MP from Gorakhpur, was celebrated for his consistent parliamentary attendance, impactful debates, raising substantive questions, and introducing private member bills. He dedicated the award to his constituents in Purvanchal and expressed gratitude to PM Modi, Amit Shah, and CM Yogi Adityanath. This marked his **second time** receiving the award.
  - **Naresh Mhaske**, a first-time MP from Thane (Shiv Sena), was recognized for strong engagement in budget debates, social media regulation, and public insurance issues. Prior roles include Mayor of Thane and standing committee memberships
  - **Praveen Patel** (Phulpur, BJP) received recognition for parliamentary contributions and dedicated his honour to his late father and voters of Prayagraj.
- **Awarded Committees:** Two standing parliamentary committees were honoured for legislative oversight and report quality: **Standing Committee on Finance**, chaired by **Bhartruhari Mahtab** (BJP, Odisha). **Standing Committee on Agriculture**, chaired by **Dr. Charanjit Singh Channi** (INC, Punjab).
- **Selection Criteria & Background:** The awards, instituted in 2010 by the Prime Point Foundation and e-magazine PreSense upon Dr. A.P.J. Abdul Kalam's suggestion, are based purely on parliamentary performance metrics sourced from Lok Sabha/Rajya Sabha records and PRS data. Indicators include debates initiated, bills introduced, and questions asked.
- **Regional Highlights: Maharashtra stood out**, with **7 MPs** honoured among the 17 awardees, showcasing the state's strong parliamentary engagement. Awardees from Maharashtra include Supriya Sule, Medha Kulkarni, Varsha Gaikwad, Smita Uday Wagh, Shrirang Appa Barne, Arvind Sawant, and Naresh Mhaske.



## SCIENCE AND TECH

### ISRO to Launch 3 More Navigation NavIC Satellites by 2026

**In the News:** The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) announced plans to launch **three next-generation navigation satellites—NVS-03, NVS-04, and NVS-05**—by the **end of 2026**, aimed at replenishing India's **NavIC** constellation and restoring full regional navigation capability.

#### Key Points:

- **Upcoming Satellite Launches:** ISRO intends to launch **NVS-03, NVS-04, and NVS-05** by the end of 2026 to bolster the NavIC constellation, which has been operating with only four of its original seven satellites functional.
- **Launch Schedule & Sequence:**
  - **NVS-03** is expected by **end-2025**
  - **NVS-04** and **NVS-05** to follow at roughly **six-month intervals** through 2026.
  - According to future ISRO launch plans, **NVS-05** may extend into **2027–28**, though current targets remain through 2026–27.
- **NavIC Constellation Status:** Launched in phases from 2013, India's **Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System**, operationally known as **NavIC**, was designed as a seven-satellite system serving India and up to 1,500 km beyond. So far, eleven satellites have launched, but two have failed, leaving only four fully functional ones in orbit.
- **Technical Upgrades – NVS Series:** These second-generation NVS satellites carry navigation payloads in **L1, L5, and S-bands**, introduce a civil L1 signal for IoT/wearables, and include upgraded **Indian Rubidium Atomic Frequency Standards (iRAFS)**, with an extended lifespan of up to 12 years.
- **Strategic Importance:** The launches are critical to restore NavIC's intended performance, reduce dependency on foreign systems like GPS and Galileo, and fulfill India's objective of autonomous regional navigation capability.
- **Launch Platform:** The satellites will be launched via **GSLV Mk II rockets** from Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota—the same platform used for previous NavIC launches (e.g. NVS-02 launched January 2025 aboard GSLV-F15).

### Two Consecutive Successful Flight Tests of Pralay Missile Conduct By DRDO

**In the News:** The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) successfully conducted two consecutive flight tests of the indigenously developed Pralay missile from Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Island off the coast of Odisha, marking a pivotal milestone in India's defense capabilities and paving the way for its imminent induction into service.

#### Key Points :

- **Flight Test Details:** These tests were part of the **User Evaluation Trials**, executed on **July 28 and 29**. The missile validated both its **minimum and maximum operational range**, following precise trajectories and meeting all mission objectives.
- **Missile Features & Performance:**
  - Pralay is a **short-range, surface-to-surface quasi-ballistic missile** with a **150–500 km strike range**.
  - The missile showcased high precision, maneuverability, and effective guidance systems capable of evading interceptor threats.
  - Maximum terminal speed is estimated at **Mach 1–1.6**, with some sources suggesting up to **Mach 6.1 in terminal phase**, making it radar-evading and thus harder to intercept.
- **Development Collaboration:** Designed by **Research Centre Imarat (Hyderabad)** in cooperation with multiple DRDO labs and industry partners including **Bharat Dynamics Limited, Bharat Electronics Limited**, and various MSMEs. Tracking data from sensors and ships confirmed all subsystems performed as expected.
- **Strategic Impact:** Defence Minister **Rajnath Singh** praised the tests as a substantial boost to India's conventional strike options and battlefield readiness. DRDO Chairman **Samir V Kamat** noted that phase-1 trials cleared the path for the missile's induction into the armed forces in the near future.
- **Operational Advantages:** The missile uses a **twin-launcher system** mounted on a high-mobility vehicle, allowing rapid deployment. The maneuverable re-entry vehicle and inertial/multi-GNSS guidance provide precision targeting with sub-10 m CEP accuracy.
- **Role in India's Defense Modernization:** Pralay fills a critical capability gap in India's tactical strike arsenal, enhancing the country's deterrence posture and advancing the Aatmanirbhar Bharat agenda in defense technology.

### NISAR Mission Launch

**In the News:** India and NASA jointly launched the NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR) satellite from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre, Sriharikota, aboard a GSLV-F16 rocket—marking a major milestone in global Earth observation and bilateral space cooperation.

#### Key Points :

- **Launch Details:** Liftoff occurred at **5:40 p.m. IST** (8:10 a.m. EDT) on July 30 via GSLV-Mk II F-16, placing the **2,392 kg** satellite into a **747 km sun-synchronous polar orbit** with an inclination of  $\sim 98.4^\circ$ . **Dual-Radar System:** NISAR is the first satellite to carry **dual-frequency Synthetic Aperture Radar—NASA's L-band and ISRO's S-band**—allowing all-weather, day/night imaging with **centimetre-level precision**.
- **Revisit & Coverage:** It will scan nearly **all land and ice surfaces globally** every **12 days**, circling Earth approximately **14 times per day**.
- **Scientific & Application Goals:** Measure surface deformation from phenomena like **earthquakes, landslides, subsidence, and volcanic activity**. Monitor **glacier retreat, vegetation changes, wetland dynamics, forest biomass, and groundwater levels**. Support **disaster response, infrastructure monitoring, and climate-change research** globally.
- **Mission Lifespan & Operations:** Nominal mission life is **five years**. The initial 90 days post-launch are dedicated to commissioning, calibration, and systems checks before transitioning into full science operations jointly managed by ISRO and NASA.
- **Cost & Collaboration:** Valued at over **USD 1.3–1.5 billion**, with NASA covering the majority of payload development, the mission exemplifies deep Indo-U.S. collaboration in civil space science.
- **Strategic Importance:** Union Minister Jitendra Singh hailed NISAR as a **globally significant mission**, emphasizing its role as a beacon of scientific diplomacy between India and the U.S., and a testament to India's evolving space ambitions.

### SpaceX Launches NASA's Crew-11 Mission to the International Space Station

**In the News:** On **August 1, 2025**, SpaceX's Falcon 9 rocket lifted off from **Launch Complex 39A** at Kennedy Space Center with the **Crew Dragon 'Endeavour'** carrying **NASA's Crew-11**, marking the **11th crew rotation mission** under NASA's Commercial Crew Program.

#### Key Highlights

- **Launch & Vehicle:** A SpaceX **Falcon 9** rocket launched the reusable **Crew Dragon Endeavour** from KSC at **11:43 a.m. EDT**, overcoming a one-day delay due to bad weather [NASA](#).
- **Crew Composition:** The four-person team includes **Commander Zena Cardman (NASA)** on her first flight, **Pilot Mike Fincke (NASA)** making his fourth station flight (382 cumulative days in space), **Mission Specialist Kimiya Yui (JAXA)** on her second mission, and **Mission Specialist Oleg Platonov (Roscosmos)** on his first flight.
- **Docking & Arrival:** The spacecraft autonomously docked to the Harmony module at 2:27 a.m. EDT on August 2 after  $\sim 15$  hours in orbit; hatches opened  $\sim 2$  hours later before a brief handover with Crew-10.
- **Mission Duration & Research Focus:** Crew-11 is scheduled for a  $\sim$ six-month stay, with NASA evaluating an up-to-eight-month extension to better align U.S.–Russia ISS crew schedules; research tasks include lunar landing simulations, astronaut vision protection, plant & cell biology studies, and on-demand nutrient generation experiments.
- **Programmatic & International Significance:** This mission reinforces NASA's reliance on private-sector crew transport via SpaceX, and underscores continued collaboration among NASA, JAXA, and Roscosmos, even amid broader geopolitical tensions and high-level talks between agency leadership during the launch window.
- **Operational Context:** Zena Cardman and Oleg Platonov were reshuffled onto Crew-11 following delays with the Boeing Starliner crewed programme; Fincke's experience includes flights on Soyuz and the Space Shuttle relapse-end Endeavour final mission; Yui's involvement reflects Japan's ongoing ISS partnership.

## SPORTS

### Divya Deshmukh Creates History: Wins FIDE Women's Chess World Cup 2025

**In the News:** India's 19-year-old chess prodigy Divya Deshmukh won the FIDE Women's Chess World Cup 2025 in Batumi, Georgia, defeating veteran Grandmaster Koneru Humpy 1.5–0.5 in the rapid tiebreak. With this victory, she became the first Indian woman to claim the Women's World Cup title and earned the Grandmaster (GM) title, becoming India's 88th Grandmaster.

**Key Points:**

- **Final Match Triumph:** Both classical games in the final ended in draws, pushing the match into rapid tiebreaks. Divya drew the first rapid game and clinched the title by winning the second game with the Black pieces, sealing the result at **1.5–0.5**.
- **Historic Grandmaster Title:** As a result of her World Cup win, Divya bypassed the usual norm requirements and was directly awarded the **Grandmaster title**, joining Viswanathan Anand, Harika Dronavalli, and Vaishali Rameshbabu as India's **fourth female GM**, and **88th overall**.
- **Prize and Future Qualification:** She earned prize money of **US \$50,000** as champion, while the runner-up received **\$35,000**. Divya, Humpy, and third-place finisher **Tan Zhongyi** qualify for the **2026 FIDE Women's Candidates Tournament**, positioning them to challenge for the world championship spot.
- **Personal Backstory:** Hailing from **Nagpur**, Divya balances academic pursuits (including online coursework in sports psychology and data analytics) with her chess career. She previously won the **Asian Continental Women's Championship (2023)** and the **World U-20 Girls Championship (2024)**.
- **International Recognition & Reactions:** Her win was widely hailed, with **Prime Minister Narendra Modi** congratulating her and calling her victory an inspiration to Indian youngsters. Chess legend **Viswanathan Anand** described it as a "celebration of Indian chess," while former world champion **Judit Polgar** praised her composure in the tense tiebreak, noting, "Indian chess is just unbelievable!"

## ECONOMY

### Digital Payments Index Surges

**In the News :** The **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** released its semi-annual **Digital Payments Index (DPI)**, reporting a score of **493.22** for March 2025. This reflects a **10.7 % year-on-year** growth over the **445.50** recorded in March 2024, signaling strong momentum in India's digital payment ecosystem.

**Key Points:**

- **Index Value & Growth:** The RBI-DPI stood at **493.22** as of March 2025—up from **465.33** in September 2024 and **445.50** in March 2024, representing a **+10.7 % YoY** increase.
- **Base-Year & Publication Schedule:** Launched on **1 January 2021**, the DPI uses **March 2018 as its base year (DPI = 100)** and is published **twice annually** (March & September), with a lag of approximately four months.
- **Index Framework & Weightage:** The composite DPI aggregates **five broad dimensions**:
  - *Payment Enablers* (25 %)
  - *Payment Infrastructure – Demand-side* (10 %)
  - *Payment Infrastructure – Supply-side* (15 %)
  - *Payment Performance* (45 %)
  - *Consumer Centricity* (5 %)

Each dimension comprises a suite of sub-indicators—such as merchant acceptance, unique users, and fraud resolution.

- **Key Growth Drivers:** The March 2025 rise was fuelled especially by strong improvements in **Supply-side Infrastructure** (e.g. merchant PoS/QRs, payment intermediaries) and **Payment Performance** metrics (volume, value, active usage).
- **Steady Seven-Year Upswing:** Since the base score of **100** in March 2018, the index has risen through:
  - 153.47 in March 2019
  - 207.84 in March 2020
  - 349.30 in March 2022

Reinforcing more than a **four-fold increase** in payment digitisation over seven years.

- **Complemented by Transaction Trends:** The DPI surge echoes broader fintech adoption: UPI transaction values and volume continue to scale, while QR-based and merchant-led payments deepen rural and MSME outreach.

### Banking Laws Amendment Act 2025

**In the News:** The **Ministry of Finance** issued a Gazette Notification (S.O. 3494(E)) appointing **1 August 2025** as the date on which major provisions of the **Banking Laws (Amendment) Act, 2025** will come into force. The Act itself had been granted Presidential assent on **15 April 2025**, marking it as a key reform in India's banking governance framework.

#### Key Points

- **Enactment & Legislative Chronology:** First introduced in **August 2024**, the Bill was passed by Lok Sabha in **December 2024** and approved by Rajya Sabha in **March 2025**. The Act received presidential assent on **15 April 2025**, and selective provisions—including Sections 3, 4, 5, 15–20—came into effect on **1 August 2025**.
- **Scope of Reform: 19 Amendments. 5 Acts :** The Amendment contains **19 distinct changes** to five central legislations—the **RBI Act 1934**, **Banking Regulation Act 1949**, **State Bank of India Act 1955**, and the **Banking Companies (Acquisition and Transfer of Undertakings) Acts of 1970 & 1980**.
- **Redefined 'Substantial Interest' :** The outdated 1968-era ₹5 lakh limit for “substantial interest” in a banking company is raised to **₹2 crore**, empowering the regulator to align governance norms with modern financial realities.
- **Eligibility Tenure for Cooperative Bank Boards Increased :** The maximum continuous term of non-whole-time directors in **co-operative banks** has been extended from **8 to 10 years**, in line with the **97th Constitutional Amendment**, enhancing leadership stability.
- **Nomination Rights Expanded: Up to 4 Nominees Allowed :** Individuals holding **bank deposits, fixed deposits, or lockers** may now appoint **up to four nominees**, either simultaneously (in fixed proportion) or successively. Previously, only one nominee was permitted. These rights mirror those in the Companies Act and insurance contracts.
- **PSBs Now Obligated to Transfer Unclaimed Assets to IEPF :** **Public Sector Banks (PSBs)** must now transfer **unclaimed shares, interest, redeems, bond proceeds, and fixed-deposit amounts** to the **Investor Education & Protection Fund (IEPF)** after the statutory dormancy period.
- **Statutory Audit Overhaul for PSBs :** PSBs are empowered to pay remuneration directly to statutory auditors, opening the door to hiring top-tier independent audit firms and strengthening financial transparency.
- **Streamlined Reserve Reporting: Revised 'Fortnight' Structure :** The meaning of “fortnight” for Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) and SLR reporting under the RBI Act is redefined as 1–15 and 16–month-end, replacing the previous Saturday to Friday definition. Additionally, reporting timelines are relaxed from weekly (alternate Fridays) to **fortnight/month/quarter-end**.
- **Anti-Related-Party & Board Conflict Norms Strengthened :** Amendments to Sections 10A and 16 of the Banking Regulation Act exclude **common directorships**—other than RBI-nominees or overlapping board positions between state and central co-operative banks. This lowers conflict-of-interest risks across institutions.
- **Why It Matters: Modernised Governance, Improved Deposit-Consumer Safety** The Act updates half-century-old rules, promotes depositor confidence through investor protection via IEPF, brings cooperative bodies into constitutional compliance, and enhances audit integrity in public banks — collectively reflecting India's move toward global best practices in banking regulation.

#### India's Economic Outlook and Monetary Policy in 2025

**In the News:** The Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), chaired by Governor Sanjay Malhotra, delivered a major policy update. The repo rate was slashed by 50 basis points to 5.50%, the Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR) cut by 100 bps, and the policy stance was revised from “accommodative” to “neutral”. This shift came amid a backdrop of falling inflation and a desire to bolster growth while maintaining price stability.

#### Key Points:

- **Monetary Tightening to Neutral Policy:** The MPC reduced the repo rate from 6.00% to 5.50%, with the policy stance now neutral, signaling flexibility in future rate decisions based on inflation and growth data.
- **CRR Cut & Liquidity Support:** CRR was reduced by 100 bps, phased over four tranches starting September 2025, to inject approximately INR 2.5 lakh crore liquidity into the banking system by year-end.
- **Inflation Forecast & Outlook:** Retail inflation, which reached a near six-year low of ~3.16% in April 2025, has prompted RBI to lower its FY26 inflation forecast to **3.70%**, down from 4.0% projected earlier. A State Bank of India report projects FY26 CPI at 3.0–3.2%, well below RBI's target.
- **Growth Projections:** RBI retains its growth forecast at **6.5% for FY26**, supported by resilient consumption, investment, and government capex. The Finance Ministry anticipates GDP growth accelerating to **6.7% in 2025-26**, as domestic demand recovers and fiscal stimulus from tax relief supports urban consumption.



- **MF & External Outlook:** The IMF raised its forecast for India's growth to **6.4% each in fiscal years 2025 and 2026**, citing a more benign external environment. Meanwhile, the IMF's global growth forecast was nudged up to **3.0% in 2025** and **3.1% in 2026**.
- **External & Export Risks:** India's finance ministry warns that a global slowdown and U.S. tariff uncertainties may weaken export demand. Exports fell nearly 9% in June 2025. However, India's macro fundamentals remain strong, with inflation expected to stay below RBI's 3.7% target.
- **Policy Flexibility Ahead:** The RBI governor has flagged that further rate cuts remain possible, with expectations of a **25 bps cut later in 2025**, depending on incoming data. A Reuters poll suggests the August MPC may hold rates, but another cut is likely by year-end if inflation remains subdued.
- **Structural & Innovation Highlights:** On the digital front, rollout plans for the **digital rupee** continue, which may enhance efficiency in payments and remittances, though RBI remains vigilant over systemic risks from unsecured lending and forex volatility.

### IMF Raises India's Growth Forecast to 6.4% for 2025 and 2026

**In the News:** The International Monetary Fund (IMF) announced that India's GDP growth forecast has been **upgraded to 6.4% for both 2025 and 2026**, citing an improved global economic environment and strong domestic momentum.

#### Key Points:

- **Growth Revision:** The IMF raised India's growth projection from **6.2% to 6.4% for 2025**, and from **6.3% to 6.4% for 2026**, up from its April 2025 World Economic Outlook estimates.
- **Fiscal vs Calendar Basis:** On a fiscal-year basis (FY26 and FY27), the IMF projects **6.4% growth** each year. On a calendar-year basis, growth is estimated at **6.7% in 2025** and **6.4% in 2026**.
- **Drivers of Growth:** The upgrade reflects a **benign external environment**, easing global trade tensions, lower inflation, and favorable financial conditions. Reforms driving robust domestic consumption and public investment are key support factors.
- **Policy Priorities Ahead:** IMF emphasized the need to sustain growth via **job creation, reskilling agricultural labour**, enhancing **labour market flexibility**, continued infrastructure investment, reduction in trade restrictions, land reforms, education investment, and streamlining regulations for businesses.
- **Global Comparison:** India is reaffirmed as **the fastest-growing major economy** globally. The IMF raised its global growth forecast to **3.0% for 2025** and **3.1% for 2026**, while emerging market growth is expected at **4.1% in 2025** and **4.0% in 2026**. China's growth was revised upward to **4.8% in 2025** and **4.2% in 2026**.
- **Past Growth & Forecast Shift:** India's GDP grew at **6.5% in FY2024-25**. The IMF's April 2025 baseline had projected **6.2% for FY26**; the current forecast now aligns more closely with RBI's own **6.5% estimate**, though slightly lower.